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Editors

European Integration and the Governance of Higher Education and Research

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or students. It will include both mature and developing systems of higher education,
covering public as well as private institutions.

European Integration and the Governance of Higher Education and Research

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Preface

The high level Douro seminars are now a well-established tradition in the annual activities promoted by *Hedda*, a European consortium of nine centres and institutes devoted to research on higher education, and CIPES, its Portuguese associated centre.

At the seminars, each member of a small group of invited researchers presents and discusses an original research-based paper that is revised afterwards taking into account the comments of the participating colleagues. The revised papers form the basis for the annual thematic book published by Springer in the book series called Higher Education Dynamics (HEDY). Paying tribute to the regularity of the seminars, it was decided that the volumes originating from the initiative would be collected in a 'series in the series' called the Douro Series.

Previous seminars were dedicated to in-depth analyses of different aspects of higher education systems and institutions, including institutional governance, the emergence of managerialism, markets as instruments of public policy, cost-sharing and accessibility of students to higher education and developments in quality assurance.

The present volume aims at analysing the change process which the European university is undergoing as a consequence of European integration efforts. In the case of higher education, these have materialised, amongst other things, in the implementation of the Bologna process, while the Lisbon summit also has important consequences for the university.

In March 2000, the Lisbon European Council set the goal for the EU to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world by 2010. This goal was reaffirmed in 2001 at the Stockholm European Council. The strategy for realising the goal includes 'the adaptation of education and training to offer tailored learning opportunities to individual citizens at all stages of their lives'. The Lisbon European Council also confirmed the ambition of developing a European Research Area (ERA) that in turn was framed as part of the instruments of the 2010 Lisbon target. Following the Lisbon summit, the European Council made some key decisions concerning the coordination of national research policies while agreeing on a very ambitious goal for investments in R&D.

While the supranational Lisbon agenda includes in addition to education and research also economic policy, company policy, social policy and environmental

policy as policy areas, the Bologna process, being the most prominent and important intergovernmental Europeanisation process of relevance for the university, is solely aimed at higher education. In 1999, that is, one year before the Lisbon summit, a large number of ministers of education signed a joint declaration in Bologna with the aim to develop an open European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010.

Since the signing of the Bologna Declaration, many meetings have taken place at which the Bologna process has been discussed. The European ministers of education met in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (2007) to discuss the 'Bologna developments' and the measures that need to be taken to make sure that the main Bologna objectives are realised in 2010. Also, European university leaders and student unions, as well as other stakeholders, have met on various occasions to reflect upon the Bologna process.

Given the overall ambitions and goals of the Lisbon agenda and the Bologna process, and other relevant supranational and intergovernmental European integration processes, it is obvious that these processes have the intention to affect the university in all its basic structural features, including the way it performs its basic activities. However, the European Commission does not have a formal authority with respect to the university, nor did the governments that signed the Bologna process develop an executive administrative capacity for implementing the Bologna Declaration. As a consequence, whether and how the supranational and intergovernmental European integration processes actually affect university governance and the university as a social institution, is far from clear.

The present volume aims to discuss the nature and possible effects of these very complex processes by analysing the many facets and levels of higher education policy making in the European Union and a number of case studies that focus on the responses of higher education systems to external pressures for change originating from the integration process.

We are grateful to all who have made the sixth Douro seminar and book possible, namely Amlia Veiga at CIPES and Jennifer Olson at *Hedda*, the perfect organisers of the Douro seminars. We are also grateful to Di Davies for her editorial work. We have appreciated the diligence of all our colleagues who have contributed to this book with their papers, comments and editorial suggestions, and we certainly noticed their forbearance in replying to our tedious editorial demands.

We want to acknowledge the financial support from *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia*, of the Portuguese Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education, making the organisation of this new Douro seminar possible. And last but not the least, we register once more the superb environment provided by the management of the Vintage House Hotel on the banks of the Douro River.

Matosinhos	Alberto Amaral
Oslo	Peter Maassen

July 2008

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Part I
Introduction

European Integration and the Europeanisation of Higher Education

Peter Maassen and Christine Musselin

1 Introduction

European higher education is going through an important transformation. While during the first decades after the Second World War the sector experienced a period of relative stability in its basic national and institutional organisation and governance structures, more recently it has undergone far-reaching changes. Overall, the recent change dynamics represent a shift from internal to external control, consisting, amongst other things, of the introduction of externally initiated evaluation mechanisms, the professionalisation of institutional management functions and the growing pressure to be accountable to society. In addition, a change from central governmental planning and regulation of higher education to a growing reliance on a market-like competition in the steering of individual higher education institutions can be observed. It can be argued that these transformations are the result of massification, but they can also be linked to the growing interest in the potential contribution of higher education to the knowledge economy. Whatever the exact causes, the expectations with respect to what can be achieved by universities and colleges have been on the rise. However, public investment in higher education has not kept pace with growing expectations, even though the decrease in public investments in higher education, at least in Europe, is far less dramatic than usually assumed (Lepori et al. 2007: 108–109). The ultimate effects of these change processes on the underlying character of higher education are not yet entirely visible. Nonetheless, the emerging new higher education contours show that its governance structures, funding sources, the organisation of its primary processes (teaching, research and services), and the general political, economic and social conditions under which the university operates are being altered (Olsen 2007a).

While universities and colleges the world over have been facing the consequences of these shifts, higher education in Europe confronted an additional challenge in the form of various European integration efforts aimed ultimately at creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and a European Research Area (ERA). The

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aim of this book is to explore these issues by discussing the impact of European integration efforts on the governance, organisation and funding of higher education. Various studies have attempted to analyse this impact over the last 10 years, but in this book we want to add to the understanding of the effects of European integration on the dynamics of higher education by systematically referring to the general European studies' literature and general social science literature. In addition, this book includes some studies of European integration that compare higher education with other sectors.

The focus of the book will first be on the Bologna process, but not from the assumption that it is the first or even the most important European integration process in higher education. With this starting point in mind, the book addresses a number of questions: How can the history of European integration in the area of higher education be interpreted and what has been the role of the European Commission in this? What role does the Bologna process play in the European integration process with respect to higher education? What governance mode has the commission developed in the area of higher education? What are its executive administrative capacities? How distinct is the Bologna process from community-level initiatives with respect to higher education and from more general European integration processes, such as the Lisbon strategy? Are national governments committed to the European integration processes with respect to higher education such as the Bologna process and other international agreements? Can they in practice control their participation in these processes? What are the effects of the Bologna process on national higher education systems?

The book is organised into two main parts. The first part is dedicated to the issue of European integration in higher education. The concept of integration will be used here to describe the process through which countries pool resources, create common institutions, and make and implement joint decisions. The second part focuses mainly on the national level and uses the concept of Europeanisation as an analytical frame of reference. Following Radaelli (2003: 33), we will consider Europeanisation as a consequence of European integration and as a research perspective "concerned with what happens once EU institutions are in place and produce their effects".

2 European Integration in Higher Education

In the field of European studies, European integration refers to processes aimed at integrating European countries economically, politically and legally. In addition, it includes efforts to integrate Europe socially and culturally. The latter are usually more complex than the former given that they are related to national identity and have an emotional element. Traditionally, education, including higher education, has not been a central policy area in the European integration process (Pollack 2000; Pépin 2007). Nevertheless, as Schmitter (1996) and Pollack (1994, 2000) have shown through analysing budgetary and regulatory data, by the late 1990s "the EU and Member States shared competences in nearly every issue-area of European

political life" (Pollack 2000: 523), including education. Pollack (1994) has used the term 'creeping competence' for this process of growing EU involvement in traditionally national issue areas.

According to studies by Schmitter (1996) and Pollack (1994), since the late 1960s the EU has gradually established a policy presence in the area of education, demonstrating a movement from no EC involvement in education policy to the situation at the end of the 1990s where education policy decisions were taken at both the national and EC levels (Schmitter 1996: 125–126). Analysing more recent EU directives and their amendments in the area of professional recognition,[1] and the introduction and development of the Erasmus Mundus programme,[2] it can be demonstrated that the policy competencies of the EU in the area of higher education have further increased.

2.1 The Ups and Downs of European Integration in Higher Education

In order to understand the growing policy involvement of the commission with higher education, it is important to examine the attempts that have been undertaken to stimulate European integration in this sector since the foundation of the European Economic Community (EEC). Guy Neave (1984, 2001) and Ann Corbett (2005) through their various publications have played a central role in furthering understanding of the integration process. In her chapter in this book, Corbett focuses on two exemplary episodes of the integration story. The first episode commenced in 1955 and concerned the German attempt to establish a supranational European university. This initiative was not very successful, even though it did lead to the creation of the European University Institute in Florence in the 1970s. The second, more successful example concerns the birth of the Erasmus Mundus programme. Both cases help to improve our understanding of the crucial roles of some policy entrepreneurs in these episodes and their use of 'windows of opportunities' and the mobilisation of institutional rules as policy instruments.

The interest of the EU in higher education policy issues was based on the recognition of the importance of higher education for the development of an open European labour market. It also reflected from the beginning the idea that universities may be a vehicle for the development of a European identity. As Corbett has shown, the push to integrate higher education has gone through periods of success and failure, resembling a roller coaster. But, in general, countries refused to provide the European Commission with formal competencies on higher education issues. The commission thus restrained its interventions mostly to relatively peripheral domains, where its action was justified by the construction of the European labour market (mobility programmes for students and academics) or by its competencies in the area of vocational training (emphasis on lifelong learning, for instance). An important illustration of the latter is the 1985 Gravier judgment (De Witte 1993; Corbett 2003). The judgment provided the commission with a legal foundation for

developing university-oriented policies, based on the interpretation that universities include vocational education and training.

The ups and downs can also be observed in the period since the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). The treaty itself resulted in a step back for the development of a common higher education policy space at the European level (De Witte 1993; Petit 2002), and the period until the end of the 1990s has been interpreted as a period of tension (Neave and Maassen 2007) between the commission's policy ambitions with respect to higher education, as expressed in the Commission's Memorandum on Higher Education from 1991 (Petit 2002), and the member states' rejection of these ambitions.

Subsidiarity is the core principle concerning the "distribution of functions, responsibilities and powers between different levels of governance" in the European Union (Olsen 2007b: 236). It was introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) in response to the fear of many member states of a (further) centralisation of power at the European level. Education is one of the policy areas to which the subsidiarity principle applies. In practice, the commission could not initiate any action intended to harmonise member states' education policies or structures without the explicit consent of the member states (De Witte 1993). However, given that subsidiarity does not have a clear, uncontested meaning and is open to alternative interpretations (Føllesdal 1998; Olsen 2007b), the principle in itself does not guarantee that authority with respect to education will 'automatically' rest at the national level.

The inclusion of the subsidiarity principle in the Treaty of Maastricht, amongst other things, expressed the rejection by member states of the commission's centralisation ambitions in the area of (higher) education. In the first period after 1992, this was clearly visible in the tension between the commission and the member states with respect to higher education. This can be illustrated, as indicated, by the exclusion of the commission from the first phase of the Sorbonne/Bologna process.

However, since the end of the 1990s, European integration of higher education has gone through a remarkable 'upward' episode. One important intergovernmental element in this has been the signing of the Bologna Declaration, which included the intention expressed by the signing countries to construct an EHEA, and the launching of the subsequent process. The EU member states that signed the declaration were apparently prepared to loosen their embrace of the principle of subsidiarity and give up their opposition to the principle of harmonisation,[3] at least in an intergovernmental setting (Neave and Maassen 2007: 140). The question whether the Bologna process is 'the start of something new' or should be interpreted as a new phase in a long-term trend is addressed in Neave's chapter in this book. Neave clearly opts for the second alternative and sees the Bologna process as an important element in an ongoing wave of change fostering more competition, internationalisation, increased academic productivity and regionalisation.

The Lisbon 2000 summit forms an important 'breaking point' in the member states' attitude to joint, European-level policy making with respect to higher education. After the summit, the member states no longer rejected a convergence of higher education structures and policies. As a consequence, the commission could replace its view that the university should be conceived in terms of vocational training,

which formed the basis of its university policy since the passing of the Gravier judgment, with a more direct and active interpretation of its role (Neave and Maassen 2007). Åse Gornitzka addresses some of the consequences of this change in her chapter. She analyses, amongst other things, the administrative capacity of the commission in education that has emerged since the late 1990s. She demonstrates the important role of networks created and encouraged by the commission that are linking the DG (Directorate-General) for education, groups of experts and others at national governmental levels in the emerging European-level policy space.

Positioning the recent integration initiatives in a broader framework provides us with a wider scope for understanding the issues on which this book focuses. This is in line with an institutional perspective (Streeck and Thelen 2005; March and Olsen 1984, 1989, 2006), based on the assumption that change, even when radical, is always embedded in specific constitutive rules and practices as well as in codes of behaviour (Olsen 2007a: 27).

2.2 An Original Way Towards More Integration

It is important to emphasise that the Bologna process is not the final step in the European integration of higher education, even though it obviously plays an important role. Together with the growing administrative capacity of the commission in the area of educational policy, it contributed to the further expansion of the integration of European higher education after 1999, in a period when European integration in general was faltering (evidenced by the rejection by France and the Netherlands of the draft constitution). Strikingly, the origins, form and nature of Bologna as an integration process in higher education appear unique, if not peculiar. To start with, the Bologna process was not initiated by the commission which, as mentioned above, regularly tried to gain influence with respect to higher education but, until the late 1990s, only succeeded in relatively marginal areas. Instead, Bologna emerged from the national level through the Sorbonne Conference of 1998, and from then on developed into an intergovernmental process punctuated by intergovernmental agreements.

The Bologna process is original in three respects. First, it initially emerged from the national level and explicitly excluded the commission. Even after the commission was eventually accepted as a formal actor in the process, it was on the basis of a 'vigilant cooperation' (Ravinet 2007). Second, the Bologna Declaration is not limited to EU member states and has now been signed by 46 countries in Europe. Third, by contrast with many previous reforms, it aims at transforming the production process (the curricula) and the products (the degrees) rather than the institutional settings of each of the national higher education systems involved (Musselin 2005).

With respect to the nature of the Bologna process, an important question is: How has (some) unity been achieved in a policy field that is characterised by diversity (Kohler-Koch 2005: 14; Olsen 2007b: 58)? Recently, its internal diversity has

increased even further. This is discussed in the chapter by Jürgen Enders and Harry de Boer, who attribute this development to the "mission stretch" experienced by European universities. In addition, overall, it can be argued that, similar to other fields in higher education, integration has been based more on consent, pragmatic negotiations and the use of expert groups consisting of national representatives, than through 'coercion and threats' (Gornitzka 2007; Olsen 2007b: 58).

2.3 European Integration in Higher Education: Intergovernmental and Supranational Efforts Combined

At the national level, in most European countries, research and higher education are interrelated (if not intertwined) policy areas with one ministry responsible for both areas. At the European level, however, the two policy areas are traditionally more independent of each other with separate ministries having respective policy responsibility. Nonetheless, during the last decade, the European integration processes with respect to higher education and research have become increasingly connected. We have already stressed the steady development since the late 1970s of a European research policy. In contrast to the integration efforts in the area of higher education, it relied for many years on communitarian impulses, directives and budgets. With the supranational process launched by the Lisbon 2000 summit, it experienced a radical acceleration. This has been translated into material measures – such as an increase in the budgets of FP6 and FP7,[4] the creation of new instruments for the allocation of research funds, and the establishment of the European Research Council (ERC) – as well as into more symbolic developments. Research and innovation have become central in many discourses of international civil servants at Bruxelles and commissioners. Therefore, compared with the efforts to integrate higher education, the research sector at the beginning of the twenty-first century was already strongly engaged in a European integration process driven by the commission, with the construction of the ERA explicitly around the commission's agenda. However, the European research policy space developed without leaving much room for new policy initiatives or steering approaches, such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) (Gornitzka 2007). In practice, this policy space was mainly used for (re)distributive purposes, and hardly allowed for the development of new research policies from the commission.

The situation with respect to education was very different. Traditionally in this policy area there was little joint European-level policy space. But the Lisbon 2000 summit allowed for a rapid enlargement of the small existing space. Since this new space was not yet filled with (re)distributive or other activities, it could be used for the development of new policies, including university and innovation policies (Gornitzka 2007). This may partly explain why the commission managed to drive the higher education integration process relatively successfully in the post-Lisbon period, despite the absence of higher education from the Lisbon 2000 documents on research and education.

    The construction of the EHEA and the ERA finally converged in 2003. However, at the EU summits (including Stockholm and Barcelona) that followed Lisbon, and which were aimed at operationalising the Lisbon agenda, higher education was already high on the agenda. The commission even introduced a 'Bologna mirrored process' for vocational education and training based on the Copenhagen Declaration (2002). The Copenhagen process was expected to form a bridge to the Bologna process. It was then relatively easy in 2003 for the EU, with the support of the Heads of State who set the Lisbon agenda, to develop a joint European education policy, which included higher education and therefore the Bologna process. Disappointment at the lack of progress in the implementation of the Lisbon agenda (including the 3% of GDP investment in research) also played a part. To face this challenge, the priority measures introduced included higher education. In subsequent documents higher education was quoted many times (Ravinet 2007: 140–143). In parallel, from 2003 on, the commission began to publish an ongoing series of communications on the European university. As a result, we can state that the European integration of higher education has finally been strengthened through *both* a supranational process (the Lisbon 2000 agenda) and an intergovernmental agreement (the Bologna process).

2.4 Vertical and Horizontal Integration

The supranational integration process with respect to higher education has all the characteristics of a 'typical' EU push to integrate, in the sense that the justification for including higher education in the process is mainly functional (Olsen 2007b: 58–60). This is understandable, given that education is a 'sensitive, national policy field' in the EU. Still, what is lacking is a political vision of higher education in terms of an integrated Europe – a shared view of the economic and political, as well as the social and cultural, role of higher education in Europe. The primarily functional justification for the involvement of the EU in higher education policy is based on economic arguments, which can be found in the appropriate policy documents of the commission (see, e.g. Commission of the European Communities 2006). Giddens (2006) even goes so far as to suggest that the main underlying reason for the commission's developing its Lisbon 2000 agenda is to gain control over the European universities to further develop the European knowledge economy. While the Lisbon agenda also contains a social dimension, the main focus is on economic goals (Neave and Maassen 2007). The Lisbon agenda is an example of "vertical integration" of governance levels. The formally strict distribution of authority between different governance levels is, in practice, blurring and gives way to an integration of policy competencies and decisions over various governance layers (Pollack 2000; Blumer and Radaelli 2005; Olsen 2007b: 236). In the area of (higher) education, this is the consequence of the use of the OMC (Gornitzka 2007), as well as the development and use of networks of staff from the DG EAC (Directorate-General for Education and Culture), experts and national representatives. Through developing

and implementing a joint agenda, European countries are expected to develop further the multi-level governance system in those policy fields where the formal, legal authority of the commission is limited, such as higher education. However, the merits of this recent approach to European-level policy making are not yet clear, from either a theoretical or an empirical perspective. This goes for higher education as well as for other policy areas, such as social policy (Falkner et al. 2005).

The thrust of intergovernmental integration resulting from the Bologna Declaration (1999) had a strong cultural justification based on the history of the university and its central role as a cultural institution in Europe. As an intergovernmental process, there was no need for the Bologna process to avoid the sensitivities that the commission faced in its attempts to create a higher education policy space at the European level. Ministers could, for example, build on the Magna Charta Declaration (1988) which can be seen as an expression of the frustration and worries of the then European rectors, faced with the growing tendency of the commission to see European higher education as an instrument for mainly economic purposes. The Bologna Declaration proposed a horizontal integration of national higher education structures through a common degree structure, a common credit transfer system (ECTS – European Credit Transfer System) and a quality assessment approach with comparable criteria and methods. Nevertheless, as Kerstin Martens and Klaus Dieter Wolf argue in their chapter, the Ministers signing the Bologna Declaration were not influenced by cultural factors alone. They also saw Bologna as a possibility to use an intergovernmental agreement to impose reforms in their own countries. However, as the two authors argue, in the case of Bologna, as well as the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the ministers may have miscalculated: both cases provided the opportunity for supranational organisations (the commission, on the one hand, and the OECD, on the other) to intervene and thus reduce the ministers' room to manoeuvre nationally. Stated differently, ministers were unable to maintain the process as a purely horizontal mechanism, thus opening the doors to varieties of vertical integration.

The ongoing implementation of the Bologna Declaration and its already strong institutionalisation in a number of countries favoured its inclusion in the Lisbon strategy. As indicated above, the Bologna process and Lisbon agenda have been integrated in the *Education & Training 2010* policy documents of the commission (Commission of the European Communities 2003). Convergence of horizontal and vertical integration processes was facilitated by the use of distinct but similar instruments. This is clearly set out in the chapter by Amélia Veiga and Alberto Amaral. While the Lisbon agenda led to (further) development of OMC in a number of policy fields, education included (Gornitzka 2007), the follow-up of the Bologna process progressively introduced more formal and standardised instruments based on benchmarks. The authors analyse this in terms of the impact of OMC methodology on the Bologna process.

What this implies is clear. On the issue of the governance of higher education, the commission has protected its position. Despite the lack of a formal legal basis there is in general acceptance of an increasing governance role for the commission in higher education. Consequently, not only has the commission been able to use its

administrative executive capacity, including the DG EAC, in the implementation of the Bologna process but it has also been allowed by the member states to build a number of European-level institutions in the areas of education and research which have a European legal basis, amongst which the European Research Council (ERC), the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). In the coming years, one can expect that the pace of reform in European higher education will be affected as much by the commission's policy documents and initiatives, as by national reform agendas.

3 The Europeanisation of Higher Education

The second part of the book focuses on the structural integration of European higher education, the "Europeanisation" of higher education. Europeanisation processes are central in the four chapters of the second part of the book. Each chapter adopts a different perspective. Roberto Moscati describes the resistance of the whole Italian higher education system to the Bologna process and the national reforms introduced before and after Bologna. Johanna Witte focuses on a specific aspect (curricular governance) and analyses how it has been implemented differently in England, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Petr Fabian positions the Bologna episode in the long-term process of change in which Czech higher education has been engaged since the fall of the Berlin wall. Christine Musselin looks at the bachelor/master scheme in France in order to shed light on the side effects of Bologna in that country.

The chapters nevertheless all look at the implementation of the Bologna process and discuss the subsequent changes in the countries involved. From a formal, political point of view, the Bologna process can be seen as a success since almost all countries introduced the two-tiered study structure and the ECTS credit point system. Nevertheless, reforms cannot be detached from national context. While there is a visible, structural homogenisation as a result of the Bologna process, there are still important differences between countries when it comes to degree structures and the overall national higher education landscape (Tomusk 2006). This is a conclusion common to all the chapters in the second part of the book.

If, following Cowles, Caporaso and Risse (2001), we look at the Europeanisation processes as including four principal steps (decision making at the European level, adaptation pressure on the domestic actors and institutions, national prisms, and impact), the chapters in this second part focus mainly on the last two steps. All analyse how national settings either favoured or slowed down the implementation of the Bologna process or, more broadly in the case of the chapter by Petr Fabian, the Europeanisation of the Czech higher education system. In terms of impact, the chapters are illustrative of the different scenarios deployed by Europeanisation analysts (for instance, Cowles et al. 2001) with the exception of the more successful one: absorption. No instance of a plain and complete adoption of the Bologna process is reported There are few examples of rejection or neglect, except for England

and Greece. As Witte points out in her chapter, setting up programme accreditation as a norm was clearly refused in England until now. England also provides a rather interesting case of inertia due to the perceived tight fit between the domestic situation and some aspects of the curricular governance supported by the Bologna process: the reforms of the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) resulted more from internal pressures and reactions from the institutions than from any compliance with European initiatives. Most of the empirical facts collected in the four chapters can nevertheless be put under the heading 'translation or accommodation': domestic actors first of all adjust to European integration in higher education.

To speak of Europeanisation in terms of impact alone would nevertheless be too restrictive. It limits this process to top-down influences, whereas it is more an interactive process with domestic actors simply affected and reacting. The domestic actors also develop strategic uses of the drive towards Europeanisation at the national level, influence the decisions made at the European level, or engage in various forms of re-nationalisation, as Christine Musselin argues in her chapter (see also Palier et al. 2006). The development of a European system of quality assessment for higher education (see the last part of Witte's chapter) provides a telling argument for the further research by looking at Europeanisation more in terms of a multi-level exchange. Quality assessment has become a complex and sensitive issue. While the commission in the preparation of the Bergen Bologna meeting in 2005 proposed to move formal responsibility for quality assessment from national authorities to institutions and allow the institutions to select their own accreditation agencies (Haug 2005), this was not acceptable to many of the EU member states. Consequently, a compromise was reached in the aftermath of the Bergen meeting.

Many of the chapters in this book reveal complex interactions of actors as well as a diverse set of rules by which European integration and the Europeanisation of higher education are developing. Both processes move forward through the co-production of norms, procedures and decisions, rather than from the simple and permanent domination of some actors over others. Depending on the period under study and the analytical level, perspectives vary. The dominance of the European integration perspective on higher education, which the first part of the book underscores is tempered in the second part which focuses on the national level.

A number of questions permeate the analyses in this book: What are the major dilemmas to emerge from the contradictions and power struggles in the relationships between the three main governance layers in Europe's higher education systems: the supranational, national and institutional levels? Who are the major actors and what are the forces behind the challenges higher education faces as a social institution in Europe? This book sets out some interim but by no means exhaustive answers. Let us hope they will inspire further research into the ongoing scrutiny and examination of European higher education.

Notes

1. See, e.g. http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/future_en.htm
2. For more information on the Erasmus Mundus programme, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

3. Strikingly, while with respect to some other policy areas the term harmonisation is still being used (see, e.g. Falkner et al. 2005), with respect to higher education it is being replaced by the term convergence. The Sorbonne Declaration is called the "Joint declaration on *harmonisation of the architecture* of the European higher education system", but, apparently, as is forthcoming from Amélia Veiga's PhD work, during the 1999 Bologna meeting at which the text of the declaration was finalised and the declaration signed, all involved agreed that the term harmonisation would give the wrong impression aimed at uniformity. Instead, the term convergence was felt to do better justice to the agreement reached on creating an EHEA.
4. FP7 with a budget of slightly more than €50 billion is the largest public research programme ever.

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Part II
The Many Faces and Levels of Higher Education Policy Making in The European Union

The Bologna Process as Alpha or Omega, or, on Interpreting History and Context as Inputs to Bologna, Prague, Berlin and Beyond

Guy Neave

> *All men are not patient docile Johnsons; some of them are half-mad inflammable Rousseaus. Such, in peculiar times, you may drive too far. Society in France, for example, was not destitute of cash . . . [T]he time has come when* [Laissez-faire] *must either cease or a worse thing straightaway begin – a thing of tinderboxes, vitriol-bottles, secondhand pistols, a visibly insupportable thing in the eyes of all.*
>
> Thomas Carlyle. "Chartism."
> *Selected Writings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin,
> 1971, 199–200

1 Introduction

Not so long ago, in a fit of misplaced enthusiasm, a good colleague mischievously claimed that more studies had been made on Bologna than on the Great Napoleon. As a scientific observation, it was neither plausible nor credible. However, it served a more latent purpose and it served it well: it caused many somnolent experts to surface from a deep – but mercifully not terminal – torpor. Happily, our optimist was not a historian, though to offset this *lacuna* one has to admit the individual concerned was extraordinarily well versed in the arcana of the Bologna process and perhaps for that very reason, had never heard of Herr Friedrich Kircheisen. In the earlier part of the previous century, Herr Kircheisen was one of Germany's leading spirits in Napoleoniana and a regular contributor to the *Bibliographie napoléonienne,* a semi-hagiographical ongoing work of reference, which first appeared in the France of 1902. It continued over the subsequent years right up to the start of the Great War. Through this work of incomparable erudition, Herr Kircheisen and his French

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colleagues set themselves the stupendous task of cataloguing all that had been written on the Corsican Ogre. And indeed, the imperial score was impressive.

Already by 1870 – over 100,000 tomes, volumes, books, brochures, pamphlets, fly leaves and wicked libels, chronicled and analysed the deeds and misdeeds of the Great Man (Geyl 1976). Not as numerous as today's writings on dieting, childraising, sex or football, but impressive even so.

The point I want to develop in this chapter does not involve drawing tendentious analogues between Bologna and the Berezina, still less to make parallels between the emerging European Higher Education Area, the European Research Area and the Retreat from Moscow. Rather, I shall pose an ancient and well-exercised question that most historians find themselves having to tackle by the nature of their trade – namely, whether the Bologna Declaration of June 1999 represents continuity or change in the thrust of higher education policy in the European Union? Simplistically stated, is Bologna the start of something new? Or the end of something old? Do the Declaration and the institutionalisation of the exchange, debate and, in less evident form, the negotiations, which have subsequently been grafted on to this political equivalent of a new vine root, in truth, represent a watershed? Are there substantial continuities in content and focus between the priorities of higher education at nation state level and their projection as a shared set of objectives in the Declaration itself? In fine, given what we know about the evolution of higher education policy over the previous two decades, is it correct to see the Bologna process as the Alpha of our present-day ambitions or the Omega to those of yesteryear?

2 Three Modes of Analysis

2.1 The Projective Mode

Grosso modo, the scrutinies and analyses that focus on the Bologna Declaration and on the process of exchange and negotiation that subsequently emerged from it, fall into three broad types. These are probably best qualified as "the projective and speculative", "impact" and, third, "weighing up". These three approaches are the natural way systematic and organised understanding is brought to bear on higher education policy or, for that matter, on higher education *tout court*. And whilst the sceptical will point out that one of the most important functions of the first is to bring scholarly attention to a "problem" worth investigating and to justify why indeed one is in hot pursuit of it, it also serves – at least in theory – to set both the initial intellectual boundaries to, as well as amplifying the significance of, the general *problématique* by making predictions about its likely evolution and thus the implications such evolution may reasonably have for government, funding, institutional efficiency, reputation and general viability – if not survivability – of higher education in our time!

The "projective" investigation fulfils other purposes, as well. It may be seen as a prior stage to identifying possible route maps for institutional adaptation to the

difficulties thus identified. As applied to the Bologna process, it has two fundamental features: it is obviously future oriented on the one hand. On the other, it takes the basic principles contained in the Declaration both at face value and as determinants. Curiously, it is rare for the "projective" mode to be concerned with institutional capacity to move towards the developments thus extrapolated and identified. It is concerned literally with the various ends foreseen and rather less with the detailed means of reaching them.

2.2 Impact

The second approach seeks to assess preliminary progress in terms the impact declarations of intent have upon behaviour at systems, sub-system or institutional level. Impact, however, is a term that has suffered much from inflation in its usage and thus an unhappy deflation in its precision. One of the more unfortunate of these imprecisions is the assumption of permanency, namely, that whatever shift in practice, resource or behaviour is observed, will endure. This is not the only assumption behind the study of "impact". The second assumption the notion of "impact" makes is to confuse and to conflate two very different conceptual and operational processes. These processes are sequential and may be viewed together as the operational dimension to the overall phenomenon of implementation. Implementation without impact is, at the very most, improbable and at the very least a monument to ineptitude and frustration. Interestingly, however, the degree of impact in all likelihood may well be a direct function of the speed at which conformity or outward acceptance is required to be demonstrated to those who have oversight and general responsibility for implementation at national or regional level. Be that as it may, impact itself can just as well be a passing thing, as most living organisms tend to show.

Yet, an impact ascertained and produced does not *eo ipso* mean that behaviour modified remains such, still less that automatically the modification is fully and thoroughly assimilated into the institutional fabric, though here again one may hypothesise that measures which, by their nature, lie fully within the administrative domain might enjoy a more rapid "embedding" than those that involve redefining knowledge, its content, its presentation, the resources allocated to it and the qualities of those involved in disseminating it.

Hence, impact analysis may be applied to domains each of which has very different degrees, capacities, rates and forms of responsiveness and compliance (Neave 2006a). Even if we discount such things as differences in national practice, policy style (Premfors 1981), it is self-evident that assessing the "impact" of Bologna is in turn determined by the particular process, function or level of analysis to which enquiry is directed. In short, impact can largely be determined beforehand by the choice of what one decides to examine and very especially when what is to be examined corresponds to what the American policy analyst, the late Martin Trow, defined as falling within the "public" rather than to the "private" life of higher education (Trow 1975). The implication being that assessing impact upon dimensions in the public domain is more likely to yield discernable – though not necessarily,

unambiguous – results within a relatively short time. Investigating impact in that area, which Trow defined as the "private life" of higher education, by contrast, may yield results. The difficulty lies in interpreting them in view of what has been said especially when applied to impact, implementation and "embeddedness".

There is one final aspect to "impact" that should not be lightly passed over. For just as "impact studies" are directed at the systems and institutions for which the Declaration is destined, so at the same time ascertaining the degree of impact also involves examining how far a process that began as a Statement of Intent, has effectively acquired further standing and additional purpose. In short, how far the Declaration has evolved towards becoming an Instrument of Reform in its own right (Bologna Follow-up Group 2003: 7).[1] In the common jargon of our trade, how far and in which areas of academic activity has Bologna as a declaration mutated into the Bologna process? In this connection, it is not wholly coincidental that the first dimension to be subjected to analysis for impact lay precisely in that very domain which resides wholly in the public and the administrative spheres – to wit, the legal enactment of the six principles contained in the Declaration. Leaving aside the nice argument as to whether a Law passed is exactly the same thing as a Law enacted and applied – and in certain systems, notably France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, the first is very far from leading automatically on to the second – clearly one of the benefits the legal dimension bestowed – as doubtless it was intended that it should – was early evidence of an impact having been achieved if only by dint of legislation promulgated.[2]

If the truth were out, legislative initiatives are quite the weakest form of evidence on which to base impact, whether on a system or on the individual university (for examples of this see Boffo, Dubois and Moscati 2006). It is not, for instance, the promulgation of the Law that is important so much as the awareness and grasp that institutional leadership – no less than that led in the Academic Estate – displays over the general purpose and specific goals laid down and thus the implications the Declaration implies for the institutional fabric.

2.3 Weighing Up

"Weighing up", follow up or evaluation represent the third *modus operandi* in measuring the consequences of policy. It occupies a rather different niche from impact assessment, though it is not unknown for one deliberately to be tangled up with the other and presented as "evaluation" to endow the findings with more substance, weight and consequence. Just as we argued that impact confuses immediate response with long-term consequence, so evaluation focuses on implementation – that is presumed to be a protracted process. The evaluatory mode of policy verification focuses on practices embedded. It also focuses on the process by which they become embedded in the institution. In short, weighing up as the third and final stage in policy verification, works its way from the institutional level with the evidence rooted in what were once termed the "basic units" – that is, the smallest unit in the university capable of taking operational decisions on its own (see Premfors

1986). It is clear, even so, that the evaluative mode is firmly grounded within the "private life" of the individual institution – which involves such aspects as course content, curricular design, assessment, presentation, etc. Its explicit purpose is to give insight into how far recent legislative intention has in effect become part of institutional "embedded practice" and, though it is more rare, to ascertain what conditions – work, employment, administrative structure and models of managerial oversight – are the most conducive to encouraging and ensuring the rapid "embedding" of stipulated practices whether administrative, pedagogical or pedagogically driven.

Just as with impact studies so with those given over to "weighing up" – both are engaged in what amounts to a dual function. Whereas the former examines the impact of Bologna upon higher education systems the better to gauge the change in its status from Declaration to Process, so the latter focuses on the institutional level the better to estimate a similar transition from Process to an instrument of effect and consequence. In short, the latent role of evaluation is to ascertain the effectiveness of Bologna as a policy conduit. And that is a large step beyond merely registering its acceptability or noting the absence of hearty resistance to the ideas and to the spiralling agenda now rapidly accreting around it.

3 Disciplines, Context and Interpretive Perspectives

As other chapters in this volume show, examining the unfolding saga of the Bologna process provides a fertile ground for bringing to bear a wide range of disciplines which form an integral part of that intellectual dynamic so characteristic of the field of higher education in its present state, amongst which the sociology of organisations, political science, government, public administration, contemporary history stand well to the fore. These disciplines together with economics are the basic building blocks of analysis within the three general perspectives we have just set out. As one has a right to expect, Bologna is the centre of focus rather than the long-term context in which Bologna itself is seated. Yet, it is precisely the changes in this long-term context that open further sensitivities and interpretations to the Bologna process. For in reality, whilst it is both right and necessary to examine Bologna within the framework of European Union policy and, at another level within the cut and thrust of policy developing with the individual Nation State, it is also no less a central event in the history of the universities in Europe and, no less important in the rapidly developing changes in the relationship of that institution with society and with the economy perceived over time.

None can doubt that Bologna and the Bologna process are reshaping higher education in Europe though whether the means and the ends are desirable, prudent or whether the outcomes are likely to be conducive to meeting the original purpose within the agreed schedule, are very different matters indeed. Yet, it has often been argued that for the first time in more than three and a half centuries, Bologna revives an earlier concept of higher education and the social order.[3] The groundwork of the reconstruction of a European Identity is expressed through the notion of the

"European universities" rather than the "universities in Europe" – the latter phrase being the Nation State construction of the same. Certainly, as the abortive proposal for a European Constitution showed, whatever the commonalities Europe may choose to associate itself with, they no longer revolve around a world of shared beliefs and convictions shaped by the canons of religion. Rather, the commonalities that rally the different historic cultures of the European Nations together revolve around that lowest common denominator of economic exchange. Indeed, the subordination of the social and the political as handmaidens to the advance of the economic stands as one of the seminal developments if not its prime historic feature in European society of the past quarter of a century (Neave 2004). Though the overriding weight placed upon the revival of what the 19th century Scottish historian, Thomas Carlyle, once called the "Cash Nexus", has often been condemned by the representatives of the universities in the Union,[4] it is perhaps the lesser of two evils. By concentrating on economic harmonisation, the detestable prospect of its cultural dimension may perhaps be avoided although attempts to rewrite "European" history and other elements of school and university curricula show the temptation is always present for the more unrepentant of Europe's *intégristes*.

Nevertheless, a very substantial part of research on Bologna is often chary in the extreme towards the historical context. Many analyses sit in an historical vacuum, all too often unrelated to developments that went before. Yet, it is a truism of the most elementary sort to say that, important though Bologna and its aftermath are, the initiatives that began before Bologna was signed did not shrivel up on its proclamation. If we are to make a convincing case either pro or contra the claim that Bologna marks a watershed, a little attention should be paid to the developments which set a particular stamp on the period prior to Bologna. We need to do this if only to map the continuities that the Bologna Declaration took on board and to identify those major developments in higher education policy which themselves continued but remained outside its purlieu. Suffice it to say that higher education policy did not come to a shuddering halt and all energies focused on carrying Bologna forward. Earlier initiatives within the Nation State *pace* the elaboration of quality assurance procedures, and their accompanying agency infrastructure did not grind to a stop, even though attention often focused elsewhere (Neave 2006b).

4 Policy, History and Periodicity

Deciding whether Bologna represents continuity or an historical turning point poses in its turn a rather vital question: when did the period in which either development took place, begin? In what way was that period different from what went before? Though it is by no means generally accepted, a particularly weighty argument can be made for setting the start of the New Age in 1981. Naturally, the sceptical will ask whether at the time contemporaries were aware of the significance of this particular moment as a break point or whether this choice is simply an example of hindsight and anachronism, and therefore largely arbitrary, being made in the light of what we know took place subsequently. 1981 marked the end of what has been

termed the Neo-Keynesian consensus in higher education (Neave 1982; Torres and Schugurensky 2002), essentially the notion that higher education served such collective goals as social justice and economic progress by public investment in higher education as an act of collective solidarity and as an extension of that rationale which drove forward the development of the welfare state. Two events in Western Europe brought the long decades of Neo-Keynesian consensus to an end: the drastic budgetary restrictions imposed on United Kingdom universities and, in the Netherlands, measures to rationalise and redistribute the national provision of higher education, contained in the White Paper *Taakverdeeling en Concentratie Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs* the year following (Maassen 1987). Interestingly, the problem both countries faced was similar – the issue of resources allocated to higher education, where to make savings and how to optimise output in terms of cost; how to secure higher levels of "through-put" efficiency in terms of students graduating (Bijleveldt 1994). Yet, recourse to "the market" as an ideological and political construct took place far earlier in the Netherlands than in Britain, being presented as a political justification almost from the first. In the UK, the pragmatic measures of financial husbandry acquired an ideological purpose only in the latter half of the decade when the Conservative government reinterpreted cost-cutting as one element in a wider strategy of "rolling back the frontiers of the state" (Williams 2004).

4.1 A Remarkable Quarter Century

A remarkable quality in reform during the past quarter century of higher education policy making in Europe has been its sustained and comprehensive nature, though it does not follow that such was the intention of governments from the very start. There is, however, much advantage to be had in claiming strategic purpose retrospectively not least those gifts of omniscience and ostensible coherence (Neave 2004: 144–147). For some systems – largely in Western Europe – reform was the product of deliberation and calculated purpose. For others, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe, reform was the result of political and moral bankruptcy, economic collapse and an unswervable determination to have done with the practices and procedures of a regime grown paralytic and unbearable (File and Goedegebuure 2003). What was no less remarkable in Western Europe was the high degree of convergence across individual systems of higher education about the agenda to be addressed and the measures to be taken. The ostensible reduction in detailed oversight exercised by central national administration (Kogan 2006) was variously justified: as removing bureaucratic obstacles to an efficient interplay between university and market. The introduction of student fees – not always at full cost – stood as a significant departure from the practice, widely shared, that the cost of higher education, hitherto regarded as an act of national solidarity, should now be borne by individuals and parents. Some consolation was to be had by the Student Estate as a result. Now re-designated as "customers" and as such deemed to have certain rights and to enjoy "consumer" protection, which as students and apprentices was scant, the

new status attributed to the Student Estate very certainly justified some indirect say over the provision and evaluation of the "services" supplied. In its turn "consumer protection" justified the scrutiny ostensibly exercised on behalf of "consumers" by specialist agencies of funding, quality and accreditation – a radical step indeed (Teixeira et al. 2004).

Every bit as radical was the policy to diversify higher education's sources of funding away from public expenditure and towards private income – a priority sometimes held to justify another construct imposed on the University from without – to wit the so-called "Stakeholder Society" (Neave 2002b). Taken together, these initiatives represented a profound shift in the ethical basis that tied institutions of learning to society. This process has been variously presented – as inserting a "market ideology" as the operational lodestar into higher education policy; as a form of ideological coherence – an alternative to that which drew upon State oversight, regulation and resources to hold together establishments of vastly different purpose and mission; and as the "commodification" of higher education, which is an elegant way of registering the return of the cash nexus to learning.[5] Whatever the particular metaphor employed – and by the end of the Eighties there were many – the growing weight attached by Ministries and governments to the latter day version of Neo-Liberalism's Holy Trinity – Quality, Efficiency and Entrepreneurdom – was clear for all to see (Neave 1988a; Van Vught 1989).

4.2 Speed Not Haste

Leaving aside the sheer scope and range of the different priorities which reform urged on, a second feature – equally remarkable – characterises the past quarter century. It is the unprecedented speed by which governments pressed reform forward. Speed was a prime factor in re-engineering the Universities of Europe. There are many reasons for such unremitting haste. We will look at them in greater detail later. Student demand for higher education was not least among the "forces of acceleration" and stood as a substantial element in the equation of system "re-engineering". It is also an excellent example of continuity in policy. Two decades earlier, pressure from student numbers, then termed "social demand", played a major part in driving higher education in Western Europe firmly beyond the limited numbers that historically tied higher education to elites. It levered higher learning onto a mass basis (Trow 1974), though the command economies of the East and Central parts of the Continent remained deliberately grounded in an elite setting (Kallen 1991). The numbers involved in the rush into higher education during the Eighties and Nineties were, if anything, more spectacular still. For most Western European States, participation rates rose to 30% and beyond with certain amongst them, notably Britain (DfES 2003) and the Netherlands (Kwikkers et al. 2005), setting their sights to raising participation to 50% of the appropriate age group by the year 2010. France had already attained this level towards the end of the previous century (Neave 2005).

In Central and Eastern Europe, the liquidation of Totalitarianism released a pent-up demand for higher education all the more spectacular for the generation-long delay in satisfying it compared with Western Europe. For the first time, massive

growth in student numbers was a phenomenon that spread across the whole of the European Continent.

Initiatives to re-seat the relationship between higher education, government and society, hitherto conducted within the context of the individual Nation State and with the priorities of the individual Nation State in mind – whether France (Guin 1990), the United Kingdom, the Netherlands or Spain (Diez Hochleitner 1988; Coombes and Perkins 1989) – from 1990 onwards, moved with varying degrees of hesitation and reticence onto a broader and infinitely more complex field on which to play themselves out. From an operational perspective, the mobilising of higher education in Europe received a dramatic and very substantial boost from the developments in East and Central Europe from 1990 onwards. Spiralling enrolments, the establishment of literally hundreds of new private establishments, all claiming university status, above all in Poland, Romania and Russia (Amaral and Teixeira 2001; Slancheva and Levy 2007), conferred a new visibility to issues which, in Western Europe, were for the most part largely a matter of delicate discussion – the privatisation of higher education, institutional self-management, models of governance, the place and function of competition, quality assurance (Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004; De Boer, Goedegebuure and Meek 1998).

These concerns formed the pillars on which reform rested. Their finer details, implications and consequences have been closely studied by the higher education research community both within individual systems and comparatively by the higher education research community as well as by discipline-based scholars making forays into the higher education sphere as an area of application for their particular body of knowledge. And whilst all of them, each in their own way, serve to give the last quarter century its distinguishing features, they are individual dimensions rather than attempts at overall synthesis. It is very precisely an attempt to establish a synthesis, which is all the more necessary if we are to judge the significance of Bologna by setting the context of the period in which Bologna is sited itself in an historical perspective.

4.3 Vocabulary, Banality and Cycles of Legitimation

One of the more noteworthy trends that tend to go hand in hand with periods of radical change is the coining of a new vocabulary and terminology, which serves as tools of usage. In turn, this jargon acts as vehicles of, and channels for, the rapid assimilation of those new norms that the revised vocabulary brings with it. Precisely because this equivalent in the world of higher education to technical terminology provides the bedrock for the new interpretation of higher education's purpose, the terms themselves rapidly assume the characteristic of takens-for-granted. They slough off very quickly the radical status they had at their conception. They have, effectively, become the referential terms in which political debate is now conducted. And, just as they acquire this very quality, so their one-time radicalism evaporates. That is what "normalisation" entails. Terms once radical become the *pensée unique* – the one true way of how things ought to be done in a given domain, in this case higher education.

Shifts in such terminology are both a pointer to, and a handmaiden for, legitimising the priorities they underwrite through constant use, repetition and application. Making the radical banal is then as important a function in higher education policy as implementation itself. Indeed, because banalisation shapes the discourse in which policy is conducted, it is very often a prior condition to securing the success of the latter. At the same time, a contrary and parallel process runs alongside the task of assigning new meaning. It is a counter current. It involves the stripping away of precisely that significance and the legitimacy that had built up around it, which once accompanied the policy terminology of a previous age – or of a previous policy cycle. Thus, the central concepts, priorities and values that constituted debate in the previous "policy set" – equality of opportunity, social justice, for example – are rapidly discarded as irrelevant, an irrelevance held to be all the greater for having given rise to the very conditions it is now necessary to overhaul. It was precisely this function that the concept of "marketisation" performed in the wake of the economic crisis during the early Eighties in Western Europe. Shifting the terms of debate also shifted the locus and significance of key functions in the higher education system, amongst them Quality, Efficiency and Enterprise.

Though quality, efficiency and enterprise have in degrees greater or lesser *always* been present in higher education, only during the Eighties did they assume the centrality they now possess as the basic credo in Higher Education's counterpart of the New Theology by being directly associated with gauging and scrutinising output and performance – institutional, disciplinary and individual. Nor is this latter-day Triptych alone in having undergone such a metamorphosis. Other values and functions have also been attributed further operational purpose – competition, internationalisation, the nature of academic time, and the nature of the community higher education ought to serve.

Each of these dimensions will be dissected in turn. By doing so, I have two aims in mind – first, to remind ourselves of the extremely radical nature of the transformations the once-new interpretation – now today's established Orthodoxy of Neo-Liberalism – injected to the public end and function of the university. In short, to make us alert not just to the "challenges" that lie before us on the path to the New Electronic Jerusalem – by definition, challenges there always are – and very rarely if at all foreseen in detail. The second purpose is to analyse this period from an historic and dynamic perspective. In short, what has been done and what its significance is, viewed from the standpoint of the historical development of Western Europe's universities, rather than lamenting over their as yet undemonstrated capacity to commit themselves to being instrumentalised around a single agenda identified solely with the European Cause (EUA 2007).

4.4 Setting the Stage of Interpretation

To the literary minded, a good case can very certainly be made for setting the thrust of reform as higher education's equivalent to a Nietzschean "Transformation of All Values" – *Umwertung aller Werte*. Others may incline to the view that the burden of

reform is a classical illustration of the aphorism made almost a half century ago by Clark Kerr, one of the United States' most subtle actors, observers and shapers of its higher education system. In the Godkin Lectures of 1964, Kerr noted that the university very rarely brought about change from within. Reform, Kerr remarked, and his experience was second to none, came from outside the university and not least from government (Kerr 1964). This observation leads us to the first of the ostensible paradoxes that have accompanied Europe's reforming its systems of higher education.

4.5 The Enduring Challenge and the Attendant Risks

Amongst the various reasons advanced for reforming the relationship between government, higher education and external society was the conviction that the detailed control and oversight national administration had long exercised over that institution were largely incompatible if not utterly dysfunctional in an age where economic competition demanded both rapidity of response and flexibility in meeting the demands that society, business and the market posed. The paradox did not lie, however, in the principle of the market driving learning, still less in its shaping the acquisition of knowledge. On the contrary, similar tensions between how knowledge should be valuated, how it ought to be organised and which forms of knowledge and in which mode the university should dispense it – theoretical, applied, useful or practical – have long been an abiding source of much heat and only occasional light in the world of academe between ancients and moderns from the days of the Enlightenment onward (Ben David 1978).

Even if we take at face value the liberating and the invigorating benefits an unfettered market may bring – and to say the least they are not without their ambiguities and often devastating social cost – the dilemma that Western Europe faces is precisely how to attain that freedom without the need for a legislation so detailed and stultifying that it beggars both the patience of Nations and exhausts the charity of their citizens. One cannot, as Michel Crozier (1979) argued with great force these two decades and more ago, change society by decree any more than one may decree greater freedom.

The setting down of new boundary posts, the formalisation of new criteria of institutional and national achievement, even though intended to unshackle institutions of learning and enquiry from the weight and constraint of an overburdensome past, entail a very real risk. That risk is to outstrip, in sheer legislative weight and by sheer procedural impenetrability, even those obstacles and practices from an earlier policy cycle which legislative enthusiasm set out manfully to hew down. The legislative effort required to set down new boundaries – liberal though they may once have been – often appears to be in blatant contradiction with the original Neo-Liberal intent to roll back the frontiers of the State, to give citizens a new stake in higher education and higher education a greater latitude to serve the community. In short, the fundamental premise of reform was that all would appear very different. And so it does indeed appear. But, one is faced with a most inconvenient

truth: namely, that, having lavished untold effort in reforming governance, funding, in giving more publicly verifiable responsibilities to academia and to its leaders, the resulting topography of power, control and oversight may indeed have changed radically. But that in no way changes the horrid prospect that the procedures put in place to ensure the brave new marketable world may effectively be as adamantine, unyielding and invasive as those which in earlier times held the wicked old world together. Perhaps more so.

4.6 Four Dimensions that Characterise the Current Policy Cycle

From my perspective, there are some four dimensions that stand as the most sensitive and at the same time the best illustration of the transition to what is variously alluded to as the "Knowledge Society", the "Stakeholder Society" or in a more Utopian tradition a "Global Society" which, whether separately or in combination, have shaped indelibly the context in which Bologna is set. They may be analysed and discussed from a plethora of different dimensions: structural change, shifts in methods of resource allocation, of institutional differentiation and performance and the reassignment of formal administrative responsibility either at national or at the institutional level. However, I am less concerned with the minutiae of reform so much as the shifts in "the shaping beliefs and assumptions" that urge on, underpin and lie behind operational and grounded change. Nor, by the same token, am I greatly concerned with the full range of reform. Instead, I will focus very specifically on four key *problématiques* that permeate across several central dimensions in the present policy cycle and which impart to it a particular quality within the recent history of the universities in Europe. These are:

1. Competition
2. Internationalisation
3. Academic Time
4. The Community Served.

It is through the examination of these political and economic constructs that we may gain both insight into, and purchase over, the claim that the years post-1981 in Europe were in truth a transformation unprecedented in the basic values that have shaped the institutions of higher learning.

5 Competition

Competition stands as the central driving force in the Neo-Liberal *Weltanschauung*, though other political theories do not necessarily endorse it so wholeheartedly (Neave 2006a, 2006b). It is amongst the most powerful technical and political rationales behind contemporary reform in Europe's systems of higher education. Seen from the daily experience of Europe's universities, this credo was more than

a little curious. For in truth the issue at stake was not to install competition into the universities. On the contrary, the contest for what the American sociologist, Burton R. Clark, has called the "gold coin of repute and excellence" (Clark 1983) was every bit in evidence and no less feral for that. The real issue emerged elsewhere and at two levels. The first involved no less of a paradox, namely, who was to determine the distribution of esteem and to what purpose that esteem should serve? Or, presented in a slightly different light, how might that intellectual excellence – above all in the area of research and research training – best be harnessed to public purpose rather than serving the interests of scholarship, internally defined and largely driven by the Academic Estate via its members sitting in Research Councils?

What was paradoxical in the extreme was not that proposals to redefine the terms of competition targeted the elite parts of mass higher education. The paradox lay in the fact that the strengthening of competitive oversight by governments implied if not a condemnation of what was virtually the private nature of the way research support was conducted by the Academic Estate, then, at the very least, it expressed misgiving. In short, in certain domains, privatisation was not always conducive to the public good (Massy 2004: 15). No less ironic, the principle of competition was applied in a way that, viewed within the mental set of Neo-Liberal doctrine, seemed suspiciously like a covert form of "nationalisation" that in other areas of the social fabric national strategy sought to terminate with extreme prejudice.

The second level, which saw competition unswervingly applied as a principle of policy, focused on the undergraduate level. If anything, the notion of introducing competition at this level appeared even more surreal. Few, if any, of the conditions that in the United States had grown up organically over decades and which made competition there so powerful a policy lever, could be said to exist in Western Europe. On the contrary, with the exception of the United Kingdom, where institutional differentiation along with the social class stratification that had long characterised those islands were dominant characteristics, the majority of the higher education systems on the Mainland, subscribed, at least formally and legally, to the very opposite principle. As a public and national service, all universities within national jurisdiction were equal in status, a very clear expression of that principle, long established, of legal homogeneity (Neave and Van Vught 1994). For this reason, there was, at least officially, no competition between universities. More to the point, no incentive existed for there to be any, a situation evident in such systems as France, Portugal and the Federal Republic of Germany. Student fees, where they existed, were more symbolic than an irresistible spur for the individual institute of higher education to compete for students. Moreover, unlike the United States, enrolment fees in Europe were nationally fixed by central government and rarely revised. Nevertheless, at undergraduate level, competition certainly flourished. But it was competition between students for places, rather than competition between universities for students. Even in the United Kingdom, the power that competition could exert to mobilise change in higher education was so feeble that the government found itself obliged to take on the ideologically schizophrenic role of acting as a "pseudo market" (Williams 2004) the better, one imagines, to disentangle higher

education from the very toils central government had itself forged and applied qua national administration!

5.1 Competition: The Centrepiece in Ethical Re-engineering

Put succinctly, the principle of competition is both the ethical centrepiece of Neo-Liberalism, the encapsulation of the vision it has for Society and thus, the central core of its operational policy. By similar reasoning, it lies at the heart of our contemporary *Umwertung aller Werte.* Seen from this angle, the reform of higher education is simply one facet in a far-ranging political enterprise. That enterprise is to put in place the administrative agencies, to adapt the allocation of resources and to make sure that the new ethical order commands the necessary compliance to guarantee its perpetuation and – here is the novel aspect of the affair – to devise an effective instrumentality – legal, technical, institutional and behavioural – to inflict penalty and grant reward according to the reticence or enthusiasm individual actors and institutions display. Given the complexity, the scale, its geographic coverage and its unfolding across Europe this decade and a half, not least because of the belief that Neo-Liberalism and competition form part of a sustainable European identity, it is without a shadow of a doubt, the greatest exercise in dedicated Social Engineering the university has had to endure in the nine centuries of its existence.

5.2 Early Attempts to Use Inter-institutional Competition as a Policy Lever

Yet, it would be wrong to assert that the principle of competition has not been applied at other times to higher education policy. There are, for instance, examples of governments employing it as a lever for system reform through introducing the policy of sectoral segmentation during the Sixties (Furth 1992; Pratt and Burgess 1974: Sandvand 1976; Doumenc and Gilly 1978). The development of what was known as "short cycle" higher education in the shape of the British Polytechnics, the French University Institutes of Technology and the Norwegian District Colleges has certainly been interpreted as an indirect strategy to leverage reform in universities (Brosan and Robinson 1972). And there is some evidence that a few innovations developed by short cycle establishments, mainly in such areas as programme development, were taken up by some universities (Furth 1998). But the target of inter-institutional competition – the Student Estate – with the exception of the United Kingdom, remained largely unmoved by attempts to inveigle it into the non-university sector. Rather, student demand remained obdurately fixated upon the university. Thus, the creation of a supposedly competitive alternative fell, as the Biblical expression has it, "upon stony ground". For without students voting with

their feet, short cycle establishments posed not the slightest threat to the university and with that threat echoing emptily, competition provided not the slightest leverage for reform.

5.3 Variations in the Use of Competition to Leverage Reform

There is, however, one other variant in the use of competition to spur reform onward and it is particularly significant. Indeed, some of the early projective analyses into the future of Bologna saw it as posing a fundamental dilemma in the construction of a European Higher Education Area. What was to be the principle that underpinned the advancement of a multi-nation system of higher education? Was it to build upon the principle of competition? Or, on the contrary, was it to reside in the diametrically opposed ethic of cooperation (Huisman and Van der Wende 2004a)? Since one of the strategic purposes of the Bologna Declaration was to strengthen Europe's place in a world grown more competition-minded by the year, the apparent reluctance of its universities to go beyond cooperation and resolutely endorse the principle of competition in their intra-European relationships was surely hobbling themselves before the race had even begun?

In effect, whilst the dilemma was – and remains – ever present, it posed no less of a dilemma in the days when higher education policy was wholly determined within the Nation State. But the way in which competition – or, to be more precise, its rhetorical appeal in gaining acceptability for reform – worked, was very different. If one turns one's attention to the major changes to higher education in Western Europe from the Sixties onwards, one feature they all shared was the incessant cry that reform was necessary to improve the Nation's competitive stance.[6]

Failure to carry reform through, so this appeal to patriotism ran, would herald the first step in national decline. Or, worse still, would see the Nation overtaken by one's neighbours! What is interesting about this tactic of persuasion is that it did not imply that competition provided a remedy. Rather, competition was seen as an external threat. The purpose of this *politique d'épouvante* was to bolster internal consensus – or, put another way – to give new impetus to internal cooperation and agreement inside the Nation, to put reform in train very precisely to resist that threat. If one examines the Bologna Declaration, this same duality of internal cooperation, the better to improve external competitivity, is no less evident.

6 Internationalisation

Though universities have exchanged students and students have wandered from university to university – the time honoured *Peregrinatio academici* – almost from the time the Universities were established in Europe (De Ridder-Symoens 1992), over the past two decades, in sheer numbers alone, student mobility has assumed mass dimensions.[7] Today's version differs in several respects from its

historical predecessor, however. Though there are signs that the older edition, often know as "wild cat" (*sauvage*) mobility (Masclet 1975), is making a come-back (Veiga, Rosa and Amaral n.d.), today's mobility is highly organised and, no less significant, involves more than the movement of students between universities and across national frontiers. It is also an instrument of policy in its own right, the purpose of which is to make the younger generation aware of the opportunities Europe offers and to provide an "educational experience" beyond the limits of that which is available in the "national environment". Under the auspices of the EU Student Mobility Programmes – Erasmus, Leonardo, Socrates – mobility has become so much accepted as part of the "student experience" that it is seen as usual that some proportion of study time will be spent abroad. Student mobility has a high visibility and, whilst it is taken to be a useful pointer to the individual university's dynamism and efficiency, it is by no means the be all and end all of Internationalisation which, even confined to higher education alone, covers a broad range of activities – some central, others marginal in the degrees of institutional engagement they demand whilst also reflecting different organisational modes from the ad hoc to the systematic (Veiga, Rosa and Amaral n.d.: 5).

6.1 A Major Shaping Influence

Despite the antiquity of the practice, there are solid reasons for seeing the dynamic behind Internationalisation as one of the most significant processes shaping the contemporary history of the Universities in Europe, a development that effectively gives a unique identity and profile to the current policy cycle. Some may care to debate whether the role of the universities as prime agents in the international traffic of students and ideas – two of the key components in the global knowledge society – is that of initiator or respondent. For though universities are the most obvious vehicles for international exchange, they are very far from being alone. Earlier and more elite forms of cultural exchange and the government agencies whose mandate this was, continue to operate, projecting the Nation's cultural presence, above all in countries that share the same language or are influenced by a shared legal or administrative tradition, often inherited from the days of colonialism. Indeed, one may argue with great cogency that Internationalisation involves not simply the massification of student mobility but emphasises, yet further, the importance of cultural diplomacy. Cultural presence often weighs heavily in the balance especially when individual universities from contending national systems of higher education are engaged in the hunt for foreign students as a means of supplementing their budgets (Veiga, Rosa and Amaral n.d.: 7–8). Thus, the commodification of Knowledge alters that relationship between Education and Diplomacy, which Philip Coombes (1964) identified more than 40 years ago by coupling it explicitly to the service of the cash nexus. In place of Education serving Diplomacy and winning "hearts and minds", cultural diplomacy serves Education, assisting it to win contracts and to harvest full-cost fees. Just how important this new form of trade is in the Knowledge Society emerges very clearly when one recalls to mind the major reorganisation that

took place during the Nineties as the main historic "referential systems" in Western Europe[8] – Britain, France and Germany – overhauled and modernised their agencies responsible for projecting cultural presence – the *Agence de la Francophonie* in France, the creation of UK Ltd as a quasi-commercial successor for cultural and education exchange in Britain and the expansion of the *Deutsche Akademischer Austauschdienst* in Germany.

6.2 Two Historical Phases

It is convenient to see the rise of Internationalisation in the affairs of higher education along the lines of two historically distinct phases: the first being concerned with a traditional geographical scope of operation and application; the second with its extension to the world beyond Europe. Obviously, Bologna fits into the former perspective and it is equally clear that it is also both a response to, and an instrument for, linking the two spheres of operation. The distinction between the two phases reflects what is probably best described as a "shift in mentality" and in the perception of what is deemed to be international. In effect, this altered perception points towards the essentially dynamic nature of this field.

When higher education operated wholly within a Nation State context, international linkages were largely conceived in terms of geographic proximity, or cultural affinity – mainly, within the European framework. There are good grounds for arguing that this construct, which reaches back to medieval times, drew heavily from the renewal of aristocratic interests in the origins of proto "national cultures" during the 18th century Enlightenment in the form of the Grand Tour, was a model that began to wane in the mid-Eighties. In effect, it was overtaken and superseded by the expansion of student mobility programmes and the extension of opportunities for mobility to scholars and administrators.[9]

Replacing the historic definition of "international" as designating immediate neighbours by the notion of "a European dimension" is, not surprisingly, a process conceived with deliberation and a vital element in the quest for both an acceptable vision and consciousness of an European entity transcending the Nation State. But this first step towards a "European identity" coincided with an equally radical reinterpretation of the basis of the relationship between Nations in general. This second redefinition involved two very substantial shifts in perspective and meaning. Globalisation is a powerful concept though it has to be said that attempts to seat it historically are as unsatisfactory as they are numerous and most particularly because each of the once Imperial Nations seeks to locate the origins of Globalisation within the canons of its own history.[10]

6.3 Globalisation and La Vénalité de l'Université

Globalisation is a powerful notion because, just as competition serves as the essential lever for social Engineering within the Nation State, so Globalisation acts as

the main vehicle for legitimising Neo-Liberalism as the basis for the world order on which the relationship between Nation States rests. Not only is it the prime vehicle in the substitution of economics for politics in determining social priorities, not least in Higher Education. It exerts a powerful influence in aligning the prime activities of that institution – teaching and learning, generation and transmission of knowledge – firmly and irrevocably with the cash nexus. Indeed, the transition from cultural outreach to revenue generation as a *raison d'être* cannot be more clearly demonstrated than in those analyses that equate cultural outreach with "an international market" explicitly referred to – and moreover valuated – in terms of so many billion $US. Precisely because the relationship between Nations, as presented in a certain literature on higher education, is conceived as predominantly commercial, so the International Dimension both precipitates and speeds up a very particular shift in values in the world of scholarship. This transmutation is best viewed as a variation upon "venality"– that is, the readiness to subordinate both what is learned and how it is taught – to the central objective of "revenue generation".[11] True, *la vénalité de l'université*' may not have its *origins* in the International domain. On the contrary, the motivation, which urges on so spectacular a transformation to institutional purpose, finds its clearest expression there. Venality's *origins* are rather to be found in the financial "squeeze" universities face on their "home market".

6.4 The Shape and Form of Venality

Regardless of where "venality" has its roots and origins, as both a process and as a statement about the purpose of higher learning, venality has profoundly altered the relationship between mainstream provision of higher education and some of its more marginal but self-proclaimed "successors". It has conferred a degree of acceptability – which is the first step to legitimacy – upon a species of learning which, until very recently, was scarcely to be considered higher education at all. This species of "skills formation" was dissociated from higher learning, either because based in firms – and therefore unfree by nature – or because it endorsed a principle profoundly antithetical to the historic ethic of higher learning. This ethical engagement, long rooted in Western Europe, was prolonged by the principles that the Welfare State incorporated – namely, that learning should be *gratis et pro deo*' – thereby extending in time and in scale a collective act of public solidarity between generations which involved the polity underwriting the basic purpose of the university – that of passing systematically the experience and the advanced knowledge of the mature on to the young.

Thus, the rise of "for profit" establishments, of proprietorial bodies, is an event central to the current policy cycle in Europe. Whether it stands as a significant disengagement from community solidarity may be debated. Nevertheless, the rise of private higher education *is* a very concrete expression not simply of another dimension where profound shift has taken place in the purpose and the values that today inform higher education (Slancheva and Levy 2007). It is also central to a number of inter-related concepts that each in its own way shed a different facet on the broad

face of venality. The notion that knowledge should be saleable supports a range of different constructs: as the veritable heart of the knowledge society; as the final penetration of advanced capitalism into a body obdurately clinging to the outward forms and trappings of a world that has not been with us for many centuries; or as pointer to what, in the calculated jargon of consultants and functionaries, is wrapped up in a term that deliberately seeks to confound the advantageous with the unpalatable by giving both metaphysical status through the term "commodification".[12] This is as good a technocratic description as ever one might wish of those values that an earlier age called "venality". The overtones that accompany the new "edu-canto" are themselves an indication of how radical the shift has been in the values that both justify and define the purpose of contemporary higher education. By the same token, they also show how rapid that transformation has been. The notion of "commodification", like that of Globalisation itself, emerged in higher education at the very earliest only at the end of the Eighties.

6.5 Caveat, Emptor!

That universities are encouraged to sell knowledge, whether to make ends meet or to make money for those who own or who, alternatively, have a stake in them, brings firmly to an end a very ancient form of gift relationship. It is not, however, the only displacement in purpose and values. More significant by far is the subtle but no less rapid transmutation that has emerged in parallel to Globalisation and to the rise of an international market place for higher education. It has to do with what is to be considered as "universal knowledge". The exact relationship between what might well be the supreme example of the "revaluation of all values", with Globalisation and Neo-Liberalism, has yet to be explored systematically across different national cultures and systems of higher education. What are now considered as the "universals" in the domain of knowledge are, not surprisingly, linked to that other shift in intellectual perspective mentioned earlier – namely, the triumph of the Economic over the Political. In this instance, the shift involves putting aside the Humanistic perspective which holds that what is common to Man is spiritual and cerebral –in short, his Humanity – and thus, following the classic Aristotelian dictum, that Man is the most appropriate study of Man. Globalisation effectively stands Humanism on its head. Humanism can no longer boast – as it has since the Renaissance – of having universal status and still less of being that knowledge which unites Humanity. Rather, the Humanities take on a new character as an expression of cultures that, in the world market, represent knowledge that is local and particular. Or as an alternative explanation, that the universal nature ascribed to the Humanities reflects a universalism at a very particular historic juncture – one associated with the rise of the Nation State, of forging national identity and cultural specificity (Neave 2001).

In a world equated with exchange and market, however, this earlier version of universalism has been ousted by types of knowledge that have a very specific end, namely, to serve, uphold and sustain a world market internationalised. The new universalism is defined by those competencies and skills – that is, by the applied

dimension of knowledge, by knowledge that is both operational, "relevant" – and for that reason ephemeral. The "new universalism" of knowledge may at a pinch be spiritual. But it is supremely pragmatic, applied and utilitarian. It confers access not primarily to fraternities of knowledge but rather to transnational occupational strata and to employability on a world market. Such knowledge, whilst located and dispensed within the Nation State, has a context beyond that level. It is universal less by dint of commonalties of intellectual set or systems of belief as by the pragmatic and assessable competencies that, acquired in one system of higher education, allow its benefits to be reaped elsewhere in the form of employment, status and quality of life. Universalism in its new trappings has to do with employability on the world market. In a very literal sense, for he – or she – who possesses the requisite knowledge, the world is indeed an oyster! Amongst those fields one may equate with the "new universalism" are Economics, Business and Management Studies and, most significant of all, the Sciences – Natural, Exact, Biological, Chemical, Medical and Engineering.

6.6 Constructing Europe: The House of Science and the Republic of Letters

These latter disciplines, however, should serve to remind us that much of our perception and interpretational framework that accompany Internationalisation are rooted, as indeed is the study of higher education itself, in the phenomenon of higher education's massification. We tend to identify Internationalisation from the perspective less of the exact sciences than the social sciences, that is to say from a disciplinary perspective firmly grounded in the Nation State and one that moreover draws in, on average, some two-thirds of all university students at undergraduate level (Giglioli 2006).

Yet, there is another interpretation of Internationalisation, which differs very radically from those which evolve within the Republic of Letters. This parallel interpretation has its origins prior to the massification of student mobility qua cultural exchange. It also rests on its own very particular interpretation and claim to universalism – namely, the universality of Science, a powerful claim the distant origins of which are to be found in the 18th century Enlightenment and the rise of verifiable, replicable and testable knowledge. Seen from the House of Science, Internationalisation, cross-national collaboration at a very high level, long-term multi-national research programmes are neither recent in origin nor, for that reason, seen as pioneering ventures – as one may argue is today the case for the massified disciplines of the Social Sciences and Humanities. In short, the international dimension viewed from the House of Science, today, continues to revolve around what are long-accepted routines of working, though in contrast to both the Social Sciences and Humanities, they tend to be elite activities grounded not in undergraduate study so much as in the research training and research system – at postgraduate and post-doctoral levels (Clark 1994).

The House of Science is powerful not simply because of its long established cross-national and cross-Continental networks – an excellent illustration being the Organisation Européenne pour la Recherche Nucléaire – but also because it enjoyed the status of a priority activity from the very moment the EEC was brought into being in 1957 (Neave 1988b: 5). Thus, the presence of the House of Science in European affairs antedated by some three decades the conferment of a legal base on the remainder of the activities of higher education within the purlieu of the EEC. In addition, the close ties between government, research agencies and laboratories at the national level give the House of Science a degree of access and a specific field of action through national science policy that are not shared to the same degree by the Republic of Letters. Though unkind, it is not entirely inappropriate to point out that many of the objectives that are currently assigned to Internationalising the undergraduate body – the *peregrinato academici*, studying across multiple systems, dual qualifications and "hands-on experience" in acquiring advanced learning – may be seen as little more than projecting back onto the undergraduate level and onto the mass university, policies and practice both tried, tested and proven over many years within the home of the scientific elite.

6.7 The House of Science as Locomotive for Reform Through Internationalisation

If we look back on the reforms which, from the standpoint of the Republic of Letters, were often interpreted in terms of governments adjusting to the demands of international competition, for greater efficiency in student output – above all at the postgraduate level – the introduction of evaluatory and performance procedures as well as modernising programmes of doctoral study – a remarkably appealing alternative explanation springs to mind. This alternative view sees such reforms, whether in the shape of injecting "an Anglo Saxon" PhD structure in France of 1987 and a similar initiative in establishing a research doctorate in Italy, for instance, less in terms of political ideology than as reflecting the determination of the House of Science to bring the Republic of Letters up-to-date and in keeping with what the former held to be the best, most successful and proven practices available. That many of the leading figures in the world of science had either studied, been trained, taught or researched in the world's premier research system, which happened also to be the first higher education system in the world to assume mass status – the United States – is not coincidental. For it was in these disciplines that the principle of competition, efficiency in output and the capacity to respond rapidly to external challenge – whether from firms or from competing teams and colleagues elsewhere – spurred on achievement and stimulated innovation.

It is equally clear, however, that the House of Science employed the International Dimension in a very different way from its colleagues in the Republic of Letters. And in some measure, this difference reflects the reversal in their role as universals. If we confine our attention to Western Europe alone, it would appear

that the *modus reformandi* of the House of Science involves reinforcing international scientific norms by backing their being imported – and embedded by agency control – into the Nation State. Amongst the examples one might cite in support of this idea are the variations upon the American Graduate School introduced in the Dutch *Onderzoekschool*, the French *Ecole Doctorale* and the German *Graduierten Kollege*. In marked contrast to this is the tactic pursued by the Republic of Letters, which seemingly seeks to preserve established national practice by calculated adjustments that permit an acceptable degree of compatibility within the European Qualifications Framework. That is, to limit the degree to which newly devised European norms are permitted to penetrate into what the American sociologist, Martin Trow (1975), once alluded to as "higher education's private life".

6.8 Vital Differences

These differences in strategy and interest are important. And whilst they are far from being dismissed by those who, within the analysis of higher education policy, view matters largely within the canons of the Social Sciences, they are often presented within a conceptual framework which, if alert to the role played by competition and by the technical prowess of communications technology, tends to be less sensitive to the fact that communications technology, which is the channel through which these concepts are examined, is but one room in the House of Science which has many mansions! If we are to have a satisfactory purchase over the way Internationalisation has shaped Europe's systems of higher education over the past quarter century, it is as well to remember that the interests involved have very different views on the issues at stake and the remedies to be applied depending on whether their intellectual allegiance rests with the Republic of Letters or dwells in the House of Science. And, to add further to our burdens in the matter, it is no less crucial to bear in mind whether the centre of their interest or concern rests at the undergraduate or the research training level.

7 Academic Time

One of the more original, though no less controversial, features of the Bologna Declaration was to lay down a schedule for the completion of its six objectives. This is set for the year 2010. Whether the timing is exquisite, feasible or realistic is largely a matter of hope and belief, the evidence for which is, at best, ambiguous. That a date line should be set at all, however, is significant and not just for the success of the larger Bologna process. One of the more interesting innovations to be imposed on Europe's systems of higher education and very particularly since the early 1990s is an unprecedented speeding up in the expected "response time" between legislative enactment and the final process of embedding the legislator's will in individual institutions. Naturally, this process has rallied around it all manner of feline

phrases to describe it. Some hail directly from the inimitable jargon of logistics. Thus, for instance, universities are encouraged to adopt managerial techniques that allow "just in time" delivery methods. Management is encouraged to "speed up delivery" – an unfortunate expression which suggests that qualified students and innovative research can be organised for "consumption" – read "use" – in much the same caring way as detergents, pampers and deodorants!

7.1 Academic Time vs. Productive Time: A Very Long Perspective

Leaving aside the unpalatable association expressions such as these conjure up, they remain for all that part of another substantial reassignment of purpose to the university that has grown up in the course of the past decade and a half. This is commonly alluded to as "productivism" – that is, the direct harnessing of university output to industrial and commercial purpose – a notion that is usually attributed to Neo-Liberal reform of the 1980s but which echoes to an amazing degree the re-engineering of Russian universities during that period 80 years ago known in Soviet history as the New Economic Policy (Carr 1974; Afanassiev 1992)!

There is, however, another facet to "productivism". It relates directly to the notion of "academic time", which has been central to the way the university has functioned for many years indeed. For the best part of nine centuries, the one element over which academia had great if not total mastery was precisely over time – time to teach, to learn and to acquire knowledge. Agreed, universities tend no longer to consider their mission *sub specie aeternitatis*. Nevertheless, the days are not too distant when the pursuit of higher learning was still possible without major research grants simply because the prime value – time itself – was academia's principle and unique capital. That is what tenure and its granting are all about – the pursuit for knowledge irrespective of the time it might take.

The command of time was the essence of academic freedom, even in the days when knowledge itself was revealed rather than scientific (Neave 2006c). Evaluation and assessment regularly undertaken as a national exercise are in effect the essential lever to ensure that "academic time" mutates into, and is replaced by, "productive time". Even if this is nowhere written explicitly into the list of objectives assigned to such agencies of Quality Assessment, Accreditation, Audit or Public Accounts that are given over to regular scrutiny of institutional performance, this reassignment is nevertheless evident and has been a central theme for the past decade and a half in Europe. The essential truth is that the conversion of academic time into "productive time" is a salient and hugely significant trend in present-day higher education policy.

7.2 The Externalisation of (Academic) Norms and Functions

Changing academic time into productive time stands at the intersection of a number of separate processes all of which involve fundamentally redefining both university

identity and hence its relationship with society. The introduction of "productive time" into the groves of academe can of course be justified as a necessary development and very particularly so when change is held to be continuous rather than as a stop/go process and above all when the function of the university is to keep abreast of change rather than preserving anterior forms of knowledge. Productive time is also part of that process of "incorporation" which in turn has two meanings: the taking over of corporate business practices, forms of organisation, job description, hierarchy and very often conditions of service (Enders and De Weert 2004); second, the redefinition of the university no longer as a unique organisation – with a unique task – so much as one sub-set in a broader series of linkages sometimes qualified as the "innovation system" (Neave 2006b).

7.3 Passing of Time and Measurement of Performance

These developments, disparate though they might appear, nevertheless possess a common thrust, namely, the subordination of long-held university norms and their realignment upon external practice – a trend that reaches its fullest expression in the notion of competition itself.[13] In effect, ensuring competitiveness is a direct consequence of comparing common items of performance and output within a stipulated period – the time set for measuring academic productivity. It is a task that lies at the heart of the growing instrumentality which has emerged in the course of the past two decades in higher education and which stands in addition to the well-established battery of oversight based on legislation. Ranking, benchmarking and institutional achievement represent dimensions of comparison. Contractualisation, construed less in terms of targets set than as the period stipulated for their fulfilment, defines the common time-frame for institutional assessment. In virtually all instances, the decision about what is assessable just as the periodicity of that assessment, lie not in the hands of the university, but with specialised "agencies of public purpose", external to the individual institution. To put no firmer point on it, the concept of "remote steering" (Van Vught 1989) or the loosening of what has sometimes been called the State control model of university higher education relations (Neave and Van Vught 1994) is replaced by an even more invasive instrumentality grounded in a species of agency governance that determines those operational expectations and negotiated requirements that go to make up productive time as too the period over which they are to be judged and weighed in the balance.

7.4 Bold Presumptions

Yet the speeding up of institutional response to external change – and in this context the Bologna process is simply another example of the general *problématique* – makes a number of presumptions, which neither within the individual Nation State nor at a European level are either legitimate or even close to the reality that research has thrown up over the years. By far, the most indelicate is the belief that the

transition from academic time to productive time is a uniform and homogeneous undertaking. Yet, the accumulating literature on disciplinary cultures is very clear on this very point. What a particular discipline produces and the rhythm at which it is produced are subject to immense variation (Becher 1989; Becher and Trowler 2001; Clark 1993). Disciplines vary in their capacity to adapt to external priorities, whether these latter derive from the market or are handed down on behalf of The Prince by his agency servants. "Blue sky research" is often frowned upon as academia indulging itself at the taxpayers' expense. For the theologian, *c'est son métier!*

This is not to deny the presence of large numbers of disciplines and organised bodies of knowledge for which the market, external funding and ways of self-organisation have been finely honed by the twin imperatives of rapid response and external competition. In effect, the transition and the organisational re-engineering required in the move from academic time to productive time, though not necessarily couched in these terms, have been analysed with great deftness by Michael Gibbons and his colleagues (1994). The assumption in their study, as too in the procedures that underpin the evaluation of institutional performance, can best be described as having led to a form of "evaluatory homogeneity".[14]

7.5 Evaluatory Homogeneity and Adapting to New Norms

Put succinctly, the public procedures that underpin the rise of the Evaluatory State are normalised around the modes of operation, production, rhythm and output found in the House of Science, in the belief that, under external pressure, they will be assimilated rapidly by the Republic of Letters – a vision also shared by Gibbons and his colleagues. It may well be that, in the long run, nominal forms of compliance will be found within the Republic of Letters to satisfy such hopes. What we do not know – and it is an issue of considerable importance for the unfolding of the Bologna process itself – is how long it will take for this conversion to productive time – be it token or genuine – to be completed and very especially when it involves bodies of knowledge such as the Humanities and, to a lesser extent, the Social Sciences that do not share to the same degree – if they share at all – the long-established modes of production dominant in the House of Science.[15] Interestingly, though not, I believe, wholly coincidentally, it is precisely in those areas of knowledge whose status has undergone radical revaluation from being historic universals to becoming forms of local or national knowledge, that the degree of adaptation required is greatest.

Homogeneity in evaluative procedures is, naturally, a necessary thing, without which meaningful comparison remains a dead letter. Without meaningful comparison competition becomes a ritual based simply on manufactured perception and historic prejudice. Still, the dangers that accompany homogeneity are no less redoubtable – and very particularly when the results of the procedures through which that homogeneity is imposed have consequences – sometimes swift, even dramatic – for the individual institution, above all in the area of institutional repute, standing and funding. However, there is another aspect to homogeneity – or, to be

more precise, the belief – which homogeneity engenders. This is a notion present above all in the *pays politique* that homogeneity in evaluatory procedures reflects a homogeneity already achieved in the changeover from academic to productive time.

7.6 Contrary Imaginings

This is a devastating situation. Those in academia faced with implementing what is a fundamental, delicate and extremely complex metamorphosis, as much collective as individual, in the way they go about their work, are confronted by a *pays politique* which believes this self-same undertaking is already a species of *droit acquis* – an established practice. Nor is this the end of the misunderstanding. Comforted by their perceptions, the political world blithely and with gusto sets out to pile new items onto the original agenda of 1999, which every indication suggests that even today – eight years on – is scarcely begun at institutional level, let alone nearing completion (EUA 2007). Regardless of obvious differences and diversity in individual systems and within individual systems between individual universities and establishments of higher education, the application of similar procedures appears to reflect a broad similarity in establishments. Comparison is, surely, comparing like with like? And since comparison is made, what is comparable is *eo ipso* similar. In short, that evaluatory homogeneity is but one step – and a very major one indeed – towards homogenisation in purpose, objective and institutional policy. From this it follows, that as the time of response to external change speeds up through the organisational changes involved in replacing academic time with productive time, so the pace at which further elements are added by the *pays politique* to the reform agenda also gathers speed, in the belief that their wish is father to its own execution.

8 The Community Served

One of the more entertaining hypotheses that higher education has had to endure these past 15 years is one that argues the place of the Nation State in the life of the individual university or establishment of higher education, is under threat. For some, of the *Souverainiste* school of thought, that threat comes from Europe with the strengthening of a supra-government layer. For others, the menace lies elsewhere in the gathering momentum behind Globalisation and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which includes Education as one of the commodities to be hawked across national frontiers (Knight 2002). Given that the Nation State in Western Europe was the first systematically to incorporate higher education as a State service and that this particular relationship is nowhere more venerable than in Europe (Neave 2001), such fears are understandable. Whether they have a foundation other than in projective speculation flustered by the feats and efforts of a few well-publicised predator institutions and systems beyond Europe is, however, a different matter. Still, an external threat – or a menace that some feel to be in the

offing – does wonders in rallying to a common cause what in other times would be a certain querulous hesitation, as the Bologna strategy itself bears witness.

8.1 Many Communities, Many Visions

Yet the community that higher education is held to serve is a deceptively complex issue. Like most issues in higher education, it lends itself to a suitably eclectic analytical range, drawing *inter alia* on economic impact studies and the influence the individual university may have upon its region (Brownrigg 1974; Boucher, Conway and Van der Meer 2003; Florax 1992), on the procedures and regional agencies that link the two entities, through to the political consequence of injecting members of national intellectual elites into local and regional cultures and *a contrario* (Ryan 1977; Paterson 2001). Defining which community higher education serves is an intimate part of the political process and thus tends to reflect the dominant ideology and cultural constructs the latter places upon the role of the university at the moment when definition takes place. Moreover, there are many definitions of "community". These are best understood as a species of continuum ranging from the classical configuration set up in the 19th century by centralised governments such as France (Durand-Prinborgne 1998), Spain (Garcia Garrido 1998), Italy (Martinelli 1998) and Sweden (Svensson 1982) where the community defined was national. Such a model was predominant above all – though not exclusively – in the Latin countries of Europe. At the other extreme stood those systems where the power of the central state was deliberately limited and the community defined as local, proximate and denominational. The latter profile tended to dominate in the "Anglo Saxon" systems of higher education: Britain, the United States and others that formed part of the English speaking world. These two models, each in its own way, represent diametrically opposed views on the role of the local community in higher education, views that in turn reflected the predominant political values of the day. The "Latin" model detached the university from the local community the better to ensure that the interests served by the university were wholly and exclusively those of the Nation, as opposed to particular interests that occult lobbies might otherwise exercise at the local level (Huisman, Maassen and Neave 2001). The "Anglo Saxon" model, by contrast, held central government at a distance the better to ensue that local diversity and local community interests were adequately reflected in the type of services the university purveyed and which often determined the support the community was prepared to give it (Trow 2003).

8.2 The Historical Dynamic of Regionalisation in Higher Education

Over the past quarter century, one of the abiding trends in Western Europe has been the emergence of an intermediary layer of administration and coordination at the

regional level. Thus, if we are to entertain the thesis of a weakening role of the Nation State in higher education, by far the more weighty and immediate source of that revision is probably best seen as a species of voluntary self-dissolution from within – though that is not to deny the possibility that the predicted consequence of Globalisation may not accelerate that process from without.

Interestingly, the first moves in strengthening the "regional layer" of national administration occurred prior to the present policy cycle in the shape of the 1977 reforms in Sweden. They were not greatly successful (Lane and Stenlund 1983). They conferred upon regional authorities the power to negotiate and to fund courses and programmes held to be of immediate relevance to the regional community, whilst preserving central national control over degrees and diplomas held to be of nation-wide importance. Though the earliest example in higher education planning of new powers being assigned to the intermediary level of administration, the Swedish initiative is probably best interpreted as the last step in a major university reform that began in 1968 and was completed the year previously (Premfors 1984). It stands then as one of the last reforms undertaken as part of the previous policy cycle, the principle features of which were central planning, equality of opportunity and social justice.

8.3 The Driving Forces

"Regionalisation" as a way of redefining the community higher education serves, however, was driven forward by many considerations, some complimentary to one another, others not. Nor is it always to be equated with the tenets of Neo-Liberalism and marketisation though, in practically all instances, regionalisation was closely associated with increasing institutional efficiency. But such efficiency was associated with very different priorities and ends. Nevertheless, irrespective of the particular priority, one may detect a common presumption – namely, that proximity between services rendered, the establishment rendering them and those who stood to gain from them, would be more efficient, more appropriate and, from the standpoint of sheer administrative execution, less protracted and more sensitive by shortening the lines of communication and responsibility, directing them where possible away from central national administration and entrusting them to the region.

Broadly speaking, the rationale behind regionalisation can be classified along two dimensions: the political and cultural vs. the technical, managerial and financial. Obviously, these are not exclusive categories. Indeed, earlier initiatives justified by political and cultural considerations move on and add other functions – managerial and financial – later. Even so, the first moves towards regionalisation – 1983 in Spain and 1988 in Belgium – obeyed a rationale that was predominantly political and cultural. The former created some 17 Autonomous Communities in part to reinforce democratic participation in a country recently freed from Dictatorship. The latter took place with the Federalisation of Belgium along linguistic lines with the two

Communities – Flanders and Wallonia – responsible for the full range of educational provision – higher education included.

8.4 The Cultural Dimension and Other Priorities

To a very considerable degree, these two particular instances of devolving responsibility to the region obeyed the rationale of compensatory legitimation, that is, to give greater public participation in determining activities that, earlier, remained within an administrative purlieu (Weiler 1983). An alternative interpretation is to see the same initiative as providing an institutional base to the claims to a particular cultural identity – a consideration of considerable significance both in the case of the Basque country and Catalonia in Spain and to the Flemish speaking community in Belgium.

Pressures to recognise cultural and linguistic identity form only part of the rationale for strengthening the regional layer. Speeding up institutional response by foreshortening the chain of command was also present and urged on by other considerations, not least of which was financial. The French policy of regionalisation provides a suitable illustration. At the political level, the general press for devolving routine educational responsibilities away from central government, and, no less significant, the transfer of financial support to the regional budget and to regional taxation, stood well in evidence and formed a Leitmotif throughout the Nineties. Rather more complex, however, has been the regionalisation of funding higher education in the United Kingdom, where separate Higher Education Funding Councils were set up for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. In addition to funding higher education, these agencies exercise oversight within their respective regions for such matters directly related to higher learning as regional skills needs, monitoring the state of the economy, as well as social and cultural issues (see, for instance, Scottish Funding Council 2005).

8.5 The Third Task: Labouring in the Regional Vineyard

Providing the region with the legal remit, administrative means and budgetary responsibility go very far indeed in ensuring that universities take on additional responsibilities for the fortunes of their region, over and above the impact they have simply by dint of their being where they are. This additional commitment now is beginning to acquire a very specific significance, above all in Scandinavia, where it is seen as the "Third Task" along with the historic mission of teaching and research (Dahllöf and Selander 1996; Vakkuri 2004). The "Third Task" – comparable to the more voluntary notion of "community service" in American universities – is self-evidently a major dimension in what has sometimes been called "the Offloading State". It also reflects that conviction central to the Knowledge Society of the critical and strategic role of the University in underpinning both the transition of regions to, and their subsequent development in, the knowledge economy.

8.6 Further Issues of a Heretical Nature

However, if one mulls a little longer over the implications regionalisation poses, further issues float to the surface. They have indirect bearing on the Bologna process itself. The first of these is that the laying down of direct ties between higher education and the region is still *en cours d'élaboration.* Acquiring additional forms of accountability, evaluation and oversight is by no means complete, though the haste to do so is sometimes frenetic (Ahola 2006). The second issue, which follows directly from reinforcing the regional level of system governance, is that individual universities are now faced, not with whether to opt exclusively for a regional constituency, a national catchment area or an international profile, so much as with deciding the balance between these three elements. It is not whether universities will become more differentiated, depending on which of the three constituencies they set their sights. Differentiation is unavoidable. Rather more important is that each of these three constituencies, seen at the institutional level, endows the student body with a different degree of mobility. In other words, depending on its choice of which community it wishes to serve – or the "mix" between them – between the regional, national or transnational – the university also determines the level and type of mobility it is prepared to cater for. By the same process, viewed from a slightly different angle, the university also decides whether the community it has opted for is predominantly local and static, mobile within the Nation or mobile across National frontiers. And this consideration cannot but loom large in how far and how speedily individual establishments are prepared to "embed" the Bologna principles in their daily practice or whether their commitment is simply that of lip-service and tokenism.

8.7 The Incredible Shrinking Nation?

The third issue is whether in reality the Nation State has been weakened by the self-denying ordinance[16] the transfer of power to the regions apparently involves. Indeed, the question that is no less relevant must surely be whether power has moved out of the Nation State at all. No one will bother to deny that Bologna has created a focus and a regular venue where the universities of Europe and their representatives may consider how far the current priorities in developments proposed for higher education policy are acceptable – although rather too little attention has been paid to whether they are feasible and within what time span. Even so, none would deny that legislation and the emergence of new forms of voluntary coordination between establishments do not play their part. But claims about the shrinking place of the Nation State in higher education's affairs make two presumptions: first, that the distribution of influence and power is a species of zero sum game – that power cut back at one level means assigning it to another. In this case, that reductions at Nation State level mean an increase in the influence of the European – or supra-governmental – level, on the one hand, or the diminution through the flow of

economic power outside the Nation, if not outside the European Community, on the other. Second, such reasoning is based on strategic considerations rather than on the immediate experiential perception of the workings of power and influence in their daily manifestation. The experience an institution may have of them is largely to be had in the metaphysical rather than the pragmatic dimension. The same, though to a far lesser degree, may be said about the idea of Europe and the place of higher education in it.

Yet, regionalisation is significant. Whether this dynamic is seen as fragmenting the Nation State, shattering an older and perhaps more stable identity or as the shape of things to come, one thing is most certainly neither to be denied nor to be disputed. The reality of regionalisation, regardless of whether it is an expression of cultural identity or financial efficiency, is that it is firmly within that framework set inside the historic Nation State. There are transfrontier regions and, though there are obvious exceptions,[17] they tend to have an existence in the administrative mind rather than grounded in either historic or linguistic commonalties. Thus, a very weighty case indeed can be argued, namely, that regionalisation is in effect a renewed and more immediate version of the Nation State, the Nation State revived from beneath through close and direct contact with higher education and very precisely so in that very area where both Europe and Globalisation are largely abstract hypotheses – namely, in the quotidian, in the sustained daily exchange the university has with its immediate environment. From this highly pragmatic view, regionalisation has not weakened the Nation State in the slightest. On the contrary, whether as a cradle of less recognised cultures or as an administrative stratum, the thickening administrative rind and the development within the region, of agencies of oversight and coordination – and financial clout not least – has conferred a very real weight, presence and consequence of a very immediate sort to that level within the Nation. There is, in short, a very good case for arguing that the local is every bit as important in the daily life of higher education as the Global, if not more so. It is only fair to point out, however, that propinquity cannot always serve as an infallible formula to enhance a university's awareness of regional needs. One consequence of shortening the chain of communication is to personalise what previously obeyed the niceties of bureaucratic politics. Regionalisation of university policy may even serve both to politicise the relationship between university and region and to insert partisan politics even more deeply into the groves of academe.[18]

Regionalisation stands as an especially clear example of that other transformation in the relationship between higher education and society, namely, the end of what is sometimes described as the "Guardian Relationship" in which the state, or other intermediary bodies, served as a "buffer" to shield scholarship and learning from external pressures. By the same token, it also illustrates the rise of the opposite construct, which may be variously described – in terms of economic exchange as the Stakeholder Society and in cultural terms, as "repatriating" or "restoring" to the local community the classical institution – the university – which, until very recently, upheld a very different identity and cultural heritage.

9 Envoi

In this chapter, I have set out to view the Bologna Declaration as part of a policy cycle the origins of which begin in 1981. In turn, I have analysed that policy cycle along four dimensions of abiding change which serve to characterise the past quarter century and which also serve to distinguish it from the previous policy cycle. These are Competition, Internationalisation, the rise of "productive time" in the university and finally, Regionalisation. It is important to draw a line between "abiding change" and change *tout court* and very particularly so in a world that sets such store by change as a sustained, continuous and necessary activity, an imperative which in itself is also an identifying quality in the mentality of the Age.

9.1 Abiding Change: A Central Concept

As a concept, Abiding Change bears a certain similarity to strategy but with this difference: whilst strategy is the means of attaining a long-term goal set in the future, Abiding Change is less a technical affair than an irrevocable shift in mentality, values and ways of viewing the purposiveness of human action or the purposiveness of institutions through which that action is channelled. It stands as a necessary prior condition to change in policy. It is less a technique in the toolbox of the policy maker, consultant or administrator. Rather, "Abiding Change" is a device for seeking different explanations as to why, how and under what conditions change did in effect take place. Thus, since it focuses on what *has* taken place, rather than what *ought* to take place, "Abiding Change" is, in essence, an analytical perspective for the use of the historian or those concerned with developments across time, which is one of the most sensitive items that allow us to grasp the basic dynamics – or their absence – in human groups, institutions, procedures and beliefs. Put another way, change can be modified, even undone. This is the short-term edition of the phenomenon and may be seen as change qua adjustment. That adjustment is possible presumes the essentially provisional nature of the measure involved. Abiding Change, however, is intimately bonded with change that is irrevocable, that cannot easily be reversed without grave threat to their basic functioning in the case of institutions or dissolution of social ties and solidarity in the case of groups. When it has run its course, nothing can be exactly the same as before. Abiding Change is nothing less than a break point, a rupture in the unfolding of an institution or the evolution of a group which marks the point of transition between the world we once had and the world the building of which devours our energies, imagination and a great deal of our treasure.

9.2 How Things Were Done and Why

Evidence for the "abiding nature" of the changes underpinning the current policy cycle was explored less in terms of the classic methods applied in the study

of higher education – structural change, developments in the institutional fabric, resources, patterns of administration national or institutional, student access and performance. Rather, I have sought to go behind these formal exteriorities, the better to concentrate on changes in belief, values and perception that subsequently shape – and are also used to justify – both policy and action. In a way, this approach bears greater kinship with the History of Ideas or with the *Histoire des Mentalités* than it does to the policy analytic mode in the study of higher education. To underline this approach, I have employed a rather strange literary analogue. It drew upon the idea of the Devaluation of all Values, a theme developed by the 19th century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche. It is a highly potent, though not necessarily sensitive, way of dissecting changes in the assumptions underlying higher education policy since 1981 and thus provides us with a grasp over those individual aspects that combine to form "Abiding Change".

This examination of the significance of Bologna – in its successive forms as a Declaration, as a statement of intent and as an instrument of policy – posed two questions. Is Bologna a watershed in the history of higher education in Europe? Or does it represent a species of continuity? In the more circumscribed setting of higher education policy, is it the Alpha – the start of all that is new – or is it, on the contrary – the Omega, the end of an earlier tale? There is, of course, a third possibility – that Bologna is effectively part of an ongoing venture and thus an example of that most interesting of all conditions – continuity in the midst of change.

9.3 Omega and Alpha

Let us take the "Omega hypothesis". It is clear that in Western Europe, the major reforms in re-engineering the task, the resources, the priorities and their verification that governments required of the world of higher education, were largely complete or in process of completion before the Bologna Declaration. From this perspective, the Bologna Declaration and the six basic principles it contained, served as a species of package deal, reflecting issues – employability, transparency and readability, etc. – already present on the agendas of most of the long-term Member States of the EU. In effect, the novelty of Bologna lay in two areas: first, the creation of a new architecture around a common model for the duration of study, erected into two cycles; second, the bringing together under a single Declaration at European level a number of policies which, at the Nation State level, were pursued under separate heads. Bologna effectively grew out of an initiative by the Ministers of three Member States to inject new life into the Union's stagnating higher education policy (Marçal Grilo 2003). The Sorbonne Declaration of June 1998 was a Nation State initiative, and from that standpoint, Bologna is a continuation of that decision.

From what we now know and what many of the case studies in this volume reveal, is the nature of the benefits both Member State and European instances could expect to reap from this "package deal".

9.4 Benefits Bestowed

For the first, elevating such items as readability and employability onto a European
level provided Member State governments with an undeniably powerful leverage
and rhetoric in the conduct of domestic policies aimed at higher education. It con-
ferred both plausibility and a justification for accelerating the process of reform.
Or, to put a slightly different nuance on matters, to accelerate their completion. An
additional advantage came in the opportunity to put a gloss on domestic policy in
such a way that it could be seen as corresponding to the principles in the Bologna
Declaration, either one or severally. Adjustment in rhetorical focus thus served to
increase policy leverage on the home front.

   For the second, the benefits were no less worth having and most especially
so given the tensions that existed between the commission and the universities in
Europe over the former's persistent and obdurate definition of the universities' role
solely in terms of constructing Europe through serving technology and industry (De
Wit and Verhoeven 2001). To be able to proclaim success in the realisation of one
amongst the Bologna "objectives" allowed success to be associated with the policy
in general, an interesting case of the d'Artagnan principle "All for one and one for
all" applied to the first multi-nation agenda for the development of higher educa-
tion in History! Such a gambit finds a ready and virtually instant echo in successive
Reports on the progress of the Bologna process, undertaken for the commission by
the European University Association in which, after less than two years experience
to go on, success was proclaimed loudly and persistently from the rooftops (Haug
and Tauch 2001).

9.5 Overt Goals, Covert Functions

That Member States made use of Bologna to leverage domestic reform – or even,
in some instances – to use the time-honoured tactic of the threat of decline vis-à-
vis other European partners to gain leverage over issues which, in purely domes-
tic circumstances, had over the years proven singularly impervious to the best laid
intentions of mice and ministries,[19] raises an interesting and delicate question. That
question has to do with the real function of Bologna as opposed to its publicly
ascribed purpose of bringing a greater degree of coordination across the differ-
ent systems of higher education. More particularly, it casts an interesting light on
the recent assertion by two Dutch scholars that the European supranational agenda
threatens their domestic counterparts (Huisman and Van der Wende 2004b). What
is evident is that some Member States saw Bologna as an extension of national pol-
icy, though whether they accepted it on that specific condition must for the moment
remain a matter of surmise. Yet, if we make the assumption that such an undeclared
view existed, then we are obliged to conclude that from the standpoint of certain
Member States Bologna was acceptable only as a sub-set of national policy rather
than having to swallow the converse – namely, that national policy was a sub-set

of the Bologna process. Another way of saying the same thing is to parody Von Clausewitz's famous dictum about war and politics, namely, that, for some at least, Bologna was the pursuit of national policy by other means. Such a scenario, once again, tends to reinforce the "Omega" thesis.

9.6 Alpha Minus Minus

It would, of course, be both imprecise and uncharitable to dismiss the Alpha thesis out of hand. Though it has taken a little time to bring all the formal constituencies of higher education – the Academic, the Administrative and the Student Estate – together in a single and predictably regular venue[20] this has been achieved. It is an achievement without parallel in the history the Universities of Europe. Very certainly, the opportunity for Europe's world of learning to speak Truth to Power without having to be economical with the former is a watershed of a most substantial kind. To consolidate this newly acquired prominence will not be easy, however. Important though Bologna seems to governments, national agencies whose purlieu includes activities beyond the Nation's frontiers and to those who themselves waltz as part of the European Round, Bologna has yet to figure in the immediate awareness of even the majority of members in the Three Estates. Bologna as a Declaration, let alone as a Process, has yet to be seen by the Three Estates as having the slightest relevance to their daily lot. What ought to be, is something whose time has yet to come.

Notes

1. The view of the Commission of the European Union is very clear. Thus, in the Bologna Follow-up Group Report of 2003 (p. 7):

   Decisions of the Spring European Councils, in particular of Lisbon (2000), Stockholm (2001) and Barcelona (2002) as well as consecutive EU Education Councils have gradually altered the status of the *Bologna Declaration* [their italics] from a voluntary action to a set of commitments in the framework of the follow up of the Report of the concrete future objectives of education and training systems, endorsed in Stockholm in 2001.

2. As good an illustration as any of the shortcomings inherent in the use of legislation as a surrogate for – if not an anticipation of – implementation at the institutional level see the First, Second and Third Trends Reports issued by the European University Association.
3. It is a matter of considerable delicacy to determine when the association of the university with an earlier supra-governmental order that revolved around the Pope as supreme arbiter, accreditor and guarantor of quality, ceased to hold currency. The Peace of Westphalia, which rested on the legal principle *Cujus regio, eijus religio* (The Prince determines the religion of his subjects), is often cited as a watershed in bringing this medieval relationship to an end (Huisman, Maassen and Neave 2001).

4. This episode in the relationship between the universities in Europe and the commission in 1994 is a clear example of the tensions between the two worlds over the vision and the purpose the latter deemed the former should fulfil. It sprang from the commission's interpreting the university wholly and exclusively in terms of vocational training and industrial skills provision, a view that, without great discrimination, replicated the stance taken by the European Employers Working Group on skills and formation. Though the commission grudgingly yielded by adding the word "culture" to subsequent documents dealing with higher education and European construction, (De Wit and Verhoeven 2001; Neave 2003; Neave and Maassen 2007) clearly this is an abiding source of tension as witness, for instance, the gradual return of undiluted "vocationalism" in the wake of the commission's current tactic of splicing the agenda of the Lisbon strategy into the Bologna process. For a more detailed treatment of this see Neave and Maassen (2007).

5. "Commodification" is sometimes used as synonymous with the notion known in an American context as "marketisation", that is, the reduction of value as being expressed simply in terms of price. There is another descriptor of the same general process which parades under the term "commoditization".

> Commoditization refers to that process whereby products or services become standardized to the extent that their attributes are roughly the same … When a product or service is commoditized, it can be more readily compared with other products like, and competition revolves strictly around the price of the good (Weigel 2000: 14).

Whilst this definition was applied to the US seven years back, the reader will have to decide for him or herself whether the seeds of a similar development are not implicit in the Bologna process.

6. A good example of this would be in Britain the so-called Robbins Report on higher education of 1963. There are naturally others – the Report of the Swedish U68 Committee comes to mind. Readers well-versed in the recent history of higher education policy in their own country will most certainly not fail to find other examples of this mechanism.

7. This point requires a little clarification. According to Martin Trow's classic definition of mass higher education, the tipping point is reached when 15% or more of an age group enters higher education. By analogy, when 15% of all students enrolled in a country's system of higher education spend one semester or more studying outside that system, it is reasonable to claim that mobility has attained "mass status". On this criterion, given the very substantial growth in enrolments throughout the Nineties, it is likely that the proportion of students mobile as a percentage of all enrolled in a given national system of higher education has, effectively, dropped. This does not contradict, however, the continued yearly growth in the numbers of the mobile.

8. Referential systems of higher education are those whose example, organisation, administrative structures, structures of study, etc. served as a template in the development of others outside their country of origin. If we take a long-term perspective, they would be Spain – the earliest, having "exported its model" to Latin America in the 16th century, Britain from the 17th century with the establishment of the North American colonies, France from the early 20th century, Germany from the mid 19th century and the United States from the late 1940s onward. Nor should one forget the Soviet Union which if extinct nevertheless shaped the systems of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe after 1947. For a more elaborate treatment of this concept see Neave (1998).

9. Clearly, the launching of Erasmus in 1987 acted as a catalyst in the sphere of student mobility. And, though more restricted and deliberately conceived as a programme for an elite, COMETT – the COMmunity Programme in Education and Training for Technology – launched 18 months earlier (Lauglo and Lillis 1988) – may well have served to stimulate attention amongst key individuals in the Administrative and Academic Estates. That

COMETT was a dedicated programme limited to the sphere of Technology is a revealing pointer towards the priorities the commission then entertained.

We shall return to the issue of technology later since it provides a most important insight to the broader question of interpretive bias in the whole field of Institutional cooperation, sometimes known – erroneously in my view – as International Relations.

10. Amongst the erudite exchanges on the topic, I have heard claims for the historical origins of this world shaping idea attributed to the Roman Empire by an immensely learned physicist, to the 16th century Philippines, to the Spain of Philip II, and, following in the wake of John Hobson, author of the book "Imperialism" in 1902, to the United Kingdom. In short, like the story of M. Jourdain and prose, we seem to have been indulging in "Globalisation" *sans le savoir* and that in both the senses this phrase conveys.

    Yet, some scholars are giving serious attention to the possible historical origins of the phenomenon. Simon Marginson, well to the fore in researching the impact of Globalisation on higher education, is pursuing what may well turn out to be a much needed breakthrough in this field, by applying the work of Marc Braudel on the commercial and cultural shift that accompanied the move from the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic during the reign of Philip II of Spain as an historical analogue to that contemporary shift in world focus from the North Atlantic to the Pacific Rim. For this see Marginson (2004).

11. The historically, rather than the economically, inclined will recall another term of more than ancient lineage that carries similar though less technocratic overtones: "venality" – that is, the eager willingness to see everything as purchasable or saleable. This, in an earlier age, included various forms of public office. The classic work which, significantly reinterpreted part of France's history during the 17th century and laid weight upon the political and cultural dimensions rather than the economic, was Roland Mousnier's path-breaking thesis, which he defended in 1945, *La Vénalité des offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII*, republished in 1971 by the Presses Universitaires de France.

12. See note 5.

13. See Section 5.

14. For a more extensive but nevertheless summary treatment of this concept see Neave (2006c). The central point is that the rise of the Evaluatory State has effectively changed the mode and locus of the process of coordination through legal homogeneity, a hallmark of the "State control model" of relationship between government and university (Neave and Van Vught 1994) from input to output and performance with the rise of the Evaluatory State. Here, however, we are interested more in the impact this development appears to have on the substitution of academic time by productive time. Here, we are more concerned with the consequences this displacement has upon the way that the university is viewed and perceived by what I termed elsewhere as the *pays politique* (Neave 2002a).

15. The obvious exception is Economics, though even in this domain, there are sub-sets where the accumulation of knowledge is driven primarily by internal dynamics of knowledge and thus incline more to the notion of academic time than productive time. For this see Heen (2000).

16. For *aficionados* and the curious, the Self Denying Ordinance was passed by the English Parliament on 3 April 1645. It stipulated that, in time of war, no Member of Parliament could hold military office or, for that matter, any other office appointed by Parliament. Its purpose was to remove certain aristocratic Generals from the ranks of the Parliamentarians, who were somewhat reluctant to inflict defeat on the King, Charles I, then busily engaged in waging civil war with his subjects. By extension, a Self Denying Ordinance is a situation in which an individual or body, having the right and capacity to do something, decides unilaterally not to make use of it and thus voluntarily imposes a restraint on its own legitimate and recognised powers.

17. Amongst the historic and linguistic cultures spanning political frontiers are the Catalan, that spans the Franco Spanish border; the nomadic Sami (owners of reindeer) across Norway,

Sweden and Finland; the Flemish speakers in Northern France, Belgium; and the Tyrolean found in Northern Italy around Bolzano and Austria. Amongst the administrative artifacts that cross frontiers, is the so-called "Euregio" across the German Dutch border at the height of Twente.

18. The lengthy kerfuffle around the creation of a new university in the Autonomous Community of Valencia shows some of the perils when the powers of budgetary allocation are wielded on partisan lines for partisan ends. For this see Warden (1996: 10) and "Feud Puts Science Project in Jeopardy." *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 13 October 2000.

19. As Johanna Witte (2006) makes abundantly clear, Germany is an excellent example of this *politique d'épouvante* in relation to the long and persistent problem of study duration (*Regelstudienzeit*) which had bedevilled the Federal Republic for the best part of 30 years.

20. For instance, it was not until May 2006 at the Bergen (Norway) gathering that the Academic Estate was officially recognised and admitted in its own right – an omission understandable had it endured say a year. That the "non-existence' of academia lasted six years at least, suggests that the omission was deliberate, though its justification, astounding at the best of times, was never explained, thereby adding insult to injury.

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Process, Persistence and Pragmatism: Reconstructing the Creation of the European University Institute and the Erasmus Programme, 1955–1989

Anne Corbett

1 Introduction

The Bologna process appears novel to many on the European higher education scene. It associates 46 governments and the European Commission in the construction of a European Higher Education Area by 2010,[1] and is complemented by EU activity linked to the Lisbon agenda to develop and greatly expand Europe's knowledge economy (European Commission 2007). The Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, maintains that universities have never been so high on the Commission's agenda (EUA 2005). But if we are to make sense of the universities' importance in contemporary Europe, such claims need to be put into a comparative perspective of the policy-making and political processes generated in other historical contexts (Mahoney and Rueschmeyer 2003).

An established scholarly view places Community policy activity[2] in education as starting in the 1970s and consistently pursued from the mid-1980s with the establishment of the Erasmus programme and other programmes in education and training (Council of the European Communities, General Secretariat 1988). Policy making is usually presented as expanding incrementally over 30 years. In many accounts, this leads to an implicit, if not explicit, interpretation of the Community's 'creeping competence' (Pollack 1994) and moreover a rational actor in place in the Commission, that has had better information and resources and so has been able to manipulate itself into a position of ever-increasing importance.

The classic reference on the early history of Community education, that of Guy Neave, *The EEC and Education* (1984), dates the beginning of educational policy activity within the European Economic Community to a resolution in favour of cooperation, taken at the first meeting of ministers of education of the member states on 16 November 1971. Many more recent accounts take broadly the same line (Beukel 1993, 2000; De Witte 1993; Field 1998; Shaw 1999; De Wit and Verhoeven 2001) and this is confirmed in the Council of Ministers' compendium of

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educational policy statements for the period 1971–1987 (Council of the European Communities, General Secretariat 1988). Out of the 1971 meeting, which took place under EEC Council of Ministers' rules, came a proposal from the French minister of education, Olivier Guichard, for the establishment of a European Centre for the Development of Education to act as a nodal point for cooperation. This appeared to break what Neave famously calls 'a taboo' which had operated since the creation of the EEC by the Treaty of Rome EEC 1957, on the basis that the treaty did not contain an explicit reference to education. The 1970's change of attitude, signalled by the ministers' resolution, is explained by the EEC institutions' action in developing policy on vocational training. Since the creation of an effective economic community depended in part on the mobility of labour, vocational training was an intrinsic part of the EEC Treaty. In this policy sector, thinking was changing. In 1963, the Council of Ministers had approved a decision laying down general principles for the development of vocational training which included a reference to general education.

For Neave (1984: 8), an important intellectual impetus for action, which was to shape the 1970s, emerged in 1973 from the former Belgian minister of education, Henri Janne. He was asked by the Commission to consult experts and other authoritative individuals in the European education world on ideas for future action at the Community level. His report, noting that the treaty 'postulates taking over the whole problem of the training of young people and adults', saw the issue of training as connected to education through language teaching and the development of permanent education, or what we would now call lifelong learning. The Paris summit of 1972 had already appeared to signal strong political backing. Its up-beat communiqué concluded that 'in the European spirit special attention will be paid to non-material values' meaning that the EEC was not exclusively concerned with economics. Indeed, a social action plan was approved in 1974. Ministers of education met for a second time in 1974. They approved principles for cooperation which were explicit that the autonomy of education and educational practice should be upheld, while at the same time education should reflect major changes in the economic and social spheres of Community policy. This Neave (1984: 9) interpreted as a recognition that education, training and employment systems should be brought more closely together.

A protracted, and often difficult, quest to find a basis for cooperation in education was brought to an end by the agreement in February 1976 by ministers of education of EEC member states to create and fund an action programme on education in six priority sectors. The programme had been developed by a 'dual' committee, the Education Committee, representing the nine member states and the Commission, and had been approved under an original process of dual intergovernmental and EEC rules. Hence the action reflected both the voluntary nature of ministerial commitment and Commission engagement. A further important step was taken at a meeting of ministers of education in Luxembourg on 22 June 1981, approving closer integrated planning between education and training, a move which, in the view of those heading the policy, brought education from the periphery to the centre of the Community's preoccupations (Neave 1984: 17). By the time Neave

wrote his account in the early 1980s, he believed that there were 10 flourishing facets to Community education 'action'. Interestingly, given future developments, the topics that mattered most to the Commission at the time were the education of children of migrant workers and the efforts to get school leavers into work. Higher education cooperation was some way down the list.[3]

A more recent account of EC policy history in education comforts this view of Community action on education as essentially concerned with the integration of education and training and its later translation into lifelong learning. Luce Pépin, who wrote the official history of Community action on education for the Commission, in a commentary emphasises the thread which links such early developments to the contemporary support for lifelong learning, exemplified in the decision on an integrated programme of lifelong learning for the years 2007–2013 (Pépin 2007).[4]

However, such accounts, valuable as they are, leave us with a puzzle as to why they, and even the Council of Ministers (Council of the European Communities, General Secretariat 1988), ignore the extensive evidence of earlier decades of higher education activity at the European level which a priori has some policy lessons for contemporary development.

Ladislav Cerych (1999) and Walter Rüegg (1993, 1999) have given us glimpses of the contentious climate between rectors and the Community in the post-war years. Jean-Marie Palayret (1996) has delved into the Community and state archives to unearth the absorbing pre-history of the European University Institute, which was brought into being by an agreement, signed in 1971 by the six original member states and the three that became members in 1973.[5] An account of the Council of Europe, founded in 1949 to promote democratic values, presents the activities of its committee of cultural cooperation in the 1960s as 'a future European ministry of education' (Haigh 1970). Another intergovernmentalist organisation, the Western European Union, primarily devoted to defence, had been active on education and culture in the 1950s giving the rectors and vice-chancellors from the West their first European base.[6]

My starting point is that if we are to understand current developments associated with the Bologna process and the EU in a comparative context, we first need to provide a better account of how and why the Community developed a European policy dimension in higher education. We can then see if that policy making provides generalisations relevant to the current situation.

My aim in this chapter is to take this evidence on board to create what Renate Mayntz (2004) calls a causal reconstruction of the policy process, in linking what happens at a macro level of politics with a micro level of process. The hypotheses are that we will have a better understanding of what matters for contemporary policy making if, first, we reject a rational actor account and, second, we do not ignore the role of individuals who are recognised by contemporaries as playing a crucial role in the outcome.

I take the years 1955–1989 to represent two major policy episodes of Community policy making in higher education. These are, first, the effort to create a supranational university under the 1957 Treaty of Rome which created a European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC – familiarly known as Euratom). This culminated in the

1971 decision to create the European University Institute in Florence. The second episode relates to the more familiar efforts to develop effective cooperation between member states on higher education issues, with the increased use of Community instruments. This episode starts with the 1971 decision of ministers of education of the six EEC member states to cooperate under Council of Ministers' rules. The outcome taken here is the 1987 decision to create the Erasmus programme.

The data draw on research conducted for an earlier and more detailed study, including material from the European Community Historical Archives in Florence, as well as some of the private papers of major actors and interviews with them and other actors with experience of the period under study (Corbett 2005).

The next section describes the methodology. The policy history which follows is succeeded by a discussion of the findings and their implications for contemporary Europe-wide policy making in higher education.

2 Using a 'Process' Framework

The analytical assumptions made here draw on authorities that see explanatory value in the policy process in terms of an interplay between context, situation and agency (Kingdon 1984; Barzelay and Gallego 2006; Zahariadis 2007). This stance, which is sometimes described as close to a model of the 'garbage can' (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972), is the polar opposite of those models much favoured in political science which explain outcomes by rational actor behaviour and aggregate individual choice. The aim of the 'garbage can' theorists and their successors[7] is to get closer to the political analysis of 'real life' situations (Kingdon 1984) in which time (Zahariadis 2007), institutions and mechanisms generated in policy making (Barzelay and Gallego 2006) and recognition of opportunities by creative and energetic individuals (Corbett 2005) are factors which constrain or augment the possibilities for choice. The decision maker never has the perfect information about problems and preferences to make the rational choice. This is linked to the characteristic process in which policy makers come and go; in which in any event they will seldom know exactly what they want from a collection of policy ideas; and for which they are usually only prepared to give limited attention to the question under consideration (Kingdon 1984; Zahariadis 2007).

Kingdon (1984) studied the trajectory of policy issues through the pre-decision process of agenda setting, policy formulation (which he calls alternative specification) and the choice which is presented to decision makers. His insight was to model the transformation of inputs into outputs in the policy process in terms of five factors. Three of these are parallel streams of problems, policies and politics.[8] The problem stream relates to the framing of a *problem*, the policy stream to the refining of a *policy* solution and the political stream to the changes in the political climate, or the *politics* of the context. The two other elements in his model link the streams. These are the structure of opportunity or *policy window* and the *policy entrepreneur*, who seizes the opportunity to match a policy to a problem and shapes the preferred choice.[9] Kingdon (1984) describes the function of policy entrepreneurs as being to

advance an issue or idea towards a decision and characterised by tenacity, strategy and advocacy skills. They risk their energy, their reputation and their time. Their rewards come in the form of policies of which they approve, their participation and possible promotion. Some may see them as manipulative. Zahariadis (2007) sees them as the product of a situation in which decision makers attention is short; Corbett (2005) sees them as agents of a necessary function.

Barzelay and Gallego (2006) bring to this debate a commitment to comparative historical analysis in seeking to explain how the systemic, the situational and the contextual interrelate to explain policy entrepreneur effectiveness and eventual outcomes.[10] They look for additional explanatory value in the different social mechanisms which come into play in the different phases of a policy cycle. For example, spillover or lessons from another policy sector may help to advance agenda setting and the framing of the issue as a problem that needs to be dealt with and help explain the status of the issue. In the policy formulation phase, there may be a linkage between organisational search and learning and policy entrepreneur effectiveness. In the decision phase, when policy alternatives are selected and conflict may need to be resolved, different skills are required and different mechanisms come into play such as bandwagoning or conflict resolution.

The narrative which follows draws on these process-based conceptualisations of policy making in which individuals tenaciously committed to an idea (policy entrepreneurs) work for its advance.

3 The Course of an Idea

3.1 The European University Episode

The first time leading political figures of a European Community made a proposal to raise the standards of universities and to encourage them to be more European, was in 1955, in the unlikely surroundings of a foreign ministers' meeting in the small Sicilian town of Messina. Not that the foreign ministers of the six European Coal and Steel Community states were there to decide about the future of universities. The issue for them was whether they had the common ground to recommend their governments work for the establishment of two new European Communities: that of the European Economic Community, the EEC and a Community in the 'new energy' domain of atomic energy for civil purposes, the EAEC. In agreeing to recommend that negotiations be started, they carried forward in the process a lot of extra ideas. This precise form of the university proposal, which came from the delegation of the German government of the Federal Republic, was that the new Community establish its own supranational European University. The German delegation, led by Walter Hallstein, who was to be the first president of the EEC Commission, stressed the need to create a pro-European spirit among the elite who would rule Europe and become a model of excellence for the universities in Europe in general (Palayret 1996; Serra 1989).[11] But my research shows that the

proposal originated with a group of senior civil servants, all of whom were former professors and longstanding colleagues of Walter Hallstein. They had a double aim: to get German universities back onto the international scene after 'being separated from the big issues of the day' and to provide a base for European research that would help overcome the gap with the US and would act as a model for innovation (Müller-Armack 1971).

During the subsequent phase in which officials drafted the treaty, a choice was made that was heavy with consequences for the future. The drafting team made the decision to link the supranational university proposal, put forward at Messina, to a proposal from the French for the atomic energy community to have its own training and research institute for nuclear energy. This was the model of the specialised training institute established for the European Coal and Steel Community. Despite the incompatibilities between the proposals, that decision was not questioned by ministers (Palayret 1996; Pineau and Rimbaud 1991). Under pressure from the German representative, before the treaty was finalised in late 1956, the proposed article of the treaty was made purposely ambiguous to cover the two possibilities. The decision as to which course to follow, similar to other matters peripheral to the main treaty EAEC, was left for the implementation phase. The treaty simply specified that the Council of Ministers should make the decision in their first year after the treaty came into force. The Treaty of Rome EAEC institutionalised this choice in Article 9(b). A cycle had been completed.

For the Community at large, the year 1958 marked a start to implementing the Treaties of Rome EAEC. But the issue of the European University required ideas to be developed from scratch, if the Article 9 reference to a supranational university institution were to be interpreted as the Germans, rather than the French, wanted. An initial EAEC working party effort, to define what a supranational university might be, was met with bewilderment by the foreign ministers making up the council of the time. Their references for this unexpected idea were their national – and divergent – models. Behind them were ranged national rectors' conferences with a base in the Council of Europe and opposed to an institution which threatened to drain them of prestige and funds (Palayret 1996; Rüegg 1999).

A second attempt at policy formulation at the official level, known as the Report of the Interim Committee on the European University (April 1960), got much further on paper. It was led by the new and committed French chairman of the EAEC Commission, Etienne Hirsch, a former technocrat minister. It incorporated ideas which national officials from education ministries thought appropriate, with the French director of higher education leading the arguments of the national interest in having researchers circulate between institutes in the Community (Palayret 1996). A key proposal of the report was to organise all volunteer universities and national research institutes in Europe into concentric circles of institutions. The universities would activate Europeanising mechanisms, for example, student and academic mobility. Research institutes would acquire a European label if they were prepared to recruit researchers from institutes in other member states. At the centre would be a European University, trimmed from its original conception of being multi-faculty, to one which would focus on the humanities.[12]

However, the report heralded a period of serious conflict, with significant actors determined to kill off the proposal for a supranational European University. As the policy proposals became more specific and the national rectors' organisation (by then acting in concert on a European basis) more hostile, politicians drew back from the Interim Committee's proposals (Hirsch 1988). They refused to agree to a legal framework or funding mechanisms. Charles de Gaulle, president of France, joined the battle. He took up the European University as a symbol of the undesirable extension of Community powers. No other heads of state or government challenged him (Hirsch 1988).

A summit in Paris in February 1961 to present what was known as the Fouchet Plan[13] effectively finished the European University as a potential Community institution. The de Gaulle proposal was that education and culture, like foreign affairs and defence, were national sovereign matters and should be treated as matters of cooperation between sovereign states. A summit in Bonn the same year despatched the European University proposition to the Italians, who wanted this European institution on their soil. It also agreed that ministers of education of member states might meet periodically to agree on intergovernmental conventions (Palayret 1996).

The ministers of education of the member states inherited the Interim Committee report, without the section on the European University. But this agenda had no more success than under Hirsch. Member states could not agree on how to finance it. The ministers of education of member states decided their preferred venue was the Council of Europe where they could meet under the auspices of the Council for Cultural Cooperation in a larger Europe.

It was within the Council for Cultural Cooperation that a turning point was reached in the course of the European higher education idea. For the first time, the European education issue had a policy venue which was appropriate. In 1959, European education questions became the responsibility of ministers of education, rather than the diplomats. This was largely thanks to the Dutch motivated by the idea that it was worth 'picking the brains' of their partners (Haigh 1970).

The French took the second step to strengthen European education as a policy domain – by complaining. They maintained that nothing had happened in the Council for Cultural Cooperation which had met seven times in 10 years. They claimed that they needed a venue with the resources to move from talk to action (Jarvis 1972).[14] In 1969, an opportunity arose which the French recognised. As the Germans had done in 1955, they used an exceptionally important summit (that of the Hague) to launch *their* idea for a European dimension to education. They proposed reviving the Bonn idea for member state ministers of education to meet on matters of common interest. They wished to propose a European Centre for the Development of Education. This, under the Fouchet-Bonn terms, would be managed under intergovernmental cooperation rules, but run under EEC auspices. The significance of such a move was that ministers would have at their disposal the institutional resources of the Council of Ministers General Secretariat and the potential support of the Commission.[15]

At this point, the Commission recognised *its* opportunities. One of the most politically astute commissioners, Altiero Spinelli, much of whose life had been spent

fighting the federalist cause as an Italian politician, worked with the long-serving Secretary-General, Emile Noël, to generate some policy capacity within the Commission. This meant Spinelli, Commissioner for Industry and Research, beating off competition to take responsibility for this nascent policy area and also convincing his fellow commissioners that the Commission was not venturing improperly beyond its treaty role.[16] The outcome was a small, specialised bureaucracy coordinating information, if not the education activities, in the various directorate-generals (DGs) of the Commission[17] and a group on teaching and learning.[18] This gave the Commission the opportunity to help the Council of Ministers' Secretariat prepare the resolution on cooperation for the ministerial meeting which was to take place on 16 November 1971.

The opportunity of this new agenda setting was not lost on the Italians. They held two intergovernmental meetings in 1970–1971 in order to achieve consensus on what might be rescued from the European University, in its modified form as a humanities institution. The basic form of what was to become the European University Institute in Florence was hammered out, with the French opposing the concept of a university institution particularly the idea of doctorates (Palayret 1996). At that point, the Italian minister of education did a deal with his French colleague. He promised to support their proposal for the European Centre for the Development of Education on condition he received French support for the European University Institute (Palayret 1996).

The deal held.[19] The six ministers, meeting outside EC rules, agreed that their officials should prepare a treaty to create the European University Institute. A convention was drafted in 1971 and signed in 1972 by the six ministers of education of the member states and the three ministers of the states entering the EEC with the first enlargement.[20] Immediately following and sitting as the education ministers of EC member states, the six ministers of education made their first declaration committing to educational cooperation (Jarvis 1972; Council of the European Communities, General Secretariat 1988).[21]

This was another turning point. From 1971, education was a policy domain with an appropriate venue (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). The first major episode in the history of the Community's engagement with higher education had come to an end.

3.2 The Erasmus Episode

A new episode of Community policy making on higher education began very differently from the first. There was no question of springing the kind of surprise which was dealt to the foreign ministers at Messina. In 1971, the secretariats of the Council and Spinelli's group had long been preparing the resolution of ministers of education on the principles on which Community cooperation in education should be based. Guichard, the French minister, who had a central role, complained that the meeting had already been put off twice (Jarvis 1972).

The 1971 resolution of ministers of education has the signs of a document trying to accommodate all views. Ministers agreed it was normal that if Community

action on vocational education was now making reference to 'general education' they should cooperate on education 'as such', as Neave (1984) and Beukel (1993) report. But ministers also described, in federalist terms, the purpose of educational cooperation as part of the cultural project of European integration – something of an anathema to the British. As Spinelli had foreseen, policy moves to strengthen European integration needed to be accomplished before the British joined the Community (Emile Nöel archives, Corbett 2005). What now looks like the final thoughts of the old guard about the EEC's expansion into non-economic areas is the reference in the pre-enlargement summit of Paris in 1972 to the Community's role to promote non-material values.

By 1974, when a second ministerial meeting was held and a new resolution agreed upon, the dynamics had changed. Following a proposal from the Commission, the cultural reference had disappeared, although some effort to accommodate all views was apparent. Educational action should reflect the specific objectives and requirements of the policy sector. On no account should it be regarded as a component of economic life. On the other hand, a programme of cooperation would reflect the progressive harmonisation of economic and social policies without leading to any harmonisation of educational policies (Council of the European Communities, General Secretariat 1988).

The policy formulation which followed owed much to the organisational changes of 1973 within the Commission. This made education a portfolio of the Commissioner for Research and included the establishment of an education division, within his DG.[22] A bureaucracy strengthened by enlargement contained officials whose personal ambitions to play a role were strengthened by seeing the collapse of the Guichard initiative within the Council of Ministers.[23] It was the Commission which proposed a creative response to the specific 'sovereign' characteristics of education which could clearly not function under the supranational rules of the EEC,[24] but appeared doomed to inaction if purely intergovernmental. The creation of a 'dual' Education Committee, run by the council, but of which the Commission was a full member, was one such creative response. Another was the recognition by the responsible officials in the Commission that the main strategic objective was to get access to Community resources (Fogg and Jones 1985).

The outcome was the Action programme in education of 1976, an initiative which officials fondly described years later as one of the most beautiful moments in the Community history of education.[25] It was a remarkable juxtaposition of purely cooperative measures of information collection and diffusion and funded measures of pilot action in a variety of domains including academic exchange (short study visits), joint study programmes between universities and the education of migrant workers. The seven action lines contained over 30 measures.

The Action programme was a major achievement of policy formation (alternative specification) by officials in the Commission and national officials in the Education Committee, demonstrating significant political skill. The Education Committee's members gained the support of the permanent representatives who monitored the national interest; and they gained the support of the new European Parliament which was able to grant pilot funding under one of the

European Parliament's few autonomous powers. It owed little to immediate political events in the EC. It was, rather, some imaginative packaging under the banner of an education action programme, which ministers had asked to be developed. Issues categorised as social affairs, because they were linked to vocational training or mobility, were linked to non-treaty education issues. The funding of education of children of migrant workers was an example.

However, the success of the Action programme brought conflict in its train. The linking of education and training and thus non-treaty issues with treaty issues, had the short-term advantage of providing funding, but the medium-term disadvantage that national delegations were building up the suspicion that the Commission was exceeding its powers. This was not only the case with education. The Commission started a general investigation into the so-called 'grey areas' of the Community's legal competencies shortly after.[26] At the same time, the council reacted to some short circuiting of procedures in 1978 by refusing to meet on education, a stand-off that lasted two years.

But, while the political participants were hostile to new educational development, the Action programme was providing valuable experience on the ground, especially in higher education. For the first time, the Commission was dealing directly with individuals and institutions that were able to work with these volunteers to pilot mechanisms which could encourage trans-national cooperation without falling victim to different national rules. The outstanding example was the student exchange schemes, driven – over and beyond the strengthening of a European 'feeling' – by the need to get around university admission rules which differed from one country to another.[27] But while one of those running such development projects wrote in 1980 of a climate slipping from '"Europhoria" to pragmatism' (Smith 1980), politicians were beginning to take notice of an interesting development which had been carefully monitored since its start in 1977.

The growth of a favourable political climate can be tracked through the years from 1983 as ministers, and then heads of state and government,[28] began to see universities as relays in creating a stronger European identity and joint study programmes and other forms of university cooperation, such as twinned universities and more (unfunded) mobility of students, as effective instruments. The ad hoc Adonnino committee, writing their report, 'A People's Europe', in 1985, almost took down at the Commission's dictation a blueprint for university cooperation.[29]

Once again the venue was playing a part in policy development. In 1981, Hywel Jones, the official who had progressed from being the desk official for education in 1973 (and as such the key player in the early days) to director of education within the Commission in 1979, got his services moved to a new DG. This was a matter of leaving the Research DG and moving to social affairs. Jones saw it as a way of indissolubly linking education and training and advancing the egalitarian cause, which he held dear, of better opportunities and second chances for those who were not part of an elite. The proposal was contentious in the Commission at the time, since the able and ambitious Commissioner for Research, Etienne Davignon, had assumed education would sit happily with his plans to expand the Commission's research activities. But Jones had marshalled his forces effectively.[30]

The organisational move almost certainly had consequences for the development of higher education policy. It immediately brought Jones into a DG which wanted to advance policy and where some innovative thinking developed in response to education and training links with regional policy (and access to structural funds) and also on responses to the coming IT revolution. More concretely, when a new Commission was appointed in 1985 under the presidency of Jacques Delors, education fell with social affairs into the in-tray of the Competition Commissioner, who had agreed to a one-year brief, before handing over to a Spanish Commissioner when Spain was admitted to membership in January1986.

The Commissioner was Peter Sutherland, former Attorney-General of the Republic of Ireland and later famous for his role in GATT and the World Trade Organization. He immediately asked the DG of Social Affairs, Jean Degimbe, and Jones whether there were policy initiatives taking place which could be worked up into decisions to be made under EEC law and provided with EEC funding. Degimbe and Jones picked two. One was a scheme for training young people in the technological culture emerging with the IT revolution, which could be linked to the treaty. This was the eventual COMETT programme. The other was to get a programme focused on university cooperation projects and student exchange, the eventual Erasmus, constructed out of the impressive experience of the joint study programmes running since 1977.

Promoting an education programme was not an obvious strategy, given education's lack of treaty status. But the idea had two factors in its favour. One was the experience of the joint study programmes in demonstrating the policy possibilities of direct university-to-university contracts of cooperation and exchange and the goodwill and trust that generated. The other was that the eventual proposals for two programmes should be run together, so that COMETT, which could be demonstrated as falling within the treaty, would create a precedent for an Erasmus decision.[31]

As it became clear that a decision was possible, the Commissioner made one stipulation for the drafting of the Erasmus Decision.[32] He judged the best strategy was to present it as integral to the single market project since this was the core political aim of the Delors Commission and the European Council, with the tandem of Helmut Kohl of Germany (FDR) and François Mitterrand of France in strong support. Events reinforced Sutherland's judgment. The European Court of Justice delivered a ruling soon after that university education could be deemed to be vocational education (European Court of Justice 1985). This decision opened the way to justifying the decision in terms of the EEC Treaty, Article 128. It also showed how far the official conception of education had been instrumentalised, contrasting with ministers' wishes in 1974 to preserve education from economic pressures. However, for the actors, it was a question of finding the appropriate tools to deliver. Sutherland says that in fact the first thing that attracted him to the Erasmus Decision was emotional: the idea that Irish students might be moving round Europe as they had in medieval times.[33]

Officials took the opportunity offered by policy formulation to build in the lessons learned from the joint study programme experience. This included funding

activities which in addition to mobility grants would help institutionalise the programme. They proposed aiding joint curriculum work of the sort the programme pioneered and funding development work on a credit transfer scheme to cover the recognition of study in another member state. They also wanted to see support for the developing national academic recognition information centres (NARICs).[34]

This was where the Commissioner's cabinet specialist played a key role. It was the job of Michel Richonnier, a Frenchman previously working for the French strategic plan, to get the legal and financial framework for the programme sorted out. A man with a passionate belief in the need to educate a new generation of 'Europeans', he found the DG insufficiently ambitious. Think big, he said; and successfully negotiated for sums ten times larger than they had imagined, with the objective of supporting mobility for 10% of students in what by then were already mass higher education systems.[35]

The draft decision successfully passed the College of Commissioners on 5 December 1985, just before Sutherland handed the dossier over. As predicted by the Commissioner, the COMETT draft decision had served to open the door for Erasmus with commissioners. The Erasmus draft decision was approved for transmission to the Council of Ministers on the basis of Article 128. Richonnier, the main liaison with Delors' cabinet, had already helped prepare the ground on an issue on which Delors was known to be sympathetic.[36] The single market White Paper of June 1985, that would lead to the Single European Act (European Commission 1985), had a clear reference to the Commission's wish to extend activity in higher education cooperation, referring specifically to recognition and also to 'helping young people, in whose hands the future of the European Community lies, to think in European terms'. The European Parliament, which had been consulted, was supportive, as were other consultative bodies.

However, in the Council of Ministers the Erasmus Decision generated a conflict of an intensity not foreseen. It divided member states, got the education section of the Council Secretariat wrong footed, caused the Commission at one point to withdraw its proposal and needed the European Council to come to the rescue, under pressure from the rectors of Europe's oldest and most prestigious universities. The assumption of council officials had been that ministers who had been enthusiastic about the principle of mobility and cooperation and who had backed the Adonnino Report, would consider the Erasmus draft decision in June 1986 under the Luxembourg presidency and would approve it in November 1986 under the British presidency.[37] The Commission thought it could help by suggesting an informal ministerial meeting to 'soften up' the ministers, a tactic which national officials detested, knowing the Commission would try to manoeuvre ministers into taking a position on upcoming items on the formal agenda.[38]

When it came to the June meeting, the council had not been 'softened up'. They were deeply divided on issues of procedure and finance. Ministers had been alerted by representatives on the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) to back mobility but avoid 'cumbersome' procedures. Despite hard work by the

Education Committee in negotiation with COREPER, the situation was still not resolved in November, the date pencilled in for formal approval. The contentious issues were still sovereignty and budget procedure. For certain member states, the procedure was unsuitable for education, as a national sovereign policy – despite the Gravier judgment and the precedent of the COMETT programme, approved in 1985. It also risked being expensive for the 'net contributors' to the EEC budget since Article 128 had the rare distinction of being an article which was voted on a simple majority and in which the 'non net contributors' of the Mediterranean states could outvote the 'net contributors'. The arguments the Mediterranean states were actually advancing were ones to be heard after the collapse of the USSR: integration to a European programme provided a means of underpinning the autonomy of universities which had suffered under dictatorships, promoting democratic values among students and, through contact with the universities of the old member states, improving quality.

There was, however, one issue with the traction to encourage the UK and Belgium to settle: they feared a large influx of students as a result of Gravier and other jurisprudence and the Erasmus programme had the advantage that mobility was organised and controlled (Shaw 1999). Belgium, France and the UK still required much stricter procedures to be adopted. They demanded the unanimity rule (Article 235).

The conflict was resolved, but not before it involved leading university rectors lobbying their presidents and prime ministers and provided the Spanish Commissioner, Manuel Marin, with the opportunity to make the historic remark as he withdrew the Commission proposal, that Erasmus himself would have been surprised that the EEC was prepared to spend more on its cows than its students (Corbett 2005). Essentially the conflict was resolved in two stages. The deal which six months later carried the day under the Belgian presidency was that ministers use the double jurisdiction of Articles 128 and 235, taking the risk that it would be challenged by the Commission which opposed double jurisdiction on principle (Lenearts 1989).[39]

The Commission did challenge the council on its choice of a double legal base at which the European Court of Justice produced a judgment of Solomon, backing the council in principle, but making it possible in practice to move ahead as the Commission wanted on the basis of Article 128. This was to lead to the revised Erasmus Decision of 1989. There were immediately bigger budgets, as net contributors feared. The size of those budgets was an element which precipitated the case for a clear definition of Community/EU rights in education as distinct from training.[40]

The intergovernmental conferences of 1990–1991 leading to the Treaty of Maastricht were to provide the opportunity. The deal which then emerged in the form of Articles 126 and 127, differentiating education and training, can be seen as the start of a new policy episode. However, the experience also showed that, given the consensus on the basic ideas behind Erasmus, officials on all sides were creative. The legal services of the council helped the legal services of the Commission to find an acceptable, if arcane, solution to the continuation of the Erasmus programme.[41]

4 Process Explanations: Mechanisms, Institutions, Agency

This narrative has shown several policy cycles within both episodes, not all of them complete. The European University episode is structured by two outcomes: the 1961 decision to take the European University project away from the Community institutions; and the 1971 agreement to create the European University Institute. The Erasmus episode has one outcome in the Action programme resolution of 1976, preceding the Erasmus outcome of 1987.

These four sequences of events, as recounted through the historical evidence, bear out the hypothesis that a modified garbage can model can better explain the outcomes than a rational actor model. The policy decisions did not emanate from the clearly expressed preferences for the introduction of a higher education dimension to Community policy from European leaders, or even European ministers of education. The political climate provided opportunities. Political decisions had to be taken. But politicians were present only episodically. The processing of an idea and the development of policy solutions were, in the EU as elsewhere, the consequence of how agents in a particular situation in a particular context interpreted a conjunction of ideas and institutions.

The hypothesis that individual action in the process should not be ignored is also borne out. These individual 'policy entrepreneurs' (Kingdon 1984) appear as an essential part of the explanation of policy advance, not least because they – unlike most politicians – have time and energy to devote to the issue in hand. As we see, they are embedded in the process and some of their actions can be explained by the mechanisms generated by different phases of policy making. In the agenda setting phase – from Hallstein at Messina, to Guichard at the Hague, to the Italians seeking a solution in 1971, to Sutherland and Jones in 1985 – they take their chance to propose 'their' policy idea (Kingdon 1984) as they identify a favourable political climate. These are classic examples of 'spillover' mechanisms at work which help to explain how an agenda is set (Barzelay and Gallego 2006).

While these individuals cannot control the opportunity, it is their strategic skill to frame the problem in terms which relate to a particular context which appears as a constant factor. Hallstein and Hirsch make, as their selling point, the case for training a European-minded elite for a Community trying to escape its war-torn past. Sutherland, Richonnier and Jones make theirs the need to 'mainstream' a higher education programme for the benefit of a situation in which a single market created in 1993 will have stimulated the demand for young professionals used to working in different national cultures.

At the same time as supporting the framing that they reckoned would get a decision, these policy entrepreneurs used the opportunity to further objectives to which they were particularly attached. Hallstein thinks of the contribution universities must make to a coming electronic age as key research institutions and also of the opportunity to improve German universities. Sutherland, in reflecting on how fortunate medieval Irish students were to travel, thinks of the opportunity to spread university values, as well as the single market's need of qualified manpower. Richonnier thinks of Europe's need for a new generation equal to the founding

fathers in believing in integration as well as hoping that the single market will create job opportunities. Jones, having spent more than a decade nurturing the education policy domain from almost nothing to a situation in which the 'Community method' can extend to an educational programme, almost certainly thinks he has achieved one of his life's aims. The general conclusion is that the universities are assumed to be integral to the European project.

The individual needs to be an effective advocate in preparing the ground for their policy idea. In the case of Hallstein, that was initially done badly: the European University was at that stage still a project driven by German national interests. In the case of Guichard, it was done well because the French line was consistent. The French were known to believe that education was too closely linked to national identity for any decision making to be ceded to the Community; and, furthermore, they had already aired the project for a European centre within the Council of Europe. In the case of Jones and Erasmus, it was done even better. Jones was in a strong position to get the issue taken seriously because he had a viable policy proposal ready to fit any problem that a Commissioner might dream up. He was an example of what Kingdon (1984) calls the policy entrepreneur 'lying in wait' to hook a policy solution to a problem. In his case, getting on for ten years.

The alternative specification phase activates different mechanisms and calls for different skills in bringing an effective group together to work on a viable policy solution. Policy design tends to require a representative working group (Barzelay and Gallego 2006). This was the case with the Report of the Interim Committee in 1960 and in the policy formulation for the Action programme of 1976.

But this phase also calls for overall political support. The Interim Committee failed. The Action programme plan was successful. In both cases, the policy entrepreneur's efforts had led to imaginative policy formulations. But whereas Hirsch had no link to effective political or institutional support, Jones was well linked to a process which politicians wanted to advance and to the policy networks which would implement the plans. There are other examples of the linkage between creativity and the political 'stream'. In the 1970s, Spinelli immediately responded to the short 'window' before the 1973 EC enlargement with a number of initiatives to ensure the Commission would be present in a process which was technically intergovernmental. Jones worked for the 'dual' structure of the Education Committee. But, while knowing (and aiming for) the opportunities it would give the Commission, he and his superiors knew they needed to be technically within a council process. And officials in the council knew from their failed experience with the Guichard proposal that they needed Commission resources and expertise.

A decision phase activates mechanisms related to contention and consensus (Barzelay and Gallego 2006) and there is likely to be a need for a different kind of respected actor: the strategist and negotiator rather than the advocate. It is also the time that decision makers expect to give their attention to the issue (Zahariadis 2007). In 1961, Hirsch could neither achieve results on his own nor did he have anyone to speak for him among the decision makers. It was not in his power to sway a very powerful head of state strongly opposed to his proposals. In 1987, the Erasmus crisis was resolved when the Belgian presidency of the EC became the

chief negotiator in persuading council members and national ministries to agree on its proposal that the Erasmus Decision be agreed on the basis of two treaty articles (Council of the European Communities 1987; Council of the European Communities, General Secretariat 1988).

However, the Kingdon framework does not enable us to exploit the explanatory force of how institutional resources shaped the course of policy (Zahariadis 2007; Barzelay and Gallego 2006). Yet the shape of the policy venue and of the policy domain influences how issues are processed (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). In this account, we see institutional rules in the two policy episodes offering distinctively different resources. Before 1971, policy making was in the hands of the foreign ministries. From 1971 and immensely strengthened in 1974–1976, policy making was in the hands of the specialised services of the Commission, exercising its duty of initiative, working mainly to the Education Committee of which the Commission was a full member alongside national representatives, with ministers of education or, in some cases, ministers of social affairs making decisions and by their actions establishing a recognised policy domain.

In both episodes, participants go 'venue shopping' (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) in search of more effective institutional resources – a search which reveals quite permeable boundaries between Community and intergovernmental frameworks. In the 1960s, the ministers of education of the six member states go off to the Council of Europe, rather than choosing to meet as they might within EEC institutions. In the 1980s, Jones, the Director of Education, Training and Youth, takes the decision to manoeuvre his directorate towards social policy on the basis there will be more opportunities for policy development, it will be more robust and there will be better political support than in the Research DG for 'mainstream' education alongside training as part of Community policy.

Such findings support the claim that generalisations about policy making and political processes can be made in a comparative perspective.

5 Conclusions

In summary, I make three claims for this attempt at 'causal reconstruction' of how the Community came to be engaged with the universities.

First, this alternative account of the history of how the Community engaged with higher education is plausible because it draws on detailed historical evidence which is conceptualised as the impact of the policy process on an idea.

I recognise that there is a lot of university history that this account has not woven in. This includes the changes within the university world in Europe over the last 50 years chronicled in the early years by Cerych and others in the *European Journal of Education* and in recent decades by Neave and colleagues in numerous publications. To take one example of the evolution over the years: in the post-war situation when the Community was taking its first steps and the Cold War was dividing universities east and west, universities were taking around 5% of a conventional

student age group. In 1987, it was already around 30–40%. Such changes inevitably have an impact on the way the university interprets its historic functions of teaching and research and of educating teachers and the liberal professions and on the resources available. The way in which governments have made universities more explicitly instruments of government policy over past decades has been widely discussed (Neave and Van Vught 1991; Huisman, Maassen and Neave 2001; Kogan and Hanney 2000), as has the changing notion of knowledge and the impact on universities (Bleiklie 2005; Bleiklie and Henkel 2005). Between the 1960s and the 1990s, the initial search for 'social justice' and for 'reserves of talent' transformed universities from institutions serving an elite into ones which are players in lifelong learning strategies and key contributors. The need to exploit resources more effectively as systems expanded has produced the 'evaluative state'. The new demands of global competition and the expectations of a knowledge economy produce more changes in the university world.

I also recognise that this account might have appeared more immediately 'useful' if it had covered the policy making of at least a decade after 1989. The years 1990–2005 were in some respects a turning point. The Treaty of Maastricht ended some of the ambiguities in supranational/intergovernmental relations, due to education being written into the treaty as a policy area in which the EU could support but not require change. Under the rules of subsidiarity, the control and content of education systems are deemed a national responsibility. At the same time, the decade was marked by what the Commission interpreted as the eventual mainstreaming of education as an EU issue (Hingel 2001). Had this account extended to 1999, it would have produced an account which would have meshed more closely with the new scholarship on the Bologna Declaration and the policy-making initiatives which have enabled the Commission to develop an active policy role on higher education since the Lisbon European Council of 2000.[42]

But it also needs to be recognised that the prime intention of this account was not to offer a wide-ranging history of the years 1955–1989. It was, rather, to study the policy-making process in a way which allows us to bring a critical judgment to bear on whether the notion of Community creep and an ongoing struggle to maintain sovereignty is the only, or even the plausible, 'story' of the EU and higher education.

As I read this history of policy making, it recounts efforts to solve the problem which had the attention of policy makers at the time, with the appropriate policy instruments. The interpretation of what is appropriate has varied in different contexts. After the first – and failed – attempt to impose a supranational institution, it is the combination of intergovernmental process and Community process which has produced a dynamic. This has been an issue for the Bologna process too.

Hence, my second claim is that this account adds to our political understanding of how and why the different EU communities develop policies in higher education. The solutions emerge jointly – and indeed creatively – from the work of officials and politicians and the policy community within national and European venues to make cooperation effective.

Thirdly, this account suggests that the action of individual participants in advancing the policy process in agenda setting and the development of policy alternatives can be generalised across different conjunctions of events, institutions and processes. The Bologna process and the construction of a European Higher Education Area may be different in scale from anything that has gone before. But they are not different in kind.

If solutions are to emerge, there are bound to be, within the process, some well-placed policy participants who are both persistent in pursuit of an idea and pragmatic about the best way to achieve their aims.

Notes

1. By signing the Bologna Declaration, governments commit to making national systems structurally compatible based on a bachelor, master, doctorate structure and to institute quality assurance and qualifications frameworks which are compatible with an overarching European framework. The Commission is closely associated with such developments.
2. The term 'Community' is used here. The European Union came into existence in 1993 when the Treaty of Maastricht came into operation.
3. The other themes Neave distinguished in 1984 were education and training; equality of educational opportunity; the European dimension in education; education and training for disabled children and young people; the micro-electronic revolution; the Eurydice information developments; and international relations.
4. This programme incorporates the previous programmes: Socrates, which itself incorporates Erasmus; the Leonardo da Vinci programme; and Youth for Europe.
5. Convention establishing the European University Institute in Florence, 1971, Office for the Official Publications of the European Communities.
6. Raymond Georis, Director General of the European Cultural Foundation 1974–1995 and a former official of the WEU. Private papers (Corbett 2005).
7. The various versions of new institutionalism, and especially sociological institutionalism (Powell and DiMaggio 1991), owe much to the initial Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) insight.
8. Hence the label 'multiple streams model'.
9. Zahariadis (2007) provides a clear and critical account of the multiple streams model, its strengths and limitations.
10. Barzelay and Gallego (2006) term this framework 'institutional processualism'.
11. Christian Calmès' intervention.
12. Fonds Etienne Hirsch EH-26 Négotiations relatives à la creation de l'Institut universitaire de Florence: Florence European Communities Historical Archives.
13. Christian Fouchet was a French ambassador.
14. Jarvis reprinted an article by Guichard in *Le Monde*.
15. From 1965 the EAEC Commission had been merged with the EEC Commission.

16. Emile Noël archives, European Community Historical Archives, Florence. For a more detailed account, see Corbett (2005).
17. These were related to information, youth and research.
18. The Janne Report of 1973 refers to these (Commission of the European Communities 1973). See also interviews with the official concerned, Félix-Paul Mercereau, in Corbett (2005).
19. Jarvis (1972), a British teachers' union official, remarked that the EEC could not be very powerful if it took 16 years to achieve this.
20. The UK, Ireland and Denmark became member states in January 1973.
21. This is the first document to be printed in the Council of Ministers' collection of education policy statements and was a press release from the Secretariat. Ministers' meetings can also be tracked through the monthly *European Community* (now *European Union*) *Bulletin*.
22. This was Ralf Dahrendorf whom Beukel (1993) saw as an important actor. But I note that he wished to do as little as possible on education, because he was opposed to the Community acting on education (interview, Corbett 2005).
23. Interviews with officials concerned, notably Hywel Ceri Jones. See Corbett (2005) for details.
24. Dahrendorf was explicit that the Commission should play a minimalist role in education (Corbett 2005).
25. Interview with Domenico Lenarduzzi, in charge of higher education questions in the Commission (Corbett 2005).
26. H.C. Jones papers (Corbett 2005).
27. See Corbett (2005) for the work of Ladislav Cerych and Alan Smith of the European Institute of Education based at the University of Paris-Dauphine.
28. Stuttgart Declaration 1984 (Council of the European Communities, General Secretariat 1988).
29. Interview with Lenarduzzi (Corbett 2005).
30. Interviews with Jones; Nick Stuart, Member of the Cabinet of the Commission president Roy Jenkins; Ivor Richard, Social Affairs and Education Commissioner (Corbett 2005).
31. Interviews with Jones; André Kirchberger, the official in charge of developing the COMETT programme; correspondence with Sutherland (Corbett 2005).
32. Sutherland (Corbett 2005).
33. Sutherland (Corbett 2005).
34. Alan Smith papers (Corbett 2005).
35. Interviews with Jones, Kirchberger, Richonnier (Corbett 2005).
36. Delors' first speech to the European Parliament of January 1985 on the thrust of Commission policy deplored, like Jean Monnet before him, the fact that Europeans had lost the ability to live together and stressed the need to strengthen the human dimension of the single market.
37. Interview with Alan Forrest, Education Secretariat, Council of Ministers (Corbett 2005).
38. Interview with Jones, British education ministry official, who accompanied ministers to ministerial meetings over several years (Corbett 2005).
39. Interview with David Williamson, Commission Secretary-General 1987–1997 (Corbett 2005).
40. It was the statistics for these exceptional years between the Erasmus Decision and the introduction of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 that underpinned Pollack's (1994) analysis of Community creep.
41. Interviews with Félix van Craeyenest, Legal Service of the Council; and Sarah Evans, Legal Service of the Commission (Corbett 2005). The solution that the Commission followed in drafting the revised Erasmus Decision was to eliminate the word 'research' from the original text since this indicated that universities were not simply training institutions as defined by the Gravier ruling. The officials – and later the ministers who approved the decision – saw the solution as acceptable since the Single European Act of 1986 gave the Community a role in research.
42. See e.g. Bache (2006); Gornitzka (2007); Keeling (2006); Maassen and Olsen (2007); Musselin (2005); Novoa and Lawn (2002); and Van der Wende (2001).

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Boomerangs and Trojan Horses: The Unintended Consequences of Internationalising Education Policy Through the EU and the OECD

Kerstin Martens and Klaus Dieter Wolf

1 The Amazing Rise of International Organisations as Actors in Education Policy

During the last few years, the EU and the OECD have become increasingly involved in the field of education policy. Both international organisations have been approached by national governments in this issue area and have triggered and shaped domestic debates about the reform of national education systems. In this contribution, we look at the two most prominent among these initiatives: the 'Bologna process', which is by now commonly associated with the EU and involves the standardisation of degree structures in higher education with the goal of creating a single European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and the OECD's 'Program for International Student Assessment' (PISA), which regularly evaluates the performance of school students in different national education systems. Both processes stimulated extensive public debates and compelled policy makers to restructure their national education systems.

The increasing treatment of education as a matter of international governance comes as a surprise, since education policy is generally considered to be a core domain of the nation state, firmly anchored in the domestic political system. Why has this internationalisation taken place in an issue area as 'conservative and national' in orientation as education policy (Furlong 2005: 53), especially one still so strongly associated with protecting a country's cultural identity? Why have international institutions – supranational and intergovernmental – been employed by national governments and how could they gain so much influence? After all, neither the EU nor the OECD has any legally binding competence in the field of education.

We approach the puzzling shift of education policy to the international level as well as the resulting remarkable influence the EU and the OECD have gained by

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applying a combination of an actor-centred analysis with a neo-institutionalist theoretical analysis. For both cases, we first reveal governments' motives of putting external pressure on the domestic setting. We argue that they turned to international organisations not only to pursue substantial policy goals but also because it was in their strategic interest to use the intergovernmental policy arena to manipulate the existing distribution of formal institutional competencies in their domestic political systems. They thereby sought to enhance the sovereignty of their respective nation's executive in order to outmanoeuvre domestic opposition to their own policy goals.

In a second step, we claim that the strategically motivated internationalisation triggered institutional dynamics which backfired on its protagonists and led to the opposite of what was originally intended, namely, a general weakening of the state's role in education policy. By internationalising education policy through the EU and the OECD, new modes of governance and steering philosophies were introduced, new non-governmental actors became involved and new ways of thinking about how state and society should interact in this field gained importance. National governments intended to instrumentalise international organisations as a means to a domestic end, only to find the latter seizing control.

From an empirical point of view, our case studies illustrate the dilemmas confronting national governments when they try to form a cartel against domestic opposition and institutional barriers by playing a two-level game. By taking a closer look at the motives and the institutional dynamics which shaped the course of shifting education policy to the EU and the OECD, we examine how internationalisation 'struck back' on domestic politics. In theoretical terms, by combining an actor-centred approach with a neo-institutionalist approach at different stages of the explanation, we make use of the complementarities of two different analytical lenses in the interest of better understanding a specific empirical problem. We demonstrate how different approaches rooted in rationalist and constructivist thinking, and often regarded as mutually exclusive, can be fruitfully amalgamated and applied in an eclectic mode of analysis.

The chapter is structured as follows: we first set up the theoretical framework for our argument about the strategic motivations of actors initiating the internationalisation of education policy and the following institutional dynamics of this process. We show how states' *behaviour* can be captured by actor-centred approaches to international cooperation, but when it comes to explaining *outcomes* of internationalisation, this framework needs to be complemented by an institutionalist perspective. In the empirical part of this chapter, we trace the process of internationalising education policy by examining actors' motives for approaching both international organisations and by showing the paradoxical effects of the eventual takeover by the EU and OECD, respectively. In the concluding remarks, we confront our argument with an alternative functionalist explanation according to which a competence shift to the level beyond the state would result from a lack of problem-solving capacities on the national level, rather than from the strategic interest of gaining leverage over the domestic context in order to pursue certain policy reforms.

2 Unintended Consequences of Strategic Behaviour: The Institutional Dynamics of Internationalising Education Policy

Why do national governments turn to international organisations? From the perspective of actor-centred concepts, such as the liberal intergovernmental approach (Moravcsik 1993a, 1993b) or what has more recently been explored under the label of the 'new raison d'état' (Wolf 1999), national governments enter the intergovernmental arena not only because they want to pool their problem-solving resources and reduce transaction costs, but also to gain leverage on the domestic level.[1] The organisation of the society of states 'lends domestic autonomy to the state through institutions such as international law and diplomacy, which empower the state to overcome societal resistance to its policing practices' (Thomson 1995: 226). Intergovernmental governance arrangements serve as instruments for national executives to withdraw decision-making control from domestic actors or institutions and to manipulate the domestic context.

According to such assumptions, international organisations can only serve as pressure instruments on the domestic policy-making process as long as they *remain instruments* in the hands of state actors. Strategically motivated mutual self-commitments at the intergovernmental level must therefore never result in the international organisation taking over the initiative from national governments, as this would imply a loss of state capacity to determine its own policy and harm the overall strategic aim of attaining more leverage.[2] Seeking political support at the intergovernmental level to strategically enhance this capacity must be done in a balanced fashion. On the one hand, in order to build power and exert control vis-à-vis domestic actors and institutions, the influence of intergovernmental self-commitments must be strong enough to put pressure on the domestic decision-making process.

On the other hand, however, the formal power of the intergovernmental level should not be too extensive either, as it would negatively affect the sovereignty of national governments. Thus, any commitments should be irreversible enough that they cannot be revoked too easily, but at the same time they should be reversible enough to allow withdrawal when constraints on states become too massive. National governments should therefore be expected to select international organisations with little formal (or even legally binding) authority, but with a reputation for objectivity and impartiality that is strong enough to impress in the domestic setting. In such cases, there is a chance of employing and controlling intergovernmental organisations at the same time and of overcoming domestic opposition to one's policy goals without sacrificing too much sovereignty.

In order to substantiate our claim that our explanatory approach reveals a certain generalisable pattern, we look at two cases for which this holds true, although the EU and the OECD in general differ greatly in their supranational quality and in the legally binding commitments which they could, in principle, impose. This difference, however, is virtually non-existent in the field of education policy, where neither has an explicit regulatory authority. This is the very reason both institutions seem so attractive for instrumentalisation: minimal costs have to be paid in the

currency of external autonomy.[3] The Bologna process and the PISA project represent two empirical cases of shifting education policy to the international level in which the rationalist assumptions of liberal intergovernmentalism and of the new raison d'état regarding national governments as autonomy seekers should hold true – at least as far as the explanation of the *behaviour* of these governments is concerned.

Such actor-centred concepts reach their limits, however, when it comes to explaining the unintended and seemingly paradoxical *outcomes* of internationalisationwhich strengthen and weaken the state at the same time. In accordance with our assumptions, the instrumentalisation of international organisations has led to more capacities *of* the state in education policy in the sense of enlarging the national executives' area of competence. But at the same time, this process has resulted in weakening the state by providing other actors with more capacities in education policy *from* the state through the introduction of new norms and forms of governance that have reduced steering functions of the state in general at both the national and the sub-national level. When it comes to the *outcomes* of the instrumentalisation of the EU and the OECD in the field of education, in particular the amazing influence both international organisations have gained over the course of the process, the actor-centred approach cannot provide an adequate explanation.

In emphasising the institutional dynamics of both international organisations as intervening factors, the actor-centred approach needs to be combined with a neo-institutionalist framework. Institutionalists' claims inspired by sociological studies enable us to show what happens when norms and forms of governance characteristic of certain institutions interfere with the strategic logic of actors who turn to them. International organisations not only influence the strategic choices of rational actors, but also develop in ways unanticipated by their creators.[4] International organisations incorporate certain 'symbolic systems, cognitive scripts and moral templates that provide the "frames of meaning" guiding human action' (Hall and Taylor 1996: 947; see also Finnemore 1993).

These frames may imply specific problem definitions, objectives for actions and measures through which they should be reached and may thus alter the direction of the political process and lead to outcomes unintended by those who approach these organisations: the governments of member states. However, international organisations may not only be conceptualised as institutional frames of meaning which guide action, they may also make policies themselves and unfold their impact on the political process in a particular field as political entrepreneurs (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Dorado 2005).

By widening our perspective and making use of an eclectic mode of paradigm-transcending analysis, we can explain the practical limitations of the instrumentalisation of international organisations and the unintendedconsequences and paradoxical effects of employing them to gain influence in the domestic policy-making process: institutions *do* matter once again. The institutional dynamics of both international organisations discussed here accelerated the spread of new modes of governance. In the course of this process, a shift from govern*ment* to govern*ance* took place: state functions changed from hierarchical intervention by command

and control to either negotiated forms of coordination, such as target setting and performance-based funding, or deliberative political processes in which the authority and expertise of peers and professional experts play a major role. As a cooperative *primus inter pares*, the state involves other actors and shares responsibilities with them.[5]

We use the metaphors of the 'boomerang gone astray' (for the EU case) and the 'Trojan horse' (for the OECD case) to depict unintended consequences of strategic behaviour; at the same time they illustrate the differences between our two cases. The boomerang of internationalising higher education policy in the European area was deliberately set in motion but it landed differently than expected by its throwers. National governments sought to strengthen their reformative position at home and to defuse domestic opposition, but not to weaken governmental influence on all levels. In the case of the OECD, those who favoured education indicators were not aware that they had opened the gates for a Trojan horse. National governments wanted the OECD to collect and develop international comparative indicators in education, but they did not anticipate that this would result in regular assessments of their performance.[6]

In a nutshell, we claim that by internationalising education policy, national governments acted in their own strategic interests, but their actions led to unintended consequences and even paradoxical effects. Seemingly 'weak' institutional dynamics mobilised on the intergovernmental level turned out to be 'strong' enough to reduce domestic influence of the executive on both the national and sub-national levels in the process of education reform. By analysing the unexpected course taken by the internationalisation of education policy, the theoretical aim of this chapter is not to test competing hypotheses, but rather to apply complementary insights from different strands of theoretical research to a specific empirical problem. This eclectic mode of analysis[7] offers a comprehensive explanation which demonstrates how actor-centred and neo-institutionalist paradigms can speak to each other (Risse 2002; Abbott and Snidal 1998).

To solve the empirical puzzle of internationalising education policy, we employ a qualitative case study design, carefully tracing the processes through which the EU and the OECD were enabled to become important actors in education policy.[8] The empirical data needed for this study were generated through semi-standardised expert interviews with politicians, bureaucrats and consultants who participated in the development of education policy in the EU and OECD context.[9] We also analysed documents from the two international organisations which, like the interview transcripts, were systematically searched for governments' motives for approaching the two international organisations in education policy, as well as for institutional dynamics and their implications.

In two respects, our analysis of the internationalisation of education policy provides a 'hard case' for examining how institutional dynamics can alter the outcomes of strategic state behaviour. First, we look at two seemingly weak international organisations in the field of education, namely the EU and the OECD, and demonstrate their eventual empowerment during the Bologna process and the PISA project, respectively. Second, by focusing on education policy, we examine a policy field

in which internationalisation is least expected because it is closely linked to the state, to the preservation of national identity, culture and heritage (see Enders 2004; Goldthorpe 1997).

3 Involving the EU in Higher Education Policy: The Boomerang Goes Astray

National governments of member states have repeatedly instrumentalised the EU in order to overcome actual or anticipated domestic opposition.[10] In fact, according to Moravcsik (1993b: 507), 'the unique institutional structure of the EC is acceptable to national governments only insofar as it strengthens, rather than weakens, their control over domestic affairs'. This assumption of a strategic two-level game played by member states' national executives has only rarely, but never systematically, been applied to the field of education policy.[11] Considering the prominence of education policy in general and the Bologna process in particular, both in public debate and on the political agenda, this oversight comes as a surprise. Furthermore, although the EU lacks the formal authority to interfere substantially with the national education policy prerogative, during the Bologna process it has gained increasing importance in the reform processes of national higher education systems at the expense of state control. Why did governments approach the European level in the first place? How far can the assumption of a strategic two-level game played by national executives account for the empowerment the EU (a seemingly weak international organisation in the field of higher education) has experienced in the Bologna process?

3.1 The Role of the EU in Education Policy

The Treaty of Rome did not provide for Community competence in higher education, reserving the field at most to intergovernmental decision making. Only via links to more general economic issues for which it had direct competence did the Community gradually become involved in education, starting with vocational training, in order to enhance the free movement of labour in the common market. In 1985, the European Court of Justice supported a commission proposal to include higher education under its purview, which would have extended its authority beyond student exchange programmes (such as Erasmus) or the mutual recognition of degrees.

These aspirations were tamed by the governments of the member states in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. The new treaty base firmly anchored education within a subsidiarity framework (Schink 1993: 73–79; Corbett 2003: 326). Articles 126 and 127 of the Maastricht Treaty clearly limited the commission's legal competence in education and training to mere support functions and stressed the value of responsibility at the state level and of cultural diversity. Thus, since Maastricht, the

subsidiarity principle left little ground for legally binding interventions on the part of the European Commission to harmonise national education systems.

Instead, an initiative for an EHEA was developed outside the EU framework. In June 1999, the higher education ministers of 29 European states signed a joint declaration (the 'Bologna Declaration') with the goal of creating a barrier-free and harmonised European space for education by 2010, eventually to be linked with a common European Research Area (see among others Furlong 2005; Papatsiba 2005). The origins of this act go back to the 'Sorbonne Declaration', which was the result of a meeting of education ministers from the 'EU big four' (France, Germany, Italy and the UK) in Paris the previous year. Since 1999, the number of states that have formally acceded to the Bologna Declaration has gradually risen and the ideas and goals of the declaration have gained an unforeseen momentum in the national higher education discourses of the participating countries. The process triggered by the Bologna Declaration led to ministerial follow-up conferences in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005) which further developed the policy goals and agenda, sharpened the conceptual guidelines, came up with strategies and instruments for their practical implementation and evaluated the implementation steps taken so far.

Most surprisingly, during the Bologna process the European Commission re-entered the game to make Europe a competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy. Although the process was initiated outside the institutional frame of the EU, the European Commission gradually took over 'Bologna' commencing in 2001 when it became a full member and as a body had the same role as any individual member state. Today, the Bologna process is strongly associated with the EU, despite the fact that its 45 signatories go far beyond the European Union. In fact, the commission today counts as the driving force behind the establishment of the EHEA, coordinating the different actors involved, providing impetus for its goals and administering its progress.

In addition, the European Commission today is also more intensely involved in other areas of education than before Bologna. In December 2002, the education ministers of 31 European countries and the European Commission adopted the Copenhagen Declaration for vocational education and training: a single common framework for the recognition of certificates, a system of credit transfer, common criteria and principles for quality.[12] Unlike in the Bologna process, however, the European Commission was involved in the Copenhagen process from the very beginning, initiating it, designing it to be similarly voluntary and systematically keeping its power as the managing organisation behind it.

In essence, under the auspices of the European Commission and on the procedural basis of voluntary commitments, the Bologna process has led to the progressive harmonisation and structural convergence of national higher education systems, with the Anglo-American Bachelor and Master degree system as a common frame of reference, including commonly agreed mechanisms of quality assurance, student mobility and employability of graduates. For some of the participating countries, such as Germany or Italy, this means a complete restructuring of their current systems and the greatest reform process for decades.

3.2 Why the EU's Role in Education Became Strengthened – Domestic Motives and Institutional Dynamics

This narrative of the Bologna process leaves room for different explanations. National governments – in this case, bureaucrats of national executives in charge of education policy – may have turned to the international arena to improve the problem-solving capacity of their institution and, by responding to the needs of its member states, the EU's role in education eventually became strengthened. Such a reading would cover only the policy dimension[13] and leave out the politics behind it. However, an explanation based solely on the assumption of a strategic two-level game played by member states' national executives to strengthen their control over domestic affairs, does not suffice either. It fails to account for some fundamental changes we observe today as a result of the Bologna process. Why, for example, did 'national regulators transfer a substantial part of their norm-setting power to university institutions which accepted their autonomy and made use of it boldly' (Kohler 2004: 10)? If the initiating states wanted the Bologna process to be a tool to increase their responsibility over education policy, how could it deteriorate into a 'de-governmentalisation' of education policy in the end (Teichler 2004: 21)? By proceeding in two steps, the following explanation can fill such explanatory gaps. It combines an actor-centred approach for explaining the behaviour of the governments that initiated the shift of higher education policy to the European level with a neo-institutionalist explanation of the unintended outcomes resulting from this shift.

3.2.1 Stage I: Domestic Motives of Governments

To characterise the Bologna process as the common solution to the problem of incomparability and incompatibility of education systems in Europe would only touch the technocratic surface of this project. Rather, the four initiating governments were united by diverse domestically motivated interests. They sought to gain leverage for reforms in their respective countries by going onto the European level.

The French government was most fervent about a common initiative, since they needed support from other states to reform theirhigher education system (Interview EU No. 3, 2003). In 1997, one year before Minister for National Education, Research and Technology Claude Allègre invited his German, British and Italian counterparts to the Sorbonne, he commissioned a report on streamlining the diversity of degrees in France and making the system more transparent (Interview EU No. 5, 2004). The result, known as the Attali Report (Attali 1998), suggested restructuring the French system towards a 3–5–8 year programme of studies (Bachelor degree – Master degree – PhD) to bring it closer to that of other European countries.[14] The French minister deliberately linked domestic reform to the European sphere because 'he got the impression that the only way to make changes in the French system would be to blame it on Europe' (Interview EU No. 3, 2003).

The German federal government, on the other hand, was motivated by exactly the opposite considerations. Because responsibility for higher education rests on

the sub-federal level of the *Länder* in Germany (so-called *Kulturhoheit*), the Ministry of Education and Research has very limited power to make policy. It needed to mobilise international pressure for reforms in higher education to overcome the unwillingness and incapability of the individual *Länder* to agree on any substantial reforms. By emphasising the possibility that single courses or whole degrees could become recognised at the European level instead of the national level, reformists gained leverage within Germany and put pressure on domestic opposition (Interview EU No. 1, 2003; Interview EU No. 5, 2004). Germany and Italy also sought reform because their students take longer to attain degrees than those of other countries (Interview EU No. 5, 2004). Bologna thus brought together politicians' substantial short-term and strategic long-term goals: outmanoeuvring domestic institutional barriers to specific education reform goals involved changing the distribution of competencies for education in the long run.

The UK supported the initiative because its education system was the reference model, so it bore no costs of reform but could provide others with advice about establishing the British system in their own countries. In fact, when Minister of State for Education and Employment Tessa Blackstone returned from the meeting in Sorbonne in 1998, she faced criticism for signing something so 'European' as a declaration on a common EHEA. She had to justify her decision, explaining that the agreement only implied that Britain's system would be introduced elsewhere (Interview EU No. 5, 2004). Furthermore, the UK never considered allowing international interference in its domestic system. It wanted the initiative to bypass the commission and to be as voluntary, intergovernmental and 'soft' as possible (Furlong 2005).

So as not to pay for their increased internal authority with new external constraints, education ministers chose intergovernmental rather than supranational control. For very different reasons, all four government representatives of their respective resorts therefore deliberately started their initiative outside the formal EU institutional framework. The European Commission was made a full member of the Bologna process only later, when basic policy goals had already been fixed and it was deemed instrumental for promoting them. The institution seemed to be a necessary tool, 'like a coat hanger . . . something to hang the reform on' (Interview EU No. 2, 2003). Moreover, the commission was needed to cover promotion costs: even when it was not yet a member of the process, it paid for the preparatory work leading to Bologna and for the meeting itself.

Controlled inclusion of the commission thus allowed the respective national governments to institutionalise and strengthen the external pressure on their domestic settings. It functioned like 'a tool to explain at home that you need to change and . . . as a guarantee that change introduced at home will actually be coherent with other countries . . . It provided a strong political argument which has been used by all governments' (Interview EU No. 3, 2003). The strategic inclusion of non-EU members in the Bologna process also served as protection against too much commission leverage. Although other actors at different levels became increasingly involved in the process, their status was intended to remain that of policy *receivers*. Groups like the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA),

or evaluative institutions that monitor university research and teaching, were meant to support the implementation of policies already decided at the intergovernmental level.[15]

So far, this picture fits neatly with the rationalist actor-centred assumption that national governments instrumentalise international organisations. We observe states' controlled inclusion of the *international* level of policy making for *domestic* reasons: the EU as an international organisation was employed at the same stage of the Bologna process in the policy field of higher education in order to outmanoeuvre domestic opponents and institutional barriers without – so they thought – sacrificing too much of their own sovereignty.

3.2.2 Stage II: Institutional Dynamics and Unintended Outcomes

What governments did not foresee was that the boomerang thrown out vigorously towards the European level, returned differently to national governments, in terms of beneficial outcomes. While governments at the national level gained in terms of *competence*, they lost policy capacities in terms of their *function* in higher education politics. Their strategically motivated inclusion of the commission made education an economic issue: in order to employ the EU's resources and leverage to manipulate domestic policy, higher education had to be reframed as an issue of global competitiveness. This makeover of the higher education discourse resulted in a dominance of cost-benefit rationale at all levels of education. Even the social institution 'university' was re-conceptualised as a firm and thus given increased power over its own programmes. As declared in the Berlin Communiqué (2003), 'ministers accept that institutions need to be empowered to take decisions on their internal organization and administration'.

According to Huisman and Van der Wende (2004: 350), 'the economic rationale became more important than the political, educational and cultural rationales'. This can clearly be attributed to institutional dynamics triggered by the incorporation of the European Commission into the process and was not brought about by the national governments. On the contrary, one motive behind the Sorbonne Declaration was precisely the *prevention* of commodification and the foreseeable sell-out of the education sector during the GATS negotiations within the World Trade Organization. A chronological look at the different declarations issued during the Bologna process reveals this unintended 'economic turn'.

The Sorbonne Declaration (1998) (before the participation of the European Commission) lacks any mention of an economic rationale. In fact, it states in the first paragraph that 'Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy', but emphasises that '[w]e must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent'. It underlines the necessity of establishing a common frame of reference to facilitate student mobility, mutual recognition of degrees and continuing education and training throughout life via an EHEA. The Bologna Declaration (1999) (now *with* the commission as an observer) already shows the first economic considerations, recognising that a common

European system is helpful 'in order to promote European citizens' employability' and 'is relevant to the European labor market'.

The Prague Communiqué (2001) (at which the commission was a full member of the process) links its objectives directly to economic gains expected from a common education area. It explicitly claims that 'building the European Higher Education Area is a condition for enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness' of Europe as an economic area. Having started out as a goal in itself, educational reform became a means to reach economic ends. This instrumental character is brought to light in ministerial statements emphasising that comparable degrees enable citizens to use their skills and qualifications throughout the common zone (objective 1), that a system based on two main cycles will accommodate the labour market (objective 2) and that a system of credits together with a universally accredited quality assurance system will facilitate students' access to the European labour market (objective 3). The declaration also states that 'lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness' and that study programmes need to be developed, 'combining academic quality with relevance to lasting employability' (Prague Communiqué 2001).

An increased economic focus of the education discourse is only one of the two institutional dynamics set in motion by states' instrumentalisation of the EU for education policy. The second consisted of importing new modes of governance, shifting responsibilities to new actors and limiting the role of governmental actors to coordinating functions. This was unavoidable because Bologna took place outside the formal competence of the EU and was therefore a 'voluntary process, not binding and thus with no legal consequences' (Enders 2004: 375). With respect to reducing the role of the state, these new modes of governance were compatible with a neoliberal philosophy requiring governments to deregulate, that is, to step back and grant higher education institutions such as universities, rating agencies and quality assurance organisations, more autonomy.

By involving the commission in the Bologna process while trying to control it at the same time, governments paid the double price of making education an economic issue and spreading new modes of governance which weakened their own importance. This in turn paved the way for further *unintended* institutional dynamics: the Bologna process and the activities of the EU in the field of education became increasingly intertwined. During the European Council meeting in Lisbon in 2000, education was prioritised as a means for making Europe the world's leading knowledge-based economy. Although Bologna was not related to that declaration, it inspired 'some key people who drew up the Lisbon message' (Interview EU No. 3, 2003), such that education policy was now firmly integrated into the EU context, recognising how important education and training are in the whole of the political process (Interview EU No. 7, 2004).

Moreover, in Lisbon, the EU gained a new tool for pursuing commonly agreed goals, the Open Method of Coordination, even though to some this seemed like 'the creeping hostile takeover [of education policy] by the Commission . . . and the harmonisation of systems' (Interview EU No. 1, 2003). A culmination of the increasingly economised trajectory of education, the 2003 Berlin Communiqué (at that time

the European Commission was not only a full member but also organised the meeting) even quotes in its preamble the conclusion of the European Council meetings in Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002) which proclaim the goal of making Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'.

As a result, the EU now plays a much larger role in higher education than the Sorbonne Declaration's signatory ministers envisioned. Their intention in 1998 was that the Sorbonne Declaration should be intergovernmental without any substantial EU involvement. In Bologna, the European Commission was still only an observer. In fact, the four signatory states insisted it should not have a stronger role – with the usual arguments of '"Maastricht", the "Treaty of Rome", . . . "subsidiarity", "a clear division of responsibility between the EU and the member states" so that education policy – a fundamental part of cultural policy – is not primarily delegated to a harmonizing institution' (Interview EU No. 5, 2004). Even in Prague in 2001, the British still complained about the commission's presence and reminded other participants that it was agreed in Bologna to accomplish the process without European Commission participation (Interview EU No. 7, 2004).

Nevertheless, today the EU is fully integrated into Bologna's formal structures. The 2005 Bergen meeting even produced a declaration noting 'the complementarity between the overarching framework for the EHEA and the . . . European Union', asking 'the European Commission fully to consult all parties to the Bologna Process as work progresses' (Bergen Communiqué 2005). The EU's role now goes far beyond that of an instrumental 'scapegoat' or a mere financier. It is able to contribute 'the impetus, the ideas . . . [of] what should be done, what the priorities are, discussing each and every article' (Interview EU No. 3, 2003). The EU now has more (amazingly undisputed) options and responsibilities in the field of education policy *due to* the Bologna process, although it was deliberately excluded from the process at the start. Having learned from the Bologna experience, the Copenhagen process illustrates the European Commission's increasingly 'emancipated' role with particular clarity, showing that the intended 'instrumentalisation' only partially worked out.

3.3 Summary of the Bologna Case

This first case study illustrates that, as the assumptions of liberal intergovernmentalism and the new raison d'état would suggest, there was more at stake in the internationalisation of higher education policy than policy itself. Confronted with domestic opposition to their reform goals, national governments employed intergovernmental policy making to manipulate their domestic distribution of competencies in the education sector. Although the boomerang of instrumentalising the EU was intended to strengthen the initiating national governments at the expense of their domestic institutional opponents, it failed to return to the strategic actors who threw it. Instead, it flew into economic territory, bringing a new rationale of de-governmentalisation

to policies of higher education which is likely to weaken the role of *government* steering at all levels, including the national level. The boomerang returned with a new steering philosophy favouring voluntary modes of governance, such as target setting agreements, and increasing the influence of new state and non-state actors at different levels.

By mobilising this bundle of factors, the EU exerted tremendous influence, as 'national views on the role of higher education gradually grew closer – not necessarily intentionally – to the EC's perspective' (Huisman and Van der Wende 2004: 350). Thus, governments' unsuccessful attempt at a 'controlled inclusion' of the European level in order to 'nationalise' higher education policy led to unintended consequences. The strategic involvement of the intergovernmental level of policy making as an argument and tool to facilitate domestic reform, unfolded dynamics of its own. The European Commission seized control and intruded into domestic affairs, thereby contributing to unforeseen shifts in the roles of the old and the new actors involved in the field of higher education.

4 Competence Shift to the OECD: Opening the Gates for the Trojan Horse

The OECD has various nicknames including 'debating club' and 'toothless tiger', implying that it has no enforcement tools over its member states.[16] Its few legally binding instruments render it powerless vis-à-vis its member states (Marcussen 2004). The 'Declaration on Future Educational Policies in the Changing Social and Economic Context', for instance, merely states that ministers of the signatory countries agree to prioritise education policy. Its specific aims are only vaguely formulated and include promoting continuous development of educational standards and the general need for measures that contribute to gender equality (OECD 1978). Nonetheless, the OECD has established itself as an international authority in education policy and manages to exercise governance by effectively influencing opinion formation and putting pressure on domestic actors. Today, the OECD counts as the 'éminence grise' (Rinne, Kallo and Hokka 2004) in the field of education: its studies serve as the reference point when it comes to demonstrating strengths and weaknesses of individual education systems and raising questions of 'best practice'. Most influentially, the OECD ranks participating states for their performance in education – and sometimes reveals embarrassing results. But why do governments approach the OECD to be assessed? Could it be the same strategic shift of authority to the international level that we observed for the EU's role in the Bologna process?

4.1 The OECD as an Actor in Education Policy

The OECD's primary goal has always been to improve economic cooperation. In other words, the 'E' in OECD stands for the 'economic' focus of the organisation

and not for any specific interest in education (Interview OECD No. 6, 2003). However, education has always been part of its realm of activities. The 'OECD Conference on Economic Growth and Investment in Education' held in 1961 – the same year the organisation was formally established – represents the 'landmark' in this respect as it recognised the significance of education in the context of other OECD work (Papadopoulos 1994: 39). In the early days, education was considered part of the 'human factor' in economic development, but had no specific structural integration into the OECD in its own right. Rather, it was linked to the Directorate for Scientific Affairs, as education policy was primarily viewed as a tool to 'produce' qualified scientists and technicians to ensure prospering economies. In reaction to the 'Sputnik shock' attributed to the high quality of scientific and technical personnel produced by the Soviet Union's education system, concern about the shortage and training of highly skilled scientific personnel grew and education policy became part of the Cold War strategy.

With the establishment of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) in 1968 and the Education Committee in 1970, education policy became institutionalised within the OECD. '[T]hese changes represented a deliberate act to give formal legitimisation to the educational role of the Organisation' (Papadopoulos 1994: 63). The OECD began to conduct more programmes and projects and broadened its spectrum of activities in the field of education.[17] Between the 1960s and the 1980s, attention shifted from policies for educational growth to policies for educational development under limited resources, reflecting general economic changes from expansion to recession and the growth of structural unemployment. Accordingly, education and the Education Committee moved into the Labor Directorate and 'education within the OECD was connected with labor' (Interview OECD No. 6, 2003). The social side of unemployment and recession, the concept of 'recurrent education' (today commonly referred to as 'lifelong learning'), the social goals of education and the question of educational equality moved up the educational agenda of the organisation and became prominent topics.

It was predominantly during the 1990s that the OECD became respected for its work on education. The statistics it collects, the indicators it develops and its analyses of current trends in education policy count as the most sophisticated in its field. Today, the OECD is *the* authority for education statistics and is in fact known better for this than some other organisations that have been doing such research for decades, like the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The OECD also took over the further improvement of the international system of educational classification (known as ISCED) from the 'real' international education organisation: UNESCO. The OECD's *Education at a Glance*, a compilation of education statistics and indicators published annually since 1992, is today its best selling publication next to the traditional *Economic Outlook*.

The OECD's breakthrough as *the* educational organisation came with the 'Program for International Student Assessment' conducted since 2000. PISA is an internationally standardised survey of 15-year-old school students assessing 'how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in society' (OECD 2006).

PISA covers reading, mathematical skills and scientific literacy and is conducted in cycles of three years with a particular emphasis on one of these subjects in each assessment cycle. More and more countries are joining the PISA project: whereas in 2000 the survey was conducted in 43 countries, over 58 wished to participate in the third assessment in 2006. The reach of PISA goes far beyond the OECD membership – almost half of the participating countries in 2006 were OECD members. In response to this popularity, education even received its own directorate within the OECD in 2002.

The findings of the assessments resulted in the so-called 'PISA shock' in countries which had always believed they had good education systems. The German system, for instance, was shown to have failed in evening out achievement gaps due to differences in socio-economic background and in integrating children from immigrant families. The poor PISA results therefore prompted a wide discussion about reforming the German education system. In fact, education has moved to the very top of the *Länder* governments' agenda and plays a crucial role in local and regional elections today. PISA has also triggered discussions about the Danish education system: investing considerably more money and resources into education than other countries, the Danes were outraged to find their PISA results only insignificantly above average. In the UK, the poor results of British pupils in the latest PISA test became a *politicum* and led the government to withdraw their publication, based on the questionable justification that an insufficient number of tests were taken.

4.2 Why the OECD Became an Important Actor in Education – Domestic Motives and Institutional Dynamics

The simple narrative behind this is that the OECD is an international organisation which responds to the needs of its member states (Rinne, Kallo and Hokka 2004; Henry et al. 2001; Papadopoulos 1994). Its creators envisioned a service organisation and information manager, preparing policy analyses on topical issues to be useful for its members. In the field of education, it thus takes on the role of evaluator for both quality of education and learning achievement in its member states. Because such comparative evaluations require common indicators, states agreed on a shared set of evaluative concepts throughout a series of conferences. The first such conference, hosted by the US Government in Washington in November 1987, laid out the necessity for performance indicators. The second, held the following year in France, concretised the role of indicators in evaluation and established the 'International Indicators of Education Systems' (INES) programme. After years of review, participants were satisfied with the programme and it resulted in the presentation of the first draft of *Education at a Glance* at a meeting in Switzerland in 1991. This history of education's role in the OECD does not explain why states seem to be so willing to participate in comparative assessments in education. Is international cooperation really the result of a commonly agreed need for having good indicators so that solutions for shared education problems can be found? Why are states

willing to be compared, ranked and rated at the risk of being publicly humiliated by unexpected scores? The answer lies in part in the fact that states did not antici- pate how the educational indicator programme would develop and what the OECD would make out of it. Now they cannot withdraw without losing face – at least not without everyone knowing that poor test results are the reason for their retreat. By combining an actor-centred approach with a neo-institutionalist perspective, the fol- lowing explains in two steps the interplay between governments' motives for, and the unintended outcomes of, addressing the OECD in education indicators.

4.2.1 Stage I: National Governments' Domestic Motives

What started the new phase of developing education indicators in the mid-1980s was not a common concern about the issue, or even agreement that it was a problem. Once again, domestically motivated political interests of a few countries, particu- larly the US and France, pressured the OECD to produce better and more compara- ble data in education. Both countries were concerned about their respectivenational education systems and about domestic obstacles to reform, for very different rea- sons. The US feared losing the technology race of the Cold War; France's left-wing government was concerned about educational opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged children.

Education suddenly gained prominence on the US political agenda in the mid- 1980s, after a report entitled *A Nation at Risk: Imperatives for Educational Reform* was published. It described the appalling state of education in the US in alarming language,[18] triggering broad public concern and identifying the need to monitor schools and personnel. This 'Great School Debate' (Gross and Gross 1985) devel- oped into a controversial discussion on education quality and soon also attracted the attention of the highest political officials in the country. President Ronald Reagan regarded school reform as a major issue during that period and was deeply con- cerned about the striking deficits of US pupils in science at the height of the Cold War.

With Sputnik still in mind, US pupils' poor science performance was consid- ered tantamount to 'committing unilateral disarmament' (Interview OECD No. 16, 2004). Use of such military language illustrates the new framing of education pol- icy as an issue of *national* importance, although education policy does not fall under federal responsibility. Rather, it rests with the individual US states that guard their influence resolutely (Interview OECD No. 16, 2004). By shifting the debate to the international level, the US government hoped to gain more leverage over education as a federal concern and thereby more power over US states: 'For domestic Amer- ican political reasons, education was jacked up in the OECD … This meant that suddenly there was a huge pressure, politically, on the US Secretary of Education to show results and benchmarks against other countries' (Interview OECD No. 16, 2004).

Thus, the US government – particularly the Secretary of Education – played a very active and critical role in pushing the OECD to modify its programme on international education indicators (Interview OECD No. 20, 2004; Interview OECD

No. 16, 2004). It hardly hoped to find international improvements of educational performance worldwide, rather 'it was necessary – for purely internal American reasons – to find a support externally, in a sense to export the American debate, in order to avoid considering that the crisis of education was only an American issue' (Interview OECD No. 20, 2004). In fact, the OECD did not particularly welcome the idea of conducting a project on comparative indicators; staff considered this an American issue only (Interview OECD No. 20, 2004), as it was convinced at that time that education policy merely reflected national interests and cultural traditions that could not be quantified by figures and 'league tables'. It even saw a danger that such a statistical approach in education could easily be exploited and 'purposefully avoided anything which amounted to encouraging countries to compare themselves' (Interview OECD No. 14, 2003). But the political pressure from the US was so strong that the OECD had no choice but to take on the indicator project: the US threatened to leave the OECD's education programme entirely at the Washington conference of 1987 if CERI did not accept this task. Because 'the fact that the United States walked out of UNESCO . . . showed that this was . . . no joke' (Interview OECD No. 16, 2004), the OECD complied, fearing that otherwise it would lose its major financier.

The US received unexpected backing in its demand on the OECD from the French government. With changes in the French cabinet in the mid-1980s, the new socialist Minister of Education, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, set fresh priorities for education policy. His aim was to arrive at a more egalitarian education system that enabled equal access to education and the resulting opportunities, independent of social background. His education improvement plan was 'based upon theoretical concepts which were not those of Ronald Reagan, but arriving at the same conclusions' (Interview OECD No. 20, 2004). Chevènement, too, wanted figures on the performance of French pupils to prove that the elitist French system fostered poor performance. Thus, for several years France and the United States jointly pressured the OECD, gradually modifying its education policy programme completely (Interview OECD No. 20, 2004).

As in the case of Bologna, so far the actor-centred paradigm explains why the two national governments approached the OECD and pushed it to produce international comparative indicators in education: out of self-interest, namely, in order to gain leverage for domestic reforms, the US and France wanted to employ the OECD as an external authority. The international organisation seemed powerful enough to provide support against domestic opposition and, at the same time, sufficiently powerless to interfere with states' motives.

4.2.2 Stage II: Institutional Dynamics Within the OECD

These countries did not realise, however, that pushing the OECD to conduct more research on education indicators was equivalent to letting in a Trojan horse, namely, regular assessments of the performance of their national education systems. Professionals who subscribed to the logic of quantitative empirical methods of data collection were given the authority for the project and eventually dominated the

discourse. Through the introduction of such new actors and modes of governance, the generation and the goals of education indicators as developed by the OECD went out of governmental control: the impetus for PISA, for instance, came from these independent analysts, not the states themselves. Conceptualised by the OECD secretariat in cooperation with national experts and institutions, it was in fact presented to countries to agree on implementation, not the other way around as had been the case with the initial indicator project. In other words, whereas the OECD's original work on education indicators was *intentionally* initiated by mainly two states, PISA was the *unintended* consequence of having forced the OECD to develop expertise in education indicators.

Indeed, indicators in education were among the OECD's programme of work even before INES was started. When interest in statistical information for educational planning grew in the 1960s, a common basis for gathering and comparing statistics in this field was needed to provide national policy makers with information necessary for better and more efficient planning. In 1964, the OECD was given the task of creating a model handbook for the various factors, resulting in the so-called 'Green Book' which continued to be widely used as guidance for gathering educational statistics in the OECD context throughout the 1970s (Papadopoulos 1994: 58). The problem with these indicators, however, was their poor quality: they were 'second, third level statistics, coming out very late, not comparable at all' (Interview OECD No. 20, 2004), such that the entire project was even partially abandoned during the 1970s (Rinne, Kallo and Hokka 2004: 460). The OECD could not be blamed for data quality, as it was entirely dependent on what participating countries supplied. On the other hand, it never questioned any of the national data, even if they were obviously dubious (Interview OECD No. 25, 2004). Moreover, by itself, the OECD could hardly claim any responsibility for generating and managing 'education indicators' because such activities belonged to other international organisations, such as UNESCO and IEA. But by (re)initiating the indicator project within the OECD in the mid-1980s, countries enabled the OECD to become the leading international organisation in education indicators.

The first ideas for PISA arose in the early 1990s when the various networks set up for the indicator project realised that the available data were not comprehensive enough for accurate evaluation. After the positive reaction of states and the sales figures of the first edition of *Education at a Glance*, the OECD put more effort into developing its assessment with outcome indicators of its own. It developed an agenda to conceptualise and design outcome indicators in conjunction with member countries and networks of experts (Interview OECD No. 18, 2004). PISA represents a stronger shift towards outcome and performance measures, its goal being 'a framework for the evaluation of education systems which enables us to look at one education system in the light of the performance of other education systems' (Interview OECD No. 9, 2003). Existing data from other sources were not sufficient, so the OECD decided that it needed outcome indicators of its own (Interview OECD No. 18, 2004; Interview OECD No. 25, 2004).

Its secretariat gradually broadened the programme, hiring new personnel with the appropriate qualifications and experience, some of whom in fact came from the IEA

where they had conducted similar studies. Once the countries had been convinced of the project and thus financing was secured, these experts had 'a lot of room to manoeuvre, . . . more freedom than in a national administration because there is no one to impose politically motivated restrictions' (Interview OECD No. 9, 2003). Working with around 300 scientists from all over the world, it took the OECD about five years to conceptualise PISA (Interview OECD No. 20, 2004; Interview OECD No. 9, 2003).

Most states were sceptical, however, about the proposed benefits of PISA when its design was first presented to them in 1995. Whereas five countries were in favour of the concept and another three to four showed interest, the other countries were against such a project. Some were not convinced that the large financial input justified the potential results; others were against an international evaluation of their national education system by the OECD (Interview OECD No. 9, 2003). The director of the education division at that time simply interpreted this reaction as providing enough support to continue with the project. Staff in the OECD continued to further develop the framework for comparative evaluation of education systems and, in 1997, when it was again presented to the organisation's member states, all were on board for the PISA study and even many non-OECD states later joined the programme. International comparative evaluations were accepted as a norm and 'peer pressure' had become great enough by then that no country could refuse to support the project or be the last one to join; especially countries lacking any national system of school evaluation, like Germany, Italy and France, had to participate because their absence 'would have caused all sorts of speculation' (Interview OECD No. 9, 2003).

After the first results were published, low performers sought to downplay PISA by arguing that any quantitative evaluation of a field like education cannot be accurate. It is difficult to take issue with PISA on statistical or methodological grounds; however, regarded as a highly sophisticated analytic tool surpassing the best education indicators that existed before, 'PISA is now hard science in terms of measurement' (Interview OECD No. 18, 2004). Furthermore, all countries had agreed on the methodology beforehand and the OECD only implemented the project after every country had signed up for the test (Interview OECD No. 9, 2003).

4.3 Summary of the OECD Case

Thus, this second case study confirms many of the results of the Bologna case. We witness instrumentalisation of the international level by national governments that were confronted with domestic barriers to their policy goals. Again, this strategic behaviour led to unintended consequences: what started out as an attempt to 'nationalise' education policy in the US and to reform it in France actually led to the de-governmentalisation of education policy because it introduced new types of governance in the form of rating and ranking (Lehmkuhl 2005). These in turn strengthened the role of education experts and rating agencies; states clearly did

not anticipate how the educational indicator programme would develop and what the OECD would make of it. In other words, by initiating the original indicator project in the mid-1980s within the OECD forum, states unintentionally opened the gates for the Trojan horse of international comparative education assessment from which they now cannot escape. The OECD, originally almost 'forced' into developing expertise in education assessment, subsequently gained dominance over that very process. It unfolded dynamics of its own, the most well-known result being PISA, and has become almost impossible to withdraw from.

5 Conclusions

The two case studies in the field of education policy have confirmed our initial expectation that national governments' strategic interest in gaining more control over the domestic political process motivated them to approach international organisations and start the internationalisation of education policy. They sought to create pressure on their domestic agendas from the level of intergovernmental policy making. Both cases involved international organisations that appeared to be appropriate instruments for such a strategy because neither had a strong stand in the area of education policy, but both had sufficient authority to alter nations' domestic setting. Policy initiatives began at the national (PISA) or intergovernmental (Bologna) level and incorporated the respective international organisation by way of a 'controlled inclusion', the goals of which had already been decided upon by national governments. These strategic motivations for shifting contentious political issues to the level of an international institution played a substantial role in both cases.

The 'added value' of our actor-centred *cum* neo-institutionalist analysis as an only partially successful strategic instrumentalisation of international organisations becomes obvious when it is measured against an alternative functionalist interpretation. As far as the behavioural side is concerned, the latter would assume that national governments turn to the international arena because there is a need to acquire additional problem-solving resources.[19] On the outcome side of the argument, this functionalist interpretation of a problem-oriented delegation to international organisations would explain 'institutional choices in terms of the functions a given institution is expected to perform and the effects on policy outcomes it is expected to produce' (Pollack 1997: 102). National governments would take into account even an eventual 'loss of state control' over the political process before approaching the EU or the OECD for the sake of improving overall problem-solving capacity. In regard to our case studies, such consequences through the re-distribution of competence among an increased set of actors, which we have qualified as 'unintended', would therefore not constitute an explanatory puzzle.

However, the obvious empirical evidence of governmental efforts to make strategic use of the international level in both cases clearly marks the limits of this alternative functional interpretation. We have witnessed that the international organisations took advantage of the strategic linkages created by the national governments and

incorporated education policy into their own agenda in a way quite different from what states had originally intended. Their respective projects were gaining inherent inertia, thereby introducing forms of governance and ways of thinking that resulted in a loss of governmental control of the political process from the state. Again, in neither of the cases was this the result of a functional spillover of international competencies into new policy areas, but the result of institutional dynamics and strategic behaviour guided by organisational self-interest. In the case of the Bologna process, 'Europeanisation' turned out to be a boomerang which did not land exactly where intended after its return to the domestic level. The Bologna process will lead to the harmonisation of education systems, although this was not the goal of the states that initiated it. Instead, soft modes of governance facilitate the expansion of the functions of the EU into new policy fields. A strategic actor on its own, the European Commission learned this lesson quickly and immediately applied it in the Copenhagen process. In the case of PISA, involving the OECD for domestic reasons resembled letting in a Trojan horse, as the full implications of this involvement were unintended by participating states that are now under pressure to perform in education.

The result in both cases is that the formerly dominant public sector of education seems today to be spread across *all levels*: state and sub-state entities alike. Whereas recourse to the international level strengthened the national administrations' power over education vis-à-vis their domestic opponents, it also changed and weakened the function of state authorities in education policy *altogether*. In this sense, national governments were strengthened and weakened as political agents at the same time: employing international organisations may have provided the national executive with additional competencies within the domestic institutional division of power, but the weight of public regulators in general declined due to the intrusion of new modes of governance favouring voluntary self-regulatory steering mechanisms and the involvement of non-governmental stakeholders.

Strategic instrumentalisation of international organisations may therefore not only affect the distribution of influence between domestic institutions at the state and the federal level, it may also have unintended consequences for the role of political actors as subjects and agents in the political steering process. In the case of the EU, a new economic rationale was introduced into the field of higher education which brought new non-state actors into play, some of whom then succeeded in acquiring leverage of their own. In the case of the OECD, due to their expertise and reputation, professionals in the field of education succeeded to some extent in taking the political initiative away from politicians. As a result, education policy has become de-politicised: governments and parliaments are not the sole or even dominant agents in political steering processes any more. Instead, new actors put pressure on the political decision makers.

The process we have analysed is still open-ended and should not prematurely be misinterpreted as a permanent loss of state control. Rather and according to our claim that at least some of the consequences which resulted from addressing the level of intergovernmental institutions were indeed unintended, in both cases counter-reactions are likely to take place. Recent efforts at the national and

sub-national level to 'roll back' and change some of the results of the processes analysed here indeed point in such a direction. The German case, for example, provides evidence that such re-adjustments of policies are already under way: as regards the Bologna process, the federal government wants to regain control over the framework for qualifications, while the *Länder* have successfully tried to re-establish their competencies in the field of education during the negotiations about reforming German federalism. On the sub-national level, output-oriented contracts could develop into a new tool for regional governments to reinstall state control over 'autonomous' universities. By controlling the Accreditation Council, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany has established a compulsory accreditation system which will enable them to control the introduction of Bachelor and Master study courses as well as the mechanisms of quality assurance, while at the same time outmanoeuvring competing 'bottom-up' initiatives of university networks.

Similarly, as regards OECD assessments, it seems that the bearable magnitude of criticism has been reached in Germany and it is now actively withdrawing from further assessment through external bodies. In October 2005, *Länder* ministers of education unanimously agreed to pull out from the next OECD study on teachers, curricula and learning, justifying their decision by arguing that Germany should not automatically participate in every comparative study, because contents of different studies would overlap. This decision was taken only shortly after Germany had repeatedly been criticised by the OECD on aspects which make up the very substance of its education system, such as its tripartite school system or the status of teachers as civil servants. In the foreseeable wake of such counter-reactions to unintended consequences, de-nationalisation and de-governmentalisation may therefore not be the ultimate but at least an interim result of a still ongoing process of change.

Notes

1. For a more detailed elaboration of this conceptual argument see Wolf 1999; Moravcsik 1993a; Nordlinger 1981; Skocpol 1979.
2. Similar to our assumption, this is also the starting point of the principal-agent approach applied to international organisations, suggesting that principals (governments) delegate limited authority to agents (international organisations), even though principals know that their agents may have interests of their own (see e.g. Pratt and Zeckhauser 1985, or, more recently, Thatcher and Sweet 2002; Tallberg 2002). A shift of policies to the international level will

be unlikely if there is a high degree of conflict among the principals and if they fear that the agents could abuse their competencies. For the most comprehensive application of the principal-agent approach on international organisations, see Hawkins et al. (2006).

3. For a detailed discussion of the reasons for states to prefer a 'soft' to 'hard' mechanism, see Abbott and Snidal (2000).

4. Barnett and Finnemore (1999, 2004) argue that international organisations are able to 'emancipate' themselves from the states that initially created them for a specific purpose to such an extent that they can develop 'pathologies': they develop the power and propensity for dysfunctional behaviour through which they are often able to benefit (or also terrorise) the international scene; in any case they develop a life of their own and behave differently to their original intended function.

5. The governance approach to public policy assumes that policy making is shared amongst a variety of actors and conducted in a non-hierarchical way. Its origins date back to the debates about neo-corporatism (see among many others Schmitter and Lehmbruch 1979) and policy networks (see e.g. Marin and Mayntz 1991). The rise of the cooperative, enabling or empowering state is attributed to the 'ungovernability' of society and to the failure of the intervening state. Although this transformation implies a change of statehood in the sense of a shift to mere coordination functions, the regulatory 'shadow of hierarchy' may still be cast over societal interactions (see Zürn and Leibfried 2005). For comprehensive studies see Pierre (2000); Rhodes (1997); or Kooiman (2003).

6. Of course, the processes are much more complex and less consistent than our metaphors suggest; in this sense, they must not be taken too literally. In fact, we have employed them deliberately to reduce complexity at the expense of differentiation to highlight and illustrate our core argument about the politics behind the internationalisation of education policy, the eventual limits of strategic behaviour and unintended consequences.

7. Katzenstein and Sil (2004: 16) describe this kind of eclecticism as follows: 'Analytical eclecticism detaches explanatory sketches from the competing metatheoretical systems in which they are embedded. It offers us an opportunity to draw upon clusters of empirical observations, causal logics and interpretations spanning different research traditions. It thus permits us to take advantage of complementarities in the problems we address and the empirical claims we make'.

8. As George and McKeown (1985: 35) explain in their classic study, process tracing constitutes a qualitative method, whereby one seeks 'to investigate and explain the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes'. Process tracing facilitates uncovering the causal mechanisms between conditions and outcomes through an intensive analysis of the sequence of events within a case (Levy 2002: 443). See also George and Bennett (2005); Hall (2003).

9. The interviews were conducted between December 2003 and August 2004. To guarantee the anonymity of interviewees, a coding scheme is applied to hide their identity.

10. The convergence criteria of the Maastricht Treaty and the European Monetary Union have attracted academic attention on this point. See Sandholtz (1993); Putnam (1988: 457); Wolf (2000: 116–126).

11. Among the few exceptions is the work of Enders (2004: 267, 262), which addresses 'building of strategic international relationships' and the 'paradoxes and contradictions' of the internationalisation of higher education policy in the context of multi-level governance. However, his study does not go beyond the level of descriptive conceptualisation.

12. The Copenhagen process is sometimes also called the 'Bruges–Copenhagen' process, since the first initiative in the field of vocational training originated in Bruges a few months prior to the conference in Copenhagen.

13. This does not mean that the policy-related debate about this process is uncontroversial. It includes problems of conflicting aims (harmonisation *and* diversity), accusations of hidden

agendas like the introduction of tuition fees, supposed social selectivity in access to MA programmes and the criticism that the entire process constitutes an unconditional surrender to globalisation pressures. Many have also questioned whether student mobility is really enhanced or rather obstructed by additional bureaucratic and administrative hurdles.

14. In fact, the Attali Report caused misunderstandings during the early stages of the Bologna process. Written in French, it was often confused with the Sorbonne Declaration published in the same year. Many were falsely led to believe that the suggested 3–5–8 system was advocated by the Sorbonne Declaration, although neither it nor the Bologna Declaration actually mention such a system (Interview EU No. 3, 2003).

15. There was, however, one notable exception: the European rectors' conference, now the European University Association (EUA), shared the reform goals of the governments and was already included in the preparation of the declaration. Furlong notes that during the Bologna process for the first time 'a particular set of major stakeholders, that is, the groups representing heads and chief administrators of European universities, had been directly involved from the beginning' (Furlong 2005: 54).

16. This may also be the reason why the OECD has received comparatively little academic attention. Exceptions are the recent works by Armingeon and Beyeler (2004) and Marcussen (2002).

17. Prominent examples include research on the economics of education, the Mediterranean Regional Project, and educational investment and planning.

18. The report showed, for example, a steady decline in science achievement scores over the preceding decade. Twenty-three million American adults and about 13% of all 17-year-olds in the US were considered functionally illiterate, and among minorities the figure ran as high as 40%. Most alarming was that average achievement of high school students on most standardised tests was lower than 26 years before, when Sputnik was launched (see National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983).

19. This explanation has featured prominently in the functional theory of international regimes. See Hasenclever, Mayer and Rittberger (1997); Martin and Simmons (1998).

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Networking Administration in Areas of National Sensitivity: The Commission and European Higher Education

Åse Gornitzka

1 Introduction

Education as a policy area in the European Union (EU) has a weak legal basis for Community action and institution building. It has traditionally been regarded as nationally sensitive; an area that belongs to the core of the nation state and therefore resilient to 'Europe'. Yet, European higher education reveals a complex governance system where multiple levels are in action and interaction, including the supranational level with the European Commission (EC) as the core actor. Strikingly, no attempts have been made to systematically map the nature of the administrative infrastructure of European integration in higher education. This chapter is a first attempt to identify the characteristics of the European administrative capacity with respect to higher education and in particular the administrative networks in several versions that connect the European level to other levels of governance. This chapter asks how the development of European- networked administrative capacity can be understood taking into consideration the traditional national sensitivity of higher education and whether these connections represent a challenge to the assumed hegemony of the nation state in the higher education policy area.

An underlying assumption, spelled out as part of the analytical starting point (part 2), is that a key to understanding such networks lies in the characteristics of the policy area. Consequently, this chapter provides a brief rundown of what constitutes the sensitivity of higher education as a policy area and how this sensitivity has been handled in the EU (part 3). Next, it gives an overview of the administrative infrastructure and network configurations that have been established in this policy area at the European level within the EC and in the expert groups that link the relevant Directorate-General (DG) to other levels of governance in this policy area (part 4). The chapter goes on to explore the dynamics underlying the development of such administrative networks based on a reading of the history of three cases

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of European integration in higher education: the education programmes, European cooperation in quality assurance and mutual recognition of degrees and the role of the commission in the Bologna process (part 5). These observations are the basis for a concluding discussion of the potential challenge that networked administration poses for the nation state prerogative in higher education policy.

2 Administrative Networks: An Analytical Starting Point

If we see political integration as institutionalisation, a sign of increase in the level of integration in Europe is the development of common European institutions and administrative capabilities (Olsen 2001: 327). Administrating a policy area requires a minimum measure of organised attention, organisational autonomy and capacity for gathering area-relevant information as well as preparing decisions, actions and proposals and implementing actions, programmes and policies. If the EC as the independent executive would organise the supranational responsibilities for the policy area in question in a systematic manner and establish independent administrative capacities that can handle the commission's services with respect to this policy area, then this should be seen as an indication of evolving European integration. The commission is in this respect unique compared to the secretariats of other international organisations in its capacity to potentially act independently as an executive (Egeberg 2006a). Administrative capacity building at the European level might also imply setting up European agencies (Geradin and Petit 2004). The build-up of a sector-specific DG and European agencies is in itself important as an indicator of integration within a policy area. Moreover, such institutionalisation of European involvement in specific policy areas is important because it impacts on the dynamics of integration by creating autonomous capacity to pursue integrative agendas (Stone Sweet and Sandholtz 1997).

Few, if any, organisations can claim to operate without links to their environments. This also applies to executive organisations. They connect and establish links both horizontally and vertically and such interconnections form networks. Without such connections, executive organisations would be 'autistic', unable to reach out to, interact with and respond to, their surroundings. The EC is no different from other executives in this respect. Rather, it appears a particularly paramount characteristic of the commission – a trait that can, amongst other things, be attributed to the cap put on the size of the commission (Egeberg 2006a).

The concept of 'network' is used in a number of ways in the study of public administration as well as of European integration (Schout and Jordan 2005). It can also be used to denote a preferred steering arrangement where networks represent an alternative and normatively superior coordinating mechanism to hierarchical and market steering models. This chapter is not concerned with network theory nor with the normative qualities of network as a governance arrangement; here, the term, network is used as an analytical tool to characterise the properties of interactions between actors. The focus is on the organisational arrangements that connect the supranational executive to other administrative levels in the higher education sector. This concerns the formal and publicly recognised connections that the commis-

sion forges with other units and the organisational structures that are part of the administrative capacities that have evolved in one particular policy area. The ambition of this chapter is not to chart all sorts of links of an executive organisation such as the commission, nor the possible backchannels of policy making and the personal and informal policy networks. Moreover, I do not map the interconnections between the commission and other EU institutions. I use a simple classificatory heuristic: types of actors involved and content of networks. These two dimensions combined might allow us to tentatively approach the issue of what challenge – if any – these connections represent to the assumed hegemony of the nation state in the higher education policy area.

A distinction can be made between the connections of the commission with national administrations through commission committees and expert groups, connections with national agencies through agency networks and with trans-national networks as well as connections at sub-national levels. Distinguishing between different types of actors that become connected to the supranational organisation is highly relevant for exploring the possible loss of control over a policy area from the national to the supranational level. Egeberg (2006b), in particular, argues that the EC, by connecting to levels other than national ministries, will assert its independence from member states as a supranational executive. By categorising commission networks according to content, we can refer to notions of policy instruments and 'stages heuristic' of policy processes, that is, networks for policy making and development and networks for the implementation of EU policies, regulations and programmes. In addition, networks can be forged that are not directly connected to any specific decision-making cycle or stage, that is, general connections for transmitting information.

Under the conditions of assumed national sensitivity, we might expect a state-centric perspective on European integration to have more relevance than a perspective that sees European integration as diluting the sovereignty of the individual states (Marks, Hooghe and Blank 1996) and 'gradually, but inevitably, reduc[ing] the capacity of the member states to control outcomes' (Stone Sweet and Sandholtz 1997: 300). If, indeed, national sensitivity is the core conditioning factor we could, first of all, see limited build-up of supranational organisations and limited organisational atomisation of European institutions relevant to this policy area. Second, we would expect there to be little basis for building connections between the European level and other levels of governance that do not run through the national-governmental level. Third, it can be argued that administrative infrastructure and networks would tend to be set up as information channels rather than as more 'challenging' policy making and implementation networks.[1]

3 Education, National Sensitivity and Europe

3.1 The Sensitivity of Education

Since the Coal and Steel Community, education has been considered to be an area of national sensitivity in the European context. This consideration has framed the

European level interest and involvement in this area. It is based on the recognition that there is pronounced and legitimate diversity between national systems of education. Other policy areas also have traditionally had claims of legitimate diversity. Scharpf (2002) refers to national pension systems, for instance, where the imposition of a common European solution overriding national diversity and minority positions could be seriously disruptive and unacceptable to national constituencies, which in turn would be upsetting for the EU. In other areas subject to European integration, diversity does not have the same status allowing for a legitimate continuity of national sovereignty (Scharpf 2002: 22–27).

Why is education then an area with legitimate claims of national diversity? That there is severe national diversity at all levels of education in Europe is clear from any reading of structural overviews of educational systems, statistics on student participation, or funding and regulatory regimes within Europe. The structural diversity of higher education systems in Europe should also be interpreted as expressions of national heritage and history (Leitner 1993). From this, it does not naturally follow that this diversity is 'sensitive'. The legitimacy of the national diversity in education and the resulting sensitivity have a number of foundations. To start with, education is a service of general public obligation that public authorities have to provide, as long as education at primary level is compulsory. How far this obligation extends, differs from system to system. Especially, the private versus public responsibility for higher education is blended in a number of ways across Europe.

Second, national sensitivity springs from the educational institutions' role as instrument for transferring the cultural–national heritage, that is, these institutions form nationally embedded *socialising institutions*. Historically, the battle over school issues has revolved precisely around what kind of identity schools should represent and what kind of allegiances they should promote. As institutions, schools create and shape identities; they provide, for example, through history and language teaching, national collective frameworks for interpreting the past, harbouring the collective memories of societies and transmitting the 'national stories' (March and Olsen 2000). The nation state with its education system is also the locus of linguistic conformity, historically, a core aspect of nation building (Rokkan 1975). Linguistic conformity implies abiding by the norms of a national standard and the dominant language(s) of the nation; for instance, in primary schools, norms of national languages are transferred through teaching and learning of the most important basic skills – reading and writing.

This is, in turn, linked to linguistic plurality in Europe, which is clearly an area of legitimate diversity in the EU and celebrated as part of its cultural hallmark (Mayer and Palmowski 2004: 582). Universities and colleges across Europe also share the linguistic diversity even though the international elements are much more present in teaching and learning in tertiary education. Higher education trains teachers who eventually end up as custodians of linguistic and other norms in domestic school systems. In most countries, the content of teaching and also the way in which teaching and learning takes place are prerogatives of the nation state and subject to national homogenisation. Also, in higher education, the curricular content of study

programmes is, in many European countries, under a national regulatory and coordinating regime (Gornitzka et al. 2001).

The national sensitivity rests, moreover, on the mutual dependencies between educational institutions and the nation state: political institutions sustain schools/universities and schools/universities sustain other institutions of a political system (March and Olsen 2000: 167). The link between nation/state building and education is evident in the history of European universities which shows how such institutions were major symbols and instruments of emerging nation states (Olsen 2007; Gornitzka and Maassen 2007) that served essential functions for other national institutions especially in providing qualified professionals for the civil service, judicial system, health care and education. Technological innovations and scientific knowledge have been intricately linked to the political organisation and economic modernisation of nation states (Jacobsen 1978). Also, other parts of the educational system have strong links to the needs of the economy through the public provision of qualified labour and investment in 'human capital'.

3.2 Enter Europe

Education featured on and off as an issue on the agenda in the early history of the European Community (Corbett 2005). The Treaty of Rome linked higher education to the Community's agenda through the articles on 'an institution of university status', the freedom of movement of people and goods and vocational training. Already in the 1950s, education had a position in the European integration activities triggered mainly by the internal market efforts and the link to vocational training. As emphasised by Petit (2003, 2006), there was also a cultural rationale underlying the attention given to education in the early years of the European Community, in particular, promoting the education of the idea of 'Europe' to younger generations. Another example from the early 1960s concerns the council decision on the general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy (European Council 1963) and an agreement on a policy for mutual recognition of qualifications.

The Maastricht Treaty states, as one of the objectives of the EU, to contribute to education 'of quality' (article 3). It made, for the first time, a reference to the European dimension in education and culture (article 126). The Maastricht Treaty established Community action on subsidiary terms and also made the distinction between education and training in the context of European integration (Murphy 2003; Corbett 2006). The Maastricht Treaty explicitly excluded harmonisation of national laws and regulations in the education area. The treaty contains the following main article relevant for education:

> The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action.[2]

The Community programmes have been the EU's main instruments in the area of higher education. The rationale behind the Erasmus programme (from 1986) was not

merely the idea of promoting mobility that paralleled the free movement of workers within the European labour market, but it clearly stated the ambitions of developing a European identity through mobility of students, in addition to the labour market asset that 'a European experience' would give. This has been done not only through working on removing the barriers to mobility of students and teachers, but also by actively promoting mobility through incentive systems. The core of this EU involvement in higher education has consisted of mobility programmes, at least until the end of the 1990s. These activities have been perceived to be desirable and not tainted by the same type of sensitivity attached to the Europeanisation of the curriculum or educational structures.

4 The European Commission's Network Configurations in Higher Education

4.1 Administrative Capacity at the European Level

Since its major reorganisation around the 1973 enlargement, the EC has had some administrative capacity in the area of education. First, education was formally recognised as a division in one of the DGs (DG for Research, Science and Education). Later, a special DG for education and culture was set up (DG EAC). The administrative capacity at the supranational level is currently estimated to consist of about 550 officials and temporary agents, which is far less than the administrative capacities assigned to European research policy, which is about 1100 staff (Spence and Stevens 2006: 176–177). As such, there is limited capacity for policy development and implementation. But it has, nonetheless, represented a basis for autonomous action at the supranational level and for developing connections to the other levels of administration and education policy actors. Since the DG is organised according to sector and sub-sectors, it also attracts similarly organised administrations and societal interest groups (Egeberg 2006c: 42). Internally, DG EAC is organised according to policy themes (especially levels and sectors of education) and also, more recently, according to the function of the supranational executive. A re-organisation in 2005 separated more clearly the policy-oriented tasks from the administration of programmes and actions and was designed to better integrate education and professional training according to a 'lifelong learning logic' (DG EAC 2005).

As far as higher education is concerned, the development of EU administration has not come in the shape of European agencies, contrary to many other policy fields (Egeberg 2006a: 7–8; Geradin and Petit 2004; Ugland and Veggelend 2006: 150–151). However, in the tangent policy area of vocational education and training, two major European agencies have been established. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), established in 1975 (European Council 2004), was one of the first specialised and decentralised agencies set up to provide scientific and technical know-how in a specific field and promote exchanges of ideas between different European partners. Its function is predominantly ideational: to provide information on and analysis of vocational education

and training systems and policies, to contribute to the development and coordination of research, to disseminate information and to be a forum for the exchange of ideas.[3] Cedefop is in itself the hub of a network of national administrations and expertise in the area of vocational training.[4] Similarly, the European Training Foundation (ETF) was established to contribute to the development of the education and training systems of the EU partner countries and to promote knowledge sharing and expertise development.[5]

In this respect, the tasks and responsibilities of these agencies illustrate the informational role assigned to the European level in a policy area with limited mandate and few discretionary powers. Also, these two agencies have no formal decision-making power relative to the commission – that is, all relevant decisions are taken by the commission (cf. Geradin and Petit 2004: 48).

4.2 Administrative Networks and the Commission's Expert Groups

The EC's committee structure is an important part of the EU system of governance. It represents the expertise structure underlying the drafting of legislative proposals and preparation of new policies, as well as the linking of partners in putting programmes and policies into action. It links member states' governments and different levels of administration with the commission (cf. Egeberg et al. 2006). These committees and the administrations that are connected through them are part of what makes the EU a 'living multi-level system' (Wessels 1998: 210). DG EAC's structure of committees and expert groups is a poignant indication of the networked administrative systems dealing within education and training as a policy area. The DG EAC has a well-developed committee structure that connects the EC to education policy actors and expertise across Europe: in 2006 it organised 70 expert groups.[6] It ranked eighth of all the DGs in terms of number of expert groups. Several of the policy areas with far more legal responsibilities and resources assigned to the EU level have less expert groups (see Table 1 and Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2008). This indicates that the national sensitivity of a policy area does not preclude the setting up of rather elaborate connections between the European executive within this sector. We could see such collaborative arrangements as a way for the EU to provide itself with an administrative infrastructure without more formal responsibilities being transferred to the Community level.

Most of these groups have mixed memberships and national administrations and competent national authorities are most frequently connected to the commission via such groups. The DG EAC's expert committees are thus predominantly venues of administrative interaction. Independent experts/academics are the second most frequently represented type of actor. Non-governmental organisations and social partners are also present in these structures.

These expert groups have thus contributed to the establishment of elaborate networks between DG EAC officials from national administrations involved in the education policy area and trans-national actors. Less than 40% of these are permanent and/or have formal status, implying that their sustainability is uncertain

Table 1 Number of expert groups organised by the commission's DG in 2006*

Research	129
Environment	126
Enterprise and industry	120
Taxation and customs	95
Energy and transport	94
Health and consumer protection	89
Eurostat	85
Education and culture	70
Agriculture	64
Employment and social affairs	62
Regional policy	58
Internal market	51

* Only DGs with more than 50 expert groups are included in the table.
Source: Gornitzka and Sverdrup (2008).

(Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2008). Consequently we cannot argue, based on these data, that these expert groups represent the long-term, organised connections of stable policy networks or of an education policy 'epistemic community'.[7] Nonetheless, they represent the proliferated connections between the supranational executive, national administrations, technical experts and the various NGOs that operate at the European level.

The types of function performed by these groups are also mixed. These networks are essential for programme development and execution and for drafting communications and other types of policy development activities. Most of these groups are given the task of coordination and exchange of views, but several are also assigned tasks in preparation of policy and policy definition and providing assistance to the commission in the preparatory stages. Monitoring and evaluation and expert advice for commission studies in the area are also listed as part of the tasks of such committees. We cannot ascertain the actual working mode of these committees with the current data, but there are indications of what type of EU activity they relate to. Many of them are set up in connection with the EU's education programmes and also in preparation for the new integrated lifelong learning programme (see below). Several of the expert groups are set up to deal with more specific policy development issues, such as the expert group on the European Qualifications Framework and the one on EUROPASS.

The use of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in education has made an imprint on the development of Community administration in education, including higher education. In practice, it seems that the DG EAC has used the OMC to create an organised connection between national ministries and non-territorial organisations and associations. About a third of the DG EAC expert groups in 2006 (cf. Table 1) have been established with reference to the OMC. The content of what goes on inside the OMC structure is, on the other hand, more elusive in this sector. The indicative data on the working groups under the OMC suggest that these groups do not have one single uniform mission, but have various formal mandates and also

interpretations of their mandates. On the other hand, the OMC in its organisational set up has been a networking opportunity for the DG EAC (Gornitzka 2006).

5 Underlying Dynamics of Networking Administration: Three Explorative Cases

5.1 Administrative Networks of Community Action: The European Union's Higher Education Programmes

The *Action Programme in the Field of Education* (formally launched in 1976) marked a milestone also because it represented an institutionalisation of education as a policy area. It gave the DG for education something specific to do, and the administration of that programme entailed a permanent organisational capacity attached to this area and a budget item to administer. With the 1980s came the advent of an increasing number of Community actions, most importantly the launching of the prime mobility programme in higher education: Erasmus. The establishment of Erasmus and other education programmes was by no means uncontested and their story has been phrased as a battle between national versus Community interests (De Wit and Verhoeven 2001). Despite the controversies, a steady increase in funds available for these programmes can be observed over the years (Beukel 2001). The Erasmus programme established mobility in *higher* education as among the least nationally sensitive areas of EC/EU involvement in education. While after the Maastricht Treaty the education programmes expanded in scope and financial size, a major bone of contention was still the balance between Community action and member states in the *implementation* of the education programmes.

In 1995, Socrates became the umbrella of the EU's education programmes. The Socrates decision became one of the first where the co-decision procedure was applied (Benedetto 2005). The council was in major disagreement with the commission and the European Parliament over the balance of decentralised versus centralised measures (Steunenberg and Selck 2006). The Socrates compromise meant that the Community programme was kept in volume, but with partly decentralised implementation and with a more active role of national executive bodies than the commission initially proposed (De Wit and Verhoeven 2001: 210–211). Unlike the central actions of the programme and the EU's research and development programmes, decentralised actions are distributed nationally and not according to European level competition for funds.

5.1.1 Connecting to National Ministries and Agencies

At the EU level, there are dense organisational structures that carry the education programmes and these also involve a range of experts and national civil servants that prepare and are involved in the running of them. These are multi-annual programmes that have time to establish themselves when the 'dust settles' between the at times

highly conflict-ridden processes when their profile and size are determined. For the questions raised in this chapter, the case of Erasmus/Socrates illustrates the kinds of connections that have evolved between the commission and the national and sub-national administration.

The Socrates committee is a comitology committee led by the commission and its members are appointed by national ministries. It is the most active of the comitology committees in the area of education.[8] It has operated over two programme periods with, to some extent, a stable membership from national ministries, and as such it has become the basis for informal and durable policy networks (Fouilleux, De Maillard and Smith 2002: 79; Informant interview May 2005). It has an important function in that the commission is required to consult this committee for the development of the programme's profile, its annual programme for implementation and budget issues and also the rules and procedures for running the programme.

The connections between the commission and national administrations linked to the education programmes also come in the shape of an information network, Eurydice. Eurydice, the Information Network on Education in Europe, was set up by the commission in 1980. It is a network consisting of a European unit and national information units (most of them based in national education *ministries*). Since 1995, Eurydice has been an integral part of Socrates. Eurydice is an institutional network for gathering, monitoring, processing and circulating comparable information on education systems and policies throughout Europe. Eurydice covers the education systems of the EU member states, the EEA countries and the EU candidate countries involved in the Socrates programme. It is in the hands of the commission to coordinate the Eurydice network and act as its link with the national administrations.

With regard to higher education in the Socrates/Erasmus programmes, the actual implementation is two-fold. 'Centralised actions' are managed by the commission.[9] On these actions the DG education deals directly with the higher education institutions that apply for participation. The role of national agencies is limited to these actions although they are responsible for national PR activities and for providing information.

The 'decentralised actions' of Socrates/Erasmus are managed by national agencies designated in the countries taking part in the programme. These units are in turn linked to the commission (Commission of the European Communities 2004). For instance, the expert group established for national agencies involved in the new lifelong learning programmes (see below) organises the directors of these agencies in order to 'ensure consistent implementation of the LLL Programme and its actions across participating countries by a regular monitoring, consultation and exchange of information with the National Agencies'.[10] The profile of such national agencies varies: they may be agencies charged with the national task of academic programme development or internationalisation or they are agencies that have been set up specifically to deal with the range of EU education programmes and/or with Socrates/Erasmus (Huisman and Van der Wende 2005).

The Socrates network connects national agencies that are not particularly uniform, yet they also deal directly with the commission in addition to the national edu-

cation ministry in the practical implementation of the programmes. Their orientation is towards fulfilling the rules provided by the EU programmes (Hackl 2001), as these administrations are the caretakers of the rules that apply to these programmes. Also the rules set by the commission for running the decentralised actions have been seen as so detailed that 'in practice little scope is left for action at national or local level' (Regeringskansliet 2003: 27).

Consequently, an outcome of the Erasmus programme, also as part of Socrates I and II, has been to create permanent administrative attention on the European dimension in higher education at the national ministerial and agency level, and those units in turn are networked with Community-level administration. The national agencies represent permanent administrative capacity attached to EU programmes and are heavily involved in promotion and distribution of information to subnational actors. Even if the attention is turned to Europe this does not necessarily imply that the loyalty of these units is to the commission. There is some evidence of a Janus-faced relationship between the national agencies and the commission: the latter is a facilitator but also a controlling unit that imposes a number of irksome reporting requirements on the national institutions (cf. Teichler et al. 2000; evaluation of Socrates I and II (Commission of the European Communities 2001, 2004) and national evaluations reports e.g. Pirrie et al. 2003; Regeringskansliet 2003; Nuffic 2003).

The new generation of education programmes has been integrated into one Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–13) covering learning from 'childhood to aged'. The biggest budget item in this programme is still Erasmus for higher education. A requirement of this integrated programme has been for each member state to appoint one single national agency to replace the various national organisations that have been involved in the administration of the different programmes under Socrates until now. A national ministry cannot be designated as a national agency (European Parliament and Council 2006b). This indicates that, from 2007 on, the multi-level administrative infrastructure of Community action will become more streamlined.

5.1.2 Connecting to Administration at the Local Level

After 20 years of operation, a large part of European universities has been in some way or other involved in the Erasmus and Socrates/Erasmus programmes. The Erasmus University Cooperation scheme, for instance, included in 2005 more than 80% of all European universities across 31 countries.[11] Administrative consequences are also seen at the level of the individual universities across Europe, in the sense that the Community programme has created institutional level 'partners'. The structure of the programme in the beginning implied a direct relationship of the commission with individual students and university departments that were involved in the programme largely bypassing the national and the central level of the University. With the transition to the Socrates programme, the central university level involvement was strengthened (Teichler et al. 2000).

Administrative implications of Socrates/Erasmus include the development of a managerial stratum of officers and specialised administrative units at the central

level of universities and at faculties and departments (Olsen 1998; Gornitzka et al. 1998). Universities have increasingly set up organisational arrangements and administrative units to deal with their involvement in the programmes. These have also in many cases been the spur for the establishment of permanent internationalisation offices and for centralising and formalising the mobility activities within European universities (Olsen 1998; Nuffic 2003: 19; Huisman and Van der Wende 2005).

A survey conducted among universities participating in the Socrates programme showed that 40% of universities had established units exclusively related to this programme and 30% had staff uniquely assigned to administer the institution's involvement (Maiworm and Teichler 2000: 53–56). Many of the administrative units and staff in charge of European programmes at the local level are meshed with more general administrative units in the area of internationalisation. They are not homogenous organisational solutions to the administration of EU programmes (Huisman and Van der Wende 2005). Yet such administrative capabilities represent the university/college level's organisational capacity for attending to the European programmes that bypass the national level.

Higher education institutions across Europe are investing time, attention and personnel into knowing the rules and regulations of Community action programmes. In a sense, they are sunk costs where the costs involved for the universities exceed the narrow financial benefits they can receive from the programme (Vabø and Smeby 2003; Williams and Evans 2005: 82).

Finally, another long-term administrative consequence of the EU education programmes has been the establishment of European associations and interest groups that were formed, amongst other things, to lobby in Brussels (e.g. Erasmus Student Network), as well as the increased activities of stakeholder associations that were already in existence. As we shall see below, these trans-national organisations later became an important part of the commission's networks that were formed in connection with European activities outside the programmes (Hackl 2001).

5.2 Calibrating European Higher Education Through Agency Networks: Recognition of Degrees and Quality Assurance

Referring back to Europe's mandate as expressed in the treaty, the European dimension becomes legitimately (re-)activated when the issue of quality of education is raised. The area of mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other formal qualifications has a long tradition of Community activities, as it is regarded as essential for facilitating the free movement of people and services. Since it was linked to the area of vocational training, it had a much clearer legal basis for Community action. The first directive in this area was adopted already in the 1970s for medicine and health professions and in 1988 a directive was adopted for a general system of recognition of higher education diplomas for professional education and training 'with a duration of three years or more' (Council of the European Communities 1989). The directive was followed by the establishment of an agency net-

work, NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres), the origins of which date back to 1984. It was intended to improve academic recognition of diplomas and study periods in EU member states and associated countries. NARIC was linked to a parallel network, ENIC (European Network of Information Centres), set up by the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The NARIC network is financially supported by the EU, as the smallest item in the Socrates budget – although its rights to automatic and exclusive EU funding have been weakened under the Socrates II programme.

The network involves the coordinators of the EU directives on recognition for professional purposes. NARIC's constituents are the *national recognition centres* designated by the national ministries of education to be in charge of the implementation of policies on the recognition of degrees, but their scope of action may differ. In the majority of member states, higher education institutions have the autonomy to make their own decisions on the admission of foreign students and the exemption of parts of courses of study programmes that students may be granted on the basis of education undertaken abroad. As a result, most NARICs do not make decisions, but offer on request information and advice on foreign education systems and qualifications. The ENIC/NARIC networks see it as their task to improve common recognition standards as part of the development of the European Higher Education Area, thus their work is linked to the implementation of the Bologna process.

NARIC's relationship to the DG EAC is not formally elaborated and is subject to some confusion among the network members. The view on the role of the DG EAC underlines primarily its role as funder and coordinator of the network. The national agencies in the NARIC network also underscore that their connections to the DG EAC and the status as an EU network belonging to the EU structure give added recognition nationally as 'an authoritative body' (DG EAC 2002).

The more general area of *quality assurance and accreditation* in higher education is contested; yet, it is an area where the national prerogative is being tugged at by the embryonic development of common European standards *and* efforts of decentralisation to the higher education institutions themselves. What triggered or boosted this process at the European level is not readily ascertained, but a major contributor was a pilot project organised by the commission in the 1990s. This is claimed to have laid the foundations of the council recommendation on quality assurance in 1998 (European Council 1998). In 1999–2000 a network of national quality assurance agencies was established (ENQA).

The commission was central to the formation of this network. The first meeting of ENQA's general assembly was, for instance, co-chaired by a representative of DG education and the establishment was funded also through the Socrates programme. However, it is doubtful whether ENQA can be seen as a network with the commission as the hub; rather, ENQA emphasises that it acts in its own capacity. This was further underlined when ENQA changed its status from network to association. Membership in ENQA is open to quality assurance agencies in all signatory states to Bologna and as such it is not restricted to the EU member states.

Also, this network has become closely related to the Bologna process and its implementation. ENQA was fortified with a concrete mission given by the Bologna

follow-up meeting in 2003 in Berlin. It provided ENQA with a double mandate to first develop a peer review system for quality assurance agencies and second to develop an agreed upon set of standards and procedures for national quality assurance systems. The commission on the other hand has used the ENQA network directly in its proposal for recommendations of the Council and the European Parliament. In 2004 the commission proposed, drawing on the work of the ENQA network, the establishment of a European Register of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies where such agencies are subject to assessment and accreditation as to whether they meet the common European standards for such agencies (European Commission 2004). The proposal stated that European universities should be free to choose where they wanted to get their accreditation for their activities and that they should not be limited by nationality in choice of accreditation agency, thus implying a potential challenge to a traditional national ministerial responsibility towards universities across Europe.[12] The idea of having a European *agency* (or *agencies*) performing these functions is at present not seen as a viable and acceptable option (Musselin 2005). The question then would be what role the commission would play in a European *networked* solution to support such a register. The Council and European Parliament recommendation assigns a networking role for the commission to support cooperation between universities/colleges, national agencies and administrations and to monitor the developments in quality assurance at the national level and the European cooperation activities (European Parliament and Council 2006a).

5.3 External Representation of the European Union: The Role of the Commission in the Bologna Process

In 1991, the EC issued a *Memorandum on Higher Education* that signalled the ambitions of a broader and more active role of the European level in the area of higher education policy (Commission of the European Communities 1991). Overall, the memorandum was not well received by the major member states (Petit 2003), implying in practice in many respects an end to the EU's ambitions to develop a formal responsibility in the area of higher education policy, at least for the time being.

Some years later, four governments (Italy, France, Great Britain and Germany) initiated an intergovernmental process with the intention of developing a European Higher Education Area *outside* the framework of the EU. This initiative formed the basis for the Bologna process. The role of the EC was limited in the initial stages of this process, but the commission enlarged its role in the follow-up to the Bologna Declaration (Van der Wende and Huisman 2004: 24). The Declaration set up an extensive menu of areas of cooperation and in 1999 there was no obvious way for an intergovernmental structure to coordinate and survey the implementation of the items on the agenda. Also, parts of the Bologna process promoted initiatives that had been developed in the course of the EU's education programmes, notably the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Diploma

Supplement, and the issues related to common European quality standards in higher education (see above) (Cerych 2002).

The way in which the commission entered the Bologna process illustrates the multifaceted aspect of the administrative infrastructure that has emerged in European higher education. The administrative capabilities of the commission, its capacity for acting independently and the organised networks of the DG for education should be seen as one of the bridges that connected the supranational executive to the intergovernmental process towards establishing the European Higher Education Area.

The Bologna process follow-up activities include a number of monitoring studies and reports. The commission has provided funding for, and in other ways contributed to, the stocktaking exercises of the Bologna process and in doing this it has drawn on its networks, especially Eurydice (DG EAC 2005; European Commission – EAC 2003). In consequence, part of the information and documents that have been essential to the development of the Bologna process is processed 'through Brussels'. This information has also involved stakeholders, such as the European University Association (EUA), as paid information providers who have produced core publications such as *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education, I, II and III*. The latter documents have preceded the bi-annual Bologna meetings of the education ministers. In addition, the commission has organised seminars and conferences on numerous issues relating to the Bologna process and thus has further acted in its informational role. The permanent administrative capacities and 'stayer qualities' of the commission have made it a central player in what started as an intergovernmental process.

6 Networked Administration – A Challenge to the National Prerogative?

The commission has forged a number of links that demonstrate the multi-level connections that have hosted the Europeanisation of higher education. The EU's involvement has gradually formed a basis for administrative networks to be established. First of all, the functional differentiation of the commission services that organisationally separated education from other policy sectors was a crucial step. It created a basis for action and clear access points for actors organised along the sectoral line. Second, having traced the histories of some of these connections, it is rather striking that the Erasmus/Socrates programmes have been the 'placenta' that nourished the initial establishment and development of such connections. This implies that the programmes have been an important basis for extending the activities of the EU in this area. In practical terms, it has especially meant that the costs of such activities have found a budget line in the Socrates funds.

However, these connections are not of identical quality. Some agency networks are more permanently welded to the commission through funding and/or secretariat functions, for example, Eurydice and NARIC; others are connections with respect to

which at one stage the commission had a parenthood function, yet the 'family ties' have been loosened considerably, as in the case of ENQA. The story of how national agencies have been connected to the commission is also a tale of the increasing pressure that has been built up to establish national agencies that administer European standards of quality and recognition of qualifications and frameworks for measuring qualifications. These pressures stem from both the commission led/supported activities and the outcomes of the intergovernmental process to establish the European Higher Education Area and not in the least the interaction between them. However, the developments in quality assurance as seen from the perspective of national actors are nationally determined and controlled (Witte 2006). It is untenable to assign the EC the role as the main ideational entrepreneur, or transmission belt for transporting European concepts, that has generated this process of national level agencification. As argued by Kohler–Koch (2002: 7) on the basis of a study of the EU's regional policy, such views on the role of the commission and its networks are likely to underestimate the significance of parallel developments, competing networks and ideas, as well as travelling ideas that do not materialise into practice. The agencification of quality assurance in higher education is a process that has run parallel and co-evolved with the developments at the European level. On the other hand, these national agencies have, undoubtedly with the assistance of the commission, created formal national agency networks that may come to represent a challenge to or change in national ministerial control. The extent to which such networks are 'at the disposal of' and in consensus with the EC is, on the other hand, questionable.

The national *legal* responsibilities for higher education are in essence neither contested directly by the treaty nor by the commission's development of administrative capacities in this area. Rather, the DG EAC sees itself as defender of the treaty paragraph. The network configuration we have seen might just be the pattern one can expect when the commission tries to make the most out of a sector's legal and historical parameters that combine weak legal provisions and national sensitivity/diversity. Some of the commission's connections in the area of higher education are in this sense 'networks of compensation'. The commission's strength in this sector is certainly not coming from its legal basis, but from the resources it can offer for sub-national institutions, the possible opportunity to circumvent the national grip on higher education institutions and the additional legitimation it gives to the trans-national European associations. The commission's 'competitive advantage' here would be its centrality in the European decision-making procedures with respect to the education programmes and the initiatives that it can provide in this sector. The commission is unique as a permanent nexus in this policy sector. Its position would be hard to fill for any other national administration or international organisation's secretariat as it connects permanent administrative capacity with trans-national actors, agencies and national administrations and not in the least provides the link to the general infrastructure of the EU outside the education sector. It has also shown how it can act independently of member states in its external representation within the Bologna process.

The content of most of the connections and networks goes under the label of *information.* Even the network that has the foundation in a European directive

(NARIC) is also presented as a network of information and advice. Seemingly, these connections do not challenge the regulative power of the national governments directly. However, several of the commission's connections that we have seen developing in this policy area are not passive information channels; they have been used in preparation for the commission's own policy development and in its proposals for Council/European Parliament recommendations. The connections between national agencies and sub-national actors and the commission also imply a blending of the implementation of the commission's programmes with other activities. This is also the case with the links established through the OMC.

Much of what goes on in the channels that link the commission to European higher education concerns the establishment of European rules and standards that are able to handle the pronounced diversity of higher education systems (Sandebring 2004), notably without creating a European level legal framework. This is especially evident in the area of quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. Also, the story of the commission and its connections alludes to a wider ideational and normative convergence in this sector. Such convergence may occur when national experts and ministry and agency representatives meet regularly in commission committees and working groups, in seminars and conferences and are routinely exposed to the information provided by amongst others the commission (Gornitzka 2006).

However, processes of ideational convergence are slow-moving, organic and not readily identifiable as chains of cause and effect. A likely assumption is that the work that has been going on within the commission's networks and by the commission itself over the years has 'massaged' the minds of national policy makers and the academic communities involved (cf. Radaelli 2004: 10). We might speculate that part of the challenge to the nation state in higher education is the result of a cognitive/normative change that has loosened the 'iron grip' of the nation state especially by framing higher education policy as an economic issue referring to the 'global challenge' that cannot be met without common European solutions (Maassen and Olsen 2007). In this respect, the connections that the commission has forged suggest more of a subtle than an overt challenge to the nation state's prerogative in higher education.

Intergovernmental reassertion in the shape of the Bologna process has not slowed the process of Europeanisation, even though it may have challenged the core role of the commission as a policy initiator (Hingel 2001). The Bologna process has served to connect many of the issues that the commission worked on in the pre-Bologna stage and has given them an 'intergovernmental' face. After the initial hiatus, the networks that connected the commission to several layers of administration in higher education have come into play also under the auspices of 'Bologna' as a state-to-state led process.

The portrayal of the commission connections that have developed over a long period and in the context of several European level processes could possibly give the impression of the commission being the dynamic centre of networks that challenge the national control over a sensitive area. That would attribute an exaggerated transformative power to the commission and overlook the limitations of the analysis presented here. It must be emphasised that this chapter has kept the focus on the

commission and its connections outside other EU institutions and therefore under-reported its interactions with the council and the European Parliament. All of these institutions have or have had roles to play in developments described above, especially the Education Council, and the mere focus on the commission's role may have inflated its capacity to act independently.

Furthermore, a parallel challenge to the national prerogative of higher education comes from within the domestic level with the changing relationship between national governments and higher education institutions. Several forces have been tugging at the national prerogative with respect to higher education: supranational developments in combination with the trans-national forces and trends towards delegation and institutional autonomy, a changing balance between market and hierarchy in higher education and the strengthening of the regional authority level (Gornitzka et al. 2005).

A further limitation lies in the lack of a comparative baseline – the assumption of national sensitivity and sector characteristics as impacting on the development of Community administration cannot be addressed properly without cross-sector comparison. However, the accounts of the historical development can be used as a first step towards understanding the impact of the national sensitivities of policy sectors in the development of European administrative capacity. Such sensitivities are not necessarily an inherent and durable characteristic of a policy sector, but subject to change.

7 Conclusions

The mapping of the emergence of commission connections presented here points to core conditions for the establishment of such network configurations. First, the institutionalisation of education as a European policy area through the establishment of commission *administrative capacities* and, second, the subsequent establishment of *incentive programmes*. This gave education, and especially higher education, a common staff and a budget at the European level and consequently, capabilities for analysis, planning and decision making that have proved essential for the way in which the European level has gradually reached and connected to national sector administrations, the agency level, to trans-national associations and to the level of universities and colleges across Europe.

The 'sensitive climate' of this sector has not been conducive to any agencification at the EU level, at least not with respect to *higher* education. Such a climate has, on the other hand, not hampered the growth of an elaborate committee structure of the DG EAC. These have become an important aspect of a European multi-level administrative infrastructure in this sector. In the first place, this links national ministries to each other and to the commission. connections that challenge the nation state prerogative in higher education have also developed as part of European expert groups, in agency networks and in the implementation of European programmes: agencies, trans-national associations, expertise networks, university/college admin-

istration are linked to the commission and to each other outside of the immediate reach of national ministries' of education.

The evidence from the overview presented in this chapter suggests that European links made to the European level have entailed changes in the administrative structures of ministries, agencies and higher education institutions across Europe. Whether these changes are at the margins and of little consequence to the larger national and administrative infrastructure we cannot tell. At any rate, such changes have to be seen in combination with the changes in the governance arrangements that have been and are taking place at the national and sub-national levels.

Without a regulative role, most of these European networks are centred on handling information and as such they do not represent any overt challenge to the nation–state's legal or funding prerogative of higher education in Europe. Consequently, a discussion of challenges to the national governance of higher education systems easily turns into a discussion of the importance of ideas and ideational networks. The patterns and development of network configurations in higher education pointed to here, underline the need to further investigate the role of ideas, mutual learning and standardisation in the integration process and the role networks of administrations across levels of governance play in the integration of higher education in Europe.

Notes

1. I base my analysis on historical reviews, official documents and administrative data (accessible on the Web) and other studies.
2. Treaty of Amsterdam, article 149.1 (formerly article 126.1, Treaty of Maastricht).
3. See "About Us" on the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training website at http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?section=2.
4. See "Mission" on the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training website at http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?section=2&sub=1.
5. See the European Training Foundation at http://www.etf.europa.eu.
6. In addition, there were seven comitology committees in education in 2005 (cf. Commission of the European Communities 2006).
7. Based on an interview study of education policy makers in Europe, Lawn and Lingard (2002) argued that there is such a trans-national policy community present in Europe with a specific policy discourse that amongst others is cultivated in the EU committees and groups; they refer to this as the magistracy of influence in the European educational policy domain (p. 292).
8. In 2005 it met three times, in total for six days and issued 23 opinions (Commission of the European Communities 2006).
9. Programme management of Socrates was also assisted by a so-called Technical Assistance Office (TAO). Since 2000, the use of such TAOs in the EU has in general been phased out and their functions replaced by public law entities specialised in programme management. Regulation (EC) No. 58/2003 empowers the commission to set up executive agencies for the

management of Community programmes. From 2006 the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency was operational for the EU's programmes in education (Commission of the European Communities 2005).

10. See the Expert Group on the Implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme, DG EAC, on the Register of Expert Groups page of the European Commission website at http://ec.europa.eu/ transparency/regexpert/detail.cfm?ref=1910&l =all.

11. See the Erasmus Mundus programme on the European Commission website at http://ec.europa.eu/ education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html.

12. The final recommendation from the European Parliament and the Council (2006), on the other hand, added "... provided that this is compatible with their national legislation or permitted by their national authorities".

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Policy Implementation Tools and European Governance

Amélia Veiga and Alberto Amaral

1 Introduction

Olsen (2002) has suggested that the transformation of the European order may be studied by analysing how systems of governance emerge, are maintained and changed. In recent years, the structure of modern government has changed dramatically in a number of countries. The questioning of the cost and effectiveness of government programmes and the emergence of neo-liberal theories have resulted in governments "being challenged to be reinvented, downsized, privatised, devolved, decentralised, deregulated, delayered, subject to performance tests, and contracted out" (Salamon 2002: 1).

This "new governance" approach (Salamon 2002) is characterised by massive proliferation "in the tools of public action, in the instruments or means used to address public problems" (Salamon 2002: 1–2), while attention has been shifted "from hierarchic agencies to organisational networks" (Salamon 2002: 11). The state is no longer considered as having the monopoly of expertise and resources to govern (Newman 2003). However, the increasing complexity of the multitude of tools of public action may result in "the strong possibility that the reforms they are espousing may be the source", rather than the cure, for the problems they are seeking to remedy (Salamon 2002: 7).

Governance theory "wrestles with the problem of how to govern complex and differentiated societies, societies in which the local and the global interact in dynamic processes of structural change" (Newman 2003: 3). In the EU, the dispersion of authority away from the central government resulting from reallocation of power upwards (to the EU), downwards (to the regions, local authorities) and sideways (to public/private networks) (Hooghe and Marks 2001) led to the development of multi-level literature that is extensively used in the analysis of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) (De la Porte and Pochet 2004).

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In areas such as the educational sector, which the European treaties have reserved for the exclusive authority of national authorities, the EU could not use the traditional "Community method". This was the case of the Bologna process, an initiative of European governments without the formal participation of the commission, which was not allowed to sign the declaration. However, following the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, the commission became an effective member of the Bologna follow-up group and the implementation process is increasingly using the OMC methodology – for the 2007 stocktaking report, governments were asked to produce National Action Plans for Recognition, an OMC tool.

The impact of the OMC methodology in the stocktaking process used to measure the progress of the implementation of the Bologna process raises the question of "tools" and "networks" of new governance. In another chapter of this book, Åse Gornitzka deals extensively with "administrative networks" in the area of higher education. In this chapter, we will concentrate on the tools or instruments of public policy used to implement the Bologna process and the way they are supposed to influence the behaviour of organisational actors (executives, academics, non-academics, students) participating in the implementation process.

To form an overall picture of the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy, some policy tools are compared to understand their impact on the course of the Bologna process. In spite of clear differences of the date of establishment, of goal ambition, backgrounds and rationales of both political processes, there are also overlapping elements that should be carefully analysed. The argument developed in this chapter discusses the tools of policy implementation and how they contribute to changing European higher education systems towards the establishment of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

2 The Convergence of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy

In 1998, the ministers of education of France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom signed the Sorbonne Declaration expressing their commitment to the progressive harmonisation of the overall framework of degrees, aiming at improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility and employability. The novelty was that the initiative was explicitly taken without the involvement of European institutions, other countries being invited to join the initiative.

Other countries saw the Sorbonne Declaration as raising the danger of a Europe at two speeds. Therefore, the ministers of education decided to subscribe to the Bologna Declaration[1] in the wake of the project report prepared by the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences (CRUE) and the Association of European Universities (CRE),[2] which represented the European universities' leadership. The text of the declaration drafted under the responsibility of the Italian government was carefully drafted to eliminate the fears of possible homogenisation of the European systems, the term "harmonisation" being replaced with "convergence".[3]

The declaration proposed the creation of the EHEA without defining its follow-up structures and its implementation tools. The Portuguese Minister of Education who signed the declaration stated:

> The Bologna Declaration was meant to be a declaration of an exclusively political nature and all its words were analysed in great detail to avoid excessive embarrassment to any country; its objective being to build an area, a European space of higher education where all those characteristics of comparability and increased mobility would be present. Such a document is both remarkable and vague. What is important is to understand that it is a political declaration, each party having surely its own intentions in its country.[4]

The objectives of Bologna have been increasing in quantity and refinement and some say that this aims at keeping the impression of progress, of successful implementation (like riding a bicycle, if you stop you fall). The Berlin Communiqué (2003) defined the priority areas of Bologna as the two-tier structure degree, the recognition mechanisms based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement and quality assurance. In Bergen (2005), new objectives were added such as the implementation of national qualification frameworks, joint degrees including the doctorate level and recognition of prior learning.

In 2000, the European Union defined the Lisbon strategy to make the EU the world's most dynamic and competitive economy under the rationale that a stronger economy would drive job creation alongside social and environmental policies to ensure sustainable development and social inclusion.

The Lisbon strategy has a symbolic value (Dehousse 2002) as it displayed the concern to social problems of left of centre governments elected after the mid-1990s, thus counterbalancing earlier concerns that centred mainly in building the European Monetary Union (EMU). The earlier efforts at building the EMU favoured liberalisation and competition rules over social protection rules (Scharpf 2006). This asymmetry was increased by the combined action of the commission and the European Court and would be strongly reinforced if:

> ... the Commission and the [European] Court should be allowed to continue in applying European competition law to the core areas of the welfare state, social insurance and social services, which traditionally had been farthest removed from the market (Scharpf 2006: 15).

Therefore, we may regard the Lisbon strategy as aiming at creating a balance between pure economic competition and social cohesion (European Council 2000). However, for some (Creel et al. 2005: 4) "Lisbon looks like the quintessential contemporary utopia", while others (Iversen and Wren 1998) argue that offering simultaneously employment, income equality and fiscal restraint is impossible.

In 2004, the European Council invited the commission to establish a high level group to carry out an independent critical review of the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, as a basis for the mid-term review. The report (Kok 2004) acknowledged that "the progress of the Lisbon strategy has suffered from incoherence and inconsistency, both between participants and between policies" (Kok 2004: 39). On the one hand, ambitious European employment and social policies have been precluded by the rule of unanimous consent (Scharpf 1999) due to substantial differences in national economic conditions and welfare characteristics and, on the other hand, there is:

. . . a major contradiction between the economic policy framework of the EU relying on the delegation of macroeconomic power to independent authorities whose mandate is to guarantee stable prices, sound public finances and monetary conditions and a stable balance of payments and the objectives of Lisbon, which Member States are accountable for achieving (Creel et al. 2005: 16).

Following Kok's recommendations and the European Commission's proposals (European Commission 2005b), the European Council (2005) has relaunched the Lisbon strategy by refocusing on growth and employment in Europe.

The different member states were neither able to agree on clear priorities for the Lisbon strategy nor willing to lose control over areas that were deemed essential for their political future (Creel et al. 2005:16). For Dehousse (2005: 9):

The ambitious rhetoric of the Lisbon manifesto hides a less glorious reality: the multiplication of objectives and procedures is the sign of profound divergences between governments with regard to the priorities of the EU.

With the implementation of the Lisbon strategy, the EU was allowed to promote the European dimension of education and training policies. The Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy, although different in nature and in objectives, are now converging into one policy framework (Berlin Communiqué 2003; Van der Wende and Huisman 2004). This may have consequences as the Lisbon strategy pays particular attention to research and innovation and to vocational training. Eric Froment (2007: 12), former president of the European University Association (EUA), explains:

The current tendency at European level is to look at the Bologna process as an element of the Lisbon strategy. This is the result of the European Commission actions, and has important consequences because the Lisbon strategy takes a narrower view of higher education activities.

And he adds (2007: 12):

[The Lisbon strategy] gives priority to vocational training. The stress on the Copenhagen process ignores the reform efforts of higher education institutions because the institutions are not party to the discussions . . . we now have two qualifications frameworks for Europe: one as part of the Copenhagen process and one as part of the Bologna process. This is a very confusing situation . . . Given the current developments, one may well ask if the Bologna process is at risk and if the European change process will look totally different in the near future.

The convergence of policy processes may increase the relevance of the economic factor at European level. There is a struggle between efficiency and equity, which reflects the tension between economic growth and social cohesion, with the European Commission stating that the latter should be driven by the former. In other words, the balance between growth and sustainable development opposes the economic versus the social. For Scharpf (2006: 25): "we also have an increasing asymmetry between the European extension of economic liberties and increasing economic and legal constraints on national social-protection policies".

3 The Lisbon Strategy and the Open Method of Coordination

The implementation of the Lisbon strategy requires the European coordination of policies in areas that the treaties of the Union have considered to be the reserve of the authority of the member states. It would need the acceptance of additional significant exceptions to the principle of national sovereignty and transfer of powers from the member states to the commission. This raised criticisms against further erosion of national sovereignty. To solve the problem, the European Council (2000: §38) adopted the OMC:

> A fully decentralised approach will be applied in line with the principle of subsidiarity in which the Union, the Members States, the regional and local levels, as well as the social partners and the civil society, will be actively involved, using variable forms of partnership. A method of benchmarking best practices on managing change will be devised by the European Commission networking with different providers and users, namely the social partners, companies and NGOs.

The OMC includes deciding on short-, medium- and long-term objectives, fixing guidelines whenever appropriate, designing indicators where appropriate (qualitative and quantitative) and benchmarks, contextualised and tailored to the needs of the different member states to compare best practices, translating the European guidelines into national and regional policies (adapted to national and regional specificities) and the establishment of a mutual learning process based on periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review (European Council 2000: §37).

The OMC sets routines for comparisons and organises a learning process at European level to promote exchange and emulation of best practices that will help member states to improve their own policies. In the absence of legal constraints or formal policy coordination, the OMC coordination capacity is based upon a set of external constraints for the national authorities. These constraints include naming and shaming, the induction of national public policy debate, the use of quantitative indicators in management by objectives, while the long-term horizon set for most objectives will encourage successive governments to maintain the course of reforms (Dehousse 2002: 12–14). Therefore, normative and mimetic pressures are the major drivers of institutional change.

The OMC has the advantage of being tailored to each particular policy area where it is used. As stated by the Belgian Minister of Social Affairs and Pensions (Vandenbroucke 2001: 61), "open coordination is a sort of cookery book that contains various recipes, some of which are less rich and others more lavish".

The OMC is used to push forward the Lisbon strategy, although the movement it produces might not guarantee good levels of coordination or the enlarged participation of all stakeholders to ensure that those involved should all be aware of and share the same goals (Kok 2004). Several authors refer to the fragility of the OMC to coordinate policies (Dehousse 2002; Goetschy 2004; Radaelli 2003). However, the major aim of the OMC may be to just encouraging national reforms (Dehousse 2002), convergence being only a by-product of the implementation of commonly defined policies (Biagi 2000).

Another possible weak point of the OMC is its level of democratic legitimacy which must rest on "openness, transparency, and broad participation in public problem-solving activities, aimed at promoting mutual learning through coordinated monitoring of decentralised experimentation in pursuit of common goals" (Zeitlin 2005: 13). However, this is not easy, as networks tend to resist any form of external control:

> As a network of networks, the OMC tends to heighten this trend: management by objectives and procedural routines tend to remove decisions from electoral cycles (Ferrera et al. 2000: 84 cited in Dehousse 2002: 18).

So far, the OMC seems to be far from providing these results:

> . . . rather than strengthening the participation of all stakeholders in policy-making, the shift to these new policy instruments and to persuasive policy-making often appears to primarily address the national administrators (Smismans 2006: 19).

In the case of education, the objectives seem vague, the Education Council being invited to undertake "a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of educational systems . . . while respecting national diversity" (European Council 2000: §27). The OMC will continue to be used for identifying good practices, mutual learning and benchmarking, but "relevant information for Lisbon strategy goals should also be reflected in the national reform programmes" (European Commission 2005a: 5), "including aspects such as management, granting real autonomy and accountability to universities, innovation capacities, access to higher education and adapting higher education systems to new competence requirements" (European Commission 2006a: 12).

4 The Implementation of the Lisbon Strategy

4.1 Policy-Making Structure

The Lisbon strategy has the EU hallmark that was initially absent from the Bologna process. The Lisbon strategy concerns the priorities of the EU as a political entity while the Bologna process relates to priorities for establishing the EHEA including members external to the Union.

The implementation structure results, on the one hand, from the desire of member states not to lose control over matters of high political salience (Scharpf 2006) and, on the other hand, from the need to coordinate the complex process resulting from the absence of clear priorities (Dehousse 2005). The European Council was given the role of major decision maker, defining the agenda setting, while the European Commission presents proposals and recommendations to the European Council and assesses the policies and progress of the member states (European Commission 2005a). The council agrees on a common vision for the EU, while setting the medium- to long-term priorities based on the proposals of the commission.

This methodology creates tensions. For Dehousse (2002: 16) there is a "tension between the logic of peer cooperation, on which the OMC is based, and the desire stated in Lisbon to entrust the European Council with a centralized steering role". On the other hand, as the EU policy process is eminently technocratic (Mair 2001), other sources of tension result from the politicisation of the high-level coordination by the prime ministers sitting in the European Council and the depoliticisation necessary to favour learning processes between experts (Radaelli 2003).

The commission plays an important role despite its seemingly more modest posture. Dehousse (2002: 11) recognises this role:

> The search for cognitive convergence, which is at the heart of the OMC, involves tasks the Commission is better able to accomplish than any other institution, such as the monitoring of national action plans or the preparation of reports on the situation at European level, which are key elements in a process of knowledge accumulation. The Commission's central place in the Community machinery makes it a reference point that cannot often be overlooked, particularly in fields with weakly structured trans-national networks.

Apparently, by relying on its technical expertise, its knowledge of policy issues (Dehousse 2002) and its generous budget, the commission is gaining power by means of informal influence as recognised by Trubek and Mosher (2003) *a propos* of employment policies and as it is evident in the case of the Bologna process.

The renewal of the Lisbon strategy, following the Kok Report, underpinned the role of the commission in partnership with the member states, providing support, monitoring the process and reporting ahead of the spring European Council each year (Trubek and Mosher 2003). The recent introduction of implementation committees into the decision-making process may be seen as aiming at "facilitating a degree of continuing council control over the commission in the exercise of its executive functions" (Scott and Trubek 2002: 3).

4.2 The Tools of the OMC

Rational choice theorists (Tsebelis 2002) consider that the multiple veto-players and veto-points in mature welfare states may play an important role in resisting change. Hemerijck and Visser (2003) argue that institutionalists stress the importance of path-dependency and policy inertia as playing against the reversal of previous choice policies and that post-industrial welfare states have become "unmovable objects" even when under strong pressures favouring reform.

How, under these circumstances, can a soft law method such as the OMC produce change? Borras and Jacobsson (2004: 196) cite Dolowitz and March (2000) to support the idea that "not only is policy change in the absence of coercion possible, but there is plentiful evidence that such processes are taking place worldwide", including the EU. Hemerijck and Visser (2003: 2) quote Scharpf (1997: 63) to propose that learning processes can play an important role in promoting change:

> In highly conflictual negotiation situations the discovery of previously unknown 'win-win' solutions may make all the difference between a policy impasse and effective action. Hence

learning processes must necessarily have an important place in our conceptualisation of actor perceptions.

The OMC, as a learning process, can be a mechanism capable of "initiating or facilitating reforms to be conducted at the national level" (Dehousse 2002: 10) where mimetic and normative isomorphism play an important role:

> Given the level of uncertainty that pervades EU policy-making, it can be argued that policy transfer should follow the path of mimetic isomorphism in many circumstances. Finally, a variant of normative isomorphism can occur in those policy-making processes dominated by cognitive resources, expertise and even technocratic aspects of political life (Radaelli 2000: 29).

The OMC mutual learning process is based on periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review that use as tools annual national action plans, indicators and benchmarks as means of comparing best practice:

> The *ex-post* comparison of targets with actual results in the next action plan, the bilateral evaluation by the Commission, the Joint Report, and the peer evaluations by other member states can all enhance evaluation, and thus domestic learning (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004: 12).

In the following sections, we will analyse in more detail the tools used in the OMC: national action plans, benchmarks and indicators.

4.2.1 The National Action Plans

National action plans (NAPs) are the basis of the OMC learning process allowing for the identification of best practices and innovative techniques (De la Porte et al. 2001; Jenson and Pochet 2002). NAPs are drafted following a set of common guidelines to facilitate comparison, monitoring and benchmarking.

Every year, each member state will present its NAP reporting the progress made towards the defined objectives and presenting plans for future action. NAPs should be discussed at national and EU levels thus providing a tool for mutual learning. If the commission and council detect problems in a particular member state, they can produce recommendations drawing the attention of the "laggards", "but neither the guidelines nor the recommendations are legally binding, and there are no formal sanctions for countries that fail to make progress towards common objectives" (Trubek and Trubek 2005: 349).

Unfortunately, the drafting of NAPs "has typically been dominated by bureaucratic insiders with close ties to European institutions" (Zeitlin 2005: 15), being in general "backward-looking activity reports to EU and government documents "owned" by the relevant ministries rather than as forward-looking action plans or strategic programming instruments subject to normal public scrutiny and debate by all stakeholders" (Zeitlin 2005: 15).

This is confirmed by a report of the Netherlands Council for Social Development (2004: 20) on the use of the OMC for social inclusion:

> It is agenda following rather than agenda setting: the NAP is more a summary of existent policy, rather than a document through which antipoverty policy is coordinated and through which integral targets are set.

Considering "that the evaluations of the NAP are themselves limited", the report concludes that "limited domestic learning is caused by limited evaluation, participation and responsiveness" (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004: 17). Or, as Dehousse (2005: 12) recognises, it comes as no surprise that "national reports often tend to present a flattering situation and the action plans are more verbose on the progress accomplished than on the initiatives taken".

The lack of participation of social stakeholders has also been referred to in the Kok Report as a weakness of the implementation of the Lisbon strategy:

> Up until now national parliaments and citizens have not been sufficiently associated with the process . . . The same applies to social partners and other stakeholders.
>
> . . . National parliaments must take more ownership of Lisbon, interpreting it for their national publics and by debating what to do or not to do, opening up the whole issue . . . involvement of social partners and other stakeholders – the partnership for growth and employment – is also needed in the formulation of the national action programmes (Kok 2004: 40).

4.2.2 Benchmarks

Benchmarks and indicators play a central role in the OMC. Benchmarking is a tool borrowed from corporate management. In a benchmark, a company compares its products and processes against those of similar best performing companies. It is a learning process aiming at improving the performance of the company by adopting the "best practice" available. In general, but not always, benchmarking is done by reference to companies with identical or similar objectives. Benchmarking monitors outputs and processes, not inputs, and focuses on performance indicators.

It was the European Round Table of Industrialists that initially proposed to the commission and member states the use of benchmarking as a tool to optimise competitiveness policies (ERT 1996). The OMC uses benchmarking not only to identify good practices among the member states but also as a process that may allow for "naming and shaming" of poor performers (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004: 14). However, while in the corporate world there are in general strong hierarchical control mechanisms, "this is not the case on the European level where an atmosphere of consensus prevails" (Dehousse 2005: 12). European benchmarks have an additional important characteristic: they are contextualised to take into account the local conditions under which policies must be implemented (Hemerijck and Visser 2003: 35) and rely on "co-operation from the member states even in the provision of data (the National Action Plans) and the organization of peer review" (Hemerijck and Visser 2003: 39).

The early implementation of benchmarking activities was met with resistance from the member states when they felt at risk while questions were raised about the possibility of taking into account national differences and diversity (De la Porte

et al. 2001). The negotiation of appropriate indicators has led to lengthy and not always successful negotiations.

Benchmarks in higher education also came from quality and management concepts. The literature acknowledges the emergence of benchmarks in education from quality improvement techniques, such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Business Process Reengineering (BPR).

The European benchmarks are reference levels of European average performance. For education there are, so far, five benchmarks focusing on the share of early school leavers (18–24 years) in the EU, the ratio of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading literacy in the EU, the upper-secondary education completion ration in the EU (20–24 years), the graduates in mathematics, science and technology in the EU and adult participation in lifelong learning in the EU (25–64 years). These benchmarks relate to objectives such as improving the quality and effectiveness of the education and training systems in the EU, facilitating the access of all to education and training systems and opening them up to the wider world.

There are opponents to benchmarking in higher education, as teaching/learning processes are not prone to changes compared with administrative processes. Others maintain that *adapting*, not *adopting*, best practices induces changes in teaching/learning processes (Alstete 1995). Some argue benchmarking develops a clear picture of what is being done (Weeks 2000).

4.2.3 Indicators

The European Council considered that indicators are necessary for monitoring progress towards the achievement of agreed objectives of the Lisbon strategy and identifying well-performing member states and successful policies. However, the choice of indicators is not easy. Member states will oppose indicators based on methodological issues raised by national experts, especially when those indicators would make some countries "look bad in certain performances" (Kröger 2004). And defining indicators is faced with the low quality of available European statistics (Peña-Casas and Pochet 2001).

There are examples of member states opposing certain indicators. Kröger (2004) refers to the lack of agreement over the performance indicators proposed by the Social Protection Committee on inclusion policies; and the fact that the draft of the first joint report of the European Commission ranking member states on their performance on inclusion has never been made public due to the opposition of some member states. Trubek and Mosher (2003) also report the opposition of member states to benchmarks in employment before they were diluted by amendments from the council. More recently, the commission (2004) mentions the lack of agreement on indicators to measure the efficiency of higher education systems and Dehousse (2005) refers to the hostile reaction of governments to the idea put forward in the Kok Report (2004) of publishing league tables ranking the member states.

As indicators will be the ultimate tool for naming and shaming poor performers, member states follow closely their design and implementation. There are frequent examples of member states using the discussions of the committees of experts

to tone down the more critical comments from the commission. And some raise the question "whether the commission, as a bureaucratic organisation, has the democratic position to criticize Member States" (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004). Other criticisms relate to the fact that indicators are in general developed by "high-ranking national officials", excluding people that could contribute with their expertise and practical knowledge of the problems (Kröger 2004: 16).

Some claim that there is an excessive use of indicators. The Kok Report states that having more than a hundred indicators associated with the Lisbon process makes the method ineffective as it makes it "likely that every country will be ranked as best at one indicator or another" (Kok 2004: 43). An excess of targets and indicators may become meaningless (Leeuw 2000) allowing for opportunistic behaviour of member states that may concentrate on the more easily attainable targets, creating a weak correlation between performance indicators and performance (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004).

There are a very large number of indicators necessary to cover all the policy areas within Education and Training 2010. The commission, with the help of a "Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks and of Objective Working Groups composed of experts from all Member States" (European Commission 2004: 3), established a revised list of 29 indicators that was also used in the 2006 progress report of the commission (European Commission 2006b).

The commission recognises that "the development of relevant, analytically sound and universally accepted indicators, and especially of the underlying statistical data, is a long and complex exercise and demands technical expertise and political support" (European Commission 2004: 18) and deplores that so far the data are still produced by countries on a voluntary basis.

The council has decided to include three new areas: languages, professional development of teachers and trainers and social inclusion and active citizenship, which will result in new, additional indicators. This is pushing the commission to develop composite indicators "to give an aggregate view of progress towards the Lisbon targets for the European knowledge economy" (European Commission 2004: 10). What remains to be seen is the weight of social indicators in measuring the achievements of social cohesion under the Lisbon strategy. Apparently, education, while influencing inequality, determines the level of social cohesion (Green et al. 2003), while "value formation through socialisation is surely also significant, but much harder to examine quantitatively" (Green et al. 2003: 468).

5 The Implementation of the Bologna Process

5.1 Policy-Making Structures

Decision making in the Bologna process is carried out "intergovernmentally", decisions being reached by consensus of the ministers for higher education of the 45

signatory countries involved. This approach acknowledges the diversity in Europe's higher education systems. The most important forum in the decision-making process is the biannual conference, where the ministers meet to assess progress and to plot the course for the near future. The last ministerial summit took place in London in 2007, following those in Prague in 2001, in Berlin in 2003 and in Bergen in 2005.

After the Bologna Declaration, the ministers decided to create a follow-up structure to prepare the conferences and coordinate the action needed to advance the goals of the Bologna Declaration. The composition of the follow-up group has changed frequently to adjust to changing power relationships.

The follow-up structure to prepare the Prague Conference comprised a "consultative group" of representatives of all signatory countries and a smaller "follow-up group" including representatives from the countries successively holding the EU presidency in the two years from Bologna to Prague (Finland, Portugal, France, Sweden), the Czech Republic, the European Commission, the Association of European Universities and the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences.

After Prague (2001) the "follow-up group" included representatives of all signatories, new signatories and the European Commission and was chaired by the EU presidency at the time. The "preparatory group" was chaired by the representative of the country hosting the next conference and it included the EU presidency at the time, the European Commission, representatives of the countries hosting the previous and the next ministerial meetings, two EU member states and two non-EU member states (these latter four representatives to be elected by the follow-up group). The role of the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) was downgraded to mere consultancy members in the follow-up work, a similar role being attributed to the Council of Europe (Prague Communiqué 2001).

In Berlin (2003), the follow-up structure was again redefined. The "follow-up group" (BFUG) had representatives of the country hosting the next conference as vice-president and UNESCO/CEPES was added to the consultative members. Instead of the "preparatory group", a board was created, chaired by the EU presidency and including the next host country as vice-chair, the preceding and the following EU presidencies, three participating countries elected by the BFUG for one year, the European Commission and, as consultative members, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB.

The responsibilities of the board as approved by the BFUG in its Rome meeting (Bologna Follow-up Group 2003) consisted of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the work programme, overseeing the preparation of the next ministerial conference, looking after the participation of representatives of candidate countries, organising working groups and coordinating actions for the stocktaking exercise. In 2004, the board took the responsibility for the preparatory drafting of the Bergen Communiqué.

Following the 2005 Bergen Conference, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the Education International Pan-European Structure (EI) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe

(UNICE) were added as consultative members of the BFUG. The board now consists of the hosting countries of the previous and forthcoming ministerial summits and representatives of the acting, previous and succeeding EU presidencies, the European Commission and representatives of two countries from outside the EU. The host of the next ministerial meeting chairs the board, which includes the consultative members also present in the BFUG.

Working groups have been established since 2004–2005. In a less formal way, task forces have been created to work on the qualifications framework, on stocktaking and in drafting the communiqué. In the work programme of 2005–2007, other working groups were added to focus on other issues, such as the strategy for the external dimension, the social dimension and the portability of grants and loans.

The changes in the composition of the follow-up structure show an increase in the intervention power of the European Commission which was formally in a backstage position and not even allowed to sign the Bologna Declaration. This follows a trend similar to the apparently modest posture initially assumed in the Lisbon strategy (see Section 3.1). There is also a loss of voting power of the institutions representing the universities and the students and the gradual increase of consultative members to incorporate an enlarged array of stakeholders, eventually to ensure increasing legitimacy. To some extent, the interference of the European Commission might be seen as "strengthening an organisational capacity for collective action and the development of common ideas, such as new norms and collective understandings" (Olsen 2002: 929) furthering the accomplishment of the EHEA.

5.2 The Tools of the Bologna Process

European reports on the implementation of the Bologna process have been used to monitor the progress towards its objectives. These reports have used different levels of analysis and were conceived as contributions to the ministerial decision-making process. In parallel, there are reports or studies conducted by consultative members of the BFUG, which include the EUA "trends reports" and the ESIB studies "Bologna with Student Eyes", just to mention some examples. The reports of the seminars organised as part of the work programme also feed the decision-making process. These reports fit the notion of workshop agreements as they provide "the outcome of consensual work between a large number of parties; but they are not subject to the publication procedure or to a vote by national representatives: consequently, they are open to a large number of directed interested parties" (Borraz 2007: 61). The European Commission regularly funds these studies and seminars.

The focus of the analysis is dependent on the institution undertaking the study. The EUA trends reports often use a causal perspective to policy implementation, focusing on the leadership of higher education institutions, and the ESIB reports have been drawing the attention to issues, such as the social dimension, that were given less consideration by the Bologna process. Interestingly, the views about Bologna differ significantly (Veiga and Amaral 2006).

5.2.1 National Reports and National Action Plans for Recognition

The first national reports were prepared for the Berlin Conference (2003). Ministers noted that the "National Reports are evidence of the considerable progress being made in the application of the principles of the Bologna Process" (Berlin Communiqué 2003: 2). These reports were under the responsibility of ministers of education and the chair of the BFUG expressed the opinion that the "reports offer an opportunity for member states to explain the data brought out by stocktaking" (Bologna Follow-up Group 2004).

The implementation of guidelines was used to eliminate the lack of comparability of the 2003 reports. In 2005, the guidelines imposed specific questions, such as those concerning the degree system, recognition, mobility, internationalisation and quality. In 2006, following the recommendation of the Bergen Communiqué (Bergen Communiqué 2005), other policy areas were included, such as the implementation of standards and guidelines for quality assurance as proposed in the ENQA Report; the implementation of the national frameworks for qualifications; the awarding and recognition of joint degrees, including the doctorate level; and creating opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, including procedures for the recognition of prior learning.

Additionally, recognising that 36 of the 45 participating countries have now ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (Council of Europe 1997), ministers have committed to draw up "national action plans to improve the quality of the recognition process of foreign qualifications, which represents another step towards the adoption of the OMC mechanisms. These plans will form part of each country's national report for the next Ministerial Conference" (Bergen Communiqué 2005: 3). NAPs follow a common structure and should report on previous and future developments concerning mutual academic recognition issues.

5.2.2 Stocktaking and Scorecards

In Berlin (2003), the ministers decided to introduce a "mid-term stocktaking exercise" to provide reliable information on how the process was advancing and to offer the possibility of corrective measures (Berlin Communiqué 2003: 7). The BFUG was asked to prepare a stocktaking report in time for the 2005 Bergen Conference, including detailed reporting on the progress and implementation of the intermediate priorities set for the next two years: quality assurance, the two-cycle system and the recognition of degrees and periods of studies. This exercise used mainly the national progress reports and the report *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe* prepared by the Eurydice network that included all the Bologna signatory countries (Bologna Follow-up Group 2004).

In Bergen (2005), the ministers asked the BFUG to engage in "continuing and widening the stocktaking process and reporting in time for the next Ministerial Conference. We expect stocktaking to be based on the appropriate methodology and to continue in the fields of the degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods" (Bergen Communiqué 2005: 5). The ministers further

assumed that by 2007 "we will have largely completed the implementation of these three intermediate priorities" (Bergen Communiqué 2005: 5). The stocktaking exercise in 2007 was directed to look for progress in the new policy areas to be addressed by the national reports.

In Bergen, the ministers also asked the BFUG to present comparable data on mobility of staff and students, as well as on the social and economic situation of students in participating countries as a basis for future stocktaking and reporting in time for the next ministerial conference (2007). The next stocktaking will have to take into account the social dimension as a policy area.

5.3 A Critical Analysis of the 2005 Stocktaking Exercise

National reports, national action plans for recognition, stocktaking, scorecards, benchmarks and indicators are different categories of policy instruments (information and communication-based, incorporating best practices and *de facto* and *de jure* standards) that fit the notion of low profile instrument or soft law procedure of the OMC. They have a discrete visibility to external stakeholders and create strong asymmetries between "top bureaucrats who develop them as part of their expertise and the actors who suffer from their implementation" (Bezes 2007: 24).

> What is presented as a strategy to improve education, is however a new mode of governance. Democracy is circumvented as policy formation is removed from purview of politicians and citizens, and falls under the control of groups conducting research and organising the data culled from comparison (Nóvoa and De Jong-Lambert 2003: 60).

Bologna, like the Lisbon strategy, entails ambiguity (it deals with a considerable number of social, political, economic and cultural institutions and actors) and conflict (there a number of actions to be taken based on undeclared consensus as those involved should all be aware of and share the same goals and there is a subjective frame of reference). The use of negative instruments of shaming and blaming at national and European levels in the Bologna process (as well as in the Lisbon strategy) may often lead to window-dressing defensive strategies when drafting national reports (Dehousse 2005: 12).

The NAPs produced for recognition have the same characteristics as the NAPs produced for other policy areas, being, in general, "an exercise in symbolic politics where national governments repackage existing policies to demonstrate their apparent compliance with EU objectives" (Zeitlin 2005: 17). Being drafted at the level of national ministries, they construct a specific picture about the local level, not reporting in detail what is really going on, and focusing on the legal framework that reflects an outdated notion of linear policy implementation.

The 2005 stocktaking report (Bologna Follow-up Group 2005) addressed three priority areas: quality assurance, the two-cycle degree system and recognition of degrees and periods of studies. Each area was given a mark from 1 to 5 and a colour: 1 (Red) – little progress; 2 (orange) – some progress; 3 (yellow) – good; 4 (light green) – very good; and 5 (green) excellent. A colour was also given to the

aggregate results. The idea was that ministers' faces would blush when too much red was allocated to their countries. The Bologna scorecard can be seen as a set of colourful composite indicators of progress providing a simple description of the level of the Bologna implementation in the individual countries (Bologna Follow-up Group 2003). However, we may consider that the indicators were rather benevolent as the lower mark referred to "some progress", cases of "no progress" being beyond the imagination of the BFUG.

In the following section, we analyse three national cases, Italy, Germany and Portugal, to check how far the scorecards reflect the "actual situation" as suggested by the chair of the BFUG (Bologna Follow-up Group 2004).

Italy had an overall yellow colour (good), being also yellow on quality assurance and light green (very good) on the other two items. Germany had an overall light green colour (very good), being green (excellent) on quality assurance and light green on the other two priority action lines. Portugal had an overall yellow colour, like Italy, being light green on quality assurance and recognition of degrees and periods of study, but orange (some progress) on the implementation of the two-cycle structure. The scores of the three countries will be more closely examined on a comparative basis below.

5.3.1 Stocktaking and Quality Assurance

Germany has established an accreditation council with participation of international members and students, who also participate in review teams. The council is responsible for the accreditation of German accreditation agencies. Evaluation has been included in the 1998 Act for Higher Education and their procedures meet the Bologna requirements (self-assessment, external peer review – often with international participation – involvement of students as reviewers and publicity of results). However, until January 2005 only 2759 BA/MA programmes (24.6%) had been accredited. Germany was given green on all four items.

In Italy, although a national committee for the assessment of the university system was established in 1999, an evaluation system for teaching was not yet in place. There was no reference to student or foreign participation and there was only an accreditation exercise limited to the Campus One experiment. Surprisingly, Italy gets yellow (good) on student participation and key elements of the evaluation system and orange (some progress) on the system's development and its level of internationalisation.

In Portugal, there was at the time a national quality assessment system that had completed two full rounds of evaluation of the programmes of public universities and one round of evaluation of the programmes of public polytechnics and the private sector. The quality system was operating for all higher education; all the key elements were in place, as well as all the elements of international participation. The only element missing was the participation of students in external review teams. It is interesting to stress that more than 50% of all the Portuguese public universities have also participated in the EUA quality audit programme. However, Portugal got yellow for student participation and only light green for the other items.

This demonstrates that not only colours were given without much rigour, but also that the stocktaking process has been unable to follow in real time the evolution of this fast changing sector. The Portuguese situation reveals that the stocktaking was too static to measure the progress of the Bologna reforms. It may well happen that a country ranks light green (very good performance) for the authors of the stocktaking report, but internal discussions and national specificities do not allow for progress towards excellent performance. That is to say that being awarded a "very good" mark does not mean that the next step will be towards excellence. Higher education systems are in a process of permanent change and have to answer to national needs that can force them to approach or to move away from what are the EHEA's rules of excellent behaviour, a process that is not detected by the stocktaking methodology.

5.3.2 Stocktaking and the Two-Cycle Structure

Germany got light green (very good) on the implementation stage, yellow (good) on the level of student enrolment in the BA/MA system and green (excellent) on the access of students from first cycle to second cycle. However, in the summer semester 2005, Germany offered 2925 Bachelor and Master degrees, representing 26.3% of the total number of degrees but a much smaller percentage of students (in the winter semester 2003–2004 students enrolled in the BA/MA represented only 5.3% of the total). And only 716 programmes (24.5%) had been accredited.

> Even though there are plenty of curricular innovations implemented into the new Bachelor and Master programmes, the overall picture is rather mixed: Only a few Bachelor and Master programmes have implemented the major reform elements (e.g. ECTS-compatible credit system, accreditation . . .) as a "true reform" package. Most new programmes have chosen some reform elements without being consistent or precise enough to regard the ideas of an overall reform that would be compatible and transparent also on the national level (Schwarz-Hahn and Rehburg 2004: 12).

The Italian report (Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research 2005) made no reference at all to the implementation of the two-cycle structure. However, the 2003 progress report (Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research 2003: 1) already claimed: "The study courses have been restructured on different levels (first cycle, second cycle, doctorate) which allow the comparability at European level" and:

> After the reform of 1999, foreseeing the two cycles system, the Italian Universities started introducing gradually the new system: for the academic year 2001–2002, the first cycle of three years was introduced, while the second cycle of two years has been introduced only for the academic year 2002–2003. Up to now, 3,200 degree courses of the first cycle and 2,100 degree courses of the second cycles have been set up (Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research 2003: 2).

However, an analysis of the implementation process in several Italian universities does not support this very optimistic representation:

> There was a wide tendency to reproduce the previous set of courses, to reproduce somehow the degree programmes even under another name, and at the same time a tendency to reproduce the same logic in the construction of each individual course . . . I must say that

the proposal of the new curricula was subjected to two main forces. One point was the rush to acquire more students, so competition, through appealing degree programmes, and from the other side the need to satisfy different disciplinary powers much more than trying to establish labour market connected profiles (Boffo 2003: 1).

This fact was also recognised by an international review of the implementation of Bologna in Italian universities:

> The design of the reform was mainly the result of the academics' interpretation of the market demands without any serious consultation, or the result of internal power games between professors of subjects with a labour market appeal and professors of mainly theoretical subjects afraid of being deprived of their area of influence (Fulton et al. 2004: 3–4).

Being aware of "rumours of a new "reform of the reform", which would aim to provide students with more broad general knowledge: there would be a common first year in the 1st cycle, to be followed by two alternative curricula, one academic and the other professional" (Fulton et al. 2004: 9) it seems risky to award the colour for very good performance.

Portugal got orange (some progress) on the three items, meaning that preliminary planning or pilot phase is being conducted (orange – some progress); some students (1 to 24%) enrolled in the two-cycle system in 2005 (orange – some progress); and the access from first cycle to second cycle was limited for the majority of students because of structural or procedural obstacles (orange – some progress). This ranking for Portugal is quite benevolent. The label should be red because, at the time the report was produced, the two-cycle degree system was not in place, no students were enrolled in the two-cycle system and there were no arrangements for access from the first cycle to the second cycle. Actually, the law allowing for the implementation of Bologna was only passed in March 2006.

5.3.3 Stocktaking and Recognition of Degrees and Periods of Study

Germany got an overall colour light green (very good) and green (excellent) on the implementation of the Diploma Supplement and of the ECTS, which seems too benevolent due to the slow implementation of the Bologna process. The progress report stated that the ECTS was currently applied to some 67.7% of Bachelor and to 62.5% of Master degrees, which corresponded to only about 17% of all programmes and to around 3% of all enrolled students! And on the Diploma Supplement, the report stated that in the 2004–2005 winter semester, 44.8% of Bachelor and 44% of Master degrees would issue this document, which represented less than 15% of all programmes. For 2005, the report claimed that all students would get the Diploma Supplement free of charge but it was not clear if this would apply to all students or only to those in the new BA/MA structure. Germany got yellow (good) on the Lisbon Convention that has not yet been ratified.

Italy got an overall colour light green (very good). The stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement was yellow (good) and the implementation of the ECTS was light green (very good) as the ECTS credits were allocated in a limited[5] number of programmes, enabling credit transfer and accumulation. For the Lisbon

Convention, Italy got green (excellent) as the convention was signed and ratified, even if there was no evidence of the level of actual implementation. This shows that the stocktaking report assumed the simplistic idea of assessing the degree of policy implementation processes just by taking for granted that passing a law is a sufficient condition for successful implementation. However, the picture at local level showed that the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS were far from getting a good or very good performance result.

Portugal also got an overall light green (very good). The stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement was given yellow (good), the ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention was given green (excellent) as the convention was signed and ratified, but the implementation of the ECTS was yellow (good) which corresponds to the situation where either a national system for credit transfer and accumulation is in place, compatible with the ECTS, or the national credit transfer and accumulation system is being gradually integrated with the ECTS. The light green (very good) rank has been achieved due to the green (excellent) for the ratification of the Lisbon Convention. Again, special attention was given to the legal framework. However, the picture at local level showed that the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS were far from getting a good or very good performance result.

It is interesting to note that Italy, where the Bologna legal framework dates from 1999, does not have a single university with an ECTS or a Diploma Supplement label awarded by the European Commission, while Portugal, where the framework for the implementation of the Bologna process was completed only in March 2006 (although a decree-law passed in February 2005 established rules for the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement), there were two universities with the ECTS label and three universities with the Diploma Supplement label.

In the case of Portugal, there was a credit system based on the number of formal contact hours, not on the student workload as in the ECTS case. And the law passed in February 2005 to regulate the new ECTS compatible credit system did not make any reference to an accumulation system. Therefore, it is debatable how far the coloured descriptors of the stocktaking exercise can offer a good picture of the actual situation.

5.3.4 Some Comments

Our analysis demonstrates that not only the colours were given with a too optimistic view and not much rigour, but also that the stocktaking exercise does not provide a real time picture of this fast changing sector. The way some colours were allocated shows that the stocktaking report assumed the simplistic idea of assessing the degree of implementation of policy processes just by taking for granted that passing a law is a sufficient condition for successful policy implementation. The colour scheme did not offer a good picture of what was actually happening at local level. Using Neave's terminology (Neave 2005), we can say colours were given to the "*pays politique*", not to the "*pays reel*". So we may wonder how the Bologna instruments can ensure a complete and coherent implementation.

The 2007 "trends report" used for the first time both quantitative and qualitative research with substantial effort being dedicated to the local level where the implementation is now taking place. The report is substantially more critical than previous reports in the series and raises several implementation problems. Although the BA/MA structure has been implemented in 82% of higher education institutions, the report recognises that there are still serious difficulties:[6]

(a) The objectives of employability, one of the major objectives of Bologna, are far from being achieved, the new degrees running the danger of being misunderstood or mistrusted by the labour market. Surprisingly, in many countries governments have not yet adapted public sector employment structures to the Bologna degrees.
(b) Incorrect or superficial use of ECTS is currently still widespread and frequently there are no flexible learning paths for students.
(c) The Diploma Supplement is issued to less than half of graduating students.
(d) With the exception of the Irish case, institutions are generally confused as to whether or not their national system has a qualifications framework, as well as to its purposes.
(e) Many national funding systems act as a disincentive to mobility, rewarding institutions that retain students without offering incentives to mobility.
(f) Recognition of student learning still presents considerable difficulties, especially when learning has taken place abroad.
(g) Institutions have low expectations of their capacity to contribute to the Bologna "social objective" of widening access.

6 Conclusions

Both the implementation of the Bologna process and of the Lisbon strategy share the common use of soft law tools rather than the traditional methodology of European legislation. This methodology leaves implementation to the member states fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity. For politicians, it has the advantage of allowing some governments to shift the blame of unpopular domestic agendas to the OMC processes or the EU (Zeitlin 2005; Mosher 2000; Schäfer 2002).

As these soft law procedures lack the enforcing power of hard law it remains to be seen how far they can produce results when compared to other (less or more) formalised forms of coordination in complex, multi-level and functionally interdependent governance systems (Borras and Jacobsson 2004). Zeitlin (2005: 17) states that some authors are strongly critical of the OMC's "alleged lack of substantive impact on the Member States. According to this view, the OMC in its present form amounts to little more than the European emperor's newest clothes". However, Zeitlin opposes that view by arguing that there is now enough evidence, at least in areas such as employment and social policy, to illustrate substantive political change that has contributed not only to "broad shifts in national political thinking"

but also "to specific changes in individual Member States' policies" (Zeitlin 2005: 20). And Hemerijck (2002) also recognises some convergence of employment and social policy objectives, which might be the result of common concerns over social polarisation. And, in the case of Bologna, there has been considerable change in all the higher education systems of the signatory countries, although it is difficult to discern the direction of change and its implications for achieving the EHEA.

Therefore, what is perhaps surprising is that soft law procedures, despite some obvious weaknesses, might produce such visible results under difficult conditions as the OMC which:

> suffers from a problem of endemic tension (Radaelli 2003) by mixing elements of cooperation against elements of competition, diversity against convergence and policy implementation at the State's own pace against a timeframe for convergence to EU goals. Even more dramatic is the increasing tension created between the advocates of the priority of competitiveness and the advocates of a "social Europe" by the Lisbon strategy (to become the most competitive knowledge led society in the world) (Veiga and Amaral 2006: 292–293).

A possible explanation is that although soft law mechanisms are not efficient for strict coordination, they are quite capable of inducing change. And indeed "most coordination processes are aimed at initiating or facilitating reforms to be conducted at the national level" (Dehousse 202: 10), eventual convergence being a by-product rather than an end in itself. Indeed, the intended convergence is not of institutions and concrete solutions but of objectives and performances (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004). Therefore, it is not surprising that the draft executive summary of the Trends V Report refers to a large number of implementation problems and inconsistencies at local level.

In the case of Bologna, apparently, the benchmarks used do not provide a clear picture of reality and the stocktaking exercise does not measure real progress, either because benchmarks are not well chosen or because ministers tend to present optimistic views of national achievements to "keep up with the European Jones' (Gornitzka 2005). The second problem is that stocktaking is mainly based on implementation at national level that overvalues the passing of legislation, apparently assuming a naive faith in the linearity of policy implementation.

The commission considers Bologna as a "platform to discuss education and training policies at European level" and offering "the opportunity to build a coherent policy framework without impinging on national competences" (European Commission 2006b: 7). The establishment of coherent policy frameworks needs to be based on accurate information (Kok 2004), a goal that the Bologna instruments do not seem capable of achieving.

The implementation of the Bologna process lives off the notion of successful progress towards its final objectives, without reflection on inconsistencies or unintended effects its progress might produce. Reports are in general uncritical, presenting results in a triumphal mode, while implementation difficulties at local level are ignored as they might distract from the ultimate objective of shaping the EHEA, whatever this shape might be. However, the final configuration of EHEA depends on the aggregate results of the reforms of national higher education systems and not so much on the communication flow the policy implementation tools provide.

Therefore, it remains to be seen if the coordination difficulties of soft law policies can deal with the present wave of transformation flooding European higher education to create, in the long term, a coherent policy framework.

For Hemerijck (2002: 42) "a final concern is how much diversity in welfare design, institutional structure, and problem loads that OMC can tolerate". Does the same concern apply to the implementation of the Bologna process? The draft executive summary of the 2007 trends report shows there is apparently willingness to accept a "soft" notion of convergence even if at the expense of some of the initial objectives of the Bologna declaration.

Notes

1. Officially, 30 countries signed the Bologna Declaration in 1998 but the Liechtenstein only signed after the event was over. At present 45 countries have signed the declaration.
2. In 2001, the CRUE and the CRE merged creating the European University Association (EUA).
3. Interviews with Lourtie (2004) and Marçal Grilo (2004) by Amelia Veiga conducted for the PhD project, Lisbon.
4. Interview with Marçal Grilo (2004) by Amelia Veiga conducted for the PhD project, Lisbon.
5. To achieve green (excellent), ECTS credits should be allocated to the majority of higher education programmes. Interestingly, the majority is the target and not all the programmes!
6. These comments are taken from the draft executive summary of the Trends V Report presented at the 2007 Lisbon EUA Convention.

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The Mission Impossible of the European University: Institutional Confusion and Institutional Diversity

Jürgen Enders and Harry De Boer

1 Introduction

The outline for this book stresses the importance of the institutional dynamics of the European university and points to its current state of institutional confusion and search for identity. In fact, attempts to delineate some common elements of the multiple transformations of the university point to the unfolding of a most interesting paradox (Krücken et al. 2007). The European university is undeniably a success story. Research and teaching have expanded enormously; the fields of research and scholarship have multiplied and provide potential links to all other sub-systems in modern society (Frank and Meyer 2007). While there are signs of stagnation there are also growing expectations with regard to the contribution of higher education and research to the 'European knowledge society'. Modern societies and their sub-systems all seek new innovations and expect the universities to deliver these goods. In parallel with its success, deepening criticism of the European university is coming more and more to the fore – on the national level as well as on the European level. There is concern that Europe is losing out to its old and new competitors with profound consequences for Europe's capacity for innovation – and hence job creation and wealth generation. The lack of responsiveness of the European university to societal needs is under consideration as well as its incapacities of organisational self-steering in an increasingly competitive environment. In sum, the changing nature and role of knowledge for society seem to be accompanied by changes in universities' relationships with society, with mixed results in terms of status, function and role (Enders and Fulton 2002).

This chapter attempts to contribute to the scholarly reflection on the institutional dynamics of the European university in two ways. First, it explores the mission stretch of the university and second, it examines the unity and diversity of the European higher education landscape.

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The chapter begins by arguing that one way of gaining a better understanding of the institutional dynamics of the university is to analyse processes of mission stretch. The term 'mission stretch' addresses a process in which growing and (partly) contradictory demands and expectations are put on the university (Scott 1995; Clark 1998; Levine 2001). It is argued that the university is potentially overloaded and that the strain it is suffering can, in part, be explained by mission stretch. Mission stretch certainly had and has a quantitative component due to the 'massification' of higher education (Trow 1974; Neave 2006), the rise of 'big science' (De Solla Price 1963; Scott 2006) and its growth into a mature industry (Levine 2001). It also had and has a qualitative component due to the differentiation of 'old' demands and the growing number of 'new' demands. Finally, there is a procedural component with regard to more efficient means of goal achievement of the university as a multi-purpose and multi-product enterprise. These processes are neither linear nor uncontested; they are external and also internal to the university. They feed reforms where the idea of the university and the organisational form of the university are challenged (Olsen 2005). Part and parcel of this challenge are the enduring debates and reforms with regard to the unity and diversity of the university – more precisely, the debates and developments in Europe regarding the institutional configuration of the higher education system.

It is hypothesised that the continuous efforts to balance unity and diversity, system integration and differentiation are one key to understanding responses to the institutional confusion of the European university. Since the 1960s, public debate and policy reform have been concerned with the institutional configuration of higher education across national higher education systems in Europe (Teichler 1991; Huisman 1995; Bleiklie 2004). In considering, for instance, 'elite' and 'mass' higher education, 'diversification and stratification', 'binary systems', 'non-university' higher education or the 'research university', the understanding and reform of the institutional landscape within a national system of higher education have become important issues. More recently, institutional unity and diversity have been embedded supranationally and changes in the regulatory system across Europe have contributed to the debate on the role of the European universities (Olsen and Maassen 2007). Arguably, the rise of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area shows that European-level debates and policy-making processes pay growing attention to the European university as well as to the issue of the unity and diversity of the European higher education landscape.

Scholarly reflection on institutional confusion and diversity is by no means a new phenomenon and has been guided by various theoretical perspectives (see Huisman 1995). This chapter is mainly inspired by two perspectives rooted in sociological theory and the related study of the university as a modern institution. First, the study of the modern university has been guided by the concept of social differentiation as an important theoretical perspective in understanding the origin, dynamics and structure of modern societies (for an overview, see Schimank 2006). Historically, the emergence of the university as a specialised institution is part of the large-scale transformation from pre-modern to modern societies. Differentiation into (partly) autonomous though interdependent systems of functions such as art,

law, economy, science or education is characteristic of this development that has been analysed by scholars such as Herbert Simon, Emil Dürkheim, Talcott Parsons or Niklas Luhmann. Parsons – the founding father of a systems–theoretical and structural–functional framework – applied this perspective to the analyses of the university (Parsons and Platt 1973). In contrast to his theoretical position, Parsons provided an analysis of the functional superiority of the American university due to its multi-functional setting. He stressed the importance of the 'full university': a highly differentiated multiple-unit system functioning within the science system and the educational system yet connected as a single organisation. It was Smelser (1973) in his epilogue to this same book who stressed the social–structural anomalies, functional problems and group conflicts of the American university. He argued that the university is functionally overloaded and provided functional arguments about the need for further diversity with regard to the purpose and constitution of the university. Re-reading these two perspectives from the early 1970s brings a certain déja-vu as they seem highly relevant to the current debate confronting the European university.

Smelser's analysis of the structural–functional tensions of the modern American university introduced implicitly notions of 'actors', 'group conflicts' and 'power struggles' into the Parsonian perspective. He argued that processes of differentiation and de-differentiation cannot only be explained by the functional contribution of certain structures to the solution of problems; they are influenced by interests, compliance and deviancy and conflict between actors who do not compete simply to increase functional efficiency (see also e.g. Rueschemeyer 1977; Alexander and Colomy 1990; Schimank 1996). This perspective has also been applied to research on differentiation in higher education (Clark 1983; Huisman 1995; Meek et al. 1996; Teichler 2004). Diversity and differentiation can be understood in terms of the tension inherent in the power relationships between interest groups internal as well as external to the university. Stability and change are based on power relations and the articulation of interests by various groups, including the norms and values of the academic profession, the steering approach and policies of governmental actors and the responses of universities and other higher education institutions. The legitimacy of roles and institutional forms is not just a functional prerogative but due to exchange relations that are mediated by the context in which the power struggles between interest groups take place.

2 Mission Stretch and Institutional Confusion

Keeping these introductory remarks in mind, the institutional dynamics of the European university during recent decades may be analysed in terms of successive and enormous enhancement of the bundle of demands put on the university. After the Second World War, the coincidence of various phenomena contributed to a political climate that allowed for a substantial increase in the cost of higher education and research. The expansion of the role of research was fuelled by the belief that blue-sky research best serves societal needs for scientific and technological

innovation. This was coupled with the belief that substantial educational investment was needed in order to ensure economic growth as well as to reduce inequality of educational opportunity. This period may be viewed as a time in which the dominant political forces in industrial societies considered higher education as a relevant sector for the future of society. The quantitative expansion of higher education since the late 1950s/early 1960s was certainly the most obvious signal for a changing role and extension of the mission of the university. 'Massification' of higher education, though possibly interrupted by relatively short periods of stagnation, became a major trend across Europe (and beyond) (Trow 1974). Transition from 'elite to mass to universal higher education' and related debates about the changing mission of the university became widespread (Teichler 1991). The two main strategies adopted in the development towards a growing higher education system have been the modernisation of the university tradition, largely by founding new universities and extending old ones, and the establishment of alternative non-university institutions. While such developments seem quantitative in nature they also had a qualitative effect on the demands put on the university within emerging higher education systems (Clark 1983). Expansion and governmental planning came together because serving national development and priorities through the training of a growing and diversifying number of students for economic growth as well as for citizenship was among the most prominent expectations with regard to universities and other higher education providers. 'Training' also suggests that the mass university called for a certain degree of standardisation and utilitarian orientation in the fabric of mass higher education (Scott 1995). Such a redefinition of traditional tasks and the inclusion of new tasks of the universities and other higher education providers were not easily integrated into traditional work roles and practices. In particular, elite universities, committed to notions of excellence and exclusion, were obliged to redefine themselves as the leading elements within a much wider higher education system, affected by more democratic and inclusionary values (Trow 1974). This shift produced important effects. One was to retain the research function under the conditions of the mass university which tended to starve universities of the resources required to sustain excellence (Schimank and Winnes 2000). Another was that organisations were integrated much more into a state bureaucracy which undermined more open and collegial patterns (Olsen 2005).

In the course of the massification of higher education, much of the concern revolved around a quantitative match or mismatch between higher education and the labour market. Public debates and scholarly reflections in this area started in the 1960s with high hopes for more equal opportunities and economic prosperity by investment in education and training. The expansion of universities occurred as part of a larger societal development that was accompanied by a flourishing public sector. Its expansionist logic proceeded on a dual track, offering new educational opportunities as well as new employment opportunities in education, health and welfare in a kind of self-vindicating system (Nowotny 1995). The 1970s faced 'the end of the dream of everlasting prosperity' (Lutz 1984). The pessimistic view spread that expansion of higher education had gone too far and that graduates' skills no longer matched the needs of the employment system. The debate was marked

by sharp disagreements over a presumed over-education or under-employment of the increased number of graduates for whom not sufficient or not sufficiently well-qualified jobs would be available (Psacharopoulus 1987). In the 1980s, expectations and empirical findings adjusted to a somewhat blurred state of affairs which neither supported the high hopes of the 1960s nor reinforced the deep sense of crises of the 1970s (Teichler 1998a). What emerged from the analyses were a mixture of vertical and horizontal adjustments in job placement, changing values and expectations of what was considered a desirable job for highly qualified personnel and changes in what was meant by a proper link between higher education and work.

Since the 1990s, a new process of adjustment and re-structuring has been under way that tends to undermine the whole notion of a quantitative match (De Weert 1999). The dangers of diminishing returns on investment in higher education due to growing competition or labour markets being swamped by overqualified and dissatisfied applicants, are no longer apparent. It is now recognised that it is the occupational structure and stratification system itself that have become mobile. This is accompanied by deep structural changes in the way the economy works as well as a perceived individualisation of the life course regime (Beck 1986). The student body becomes more heterogeneous in terms of social background, age, levels of preparation and work experience, patterns of studying and learning, aspirations and life chances. The characteristics of occupations and jobs, the vertical as well as the horizontal division of work, the needs and reward structures of the employment system continue to be restructured. Learning–working pathways through education, training and employment tend to be de-institutionalised and re-institutionalised. Quality thus stands for possessing a mixture of skills and knowledge for new and changing configurations. Graduates are expected to be trained for what is increasingly seen to be a market for 'knowledge workers' in constant flux. The uncoupling between education and work thus assumes a new meaning.

Presently, universities are not only expected to continue considering fair access according to socio-biographic background and to strengthen the overall supply of a highly trained workforce in the sense of the old regime, but are also expected to further diversify structurally and, in terms of conditions of study and courses provided, devote greater attention to generic competencies and social skills, reshape their function for a society based on lifelong learning, prepare students for a growing internationalisation and serve practical learning beyond the classroom (Teichler 1998a). In other words, universities are expected to move from a 'front-end' model to a 'life-span' model of education and training – to move from curricula to learning pathways (Jongbloed 2002).

Growth and expansion as well as the search for societal and economic relevance have also affected research. Internationally and nationally, research in universities has experienced 'substantive growth' (Metzger 1987). 'In a self-amplifying cycle of effects, research and scholarship steadily fashion more cognitive domains – disciplines, specialisms, interdisciplinary subjects – whose respective devotees then push on with new specialised categories of research' (Clark 1991: 103). Restless research has moved out in many directions to new frontiers and has thus undergone its own 'massification'. In addition, the rise of 'big science' (De Solla Price

1963) with its large-scale facilities and huge budgets called for specialisation and cooperation in order to maintain 'critical mass'. Such research requires concentration in research resources, research infrastructure and research-related personnel. Individual universities in many cases have become too small (in an organisational and financial sense) to play a core role by themselves at the forefront of 'big science'.

Equally important, the 'impact or obvious and immediate 'social function of science' had ultimately made science and scientific training too important a matter to be left to the scientists and so it was eventually turned into a separate sector of national policy-making' (Nybom 2007: 91). Consequently, already in the 1960s in the US – and only later in Europe – the quest for greater relevance of the academic research enterprise began and continues today. Knowledge transfer from universities to industry and other users of research results, such as the military or health care system, was one of the demands that figured highly on the political agenda. Priority setting to promote technologically promising scientific developments, attempts to forecast scientific breakthroughs with a strong application potential and a general emphasis on 'relevance' and 'strategic research' (Irvine and Martin 1984) have proliferated over the years. In Europe this has – among other things – led to a certain emphasis on demand-side factors in the allocation of public funding of university research.

> Research proposals are expected to identify possible practical as well as scientific benefits; higher priority is being given to user involvements (including partial funding), universities are being invited to extract more revenue for licensing their intellectual property, and substantial funds are being spent in 'foresight' exercises designed to create exchange and consensus around future opportunities for application (Pavitt 2001: 768).

The research policy of the European Union clearly promotes the search for usefulness that has gained further visibility in the context of the Lisbon agenda and its emphasis on a 'Europe of Knowledge'. Expectations with regard to blurring boundaries between the university and its environment and a growing emphasis on the quasi-entrepreneurial role of academics (Henkel 2001; Owen-Smith and Powell 2004) accompany this development. While it is not clear to what extent this quest for relevance is spurred on by business firms, it often comes from national and supranational governments that are responsible for the accountability and efficiency of public expenditures (Pavitt 2001).

This quest for relevance has been reinforced by a persuasive claim that the nature and locus of knowledge production are changing. For some time and in surprising agreement, different authors have observed the emergence of a 'new mode of knowledge production' that fits quite well into the overall political debate about the changing role of knowledge in our society – and the need for a re-structuring of science and higher education policy. 'Post-normal science' (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993), 'postacademic science' (Ziman 1996) and 'mode 2' (Gibbons et al. 1994) all presume far-reaching social and cognitive changes because of institutional changes taking place over the last decades. They argue that a new form of knowledge production, '. . . a distinct set of cognitive and social practices is beginning to emerge'

(Gibbons et al. 1994: 3). These practices are carried out in the context of application as opposed to one governed by a specific academic community; trans-disciplinary as opposed to disciplinary; heterogeneous as opposed to homogeneous; heterarchical and transient as opposed to hierarchical and stable. Such attempts certainly challenge our thinking about a well-established order for science and research in proposing a qualitative transformation of its role and functioning in society. The claim of novelty by those arguing the new mode of science, the lack of empirical evidence provided and the weak explanatory power of their arguments have also stimulated quite critical reactions (Weingart 1997; Shinn 1999; Gläser 2000). For one thing, it has been argued that the trend concerning the 'new production of knowledge' is selling old wine in new bottles. It parallels the debates concerning the 'military–industrial complex' and the 'finalisation of science' nearly 30 years ago (Böhme, Van den Daele and Krohn 1973). Second, it has been argued that the process proposed is neither deterministic nor uniform and its implications may vary across academic fields and social settings. Third and most importantly, it has been argued that it mixes up developments in the institutional environment of science and research with actual knowledge production, defined as the social practices and activities of individuals or groups (Gläser 2000). The literature on the 'contextualisation' of science and research clearly has, however, a strong appeal for policy makers who strive for new institutional arrangements for legitimising, organising and funding research: for example, through linking universities, industries and government in new ways (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997).

This has a remarkable effect on the hierarchy of public expectations and support for the university. Once, universities were regarded mainly as part of a wider education system and therefore deserving of public subsidy. The research function was partly taken for granted while funding was seen as a responsibility of those most likely to benefit, including the nation state. Today, higher education is more likely to be regarded as a private consumption good while research is seen as core for the global competitiveness of the knowledge-based economy and therefore a key strategic area for national and supranational policy in Europe. As universities are increasingly seen as an important part of an overall (regional, national, European?) innovation system, numerous questions emerge concerning the status and boundaries of the university, the type of knowledge produced as well as the processes by which this knowledge is produced.

The demands put on the university are thus no longer confined to the reproduction of academic and other elites, the training of higher professional experts and the contribution to basic research. These functions are still important but have been enriched by an expansion and re-definition of 'old roles' as well as by 'new roles'. In the process of quantitative and qualitative expansion, the university's interrelationships with society have grown enormously. New bridges have multiplied, leading from society to the formerly more insular university, and problems and demands from every institution of society are brought to the university requiring relevant research, teaching and service. Conversely, especially more recently, the university has invaded society more dramatically diffusing into other institutions worldwide. Traditionally, research and teaching required mediation through the career

of graduates, the application of science and transfer of technology, or the popularisation of knowledge within a wider intellectual culture. Today, universities are expected to move into the front line of mediation between global knowledge and local contexts, between discovery and application, education and work. As is argued here, this also makes the university a rather vulnerable institution that tends to be overloaded with multiple expectations and growing demands. The mission impossible of the modern university is that it means too many things to too many and too diversified stakeholders. Overload becomes endemic as growing and multiplying expectations seem to follow erratic public 'issue attention cycles'.

What, if at all, can be done in such a situation of institutional confusion and overload? Across Europe, the most frequently heard response to this question is 'diversify', 'stratify', 'profile' the higher education landscape – introducing stratification à la Americana with a steep hierarchy between organisational classes and individual organisations.

3 Institutional Confusion and the Search for A Modern Higher Education System

In the following, it is hypothesised that the continuous efforts to balance unity and diversity, system integration and differentiation are one key to understanding responses to institutional confusion and mission stretch of the European university. Since the 1960s, public debate and policy reform have been concerned with the institutional configuration of higher education across Europe. The debates and reforms regarding an appropriate system design for higher education are not all new and have undergone several stages. Analyses of the developments until about the mid-1990s highlighted two stages (Huisman 1998; Neave 2006; Teichler 2004).

In a first response to the expansionist dynamics in higher education, diversification according to sectors or types of organisations and programmes was a key element. Across Europe, in the 1960s and 1970s, most attention was paid to one specific dimension of diversification: the establishment of different types of organisations in order to accommodate the expansion of higher education with moderate changes for the universities. In other words, the move from elite to mass higher education was thought to be regulated by a steering of the mission of the system according to institutional types. This brought an understanding that organisations are embedded in a larger 'system' that can be defined formally and potentially planned or steered. It also brought about the term 'higher education system' (Clark 1983) that claimed that there are universities and 'other' higher education institutions, most likely organisations specialised by fields of study, more professionally oriented than the universities. Obviously, change and reform in higher education thus introduced notions of mission steering along a functional division of work (horizontal diversification) as well as a hierarchical stratification of quality, prestige and reputation (vertical diversification).

In a second stage of reform, lasting from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, more attention was paid to a further diversification among individual organisations or

organisational sub-units, more frequently, however, within the logic of a sectoralised overall system. Mission steering by sectoral diversification turned out to be less successful and/or less stable than hoped. Analyses of the implementation of different types of higher education sectors showed a quite mixed performance of such reform efforts (Cerych and Sabatier 1986). In addition, the 'non-university' sector or second type of organisation had difficulties in establishing clearly distinct levels of education or profiles acceptable as 'different but equal' (Teichler 1991). Rather, one could observe sectoral overlap and sectoral copying. Phenomena of academic drift and professional drift resulted from intrinsic instability of mission steering and the inability of maintaining clearly distinct boundaries between sectors (Meek et al. 1996). Academic drift, where institutions lower in status try to emulate higher status institutions, and professional drift, where universities try to cater for student 'markets' served by vocational higher education institutions, led to de-differentiation. Finally, emerging changes in the regulatory philosophy among a growing number of European countries stimulated a diversification within the system by individual organisations. Overall, steering from a distance and output control (Neave and Van Vught 1991) were (and are) accompanied by incentives for individual organisations to become more like corporate actors in order to emphasise their distinctiveness and compete with others for research funds and students as well as to form strategic alliances (De Boer et al. 2007). This change in the regulatory environment also implies that mission steering is no longer pre-dominantly in the visible hands of the regulatory government but supplemented by the self-steering capacities of the organisations manoeuvring in quasi-markets and intra-organisational networks (Enders 2002).

That said, it is important to keep in mind that the tendencies described above do not mean that higher education systems necessarily were converging. Although they are faced with similar challenges of mission stretch, we know from comparative studies of reform and change in higher education that the ways in which such challenges are dealt with may differ considerably and also in ways that preserve rather than reduce nationally distinct characteristics (Teichler 1991, 2004; Meek et al. 1996).

In this respect, multi-level policies aimed at the European university provide an interesting case. In Europe, universities have played an important role in the making of modern nation states including the building of a national heritage and identity, the formation and reproduction of national elites, the preparation and selection of the governmental and administrative workforce and the provision of research for national, economic and social development (Neave 2001). Traditionally, (higher) education and research were thus supposed to be national affairs making it difficult to institutionalise European-level responsibilities and policies for this area, even though respective initiatives can be traced back to the 1950s (Corbett 2005). It was in the 1990s that the issue of the unity and diversity of the European higher education system again changed, embodying new approaches to intergovernmentally and supranationally.

Ironically, the conflict between efforts on the part of the European Commission (EC) to constantly extend its field of action and the national governments' aim to keep the commission out of the core business of higher education triggered

a European policy of grass roots internationalisation (Teichler 1998b). Facilitating student mobility (and to some extent academic staff mobility) became the first key instrument of internationalisation for the EC. Mobility relates to the free movement of people and goods that formed a core aspect of the Treaty of Rome and mobility became a key instrument for the EC to develop administrative executive capacities in the area of higher education – an area of relevance as well to the EC's economic policies.

The joint study programmes inaugurated in 1976 aimed at stimulating temporary study at a partner department, teaching staff exchange and joint developments of study programmes on a small experimental basis. About a decade later, the ERASMUS programme was launched. It focused on student mobility and included various other means of cooperation. The programme was clearly the core activity that addressed higher education in the EU and was accompanied by others such as COMETT, LINGUA or TEMPUS.

On the basis of various evaluation studies (Teichler 1998b; Enders 1998; Barblan et al. 2000), we can conclude that ERASMUS and SOCRATES (as the educational support programmes were called later) caused a breakthrough by introducing an European dimension into the normal teaching and learning study programmes at most institutions of higher education, even if international student mobility remained limited to less than 10% of the student population. The major effect of the programme was not only to provide international experience to 100,000 students per year, but also to challenge the substance and modes of teaching and learning with comparatively small financial outlays. The EC has obviously become a powerful actor and stimulated the intergovernmental policies of the Bologna process (Bologna Declaration 1999; Berlin Communiqué 2003; Bergen Communiqué 2005).

The pledge for convergence that has been underlined in the Bologna process launched by the National Ministries responsible for higher education is certainly another prominent factor in higher education in Europe. The ministers stressed that the process was a search for a 'common European answer to common European problems'. The main recommendations of the Bologna Declaration, which are, to a certain extent, a follow-up to the Sorbonne conference, can be summarised as follows:

- adopting a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- adopting a system based on two main cycles (undergraduate and graduate) of higher education studies;
- establishing a system of transferable credits as a means to promote student mobility, including credits acquired in non-higher education contexts and recognised by universities;
- overcoming obstacles to student, teacher, researcher and staff mobility;
- promoting European cooperation in quality assurance; and
- promoting European dimensions in higher education with regard to curriculum development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study and research.

At least four points which were not stressed or mentioned in the Bologna Declaration arose later: lifelong learning, the importance of the role of students and of higher education institutions generally, greater concern for the attractiveness of European higher education (including concern for trans-national education and its perspectives) and doctoral training as the third cycle in the degree structure.

The European dimension in higher education has certainly acquired a new meaning since the declaration of a 'European Higher Education Area'. But what exactly could or should be understood by a European Higher Education Area? No single definition has been provided so far by any of the documents prepared for or resulting from the various conferences. However, there seems to be a general consensus. It revolves around a certain number of concepts such as 'harmonisation', 'convergence' or 'coordination'. 'Bologna' has potentially far-reaching consequences for the European higher education landscape. Efforts to create convergent patterns of study programmes and degrees in Europe in order to facilitate intra-European mobility are intrinsically aimed at keeping differences in quality between sectors and organisations at the same stage of study programmes within limits. The process stimulates new opportunities for overlaps in the functions of universities and other higher education providers and for convergence of these types while intra-institutional diversity may be increased. When European governments agreed in the 1990s to establish a trans-national system of degrees and mutually recognised study programmes, types of higher education became a subordinate dimension of diversification. Obviously, this does not mean that such types become marginal, but rather are one dimension of diversity within an increasingly complex setting (Teichler 2004).

The policies described above are also influencing the development of higher education policy at the national level. They lead to initiatives that go beyond the formulation of traditional internationalisation policies, which used to be characterised as marginal, add-on activities and mainly focused on the international mobility of students and teachers. Instead, they lead to more structural measures intended to influence the higher education system more profoundly (Enders 2004). The road to Bologna is, however, a long one with options for local interpretations and manifold pathways.

Neave (2006) argues, for example, that there was an 'utter absence of any prior assessment into capacity of national systems to adapt to the Bologna principles and even less whether the dateline set was itself set on any basis other than hunch and ad-hocracy'. Studies on the role of the ERASMUS programme showed very modest direct impacts on national policies (Huisman et al. 2004). The nature of the programme neither intended to nor encroached on national responsibilities for higher education. Factors explaining the indirect impact were mainly seen in the domains of the institutional structure and the domain of the nature of objectives (policy legacies and adjustment pressures) (see Schmidt 2002). There were, however, important indirect effects on the organisational level and certain issues (degree recognition, credit transfer, quality assurance) became more important elements on the national higher education policy agenda of some governments that triggered the Bologna process. A recent study (Witte 2006) that compared adaptations of European higher education

systems in the context of the Bologna process among four countries (England, France, Germany, the Netherlands) shows a quite diverse picture with regard to the degree of policy change (policy formulation and policy implementation). The strong impact of the inherited national institutional frameworks impacted on the quite different degree of adaptations of national degree structures that have been achieved so far. The analysis shows that perceptions of policy actors of the changing European context supported national policy change, but only in conjunction with national policy agendas. 'Bologna' provided a strong (even though sometimes misinterpreted) European role model and a powerful legitimating framework while the entire process was mainly driven by national reform interests. In other words, European policies provided an important 'ice-breaker function' for national reform (Enders 2004) and dominate the policy agenda. It is thus not surprising that national higher education systems so far have not converged more closely on a common model.

Further, the emergence of policies towards a 'European Research Area' (European Commission 2000, 2002) and the role it is supposed to play in the Lisbon strategy add to the transformation of the social setting in which the university is functioning. The official discourses on a common European space of research and innovation increasingly acknowledge that the future role of universities will have to be different from the traditional role (European Commission 2003, 2006). True, on reading the original document that the EC published in 2000, it is clear that neither European universities nor European higher education have been significantly taken into account when thinking about the European Research Area. What figured prominently instead were dynamic private investments in science and technology, intellectual property rights and effective tools to protect them, the creation of knowledge-intense companies and risk capital, research for evidence-based policies and more entrepreneurial and mobile human resources in science and technology. It is symptomatic that in the initial period of the policies towards the European Research Area, the role of the university as a house of science and scholarship is not mentioned. It was only after the intervention of the European Rectors' Conference and other political actors that the role of the university in this policy process as well as its potential effects came more to the forefront. Efforts to establish a European Institute of Technology and the establishment of the European Research Council indicate that this discourse is accompanied by attempts to further institution-building on the European level.

Policies on the role of research in the 'Europe of Knowledge' have changed the environment in which universities and other higher education providers operate. The European Research Area adds a supranational level to the changing expectations with regard to the role of the university in the innovation system. As universities are increasingly seen as an important part of an overall innovation system, their contribution (or lack of contribution) to the innovation system becomes critical. We may argue again that no single definition has been provided, so far, by any of the documents prepared for such a 'European Research Area'. There seems, however, to be a general consensus. It revolves around a certain number of general concepts such as 'excellence', 'relevance', 'critical mass' and 'stratification'.

These issues also relate to the unity and diversity of the higher education and research landscape and provide another set of interesting 'templates' for mission steering (Scott 2006). First of all, an alternative view to the 'higher education system' is offered in which universities appear most prominent in the 'research system' together with public research institutions, industrial research and development and other research providers. Second, in the course of higher education's expansion, research is drifting into the shadow of teaching. A higher degree of diversification between research and teaching is thus desirable in order to assure the research function in an increasingly competitive and globalised environment. Third, the vertical dimension of diversification is most relevant, and within a stratified system the apex of world-class research universities succeeding in a global setting is most crucial. Fourth, such a highly stratified system will allow a more appropriate allocation of resources for strategic research, and unequal rewards will motivate higher efforts and better achievements. In turn, this will assure that leading European universities no longer play in national leagues but in world leagues – a perspective that is also fuelled by the growing popularity of world rankings of universities. Altogether, 'picking the winners' (Irvine and Martin 1984) thus gains in priority on the European agenda. Continental Europe may still have problems in identifying the entirety of a university as excellent rather than certain organisational sub-units of a university. Certain national policies mirror, however, supranational policies towards a more stratified system. Dutch policies for 'Focus and Mass' and the building of a confederation of the three technical universities in the Netherlands exemplify this emergent trend as well as the German Excellence Initiative that tries to identify those German universities to be supported to become world-class research universities. The founding of the League of European Research Universities (LERU) in 2002 demonstrates not only that the label 'research university' has an obvious appeal to universities but that they attempt to become major players in this policy arena as well.

European policies in the area of research and innovation also affect the higher education landscape in other ways, contributing to the 'reputation race' (Van Vught 2006) among European universities. Certain policies appear to create a diversification effect due to the stratified participation of European universities in the European research programmes, with those programmes reinforcing the interaction between universities and industry. While the variety of universities participating in European research programmes is decreasing, the larger and older universities have a higher participation rate (Geuna 1999; David and Keely 2003). Past success also appears to be an important predictor of future participation and is correlated with success in the acquisition of national funds. The push in EU policies towards closer cooperation between universities and industries places financially vulnerable universities in a difficult situation because they are not able to charge the full costs for contract research, transfer and service activities (Geuna 1999).

At first glance, such developments may appear counter to the efforts of harmonising the European higher education landscape according to the Bologna process. But combined options are at hand. While the top of the system represented by the leading research universities will be global players focusing on graduate education, middle

ranking universities will focus on professional masters training on the national level and low-ranking higher education providers will serve the regional market for bachelor students. A core of more prestigious and visible 'European universities' will thus be surrounded by a larger number of national 'universities in Europe' and more localised colleges. The idea that there is no alternative than to explicitly label and support some research universities was an unfamiliar one, at least, in continental Europe until recently. The 'research university' was regarded as a pleonasm because universities were expected to be research-active if not research-based. Obviously, any attempt to select 'research universities' does imply that Europe's 'best' universities must concentrate on their research mission. Other universities in Europe – probably the majority – will have to place less emphasis on research and are likely to receive limited resources for their scholarly and scientific foundations once regarded as indispensable for all universities. Within such a scenario 'non-university' higher education remains a predominantly negatively described sector within the overall higher education and research system – a conglomeration of institutions characterised by what they are not. It goes without saying that such a scenario is a mixed blessing for the bulk of universities that have something to lose as well as for other higher education providers that have nothing to gain anymore.

It remains, however, to be seen what the impact of such a scenario on the European higher education landscape may be. So far, 'Bologna' and 'Lisbon' certainly indicate a new era in European higher education and research policies while they also indicate the complexity of power distributions in this policy field.

> The uneven implementation of the Bologna process and the uncertainties of the Lisbon strategy illustrate that actors without authority can rarely rely on (coercive) power. The causal chain from political intention and declarations to implementation can easily be broken or weakened and building support and mobilizing partners is a key process in University reform (Olsen and Maassen 2007: 20).

There are also some other arguments about the institutionalisation of the European university worth discussing with respect to its contested past and future (Neave et al. 2006). One argument centres on the implications of the rise of the knowledge society and the need for more open and dynamic systems of knowledge production, dissemination and uptake. Another argument centres on the governability and responsiveness of higher education and research systems and their organisational sub-settings.

The knowledge society is not (or not only) characterised by the exclusive expectations and values of knowledge elites, the scarcity of scientific and technological innovations and a utilitarian mission of knowledge production and dissemination. The knowledge society is also characterised by inclusive values and expectations of a growing number of highly qualified citizens, a democratisation of higher education and research and the search for social cohesion in an increasingly fragmented society (Olsen 2002; Scott 2006; Teichler 2006). Policies that concentrate on the apex of the system may be dangerous due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the dynamics of the knowledge society and the contributions the university has to offer to this society. In fact, one may argue that the university is in the unique position

of being the institution where the various demands can be integrated, where it is all 'joined up' (Benneworth and Arbo 2006). This argument resembles the early writing of Parsons and Platt (1973) on the advantages of the 'full university' with its multiple connections and functional units that do not only serve their own purpose but are intrinsically related to each other and to society in multiple ways.

The closely connected argument also states that we should grant greater legitimacy to disorder instead of order (Clark 1996). The university as a modern institution is intrinsically characterised by inordinate and uncommon complexity, partly based on its peculiar function as a knowledge centre in its many-fold meanings. This implies that 'ambivalence' or 'ambiguity' about the university is part of its success story (Weiler 2005). From a conceptual point of view we would thus draw on a tradition in social science that is based on the 'premise that the structure of social roles consists of arrangements of norms and counter norms which have evolved to provide the flexibility of normatively acceptable behavior required to deal with changing states of a social relation' (Merton 1976: 31). If we assume that the knowledge society is characterised by growing complexity, fluidity and unpredictability, the university's claim for comprehensiveness is a pre-condition for survival and responsiveness in such a dynamic environment. This does not imply an argument against institutional diversity in higher education and research. Instead, if the impact of the knowledge society is taken into account, 'the present pattern of European universities, informally differentiated rather than formally stratified, may offer a more flexible and adaptable model' (Scott 2006: 140).

Such arguments certainly have their appeal for those who claim that European higher education and research should aspire to excellence in diversity rather than a hierarchy of excellence. Recent developments may thus encourage a system dynamics towards finer-grained and flexible differentiations rather than 'classified hierarchies'. Universities and other higher education providers may continuously bundle and unbundle their tasks in teaching, research and service, their (multi-) disciplinary profile, their geographical outreach and their embeddedness in a system of shifting organisational configurations. The price to be paid for such a more flexible and adaptable model is, however, ongoing structural tension due to mission overload and continuous struggle for a more ordered higher education and research landscape.

4 Conclusions

This chapter does not answer the question of whether we can expect further confusion about the university as an institution, a de-institutionalisation of the university, or a re-institutionalisation of the university. What we have observed is that universities have grown into much bigger and complex higher education and research systems that have been exposed to growing expectations and shifting demands. The university's interrelationships with society have grown enormously. The university as a multi-functional institution is heavily involved in literally every kind of social and economic activity in society. This is part and parcel of the success story of the modern university and arguments have been put forward that point to

the advantages of the university as a complex and disordered multi-functional institution. This makes the university at the same time a vulnerable institution due to an increasing load of multiple and partly contradictory expectations with regard to their role and functioning in the knowledge society. The chapter has argued that mission stretch and institutional confusion are inevitable consequences of such an institutional dynamic. Today, the phenomenon of mission stretch is familiar to individual academics, individual organisations, as well as higher education systems. Mission stretch has been driven by both quantitative and qualitative changes including the creation and expansion of higher education systems; the reconfiguration of scientific systems as well as of teaching–learning systems and their interrelationships; and the shifting frontiers between the university and its environments. 'Old' expectations have been differentiated and specified; 'new' expectations have been assigned to the university by government, society and the economy; and effective means of operation in achieving the enriched bundle of expectations have become an important criterion of success. From the point of view of a system theory of functional differentiation one can argue that the university as a modern institution can be characterised by over-complexity and under-differentiation.

Quantitative and qualitative expansion has been one of the drivers of European debates and reforms addressing the issue of the unity and diversity of the university. Since the 1960s, public debate and policy reform have been concerned with the institutional configuration of a modern higher education and research landscape across European nation states. Such continuous efforts to balance system integration and differentiation are key elements in understanding responses to mission stretch. In this process, conflict and struggle centre around the dynamics of differentiation and de-differentiation of types of institutions and increasingly so on individual institutions within or across such types. A new pre-stabilised order has, however, not yet been found. Instead, institutional unity and diversity are increasingly embedded supranationally within Europe.

Arguably, the rise of the European Higher Education Area and of the European Research Area has added another trans-national layer to the struggle for an appropriate institutional design for the European university. Both developments are not neutral to the issue of systemic differentiation. The European Higher Education Area revolves around concepts such as 'harmonisation', 'convergence' and 'coordination' while the European Research Area stresses concepts such as 'excellence', 'relevance', 'critical mass' and 'stratification'. The maps of the landscape with regard to the teaching function and the research function of higher education thus seem to become increasingly dissociated. But options are at hand where a core of more prestigious and visible 'European universities' will be surrounded by a larger number of national 'universities in Europe' and more localised colleges.

At first glance, this may suggest that trans-national policies will lead towards standardisation instead of pluralisation. So far, research on the European policy dynamics does not backup such an assumption. Trans-national role models partly derive from and diffuse into specific national and institutional settings. One can witness a dialectics unfolding in which an increase in trans-national agenda setting and rule making is not only influenced by national and institutional policy making but

also serves as an enabler for these. At the same time that national policies respond to trans-national trends and policies, trans-national policies serve the reverse purpose. National and organisational actors use such trans-national trends as an 'ice-breaker' for national and local reforms with their own logic and purpose contributing to the persistence of old and the emergence of new, variations across and within systems. Recent reforms are thus not only contested but will also not necessarily lead to a grand unified model for the European higher education and research landscape.

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Part III
Beneath the Arrow: The Response of Higher Education Systems at the National Level

The Side Effects of the Bologna Process on National Institutional Settings: The Case of France

Christine Musselin

1 Introduction

The successive declarations which punctuated the Bologna process since 1998 promote large ambitious goals – among them, competitiveness, quality, mobility, etc. – and rely on two main objectives to attain these goals. The first one has already been achieved in almost all signing countries and consists in the generalisation of a two-tier structure (bachelor and master) for all European curricula, most of them corresponding to a three year + two year cycle, even if variations are still to be found from one country to another or from one institutional sector to another in the same country (see, for instance, Witte 2006). The second objective (which is still being pursued) is the generalised implementation of compatible quality assurance systems guaranteeing the respect of a minimal standard of equivalent quality among all training programmes. In 2005, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA 2005) published a document called *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* which aims at setting down some of the principles which could frame the development of such quality assurance systems.

The Bologna process is therefore not an ordinary reform as it does not directly address the transformation of the national higher education institutional settings within Europe. It does not try to modify the status of universities; it does not aim to transform the state–university relationships; it does not propose to introduce new tools to improve the management of the academic profession; it does not state how to allocate budgets; it does not intend to modify university governance, etc. While most reforms in the 1980s and 1990s in the EU countries (Eurydice 2000; Musselin 2005a) were expected to redesign the national institutional settings, the Bologna process on the contrary promotes another level of action. It thus aims, first to change the 'products' of higher education (i.e. the degrees) and to normalise them by recognising three main degrees: the bachelor, the master and the doctorate. Second, it intends to transform the higher education 'production processes' through

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the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS),[1] modularisation, etc. and also through the promotion of coherent quality assurance processes among countries. The products and the way they are produced are the main points of impact chosen by the Bologna process (Musselin 2005b) when one looks at the different declarations and relies on the explicit goals of these reforms.

Nevertheless, does it have an impact on the national institutional settings? This is the question which will be discussed in this contribution. Two different ways could be used to address this question. The first one would be to reveal the implicit institutional models which can be 'discovered' when analysing the different texts, devices and reports accompanying, preparing and framing the different 'Bologna conferences'. This will not be the way chosen here even if a quick analysis certainly suggests it would be relevant: it is clear that the documents pertaining to the Bologna process implicitly promote an 'ideal' institutional model based on autonomous, accountable and responsible higher education institutions.[2] But, rather than exploring this implicit ideal, I will take another perspective and question whether the concrete implementation of the Bologna process in the concerned countries has been disconnected from the reform of the institutional national settings, that is, whether implementing Bologna can be done without transforming the latter on the one hand and/or whether the Bologna reform has not been used by the national governments as a vehicle to transform the latter, on the other hand. Focusing on the specific case of France on which a study[3] was led in 2005 by Mignot-Gérard and Musselin (2006) it will be argued that both mechanisms can be observed.

First, it will be argued that, as in many other countries engaged in this reform (see, for instance, Gornitzka 2006; Krücken et al. 2005; Witte 2006), a 're-nationalisation' of this process happened because French public authorities used this reform to achieve other objectives. In particular, the French ministry grasped this opportunity to simultaneously promote university autonomy, standardise the degree offer among the different institutional sectors and transform the state–university relationships.[4]

But, second, we also observed some 'side effects' which have had an impact on the national institutional settings as a consequence of the implementation of the two-cycle structure of French universities. For instance, this reform fostered cooperation and joint development of curricula among higher education institutions located in the same city; it questioned the internal structure of universities and led to some reorganisation; it also reinforced the power of academics on the management of curricula to the detriment of the university level.

The issues addressed in this contribution are therefore very close to those discussed in the literature dealing with Europeanisation processes when considering the impact of European Union policies on domestic change. This is the reason why Europeanisation will be the analytical perspective used in this chapter to explain what happened in the French case. It is certainly not the only relevant approach which can be used to study Bologna;[5] but, because the Bologna process is not an EU policy, the conditions by which it can be understood as a Europeanisation process should first be clarified. The Europeanisation issues which will be dealt with in this chapter should also be clearly defined. That will be the object of the following section.

2 The Bologna Process as A Europeanisation Process

In the case of France, it may be more difficult than in other countries to argue that the Bologna process is a Europeanisation process because the idea of the two-cycle structure has been developed by the French. Claude Allègre (French Minister of Education from 1997 to 2000) and his collaborators introduced this point in the first declaration signed by the Ministers of Great Britain, Germany and Italy at the Sorbonne Conference in May 1998.[6] Nevertheless, helped by the fact that this reform finally took the name of the Italian city where the second conference was held, the introduction of what is called in France the 'LMD'[7] – licence (for bachelor), master and doctorate – is perceived by French faculty members as a non-escapable move 'imposed' by 'Europe'. As a result, the difference between this non-constraining intergovernmental process and a directive of the European Commission is not always clearly understood or made by French interviewees.[8]

But this confusion is not the main reason why the Bologna process should be analysed as a Europeanisation process.

2.1 Conditions by Which the Bologna Process can be Studied as a Europeanisation Process

If one restricts Europeanisation to the third of the five[9] 'faces' of this notion identified by Olsen (2002), that is, to what he calls the 'domestic impacts of European-level institutions', the definition proposed by Radaelli (2001) to qualify such impacts is probably the most complete as it includes institutional, cognitive and normative aspects. For Radaelli (2001: 110), Europeanisation is the 'process of (a) construction; (b) diffusion; and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated *in the making of EU public policy and politics* and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourses, identities, political structures and public policies' (my emphasis). This definition applies perfectly to the Bologna process (with the major exception being my emphasised words!). As mentioned above, the Bologna process is intergovernmental and does not only concern EU countries: therefore it is not 'consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics'. For Radaelli (2001), this would exclude the Bologna process from the realm of Europeanisation studies. Nevertheless, this position is not shared by all Europeanists. In their recent book, Palier et al. (2006) adopt and argue in favour of a less restrictive frame. They first suggest going beyond 'EU policies' strictly speaking and to look at sectors in which the European Commission has no specific competence and produces either few or no directives and public policies. They also include in their studies less coercive and legal types of actions which nevertheless allow for Europeanisation processes, through less restrictive ways.

But even this enlargement is insufficient if one wants to analyse the Bologna process as a Europeanisation process. Two supplementary conditions must be added.

First, processes, instruments and decisions should be included even when not led by the European Commission; second, processes, instruments and decisions affecting EU countries but also non-EU state members, should also be considered. Rather than restricting the scope of study – as suggested by Radaelli (2001) in order to avoid naming everything 'Europeanisation' and thus weakening this concept – I suggest to avoid this risk by distinguishing and qualifying different kinds of Europeanisation processes. Some could be called neofunctionalist or EU-nisation when led by the commission, while others could be more intergovernmental, and among them a further distinction should be introduced between constraining and soft processes. A supplementary distinction could be introduced between those which are EU limited and those which are expected to have larger impacts. As a result, the Bologna process can be analysed as an intergovernmental, weakly constraining Europeanisation process with an impact on European countries, or, following Radaelli's (2001) terms, as a 'process of (a) construction; (b) diffusion; and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms' *first defined and consolidated in the making of intergovernmental public policy and politics* 'and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourses, identities, political structures and public policies' *of EU countries and other European countries.*

2.2 A Focus on Re-Nationalisation Effects Linked to Europeanisation Processes

Within this framework, I will only focus on one specific aspect among those under scrutiny in Europeanisation studies. More precisely, two issues addressed by this approach will not be discussed here, that is, the degree of change and the mechanisms by which Europeanisation occurs. This chapter is thus aiming at neither measuring the degree of impact of this process[10] on the French system nor assessing whether one should speak of inertia, absorption, accommodation or transformation.[11] It also does not intend to identify the mechanisms of Europeanisation involved in the Bologna process[12] or to qualify this process itself.[13] In order to answer our questions about Bologna and national institutional settings, the chapter's main focus will be on re-nationalisation processes linked to Europeanisation processes.

Relying on the existing literature on this point, two main meanings of re-nationalisation can be distinguished but, for each of them, further alternatives have to be suggested.

In most approaches, re-nationalisation characterises the transformation experienced by Europeanisation processes when confronted with national settings, structures, preferences and beliefs. Building on examples from Börzel (1999) and Caporaso et al. (2001), Radaelli (2001: 130), for instance, states that 'in addition, institutions determine the distribution of resources among domestic actors affected by Europeanization. The result is that the impact of Europeanization is contingent

on institutional factors'. But this conception is too overly top-down – it focuses on how measures emerging from European initiatives confront or accommodate national settings. Moreover it is one-sided: it only describes how national characteristics limit/allow the impact and transform/respect the content of European measures. But the other side of the coin (or another form of re-nationalisation having to do with national institutional settings) should also be considered. In particular, one should observe the side effects such measures have on the national[14] level in order to be implemented or when being implemented. This means taking into account the country specific characteristics and institutions which are nevertheless affected by these measures and that experience specific national changes, although not directly.

In some other approaches, re-nationalisation refers to another phenomenon, that is, the capacity (or not) of national states to still play a role. It is then understood as the moment when 'governmental actors fear to be 'overwhelmed', and start elaborating strategies to take control over [the European] policies' (my translation) (Palier et al. 2006: 75). As outlined by these authors, 'for the state to come back in, it first has to transform and thus to Europeanize itself' because 'it must control the new rules to become the master of the game or at least come back into the game' (my translation) (Palier et al. 2006: 75). But even if I agree with this last assumption, I would argue that this conception only emphasises defensive reactions from the states. One should also pay attention to more offensive forms of re-nationalisation, by which governmental actors re-nationalise the process, not so much by taking control over the European measures but by using them to tackle domestic objectives or problems.

We thus now have four mechanisms of re-nationalisation, two linked to national institutional settings and two others to national governmental actors (see Table 1).

Because of the intergovernmental, weakly constraining character of Bologna as a Europeanisation process, all four forms of re-nationalisation do not apply. In particular, there is no evidence, at least in the data collected with Mignot-Gérard (Mignot-Gérard and Musselin 2006), of the governmental actors taking over control of the Bologna process, probably because the latter is not a top-down compelling directive but a non-constraining commitment they accepted to sign and even participated in its design. If the members of the French ministry had to Europeanise themselves to develop the Bologna process (or at least become more aware of other

Table 1 Four forms of re-nationalisation linked to Europeanisation processes

	National institutional settings	National governmental actors
Direct reactions to European policies	Affecting the European process by facilitating or impeding it (form 1)	Taking over control of the European process (form 3)
Indirect reactions to European policies	Affected by side effects, while not concerned with the European process (form 2)	Using the European process to tackle other domestic issues (form 4)

European higher education systems and of the position of France among them), they never felt like having to 'take over control' of something that would have been imposed on them.

Below, I shall therefore focus only on the three other mechanisms. I shall start with the capacity of national institutions to affect the implementation of the Bologna process (form 1) because this mechanism did not impact the institutional national settings but rather showed their strength. I shall then turn to the way the French governmental actors used the LMD as an opportunity to tackle domestic issues (form 4) and in particular to transform some of the French institutional national settings, thus modifying the original goal of this reform. I shall conclude by identifying some of the side effects (form 2) the implementation of the LMD had on some institutional national settings.

3 The Impacts of the French Institutional Settings on the Implementation of the Bachelor–Master Scheme in France

Similar to many other European, international or global processes, the Bologna reform is confronted with specific institutional contexts in the country where it is implemented. There is therefore no automatic and similar declination of this reform in each country: when the same measures are 'applied' on different national settings, the latter incorporate the European measures and transform them into a specific national mixture. This is a well-known mechanism which has been studied many times by the tenants of the neo-institutionalist approach in comparative politics (Steinmo et al. 1992; Thelen 1999). When they compare different countries confronted with the same external phenomena (an oil crisis, for instance), with the same set of ideas or theory (for a study about Keynesian theories, cf. Hall 1989), or with the same policy instruments (as the creation of governmental agencies), they observe different ways of implementation, different impacts and different acceptances of these measures.

In the case of the bachelor–master scheme, Witte (2006) for the UK, the Netherlands, France and Germany clearly showed how the 3+2 structure, which finally emerged as a common reference, found specific declinations and led to many exceptions to the 'rule'. The same has been observed by Krücken et al. (2005) for Germany, by Gornitzka (2006) for Norway, by Alesi et al. (2005) for the seven countries they studied and was also stressed by the Trend IV report (Reichert and Tauch 2005). Adaptations have been negotiated and accepted in order for the Bologna process to fit into the national specificities, constraints or preferences. In France, the *grandes écoles* constitute a first good example of such amendments: as access to the more reputed of them occurs after two years of special classes (held in *lycées* and finishing with a very selective exam), the *grandes écoles* did not introduce a bachelor degree and 'only' deliver masters. But exceptions are also observed within French universities: the job-oriented professional degrees delivered two years after the

baccalauréat by the IUTs (University Institutes of Technology) have been maintained (and not expanded to a three-year degree). The same holds true for the BTS (higher degree for technicians) which is delivered two years after the *baccalauréat*, mostly offered by public or private *lycées*.

A further example of adaptation can be found with the division of master programmes into sub-levels, called *mentions* which can themselves be subdivided into *spécialités*. Trying to push for a reduction in the number of degrees and to rationalise the training offer, the ministry encouraged the creation of a large domain (possibly interdisciplinary) for each master. This was aimed at reshuffling the previous structure in which the fifth year at university was organised in various DEAs (research-oriented) and DESSs (job-oriented) degrees, each led by an academic in close interaction with some research teams or labs. But in fact it did not change very much. In many places, the master is not the relevant level of management. Some universities even decided not to name someone in charge of each master. The subdivision of masters into *mentions* led to a kind of replication of the former structure and the academic who chairs the *mentions* are the 'real' levels of decision and responsibility of the new training programmes. As a result, there is often confusion (voluntary or non-voluntary) between the different notions and it is frequent to hear the head of a *mention* (for instance, in molecular biology) in a master (for instance, in life sciences), speaking of 'their master in molecular biology'. The small territories drawn before by the DEA and DESS have therefore been redesigned (if not recreated) in *mentions* or *spécialités*.

A frequent explanation of such phenomena is what Pierson (2000) called a broad[15] version of path dependence which stresses the stability and inertia of already existing patterns, institutions, routines, etc. This of course applies in this case, but, in order to be more explicit than just recognise that 'history matters', it is necessary to identify where resistance came from. Two factors are important in this specific case. The first one is linked to the notion of bounded rationality first developed by Simon (1945): facing the need to find new solutions within a short time, academics often agree on solutions at hand rather than engage in a costly and lengthy search for innovative and new ones. The second factor is what I call the 'paradoxical strength of formal structures' within universities (Musselin 1990, 2006b). Unlike in other organisations, formal structures in universities fail to organise cooperation and coordination among individuals. Because teaching is a loosely coupled activity (Weick 1976) requiring few interactions with other colleagues and building on unclear technology (Cohen et al. 1972), belonging to the same department or teaching in the same programme does not imply strong cooperation with other members of the department or programme. But this does not mean that such formal structures do not play a role. They in fact act as defensive territories which become very visible each time they are threatened[16] and which tend to reappear each time they are suppressed: the mutation of the DEA and DESS into *mentions* or *spécialités* seems a nice illustration of such a mechanism.

Whatever the explanations for it, this first re-nationalisation mechanism plays in favour of the stability of the already existing institutional settings, or to be more precise explains one aspect of the re-nationalisation processes affecting

Europeanisation, by the strength of these settings. The next mechanism on the contrary affects the national settings and 'nationalises' at the same time.

4 A European Reform Which Also Serves Domestic Aims

This second mechanism is linked to the fact that each country rarely arrives exactly at the same European policy as its neighbours because national governments often aggregate other objectives or measures to a specific reform. The more spectacular example for this in the case of the Bologna process certainly is the 'quality reform' led in Norway in the name of Bologna but which affects many other aspects (Gornitzka 2006; Michelsen 2006) including university leadership and governance (Bleiklie 2006).

But similar phenomena can be observed in other countries as well. In the case of France, three supplementary objectives have been pushed by the ministry along with the LMD reform, which aimed at transforming some of the features of the French national institutional settings.

4.1 Trying to Blur Some of the Frontiers Between the Universities and the Grandes Écoles

First, the LMD has been used as an opportunity to standardise the degrees offered in France and thus to reshape the distinction between the university and the *grandes écoles*. To understand what happened it is necessary to recall, first, that in France the agreement to deliver national university degrees is given by the ministry and renegotiated every four years by the universities through a procedure called the *habilitation* and, second, that since the 1880 act,[17] public universities have been granted the monopoly to deliver degrees such as the *DEUG* (delivered two years after the *baccalauréat*), then the *licence* (bac+3) and the *maîtrise* (bac+4). This was also true for the DEA and DESS (bac+5) and the PhD programmes, but with few exceptions: some *grandes écoles* (although rare) can also deliver PhDs. The institutional distinction between the two sectors was therefore accompanied by a clear difference in the type and name of the degrees offered. Today, the type of degrees remains different but the distinction is so subtle that few people really understand because the names are the same. What happened? In 1999, the division in charge of higher education at the ministry resurrected an old distinction between two terms: the notion of *grade* (which refers to a specific level of study achieved by obtaining a degree) and the notion of *diplôme* (which refers to the name and content of a specific degree).[18] This subtle but legal nuance allows for the publication of decrees creating the *grade* of master[19] to name all the degrees obtained in five years. As a result, each 'bac+5' degree delivered today by a *grande école* belongs to the *grade* of master.[20] As the same terminology (master) has been chosen to name the national degree (*diplôme national*) delivered by universities five years after the *baccalauréat*, *grandes écoles* and universities now both offer 'products'

(degrees) having the same generic name: 'master'. One is a *grade* and the other is a degree, but of course only a few people are able to understand the difference. My own institution, Sciences Po, for instance, delivers both a '*diplôme* de Sciences Po' which is a *grade*of master and is not submitted to a ministerial *habilitation*and a degree of master (national degree), *habilité* by the ministry and opening the door to the preparation of a PhD awarded by Sciences Po.

This may appear as a small change, and is often considered as such by external observers (Witte 2006, for instance), but it is in fact a supplementary step further experienced by two processes[21] engaged for many years which brings universities and *grandes écoles* closer: on the one hand, universities have borrowed some practices from the *grandes écoles* (introduction of some selective programmes, creation of job-oriented curricula, etc.) for part of their training programmes while, on the other hand, the *grandes écoles* are transforming themselves into more 'academic' higher education institutions (fostering research activities, hiring professors with academic profiles rather than practitioners, etc.). During the LMD implementation, the benevolence of the ministry in favour of the development of national co-degrees between universities and *grandes écoles* also contributed to try to bring both sectors closer, more intertwined and thus blur the frontiers between them.

> The *grandes écoles* want a master, because even if they are reputed in France, they are not internationally. I do not have a preference for the *grandes écoles*, I do not have a preference for the universities: I defend the French higher education system as a whole . . . Masters have to be based on research structures, but this is a problem for the *grandes écoles*. They are not very good in terms of research and that is a problem for them on the international scene. If we work correctly, partnerships between universities and *grandes écoles* will develop. It is already clear for the research masters: most *grandes écoles* created some with the universities (Ministry officer).

This process not only consists of concessions from the university side (loosening of their monopoly); it also involves efforts from the *grandes écoles* sector. They, for instance, accepted the introduction of specific processes granting accreditation of their degrees for a limited time period,[22] that is, the introduction of procedures comparable to the ministerial *habilitations* existing for the universities. Although still notable, the existing horizontal divide between the two sectors tended to reduce with the LMD.

4.2 More Pedagogical Autonomy for the Universities

Second, the LMD has been an opportunity for the ministry to increase the autonomy of French universities in the management of their curricula. Three main facts document this assumption. On the one hand, the suppression of the national patterns (*maquettes*), which were used to define the content of each training programme leading to a national university diploma. This is more a symbolic than a 'real' and concrete modification; as a matter of fact, the national patterns were rather broad and did not define each programme in precise detail. Furthermore, the discrepancy between the project submitted to the ministerial *habilitation* and its concrete

implementation was often rather important. These national patterns had little influence. But they were symbolically important as they illustrated the existence and the apparent maintenance of a nation-wide uniform definition of the training programmes and thus symbolically maintained one of the principles on which the French university system developed: a complete equivalence among all the delivered national degrees whatever the university which awards them, guaranteed by the equivalence in content assumed by the national patterns. Suppressing them therefore meant going a step further towards the acceptance and recognition of differentiation among French universities and a step further towards their pedagogical autonomy.

On the other hand, the next fact in favour of more institutional autonomy deals with the way in which the Bologna reform has been proposed rather than imposed on French universities. While in some other countries (Italy, Norway or the Netherlands, for instance) a date of passage has been set (with little negotiation with the institutions in the two first cases and on their own initiative in the third) (Witte 2006), the French ministry engaged in a progressive process, based on voluntary commitment, far away from its usual top-down directive style. It started at the end of the 1990s with decrees providing the opportunity to French higher education institutions to choose the 'LMD' and then (in November 2002) proposed (but did not oblige) to link the introduction of the LMD in each university with the negotiation of its four-year contract (Musselin 2001) with the ministry. The central administration thus relied on the progressive adhesion of the higher education institutions to the process – and it worked!

> It's exemplar. We changed all without changing anything. No text has been suppressed but we proposed something, only proposed, to the institutions. A reform has been proposed and was expected to go on progressively (Ministry officer).

> One of the good intuitions for the LMD was to unbalance the system a bit. It created a dynamic which fed upon itself. It made the LMD desirable. Everybody wants the LMD, and especially the 'M' (master), not because the ministry said 'do it' but because the actors in the university want it (Ministry officer).

The universities whose four-year contracts had to be renegotiated[23] in 2003 had to decide whether they would at the same time introduce the LMD or wait for another four years. In fact, most if not all chose to be among the precursors rather than wait for the next contract and take the risk of being among the latecomers. Some even asked to initiate the LMD before they attained their period of contractualisation. One could of course speak of 'constrained adhesion', as many faculty members expressed the feeling that there was indeed no other way and that the introduction of the LMD could not be avoided. One could also speak of a 'surface adhesion' as few are really convinced of the real improvement of the curricula through this process but again developed conforming responses in order to appear to be doing what was expected (according to what Meyer and Rowan (1977) first described as a form of institutional isomorphism). Finally, one could speak of adhesion by manipulation, as the ministry succeeded in obtaining adhesion to the reform by consciously using a non-authoritarian method. But the fact is that this reform, contrary to many previous reforms having occasionally a more solid legal background, has been implemented,

has incurred relatively few negative protests and is broadly accepted. Among the two pathways, resource redistribution and socialisation, identified by Börzel and Risse (2000: 8) as leading to domestic changes, the Bologna process certainly induces a socialisation process 'by which actors learn to internalise new norms and rules in order to become members of (international) society' and which relies on a logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1989).

Finally, the nature of the texts of the LMD reform is indicative of the will of the division in charge of higher education at the ministry to leave it to the higher education institutions and to incite them to be innovative. I will return later to the content of these texts but it is important to notice here that they were very 'light'. This left the universities which first implemented the reform rather perplexed as they were accustomed to much more precise and restrictive notices from the ministry and thus did not know how to prepare their new curricula in order to have a chance to receive the *habilitation* from the ministry.

> We received directives from the ministry but they were so vague that we in fact prepared our projects according to our own interpretations without any real knowledge of what was expected. We had no idea how the ministry would react (An academic).

Central administration finally produced some orientations or principles (for instance, it decided that the masters would be managed by the *facultés* and not by the doctoral schools, or that there could not be more than one master by domain, etc.) but even if part of the 'doctrine'[24] has been written as the process was going on, this doctrine remains loosely prescriptive, thus leaving to the institutions the responsibility and autonomy to define their own rules, their own standards, their own structures, etc. As a result, the *habilitation* process has also been rather open. In the three universities we studied, very few projects were refused by the ministry.[25] Some transformations have been negotiated and introduced for some projects, but we also observed cases where certain academics decided not to take into account advice given by the experts[26] of the ministry assessing the projects and finally received the *habilitation*.

> When I received the assessment from the experts at the ministry, I immediately understood they wanted to reduce expenses. For instance they asked us to merge the *spécialité* X with the *spécialité* Y. We refused and argued . . . and it worked (An academic).

As a matter of fact, the inflation in degrees which occurred with the introduction of the LMD has not been regulated by the ministry, which it potentially could have done.

4.3 A Transformed State–University Relationship

Along with the standardisation of degrees and the increasing pedagogical autonomy recognised by the universities, a third transformation of the national institutional settings consisted of modifying the state–university relationships. As mentioned above, these relationships with the LMD have not been directive or coercive compared to the usual French steering mechanisms. Their content was also rather different in

nature as it was less substantive than procedural: in the texts, nothing was said about what a masters should consist of, which subjects should be taught and which classes should be included; but broad principles were defined, which did not apply to masters in a specific discipline but to all masters. It thus specified that masters should be linked to research teams, that they should be managed by *facultés*, that the students should obtain 120 ECTS at the end of the masters, etc. This may seem still rather restrictive to European academics accustomed to being completely autonomous in the design of their curricula, but it is much less formal than the regulations existing for the pre-Bologna degrees. Moreover, the nature of these directives is different as it frames the 'production process' of a masters but does not dictate its content (which subjects, how many hours for each discipline, etc.). The introduction of the LMD was thus part of the continuity of the transformation of the French university configuration (Musselin 2001) and from many points of view followed a dynamic change very similar to the introduction of the four-year contract more than 10 years earlier.[27] It is part of the ongoing evolution of the modes of steering developed by the ministry in enhancing the role and autonomy of higher education institutions, removing the ministry from the pure production and control of rules thus favouring more regulative behaviours, close to what Neave and Van Vught (1991) described as an 'evaluative state'.

The LMD reform has been confronted by the French situation and has adapted to it. The larger scope of the reform and the parallel objectives it included not only intended changing the degree structure and the production processes of the degrees within the French universities, but also affected the national institutional settings. The French ministry used the LMD to achieve other specific domestic goals and thus re-nationalised the process.

5 The Institutional Side Effects Linked to the Implementation of the Bologna Reform

The point to argue in this last section is that the impact of the LMD on the national institutional settings is not only linked to the supplementary objectives the French ministry added to the LMD reform, but also to the consequences of this reform. In other words, transforming the degree structure and the production process attached to it, consequently affected some of the national institutional arrangements. This can be qualified as the institutional side effects of the LMD. Some of them are pure opportunistic effects, while others were not foreseen and popped up, and still others were unintended.

5.1 Opportunistic Effects: The Emergence of Higher Education 'Sites', or the Site Effects

By opportunistic effects, I refer to cases where some actors took the opportunity of the Bologna reform to launch, or accelerate, other changes which, for some of them at least, had an impact on the national settings. The 'site effects' are a good

example of this. But in order to understand what a 'site' is, it should be remembered that one French institutional characteristic since 1968 is the development of several incomplete[28] public universities in big French cities (nine for Paris *intra muros*, four in Bordeaux, three in Grenoble, etc.). This was the result of the conflicts, political/ideological concerns and preferences, disciplinary-opposed interests which alimented the process by which French universities have been (re)created after the 1968 aftermath. This concentration of institutions (different universities and often different *grandes écoles* as well) on the same local territory is called a 'site'. In many cases, the rivalries resulting from this period were still very active by the beginning of the third millennium, sometimes leading to an inflation of competing programmes offered by different institutions on the same site.[29] But in others, common efforts had already been developed to try and rationalise the situation, to propose common services (inter-libraries services, for instance) or to develop cooperation ('Grenoble Universités',[30] for instance, was created in 2001). In most cases, the Bologna process accelerated the trend in the second case and pacified the situation in the first one. None of the universities we studied in our research was concerned by these 'site effects' as they all are located in middle-sized towns with only one university, but the report on the LMD prepared by the IGAENR (2005) clearly identifies this phenomenon. In Marseille, for instance, where some classes in the sciences were offered by all three universities, the LMD reform gave rise to coordination efforts among the different science departments. They came to an agreement rationalising the offer on the Marseille area. Such cooperation sometimes occurred also between universities and *grandes écoles* located on the same 'site'. It is certain that the LMD has not been the only driver in the development of institutions being brought together when located on the same territory. The Shanghai ranking and the relative absence of French universities in the top 50 have also been an incentive to join forces and attain a larger size; accumulate rather than disperse results and obtain greater visibility. The introduction of the LMD in a time when incomplete universities were beginning to see reasons to develop stronger relationships or even to merge (as the Strasbourg institutions announced) has been an opportunity to develop cooperation in teaching. The objective of rationalising the teaching offer thanks to the LMD provided a supplementary rationale to move in this direction. These 'site effects' should increase as the new research act[31] of April 2004 created new structures, called PRES (*pôle de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur*, higher education and research poles), which provides a legal basis for several higher education institutions to build common entities locally.

In this second case, it is obvious that the introduction of the LMD accelerated and favoured the transformation of some aspects of the French institutional settings.

5.2 The Unforeseen Effects: The LMD Challenges the Current Organisation of French Universities

Another example of such a process is linked to the discussions (and in some cases the decisions) the LMD raised about internal university structures. Since the 1984 act, French universities are organised in UFRs (still often called *facultés*),

responsible for both training (F for *formation*) and research (R for *Recherche*). The UFRs correspond to very diverse realities in size and scope (some can, for instance, regroup all the disciplines in humanities, while in other places there will be a UFR in history, a UFR in sociology, etc.). In the late 1990s, the creation of research federations (*Instituts fédératifs de recherche*) which could be transversal to several UFRs when they are interdisciplinary or constituted around a social problem, tended to deprive the UFRs of their capacity[32] of intervention on research issues. The generalisation of doctoral schools within the same period further weakened the domain of action of the UFRs as they lost their responsibility on graduate studies. But the LMD had an even bigger impact. If the bachelor curricula tended to respect the frontiers of the UFRs, the masters often did not and they concerned more than one UFR. This quickly raised very practical issues: which UFR can account for the students registered in the master? Which part of the budget of the master should go to each UFR? Which expenses should be taken over by which UFR? In many universities, this led to lively debates about the relevance of the UFR structure, about the idea of distinguishing the structures for the licence programmes (still organised in UFRs) and the structure for the master curricula, about the possibility – even if the UFRs are maintained – to create specific structures for the management of the master, etc. According to the situation of the interviewee, their conceptions and preferences vary.[33]

> Today the training structure does not match the administrative structure. Either we suppress the UFRs and we redesign the university, which is an enormous task, or we go on and do what we can (*bricole*). But we meet real problems in terms of budgets, enrolments. Who does what? (A director of UFR).

> Today, UFRs are in charge of the management of the masters and from my point of view it is nonsense. In our master, we will ask for a budget and pedagogical autonomy . . . When I say 'we', I mean those responsible for *mentions*. We face contradictory institutional logics and ideas: 'we must ask for our budget autonomy'. Today, if I ask someone to teach in my *mention*, I have to ask the UFR. It is very surprising! We need transversal administrative units. We need budget autonomy as we already have the pedagogical autonomy. The current structure raises problems. Nobody had seen it before. We created the masters from an intellectual point of view, but now we face the day to day practice (An academic responsible for a *mention* in a master).

In one of the three universities under study, the presidential team decided very early on to reorganise the administrative staff and create specific administrative entities dedicated to the masters. In parallel, the president launched a reform to reduce the overall number of UFRs in his university. The two other universities discovered the problems while implementing the LMD and were still searching for solutions when we conducted our interviews.

Whatever the degree of consciousness or reactivity to the UFRs' problem, the introduction of the LMD within universities not only affected the degrees and their production system, it also accentuated the non-appropriateness of the current structures, or, to put it another way, happened to be irrelevant with the existing organisation. It therefore reactivated the arguments and discussions[34] on the need for a new university act[35] but overall pointed at one of the major and unsolved

problems of the French university system: its internal organisation and the desirable relationships to develop between the whole (the university level or the presidential team and its administrative staff) and its parts (the UFRs). Even if not specific to France, this issue is recurrent and especially acute in this country for historical reasons. The universities having been constructed against the *facultés*,[36] the relationships between them are rarely based on cooperation (Mignot-Gérard and Musselin 2002b), and none of the 1968, 1984 or 2007 acts described or prescribed the link or the nature of the link between the presidential team and the deans, or between the university and the UFR levels.

By further questioning the definition of the prerogatives of the UFRs and by creating new intermediary structures and leaders (those in charge of the masters or *mentions* of masters), the LMD pushed for a reconsideration of the pertinent territories and lines of cooperation within French universities. The initiators of the Bologna process, in the ministry as well as in the institutions, did not foresee this effect but at the present moment have to take it into account.

5.3 Unintended Effects: The Revival of the Academic Profession

A last category of effects concerns the unintended consequences of the Bologna process. The difference between these effects and the previous ones is that they contradict the expectations of the reformers.

As argued above, the ministry aimed to increase the autonomy of French universities through the implementation of the LMD. In this sense they pushed further the movement of transformation initiated by the contractual policy at the very end of the 1980s (Musselin 2001, 2006a) and expected the university leaders to use the opportunity of the LMD to take over responsibility of a domain in which they were still lacking legitimacy and on which they still rarely intervened (Mignot-Gérard and Musselin 1999, 2000, 2002a; Kletz and Pallez 2003): the pedagogical offer. This is clearly evident by the fact that the ministry avoided recourse to draconian rules, used soft rather than hard instruments (thus allowing rather than imposing) and preferred procedural rather than substantive orientations. This left initiatives to the higher education institutions but they were at the same time expected to filter the projects and develop a creative but at the same time rational and understandable offer.

As a matter of fact, it rarely happened. While the presidential teams often took the lead in the decision to implement the LMD as soon as possible rather than to wait and see, many (especially among the first to implement the new system) did not manage the process. The presidential teams often used the absence of clear instructions from the ministry to justify their distant steering. Having no 'clear' information from the central administration about the rules of the game, that is, how to present the projects in order to get the *habilitation*, they left it to the academics to develop their proposals and did not filter them.

Some presidential teams nevertheless tried to intervene in certain ways (in the definition of the domain covered by the masters, for instance, in the name and the design of the *mentions*, etc.). They intended to use this opportunity to improve the

conditions of study (by decreasing the number of classes given in amphitheatres and increasing the number of classes in small groups, especially for the first-year students) and/or to normalise some rules (for instance, the organisation of examinations to occur concurrently for all training programmes, etc.). This strategy has not been very successful. On the one hand, they were not really able to go against the projects pushed by some academics: the latter developed arguments and refused to introduce changes; and this resistant strategy often succeeded. On the other hand, the presidential teams faced the reluctance of some faculty members to change their habits and ways of doing things. In one of the universities under study, for instance, we observed a strong discrepancy between the discourse of the presidential team, which claimed many changes and innovations and a strong control on the overall process, and the discourse of the interviewed academics who in many cases explained how they finally imposed their own views or simply refused to adopt the rules imposed by the presidential team.

> There were some texts and directives from the Ministry, but we had to interpret them … We sometimes added some elements (about the examinations of the students, the president of a jury …) and sometimes colleagues told me 'you are going further than the texts'. But as the texts did not say anything, we tried to go further. Some said 'it is not in the texts', for example the chart regulating the examinations and the curricula. But because there were many complaints and pleas about the exams in this institution, we tried to write down who is responsible for what in the organization of and during the exams (A member of the presidential team).

> Let's take the example of the university study schedules. The presidential team wanted them to be similar to the secondary schools schedules. But September is devoted to our own research projects. We could not accept such a change. They have to respect the specificity of each discipline … We did not accept everything. We refused the optional classes when they were not absolutely necessary (An academic).

Both cases led to the same consequences: an inflation in the number of existing degrees each university could deliver resulting from the creativity of academics but also from their opportunism. Many saw the LMD as a possibility for developing the training programme they dreamed of, or to extend their existing one-year[37] programme into a two-year one, or to be freed from pre-existing agreements.[38] They thus have been very reactive. Some figures estimate that the number of existing degrees doubled with the LMD. All did not open (for lack of students) and, in some cases, the presidential teams pushed for the opening of classes common to different programmes in order to avoid duplication. But, as a whole, despite the fact that the LMD was supposed to be implemented under a stable budget, many expected an increase in expenses as the few rationalisation processes which occurred could never cover the inflation in degrees or the improvements in pedagogy which were also attached to the reform (individual follow-ups of each student, foreign language courses, training in new technologies, etc.).

As a matter of fact, only a few presidential teams countered this intense academic reactivity. In our sample, from the beginning, one of the presidents imposed a limited number of masters and *mentions* and even chose the names of those who were to be responsible for the new programmes. But this is a rare case. Most of the time, the

academic profession took control of the process and developed its projects in a quite isolated way, that is, without the university administration, without the students and mostly without the potential stakeholders (economic partners, local administrative or political elites, etc.).

As a result, by offering the academics an opportunity to take the upper hand again, these first years of the implementation of the LMD slowed down, rather than accelerated, the process of transformation of the French university system, which was intended to lead it from a profession-based pattern to a university-based configuration. From this point of view, too, the LMD affected, indirectly but concretely, the national institutional patterns.

This last assumption is common to the three categories of side effects analysed in this process. They all provide examples for the way in which the Bologna process, even if aiming at transforming the products and the production process within universities, had an impact on the national institutional settings. This is again a re-nationalisation effect as the affected issues are country specific (France specific in the case under study): the site effects, the problematic position and design of the UFRs and the increased role of the academic profession are all closely linked to characteristics of the French system.

6 Conclusions

The starting point of this chapter was to discuss whether and how the Bologna process has had an impact on the national institutional settings of the country where it was implemented, although this process does not explicitly aim at transforming the settings but at modifying the products and the production processes of higher education systems.

To address this question it was suggested to study the implementation of the bachelor–master scheme as a Europeanisation process and more specifically to focus on the re-nationalisation effects identified by the literature on Europeanisation. The case of France and the introduction of what is called the LMD in this country served as the main empirical sources. The Bologna process impacted on both the institutions constituting the French higher education system and the degrees, contents and structure of the curricula.

But which mechanisms can explain these larger effects of Bologna? Among the four re-nationalisation processes identified at the beginning of the chapter, three are especially useful in understanding the interplay between the implementation of the bachelor–master scheme and the transformation of the French institutional settings.

The first one focuses on the way in which the LMD has been adapted to some French characteristics and thus on how the national institutional settings played a role in limiting the automatic and systematic implementation of the LMD to all sectors, all programmes and all disciplines. This is the more classic form of re-nationalisation identified in Europeanisation studies and it is very close to phenomenon studied and outlined at length in comparative public policy analysis

(e.g. Steinmo et al. 1992; Thelen 1999). Looking at how similar ideas (e.g. Hall 1989) or similar reforms (e.g. Pierson 1994 or Hacker 1998) had different effects in different countries, authors of this perspective highlight the role of past trajectories and of existing institutional settings to explain these variations.

But the 'resistance' of institutional settings to the Bologna process is only one aspect of the story. Despite their tendency for inertia they have also been affected. Two other re-nationalisation processes operated.

On the one hand, the French ministry used the Bologna reform to push domestic objectives that aimed to transform the national institutional settings. By contrast, with the re-nationalisation process identified by Palier et al. (2006), governmental actors did not take (or not only took) over control of Bologna but instrumentalised it to push further domestics issues.

On the other hand, the implementation of the LMD reform influenced the national institutional settings, not because they were aimed at the reform itself but because the introduction of the two-tier structure provoked side effects. These issues are closely linked to the existing specificities of the French system and were therefore addressed with 'French' solutions.

These two last mechanisms confirm some of the advantages that can be draw from soft-law processes such as the Bologna process, as identified by Abbott and Snidal (2000):[39] it does not deprive each country of its sovereignty (and even thus allows the addition of domestic issues to the global agreement) and it leaves way for learning mechanisms provoking side effects. If, as argued by the two authors, this kind of advantage can help us to understand why countries prefer soft-law agreement, it can be added that it also highlights why such agreement may have strong effects, although it does not explain why signing parties feel bound by it and implemented it.

Different conclusions can be drawn from the analysis and results developed in this chapter. The first one tackles the question of convergences in Europe and the capacity of Bologna to achieve them by the diffusion of the two-tier structure to all signing countries. In fact, the case of France and the different re-nationalisation processes involved in the implementation of the LMD lead us to wonder about the potential convergence effects of the Bologna process, unless the same aspects are addressed in the same way in each country, but there is poor evidence of that.[40] The various forms of re-nationalisation identified in this chapter in fact provoke an increased loose coupling between the institutional isomorphism supported by the Bologna reform and the actual national practices developed by the actors (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Even if the ritual signature of a new communiqué every two years regularly restates the commitment of each country to the implementation of the Bologna objectives, the local adaptations, national translations and side effects attached to each domestic implementation weaken the convergence potential of Bologna. These mechanisms certainly are not Bologna specific and could be extended to other European reforms to help explain why European reforms do not automatically imply more convergences.

At a more conceptual level, the French case under study in this chapter confirms the interest and relevance of looking at re-nationalisation processes not only

in terms of direct and rather defensive reactions (form 1 and form 3 in Table 1), that is, at how actors or structures react or take control over a European process, but also in terms of indirect or more pro-active reactions (form 2 and form 4 in Table 1). In other words, there are more re-nationalisation mechanisms than identified up to now in the literature on Europeanisation and domestic side effects; the instrumentalisation of European processes in order to push domestic issues should be considered as well.

Finally, this case study also encourages the consideration of Europeanisation processes in a more interactive manner. In particular, it suggests that more attention should be paid to the national implementation of European reforms. In other words, it is clear from this case study that different re-nationalisation processes have an impact on the Bologna process within a single country. It also questions how such processes may affect the next steps of the Bologna process.

Notes

1. This system has been developed by the European Commission as a means to facilitate the mobility of European students. It is based on the convention that 60 credits measure the workload of a full-time student during one academic year. All the components of an educational programme provide a certain number of credits, which can be recognised by another European university.
2. In this perspective, one could argue and show that this 'ideal institutional model' tends to become more and more explicit. As stressed by Kehm and Teichler (2006), for instance, the Trends IV Report (Reichert and Tauch 2005) recommends giving more autonomy to universities. But the ENQA document (2005) mentioned above is also rather explicit about the model of the higher education system it supports. Thus, even if the declarations remain focused on the products and the production system, the documents and reflections accompanying the process are becoming more concerned with more 'traditional' institutional issues.
3. This research was funded by the ESEN (Ecole Supérieure de l'Education Nationale) and Sciences Po and consisted of an empirical study in three French universities and in the central ministerial services which implemented the reform. Based on the analysis of numerous documents and more than 100 interviews (see appendix), a detailed report has been written (Mignot-Gérard and Musselin 2006). A synthesis (in French) can be downloaded from: http://www.esen.education.fr/UserFiles/File/documentation/expertises/ensgt_sup/musselin_LMD.pdf.
4. In this chapter, the reasons why such objectives were pursued will not be tackled. I shall focus on what has been done and the consequences/impact this has had, not on why it has been led.
5. In a paper dealing with the specific dynamic of the Bologna process, the neo-institutionalist approach was preferred and Bologna described as a case for normative isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). But in this chapter focusing on the implementation of Bologna, Europeanisation is a more relevant analytical framework.
6. Not only for a detailed and analytical description of the reasons why Allègre organised this meeting and why the three other ministers agreed to sign a declaration, but also for an analysis of how the two-cycle structure was included in the Sorbonne Declaration, see the research led

by Ravinet (2005, 2007). Her cautious reconstruction of what happened tackles the usual story told about this first meeting but there is unfortunately not enough room here to go into it. As said in note 4, objectives and motives will not be discussed in this chapter.

7. In this chapter, the Bologna process will be mostly restricted to the implementation of the LMD. But, as argued in the introduction, the two-tier structure (LMD in France) is only one of the two transformations involved in the Bologna process. But it is the only one already really implemented (quality assurance and evaluation developed in many countries but without any common framework). This contribution will therefore focus on the LMD.

8. According to Cornelia Racké (2006), this confusion is not only French and can be explained by many factors, but it can also be explained by the fact that the European Commission is involved in this process and has used it as a vehicle to intervene more in a sector in which it has no official competencies.

9. The four others are: 'changes in external territorial boundaries', 'development of institutions of governance at the European level', 'exporting forms of political organization and governance that are typical and distinct for Europe beyond the European Territory' and 'a political project aiming at a unified and politically stronger Europe'. For other reviews of the term, see Featherstone (2003).

10. For a very detailed and documented comparison of the degree of change introduced by the Bologna reform on four national higher education systems (France, Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands), see Witte's dissertation (2006).

11. These are the four possible impacts usually identified by the literature on Europeanisation (Radaelli 2001).

12. Radaelli (2001), for instance, distinguishes between vertical (top-down) and horizontal (market or mutual recognition-based mechanisms). Knill and Lehmkuhl (1999) distinguish three types of European policies, each corresponding to a specific mechanism: institutional change for policies of positive integration, change of domestic opportunity structures for policies of negative integration and cognitive evolution for policies of framing integration.

13. For a discussion of such mechanisms and an in-depth analysis of the Sorbonne, Bologna and Prague declarations, Ravinet's research (2005, 2006) provides challenging results and stimulating discussions.

14. National also in the sense that they are observed in one country and not in the others affected by the same European process.

15. In an enlightening paper, Pierson (2000) distinguishes thus a narrow and a broad conception of path dependency. For him, the second conception 'may entail the loose and not very helpful assertion that 'history matters', although it may also be presented with more rigor'. The narrower conception, which he discussed at length in his paper, by contrast focuses on situations where 'preceding steps in a particular direction induce further movement in the same direction' and is then 'well captured by the idea of increasing return' (Pierson 2000: 252).

16. Mergers of departments or labs in universities are typical examples of the activation of these defensive territories. The former structures are not defended because they were places of intense cooperation but because they draw a frontier protecting their members from others' interventions.

17. See Renaut (1995: 166–179) to understand how, despite the 1875 act (recognising the freedom of the constitution to the French higher education and allowing the creation of non-public universities), the Republicans succeeded in voting the 1880 act which gave the monopoly of delivering national degrees to public universities.

18. Whether it be national or not.

19. Which was first spelled 'mastaire' before the Anglo Saxon spelling was finally adopted.

20. It can also be a *diplôme national de master* if the *grande école* accepts going through a specific accreditation process.

21. These processes are partly used by each sector. The 'academisation' of the *grandes écoles* is, for instance, favoured by the internationalisation and the normalisation of management studies all over the world. They can also be supported or favoured by successive French governments. For years, the gap between the *grandes écoles* and the universities regularly returns to the policy agenda as a problem to be solved (democratisation, access, curricula contents, equity, etc. being some of the multiple faces of this 'problem'). The Bologna process has been one supplementary step in this long-term recurrent story.

22. Previously an agreement existed without a time limit.

23. French universities are organised in four groups, each one negotiating their four-year contracts one year after another. In other words, about one fourth of all French universities prepare a new contract each year.

24. This is the word used at the ministry.

25. This is a good illustration of the problem raised by the evaluation of public policy. As stressed by Majone and Wildavsky (1984) 'implementation shapes policy' and alters resources and objectives. Increasing institutional autonomy and reducing the number of degrees were both among the objectives of the ministry attached to Bologna. Rather than refusing to habilitate so many degrees (and thus reducing institutional autonomy), the ministry preferred to leave each institution to face its own choice and be responsible for managing the inflation of degrees while the budgets did not increase. This (conscious or not) strategy, built on the fact that universities will nevertheless be restricted by the budget at hand and on the conviction they will thus experience a learning process was probably more clever than any authoritarian rejection of degrees made by the ministry.

26. It is important to know that these experts are academics chosen by the ministry to assess the project.

27. For a comparison of the two processes, see Musselin (2006a).

28. By incomplete, I mean that they never welcome the four main families of disciplines (medicine, law, humanities and sciences) and either focus on only one of them (Grenoble 1 on Sciences) or present a limited spectrum of them (Lille 2, for instance, consists mainly of law and medicine).

29. For a good example, see the evaluation report of the CNE (Agency for the Evaluation of French Universities) on the 'Aix-Marseille' website at http://www.cne-evaluation.fr/WCNE_pdf/Aix-Marseille_Site.pdf.

30. For a presentation of Grenoble Universités, see http://www.grenoble-universites.fr/90633135/1/fiche_pagelibre/.

31. The ministry did not completely 'follow' this trend. It meets goals the ministry already had. In the 'modernisation act' which aimed at increasing the autonomy of universities but was withdrawn by Chirac in November 2003, some measures were already included which made possible the development of common services and even forms of mergers among universities.

32. Even if this capacity has always been more theoretical than real. The labs within the UFR have always been the concrete level for the management of research.

33. Those against distinctive structures for the licences and for the masters develop two counter-arguments. First, they fear it will lead to the constitution of undergraduate (teaching oriented) and graduate (research oriented) institutions and second, they argue that the masters being *habilité* for only four years will create potentially unstable structures (while the UFRs are stable).

34. In 2006, for instance, the yearly meeting of the deans of science dealt with this subject.

35. A new act was finally adopted in August 2007.

36. As shown in previous research (Musselin 2001), France had only *facultés* but no university (as a higher education institution). It was only in 1968 that today's university had been recreated and confirmed by the 1984 act.

37. For instance, a professor in charge of a DEA (one-year programme) in a specific scientific speciality, became responsible for a *mention* of the master of science in this speciality ... which is a two-year programme.
38. Some historians, who previously were associated with some social scientists in a DEA of history and social science, used the fact that the *mention* they jointly proposed with the social scientists had not been very well-assessed by the ministry experts to write their own project and to open a *mention* in history.
39. These authors identified four advantages of soft law over hard law: they are easier to reach, they better prevent the sovereignty of the signing countries, they allow to deal with uncertainty and for learning processes and finally they facilitate compromises.
40. At a distance, this seems to be the case, at least for some of the changes analysed in this chapter. For instance, the blurred boundaries between institutional sectors can be observed in other countries, as well as the organisational issues raised by the implementation of the bachelor–master scheme, etc. But a closer look reveals that the underlying rationales, the formulation of the problems and solutions agreed upon differ from one country to another. They are moreover never commonly discussed across countries.

Appendix

The study has been funded by the ESEN and Sciences Po. About 90 semi-structured interviews have been led between October 2004 and June 2005 in three universities and around 20 at the national level. Within the three higher education institutions, academic leaders and administrators have been interviewed. Then two faculties, one very involved in the LMD and the other less, have been chosen in order to lead further interviews. As a whole, 88 interviews were achieved.

Interviews led in the three universities

	Uni Pluri	Uni Multi	Uni Sciences
Faculty members	20	19	18
Academic leaders	6	4	5
Deans	3	2	3
Sub-total: Academics	**29**	**25**	**26**
Administrative staff in faculties	2	3	2
University administrative staff	1	0	0
Sub-total: Administrative staff	**3**	**3**	**2**
TOTAL	**32**	**28**	**28**

At the national level, 18 interviews were led within the ministry, the conference of university presidents, experts, etc. Many documents were also collected and exploited.

The research methodology relies on the approach developed by Crozier and Friedberg (Crozier 1964; Friedberg 1993, 1997; Crozier and Friedberg 1977, 1980).

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The Implementation of the Bologna Process in Italy

Roberto Moscati

1 Introduction

Generally speaking, higher education in Italy is in the middle of a critical transition to a new era and yet is following a non-linear path whose direction changes according to the shifting ascendancy of the countervailing forces. To explain this peculiarity one must return to the 1960s, when all systems of higher education in Europe were affected by a sudden and consistent increase in social demand. To cope with the new situation, a number of reforms were implemented to diversify the systems, either with the creation of parallel tracks or with the introduction of different stages. In Italy, the response to demand was the introduction of a completely open-door system, abolishing any kind of filter from the secondary to the tertiary level of education. The result was a flood of students coming from different secondary school tracks (some of which were not originally intended to lead to the tertiary level) and with a very different cultural capital ('habitus'), while the university remained unchanged in its structure and quality of curricula. As a consequence, the number of university dropouts increased substantially and the output of tertiary education institutions remained unrelated to changes in the labour market. In short, it is fair to say that the university kept its structure and its operational activity as usual (i.e. as a university if not for the elite certainly for a small homogeneous group of students) even if the number of people enrolled reached a level more closely aligned with that of mass higher education systems (Trow 1974).

Only during the 1980s did the government (but not the academic world) try to introduce some modernising adjustments, but this had a very moderate impact on the system. In the 1990s, a sudden decision to accelerate the process of modernisation led to a comprehensive reform of the entire system of public education and introduced some dramatic changes to the structure and functions of the university which merged with the launch of the Sorbonne Declaration and then with the Bologna process.

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Importantly, all these changes came from outside the higher education system. Namely, some sectors of the political world became aware of the gap created vis-à-vis the other European higher education systems and tried to fill it. The academic world first (in the 1980s) was able to resist and then (in the 1990s) was driven to accept the reforms without really being aware of what they meant. The process of structural reform, imposed by law, in some cases did not produce a change in the attitude of the professoriate and in its related interpretation of the professional role (particularly in some disciplinary fields like the humanities), while in other cases (including the hard and applied sciences) the reforms were accepted and implemented as intended. In addition, the changes of government during the implementation of these reforms created further problems, as new ruling parties opted to modify a process that was already underway without any verification of the initial results. The situation which resulted is still unstable and deserves extensive analysis.

2 Contour of Transformation in the Higher Education System

In mid-1987, a new national government launched an era of reform projects by creating a new Ministry of University and Scientific Research. In essence, this involved the detachment of a section of the Ministry of Education, devoted to the university and its subsequent transfer to the Ministry of Scientific Research. This move was hotly debated by political forces, particularly over its impact on the autonomy of the university. Among supporters, the creation of this new Ministry of University and Scientific Research was hailed as a way to unify all programmes of scientific research supported by public authorities and to maximise the efficiency and productivity of the country in several fields where international competition was tougher and more challenging. Meanwhile, the independence and right of self-governance for every university is expressly mandated in the Italian constitution, although until very recently it did not exist in practice. All details of university organisation have been traditionally imposed uniformly by the central authority, not only by means of laws and regulations, but also via circulars and replies to requests through which the ministry made known its own interpretations of the laws in force. Historically, the Italian system was born (mid-1880s) with a centralised Napoleonic structure 'blended' with a German style of the academic world: the power of the *privat dozent*; while the new national constitution was introduced after the Second World War (Clark 1977).

However, in 1993 an amendment to the state general financial law partly changed this procedure by stating that the Ministry of the University would now give annually a lump sum to each university according to certain parameters. It would be up to the university to decide how to use this money. This measure, which was never debated and has since almost escaped notice by the university community, represented the first real step towards university autonomy.

The 1996 general election brought into power a political coalition which granted high priority to education. This represented a new attitude in Italian modern political history that can perhaps be explained by the growing consensus throughout

the EU about the importance of education and training systems. Also, the coalition contained a good number of intellectuals and university professors with direct experience of other systems of education and, in general, an awareness of the unavoidable process of interdependence among European states. Not surprisingly, the new government therefore launched a comprehensive reform process involving all levels of the education system – from pre-elementary to university. This reform (*legge quadro*) suggested that postsecondary training should be a task of both the regions and the institutions of secondary and tertiary education. It aimed at (1) establishing for the entire country the prerequisites for competence – at a European level – in related professional activities; and (2) identifying the values of the acquired credits necessary for possible admission to university courses.

This emphasis on reforming the postsecondary level of training can be considered perhaps the most crucial point of the entire modern system of education in Italy. To begin with, vocational training has traditionally been under-appreciated in Italian culture and in fact it has always been viewed as a form of remedial training for students dropping out from other levels of the system. Secondly, adult education and permanent (recurrent) education in Italy have been largely disregarded; at the very least, they have never been considered as interesting endeavours for higher education institutions. Thirdly, the responsibility of vocational training (assigned to the regions in order to better coordinate supply with demand for professionalisation at local levels) proved to be a failure, as regions have not been able in most cases to provide systems of vocational training at an acceptable level of quality.

As for the tertiary level, the first reform measure to be taken addressed the high level of dropouts and the high percentage of students obtaining their degrees after exceeding the expected length of time – the average in many fields then was seven and a half years instead of four. The main effort here was devoted to developing and implementing measures which could increase university 'productivity' without introducing the kinds of competitive admissions policies that are strongly opposed by many cultural and political segments of society. The measures foreseen included a better linkage with secondary schools (the reform of which would have in itself supported this attempt). Components of this new policy included orientation in the last two years of secondary school; counselling and tutoring during all university courses; an improved student/teacher ratio; and a different way of teaching (more focused on students' real understanding) in the first year of university courses.

Aside from these important reforms, a central component of the new ministerial policy can be loosely defined as improving institutional autonomy, which in essence meant the end of a historically centralised system where all the decisions had been in the hands of the ministry. For a long time, this structural dependence has been both a constraint and an alibi for any autonomous initiative of an individual university. The main consequences have been the domination of disciplinary power inside the academy and the lack of any real cooperation between university and society. The winds of autonomy seemed to be finally blowing in the Italian university system. This implied a number of consequences, from offering services to the outside

world (in order to raise additional financial support) to the introduction of different forms of internal performance evaluation (in order to improve efficiency) and the drive to establish a 'brand name' for each university (in order to make individual institutions more attractive to prospective students, research customers and the like).

The market-oriented tendency of these reforms – which can also be seen in several other European countries – has given rise to a number of opposition groups and general resistance inside the university community at all levels. Nonetheless, the government seemed committed – at first, anyhow – to pursue the indicated direction. In fact, while a ministerial ad hoc group was preparing a project for the reform of university curricula, the minister of the university himself – together with his colleagues from France, Great Britain and Germany – took the opportunity of the 800-year anniversary of the Sorbonne foundation in Paris (in 1998) to announce the basis for a policy of homogenisation among higher education systems throughout Europe, which a year later became known as the 'Bologna process' (Luzzatto 2001). An internal drive for the modernisation of the Italian university system, combined with the new international policy for the creation of a European model of higher education system, has accelerated the political process of reform in Italy and made the Italian system a more orthodox example of the 'three stairs' model (also known as '3–5–8', referring to the standardised number of years involved to earn bachelor, masters and doctoral degrees). Other reasons for the acceleration of the reform process were linked to the government's ability to take advantage of an unusually favourable political situation created by the positive feelings between the Minister of the University and Scientific Research (a former rector highly respected by academia) and a substantial proportion of the academic world which was aware of the need to keep up with other systems of higher education. In particular, the Italian Conference of Rectors (CRUI) supported the modernising policy of the minister. At the same time, the government – fearing the delay which a debate in parliament would have created – ensured that the reform of curricula was passed at the level of commissions (both in the Senate and House of Representatives). Thanks to all these circumstances, the entire reform process was approved in a very short period of time and without extensive debate.

3 Implementation of the Reform

Problems with implementation are almost unavoidable in any reform, but in the case of the Italian higher education system quite a number have different origins. Some difficulties have objective reasons, since they originate from the complexity of the reform itself and from the way it has been introduced. Other challenges are derived from the social milieu affected by the reform (primarily from the academic world, but from the national government as well).

The reform sought to substantially transform the teaching structure, keeping in mind the need to re-establish a coherent relationship between supply and demand of higher education. In other words, acknowledging that the student population had

changed, the supply was restructured in order to match the needs of a new kind of customer. The declared main purpose was to drastically reduce the dropout rate and the period spent in university courses by the majority of students. To reach these goals, curricula were split into two levels in order to encourage a consistent percentage of students to earn a first degree (*laurea*) and then leave the system after three years (instead of staying for seven or eight years, as had become the norm). Only a minority of students were supposed to continue on to the second two-year level – largely intended for future members of the elite – while the doctorate was left practically unchanged, remaining the domain of a small number of would-be researchers and academics. In addition, professional education programmes of one or two years – called 'masters' – were 'permitted' but not specifically established for graduates of either the first or second level. In fact, the professionalisation of the higher education system was and still is a crucial, unsolved problem of the reform. On the one hand, the reform included the introduction of a sort of binary system, with the creation of a professional track that should be administered at the regional level. But this track has never been endorsed at the university level – from either cultural or professional points of view – and thus it has never represented a real alternative to the university. On the other hand, the first-level degree was supposed to prepare students for the labour market (and thus have a professionalising function), while at the same time representing a first stage for the eventual pursuit of a second-level degree. However, the responsibility for developing two different disciplinary paths in order to meet these two different purposes was left up to the universities and has thus far turned out to be too difficult to be implemented.

It is possible to maintain that the bulk of the problem has cultural origins. As in some other Latin countries, higher education had been traditionally conceived of as the training of the elite and the elite did not need to have technical skills (with the partial exception of engineers who needed to obtain certain social skills in order to engage with high society) (Bourdieu 1979). A long debate on the possible introduction of the *Fachhochschulen* in the Italian system did not produce any results while the creation of short-cycle courses in the 1980s had limited success in medicine, engineering and economics only and ultimately has been abolished. Giving the responsibility to organise a postsecondary structure of vocational training to the regions, although justified due to a possible better correlation with the local economy, prevented this sector to be considered at the university level. As a consequence, the first stair in the reform had to play the double role of training students for the labour market and for the continuation to the second stair (the *laurea specialistica*). The need for professional training has found a very partial answer with the introduction of masters courses for degree owners organised by individual universities with external partners (companies and public institutions) aiming at creating specific professional figures. These courses are *numerus clausus* and could have rather high tuition fees (if they are not organised together with the Social European Fund).

The reform also had to face many other problems of a different nature. First of all, *the government did not allocate an additional sum in the state budget to support the reform*. This created a shortage of teachers and (in many cases) spaces

and structures, which has become increasingly evident with the complete activation of the second level of courses. The lack of financial resources prevented the introduction of significant incentives for those among the academic staff willing to give more time to teaching activities and did not allow institutions to offer part-time engagements to school teachers. Also, a comprehensive orientation programme for students in their secondary school final years, which had been conceived together with the reform project, eventually did not take off for lack of financial resources. This last consequence created a serious mismatch between the cultural backgrounds of prospective university students and the requirements of the new courses (which could be measured in terms of debts of credits). The trouble is that, due to a number of organisational reasons, it is very difficult for universities to offer a large number of remedial courses before or during the first year of study to students who may have chosen their field of study without any serious examination of their background and inclination.

Another consequence of the weakly supported start of the reform is represented by the delay of the *evaluation policy*, which has thus far developed with considerable difficulty. To be sure, a National Center for the Evaluation of University Performance (*Comitato Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario* or CNVSU) was created by the Ministry of the University in the late 1990s and within each university a special section for self-evaluation (*Nuclei di valutazione*) has been established. The *Comitato* (as it is commonly known) requires and collects data from all the universities through the institutional *Nuclei*, which are required to administer a questionnaire to their students in which they evaluate the didactical services of the university. In addition, the CRUI launched a programme for the evaluation of some courses of study (on a voluntary basis) called 'Campus One' which was based on visits of committees to universities (peer review). More recently, a special committee for the evaluation of research activities (*Comitato di indirizzo per la valutazione della Ricerca* or CIVR) has been created, and after three years' work the first comprehensive report on universities' research activities has been presented. All these initiatives represent a first step which must be completed by a comprehensive evaluation of all university activities tied to consequences in terms of rewards and punishment. This is particularly relevant to the complete development of institutional autonomy that is supposed to characterise the system. As is self-evident, without evaluation the autonomy of universities will not lead to a true quality system of higher education. Unfortunately, the CNVSU resents the fact of depending on the ministry and for not having the possibility (economically and politically) to implement qualitative evaluations (peer reviews). Besides, the CRUI never strongly supported the CNVSU, having its own system of evaluation which, at the moment, has been stopped due to lack of financial resources. Thus, the impact of evaluation is rather partial and gives room to the not so latent inclination of the central (ministerial) bureaucracy to reduce the degree of university autonomy. The new national government has recently established by decree the creation of a new independent agency for the evaluation of all university activities which should develop and coordinate all the existing evaluation institutes. The impact of this initiative on the academic world remains to be seen.

Changes in the government have also undermined the potential of the reform. First, the popular Minister of the University and Scientific Research was replaced and afterwards the entire government changed following the 2001 election. These changes certainly did not lead to consistency in how the main elements of the reform project were presented to the academic world. Second, aside from a few minor initiatives at some universities, the rather complex structure of the reform was never publicly debated. The government was supposed to hold a number of conferences in all universities throughout the country, but they have been consistently postponed. Thus, the implications of the reform are still largely unclear to the large majority of academic staff and in many cases have been misunderstood. To date, a variety of different interpretations coexist in the university system.

Finally, another aspect of a system based on autonomy that has not yet been fully considered is the adaptation of *university governance* to the new demands of individual universities and of the system as a whole. Determining how to lead a self-governing university – competing with others in a market-oriented environment – has been left to the traditional leadership (rector, academic senate and administrative council), who have for decades functioned in a centralised system. The resulting balance of powers and interests – wherein the power distribution in a given individual university is based upon a balance among different disciplinary fields – has proven to be unproductive when the autonomy of the university stresses the relevance of the internal decision-making process and the need to make decisions in the interest of the institution. A debate has arisen about the possible changes in university governance and a number of alternative ways have been presented – all inclined to reduce the democratic characteristics of the present bureaucratic–professional model (rector elected by the academic staff; dual system of legislative bodies: senate and council of administration led by the rector) in favour of a more managerial role of rectors and their staff (vice-rectors) and the introduction of lay members representing the stakeholders (with an effective role) on the governing bodies. But so far nothing has happened in practical terms basically for two reasons. First of all, there is still a lack of awareness among academics of being a member of an institution (the professional identity being linked to the disciplinary field); and secondly, it is extremely difficult to find in society as a whole potential members of a university council ready to play an effective role in articulating institutional policy. The impact of a traditionally centralised system is still visible and operates against the governance of autonomous institutions (Boffo et al. 2006a, b).

In short, it is fair to say that the reform has shed light on a number of traditional weaknesses in the Italian higher education system.

Without efficient systems of evaluation to rectify bad policies, the universities had (and still have) a serious weakness in the mechanisms of governance. The large majority of them could not rely on the ability of governing structures to deal with the basic problems of administration, especially in terms of coordinating the teaching and research activities among different faculties. Further, university administrators had no model to refer to in the process of adopting policies of fundraising from different sources (other than traditional ministerial ones) and offering various services in order to rebalance the budget.

4 Interest Groups and the Reform

The subject of governance also emphasises the problems of reform implementation related to the social milieu involved – namely, *the attitude of the government* and the reaction of those in academia.

Since the beginning of the reform, the *ministerial bureaucracy* operated in ways that clearly opposed the idea of university autonomy (a logical response for any government agency trying to prevent a loss of power or control). For them, the principle of a degree's legal value turned out to be a very useful homogenising tool, reducing the amount of freedom available to an individual university in building its curricula and compelling all faculty to check with the ministry to ensure the acceptability of new programmes. A similar situation occurred within the scientific disciplines, where a representative organisation – the University National Council (*Consiglio Nazionale Universitario* or CUN) – has traditionally held the power to determine the acceptability of curricula. These structures have continued to undermine the movement towards greater institutional autonomy, as well as (indirectly) the spirit of the reform. A good example of this dynamic is seen in the creation of the contents of the new curricula. To ensure the autonomy of each university, basic guidelines for the building of curricula were not extremely compelling. As faculty members structured their curricula and organised courses, the traditional habit of leaving each professor free to teach their own course (within the discipline for which they had been hired by the university) meant the institution could not compel them to shift from one topic to another (even in the same disciplinary field) nor coordinate the content of their course with those of related ones. This obviously led to considerable problems in an institution's capacity to innovate in the structure and content of their curricula. Thus, in some cases the need to reduce traditional four- or five-year programmes into three-year ones – as required by the reform – created a reproduction of existing curricula into smaller versions, protecting all the previous subjects; that is, the same number of courses would be taught, but with abridged content and within a shorter time span. Very often, this approach resulted in a multiplication of superficial cultural and scientific suggestions submitted to increasingly confused students. On the other hand, the traditional culture of viewing university studies as the final period of organised learning in a person's lifespan has prevented a serious elaboration of lifelong learning activities, which in turn could have been conceived as a way to make a reduction of the first-level curricula acceptable.

The response of university professors towards the reform has been far from uniform. Opposing positions have been taken towards the entire project or some of its aspects, with differences arising among (and between) disciplinary fields and members of the same faculty or department. An approximate generalisation is that academic staff in the hard sciences (pure and applied) seem to be more in favour of the reform, perhaps owing to their tradition of being more connected with their European colleagues and thus more aware of the need to reduce the gap between the Italian and other European systems of higher education.

It is also fair to say that a large number of university professors – even inside the humanities and the social and political sciences – have accepted the idea of the

reform. Support came first from the academic leadership; namely, rectors (through their National Conference, the CRUI), deans and heads of departments. From their roles of collective responsibility, these members of academia were more aware than others of the need for a modernisation of Italy's higher education system and thus began to work towards the implementation of the reform. The traditionally vertical structure of academic power helped to spread a positive attitude towards the reform. A survey carried out in 2005–2006 of academic and administrative staff in six Italian universities revealed a better attitude towards the reform among those who had academic responsibilities then among those who did not.[1] For example, an awareness of the relevance of teaching objectives for the definition of credits appears more widespread among teaching staff members who have held key positions in all disciplinary fields (63.5% vs. 55.1%, but with a peak of 15 points of difference in economics and 18 in engineering). Similarly, the activities included in the new curricula have been considered satisfactory – at the first cycle – by 60.4% of teaching staff members with leading roles and by 54.3% of those who never had these roles (66.3% vs. 56.3% at the second cycle) (Moscati et al. 2006). As a result, a good number of academic staff became involved in the rather difficult work of transforming the structure of study courses and curricula. Through this collective effort, the new configuration of courses (at least for the first level) was ready in a rather short period of time – in fact, earlier than expected.

On the other hand, groups of professors from the humanities and law developed a somewhat strong opposition towards the innovations implied by the reform. Beyond a general resistance towards innovation and change, the attitude of these members of academia is likely to be rooted in a traditional interpretation of the university's role in society (and that of the academic staff). Simply put, this attitude views the university still as an institution for the formation of the elite and – accordingly – the role of university professors as dedicated to the accomplishment of this purpose. This view can be explained only by the traditional independence of the academic world and its relatively exclusive position in Italian society.

The movement of the system from elite to mass higher education and the traditional attitude of a significant proportion of the academic staff help to explain the overall resistance to the reform project. Massification highlighted the difference between the task of the first level of courses – the heightening of the country's social capital – and that of the second level, viewed as the training of the elite (Capano 2002). Thus, for the 'traditionalist' in academia, the introduction of the first level simply meant the cultural decline of the university. In the survey mentioned above, a majority of respondents (63.5%) feared a possible decline of the scientific and cultural content in case courses at the first cycle would be more oriented towards the needs of the labour market (74.2% at the faculty of foreign languages, 72.8% at engineering, 71.6% at natural sciences) (Moscati et al. 2006).

Nevertheless, the reform did not collapse. On the contrary, it was successfully launched and developed the three-year first level and the two-year second level in all universities. The primary reason for this success is based on the positive support that the top (the reform promoters in the political milieu) received from the bottom (namely, the academics). It seems fair to say that a significant part of the academic

staff either felt the old system of higher education had to change or – as suggested earlier – accepted the reform because it was coming from the local academic authority (rector, dean, head of the department and the like).

In any case, a consistent proportion of them have become involved – for the first time – in academic business on a regular basis and this represents a very positive side effect of the reform which will turn out to be crucial for the modernisation of the entire system. The highest and most meaningful level of involvement (84.1%) is found in faculty meetings, followed by individual teaching staff initiatives (71.1%). A relative majority considered the reform as having created sometimes conflicting but constructive discussions (45%) while only a small minority (5.4%) considered the debates unproductive (Moscati et al. 2006).

The involvement of administrative staff who traditionally have been considered clearly separate from academics and positioned at a lower level in the university hierarchy is of special interest. First of all, it is important to emphasise that the reform has made it necessary to review processes involving student administration. In addition, the fragmentation of the teaching processes, produced as a consequence of the possibility to diversify course structure, has increased the workload of university administration. Therefore, the majority of interviews reported problems concerning the increase in the volume of work of processing and checking student progression, resulting in (in a number of cases) the need to establish or adapt information systems. Nevertheless, as far as opinions on the reform are concerned, the clear majority of the interviewees expressed a positive judgment, both for the theoretical framework and its application in the workplace. Furthermore, in comparing judgments between administrative and academic staff members about the reform, a more consistent percentage of positive judgments emerged among the former on all aspects of the reform (Moscati et al. 2006).

5 The Academic Career and the Reform

Within the context of governmental reforms, it should be noted that the Italian professoriate is also facing a general reshaping of their careers and the interpretation of their professional role. A revision of their legal status is also under way (after several years of debate). While it is currently difficult to predict what the eventual changes will be, proposed revisions are characterised by increased duties and less career stability, without any increase in benefits or rewards. Further, the reform has implied more administrative and organisational activities for faculty without any real financial return.

In evaluating the relative attractiveness of the academic profession today, several contradictory aspects must be taken into consideration. First of all, it is crucial to consider the relative decline of social prestige due to the expansion of higher education. Being a member of academic staff is no longer seen as being an educator of the elite. Academics appear to be increasingly valued based on the usefulness of their expertise in realms outside the university. The importance of technical advancement

further differentiates the way some faculty are viewed – for example, those in the hard and applied sciences appear to be valued more than those in the pure sciences.

Economically, the academic profession per se is not very attractive. The initial salary is rather modest and the first steps in a faculty career are neither easy nor rapid. The real appeal of the academic profession – economically speaking – comes from outside sources that some can secure and others cannot. In this respect, the economic environment plays a mixed role: on the one hand, a wealthy city may offer interesting alternatives for prospective researchers; on the other, it may offer opportunities for well-known full-time professors to use their competencies (and thus increase their earnings). In either case, such opportunities are clearly less available in peripheral and less-developed areas of the country (Boffo et al. 2004).

The reform of the higher education system and particularly the increased autonomy of individual universities has created a number of financial problems which have had an impact on the recruitment of academic staff and on their careers. Presently, there is an increasing problem of (a) the possible shortage of academics due to the rapid ageing of the profession and insufficient recruitment; and (b) the growing 'parochialism' of universities that cannot recruit increasingly costly external faculty members. The consequence is a growing reduction in staff mobility and of endogamy in the recruitment process.

The autonomy of individual university budgets plays a crucial role in this process. In financial terms, autonomy of individual universities means that each institution must determine for themselves how best to meet all their different budget items by subdividing income (the lump sum received from government, the amount received from students fees and – to a limited extent – possible grants from private sources). However, expenses related to personnel cannot exceed 90% of the total institutional budget. Prior to 1993, the centralised system of university budgeting subdivided institutional income and expenses regardless of university preference, and the possibility of obtaining additional resources for academic staff was a matter of constant negotiation between each individual university and the Ministry of Education. Presently, most of the universities are not culturally ready to develop fundraising policies that, for instance, encourage staff to engage in entrepreneurial activities that benefit the institution (there are few exceptions like the polytechnics of Milano and Torino).

6 Main Results of the Bologna Process

As described here, the reform of the curricula has encountered many difficulties in its implementation, basically due to the combination of two elements. On the one hand, it was introduced to the academic world from the outside – from the political milieu in which the modernisation of the higher education system was proposed in order to keep up with the main trends developing in Europe. On the other hand, a number of different interests and the lack of a strong political will have also

complicated efforts to implement the reform. The introduction of such a comprehensive change with virtually no preparation or experimentation has understandably created a considerable amount of resistance and operational difficulties (Frey and Ghignoni 2002; Pontremoli and Luzzatto 2002; De Maio 2002).

Nevertheless, *some positive results* of the reform can already be observed. First, it appears that the new system of university degrees has a strong appeal. The total number of students enrolled in the traditional four- or five-year university courses had been slowly declining in recent years, after reaching a peak in the 1996–1997 academic year because of the (rather mild) impact of the short-cycle courses. The introduction of the new three-year courses seems to have changed this trend. Further, the proportion of women enrolling in the university has become a majority in quite a number of fields (including arts, education science, health, humanities, life sciences, law, social services, social and behavioural sciences and veterinary science) with a total percentage of 56%. Further, the number of first-year students increased from 310,924 in 2000–2001 (the last year before the reform) to 331,368 in 2001–2002 and to 371,908 in 2005–2006 (plus 51,868 enrolled in the first year of second level: the *laurea specialistica*), the total enrolment being 1,820,221 students in the 2004–2005 academic year.

The impact of the reform can also be seen very clearly among the number of graduates, which increased from 174,197 in 2001 to 301,298 in 2005. In addition, a small improvement has been observed regarding one of the major problems of the Italian university, namely, the dropout phenomenon. Of the students first enrolled in 2001–2002, 84% reached second year in 2002–2003, whereas the matriculation rate had been 80% just two years earlier. This should lead to a further increase in the number of graduates. Further, after a declining trend, the percentage of secondary school graduates enrolling in a university is now increasing substantially (from 65% in 2000 to 77% in 2005).

However, *some expected goals of the reform have yet to be achieved*. On the one hand, the number of students not obtaining a degree in minimum time has not decreased significantly and remains at about 40% of enrolled students. On the other hand, reducing first-level courses from four to three years has reduced the appeal of international programmes since students fear that their participation in the Erasmus/ Socrates programmes might result in increasing the length of time of their studies. While the latter problem could be solved through better coordination among participating European universities with respect to credit recognition, the former is connected to the multiplication of courses and exams introduced via the curricula reforms. In many cases, academics wanted to keep their courses even when the reduction of the total length from four to three years resulted in some decrease of the total number of exams required.

The consequence was, in many cases, a fragmentation of smaller courses and modules earning few credits, which compelled students to pass an excessive number of exams with little chance of staying on schedule. The academic staff members interviewed in the survey mentioned above were fully aware of these problems. With respect to the effect of the reform on the reduction of time to graduation in the different curriculum pathways, the majority gave a negative opinion (49.7% against

45.2% giving a positive one). Respondents were more positive about the reform in terms of its capacity to reduce dropouts (54%) while only 12% of the interviewees felt that the reform had no effect whatsoever on this phenomenon. Finally, the opinions expressed on the effect of encouraging international student mobility by means of the credit system are at odds with the above observation as 48% were optimistic, while 42.4% were sceptical (Moscati et al. 2006).

7 Concluding Remarks

The situation in which the Italian higher education system presently finds itself appears rather unclear and its future highly unpredictable. Failure to recognise changing social and economic needs earlier, and to modify university missions accordingly, helps to explain the rapid pace of reform once political circumstances favoured its introduction. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the acceleration of the reform process has been a result of the failure of Italian higher education during the 1960s to 'modernise' and keep pace with change in other European systems. At that time the government had to face strong social movements (involving both students and labour forces) pursuing an equalitarian ideology. Therefore, the answer to the growing social demand for education had a clear equalitarian flavour represented by the open-door policy (credentialism for social mobility) (Collins 1979). The reaction of the academic world – compelled to accept the egalitarian policy – involved strengthening individual course evaluation which produced an impressive growth of negative results in exams and in the dropout rates. Clearly, academia resisted the transition from a highly selective to a mass access system of higher education through control of the quality of the curricula.

The eventual reaction by the national government to the system's lack of reform made the Italian realisation of the Bologna process the most rapid and comprehensive in Europe, despite the Italian system being the most traditional system of higher education in Europe. Consequently, a number of severe problems – simmering below the surface for years – have appeared, highlighting the need for a dramatically changed perspective among academic staff and administrative personnel (both at the ministerial level and the individual university level). Perhaps even more striking is the fact that the external source of the initiative has highlighted the fact that only a minority of members – albeit a consistent group – felt the need for system modernisation, thus explaining the pervasive resistance to the reform among many in the academy. Members of disciplinary fields who were in positions that allowed them to operate individually (without the support of the institution or the help of colleagues: the typical case of academics working in the humanities) saw the reform as the beginning of the end of the university. In a way, they are correct, given that their view of the university is largely framed by the model suggested by Wilhelm von Humboldt. In particular, they resent the declining (or changing) role of the intellectuals inside academia. Unfortunately, the rapid pace of reform has prevented any real debate on that complicated matter.

With respect to the dynamics of the reform, it is worth emphasising *the relevant impact of the European dimension*. At first, academics did not realise that the Italian reform was occurring within the framework of the Bologna process. The government which first introduced the reform did appreciate the European dimension. The conservative government which was to follow disregarded the international dimension. Understanding that the reform was not solely a national process helped to ease some of the political tensions and made some academics aware that the reform and the Bologna process were not merely internal problems, but were related to broader issues involving the evolution of Italian and European society as a whole. This move can be seen as a first step towards the reconsideration of the university's role in a changing society.

Nevertheless, the basic implications of the Bologna process remain to be fully understood by the majority of academics (and by a good number of political representatives as well). A number of issues are involved. First, autonomy may sound bizarre in a system highly centralised from the beginning, dependent on a central authority to define the rules and to solve all problems of interpretation in the name of a formal equality. But the question of autonomy is relevant insofar as it relates to governance of both the system (role of the state) and of the individual university (duties and responsibilities of rectors, individual professional identity related to disciplines or to the institution). Second, understanding the university's new goals and their coexistence with the old ones requires the consideration of relations with the economy and society as a whole and an appreciation of the individual professional role of academics. Third, lack of a tradition of internationalisation (especially in some disciplines and parts of institutions) produces a sense of inadequacy. Finally, in the Italian case there are at least two other dimensions that only partially correlate with the Bologna process that need to be mentioned: the unsolved problem of postsecondary vocational studies with its consequences for curricula structures and content at first-level university courses; and unstable political support of the reform impacting on the availability of financial support for implementation and the overall effectiveness of the system. From a wider political perspective, the reform of the Italian higher education system is an interesting case study of organisational change within a rapidly evolving social and political environment. In particular, it is interesting to note that the need for reform emerged when a progressive government sensitive to the changing economic process in Europe was in power. When a conservative government took over, the reform languished and the internal resistance became stronger; when the progressive forces came back into power the implementation of the reform obtained new strength.[2]

The way in which the political forces, in attempting to modify the higher education system, clashed with the central professional interest group (the academics) could be seen as an example of the impact of social interaction on educational structure. Margaret Archer (1979: 5) characterised this as the combination of a pure action approach and a pure structural approach. This conceptualisation is useful in interpreting changing process in educational systems according to a macro-sociological perspective.

From the institutional point of view, the Italian system of higher education has traditionally been based on a chair structure inherited from the German model. In a situation of rapid transformation and increasing numbers of students, as well as of institutions and staff members, that structure proved not to be sufficiently adaptive.

The introduction of the department system in the early 1980s was an attempt to respond to the requirements of expanding knowledge. But the chairs kept their power and the two structures coexisted with little impact in terms of flexibility. In addition, the Italian system resisted differentiation of degree levels. With the exception of a limited experiment of short vocational cycles which lasted a few years (from mid-1980s to mid-1990s) and affected only a few disciplines, the basic philosophy has been to maintain a comprehensive university through a combination of research and teaching activities within the same institution. Here, the original French model has been kept alive justified by the need to grant degrees with legal values (with corresponding equal quality). Consequently, there was no room for a strong vocational track or for diffuse centres of excellence (research universities). The intent was to avoid the creation of a hierarchy of institutions. As mentioned earlier, even the recent reform has not been able to sufficiently articulate the structure of the system. Instead, the creation of first- and second-level vocational masters as unofficial units promoted by local municipal or private entities represents a striking confirmation of Clark's analysis of the Italian higher education system where it is easy 'to add a department here and an institute there, under municipal sponsorship or private support' (Clark 1977, 1983: 194).

Looking at *the role of interest groups* in the process of change it becomes evident that the Italian professoriate reacted in line with their perception of the university's main goals and of their own roles accordingly. The isolation in which academia has been kept and its prevailing self-perception of being committed to the training of the country's elite made academics resistant to the differentiation of tertiary education, which they considered as a lowering of student quality and of courses. Diversification of types of institutions was opposed, as well as the introduction of teaching evaluation, which was considered to be an insult that questioned the autonomy and self-responsibility of professors.[3] At the same time, the ministerial bureaucracy was forced by the political ruling class to accept the drive for change. Not being in a position to refuse the political will, it pursued a comprehensive policy, planned and directed from the centre according to a traditional top-down procedure. To better understand the forces at play in the introduction of the Italian version of the Bologna process, Clark's distinction between superstructure, understructure and middle structure may be of help (Clark 1983: 207).

At the superstructure level, the government tried to introduce a reform that granted more autonomy at the institutional level. But it was not able to create the appropriate conditions for substantive ex-post control (through an effective system of evaluation). Thus the pressure of the ministerial bureaucracy for administrative coordination and control obtained more room and legitimacy.[4] At the same time, at a different (European) level, a similar trend towards unity – the Bologna process – reinforced the strength of the reform.

The institutions (*the middle structure*), which were supposed to gain relevance from the increasing autonomy granted by the reform, revealed a weakness in their governance which was dependent on a centralised system of power where the decision-making process was in the hands of the ministerial oligarchy. Most rectors were not accustomed to managing their institutions and many of them (informally) were not willing to exercise the autonomy their organisation (the CRUI) formally advocated (Boffo et al. 2006b).

Nevertheless, the positive or negative disposition of each individual rector (as well as that of deans and heads of departments) towards the reform exercised a certain impact on the academic and administrative staff. This phenomenon seems to give support to the hypothesis of an attitude of compliance which might develop 'when those concerned believe that the new policy will be implemented anyway and when they believe a strong political will behind the reform will make resistance useless' (Cerych and Sabatier 1986: 250).

At the disciplinary level (*the understructure*), the attitude towards the reform has been diverse – as mentioned earlier – dependent on a number of variables related to both the epistemological characteristics (hard applied sciences more in favour then the humanities) and the prevailing attitude towards the reform in different institutions. Also relevant is each university's link with the labour market in terms of providing the necessary manpower trained through the new curricula (Moscati et al. 2006).

The Italian reform is basically a process of changing the structure and content of curricula and, more generally, the university supply in order to adapt the role of higher education to a changing society. It has been initiated at the level of the superstructure (the national government under the umbrella of the Bologna process), formally supported by the middle structure (the rectors' organisation) and opposed in a 'resilient way' by the understructure (disciplines) with internal differences and various degrees of resistance.

In analysing the entire process, it is relevant to note that *some characteristics of the reform* made its implementation rather problematic from the beginning. First of all it was (is) a *top-down reform involving the entire system* and with some contradictory goals. Several examples of change of higher education systems show that incremental adjustments have more chance of success then global changes. Besides, it is well known that 'changes initiated at the top commonly need the support of interests residing at lower levels' (Clark1983: 236). In the Italian case, the government initiating the reform did not bother to obtain wide support from the academics and tried even less to involve them in the process. Rushing to have the reform law passed, it received a less than enthusiastic endorsement from the Conference of Rectors.

Finally, the reform suffers from *the pursuit of conflicting goals*. While the first tier is supposed to provide some professional training for students who want to enter the labour market, simultaneously it is designed to qualify students for subsequent studies at the second tier (masters level in European terms). The situation turns out to be very similar to that of the Norwegian colleges described by Cerych and Sabatier (1986: 243) as a perfect example of 'ambiguity of objectives' considered as one of

the factors affecting the process of achievement/failure of reforms. The authors also recognised that multiple and ambiguous goals are difficult to avoid in any higher education policy implementation.

In the Italian case, *the diversification of students' cultural capital* was disregarded for far too long, and the consequent decline in system productivity played a central role when a centre-left national government took power and attempted to promote social equalisation through education. At the same time, the broadening of the labour market placed some pressure on postsecondary professional training. These goals signalled a diversification of the higher education offerings and a lowering of the educational requirements for students, at least at the first-year university level. Unavoidably, these goals conflicted with the values and rules of academics who were not aware (because of their isolation) of the changing social needs.

From the political perspective, the government which ran the country between 2001 and 2006 was not in favour of the inherited reform and did not encourage its implementation. But the government which initiated the reform failed to introduce a system of rewards and sanctions to support and reinforce the reform. The reform effort of government suffered from poor financial investment, the ignorance of the academic world and what might be called 'inadequate knowledge of reform strategy'.

Despite all these negative aspects of the change process in the Italian higher education system known as 'the 3+2 reform' (intended as the national version of the Bologna process), the reform cannot be considered a complete failure. At the end of 2006, the situation remains unstable. It is fair to say that some correcting measures have already been taken by the past government. Namely, the number of credits of the second cycle have been separated from those of the first (180+120) facilitating the transfer from the first cycle to different second cycles.

The new national government (politically similar to the one which initiated the reform) seems inclined to introduce some minor modifications to correct major unexpected negative consequences, while some of the negative reactions from the academics are losing their relevance in the light of experience. The government has constrained, by decree, the proliferation of courses, limiting to twenty the maximum number of possible exams in the first cycle and twelve in the second. In some disciplinary fields (engineering and architecture at polytechnics), a better connection with the professional market has been developed.[5]

As research on the reform implementation discussed above has indicated, a substantial part of the academic staff (although not the majority) has accepted the basic aspects of the change process. Nevertheless, the crucial problem remains: the changing of the curricula contents, especially in relation to a more clear definition of the goals of the first tier. To achieve this result, a collective transformation of academics' self-perception of their professional role seems unavoidable, although unlikely, at least in the short term.[6] Certainly, the process of reform should be supported by rewards and encouragement from inside and outside (the congruence of the new degrees with the professional market being a prominent example), and more time should be given to see whether this type of policy of support will have a positive impact.

At the moment, it is difficult to evaluate the degree of success the reform has obtained. A lot depends on the original expectations which were linked to the initiative. In any case, it seems wise to remember that 'reforms of higher education in general, whatever their degree of success or failure, represent a mixture of achieved, practically achieved, and unachieved goals, with intended and unintended effects as well as positive and negative results' (Cerych and Sabatier 1986: 256). The mixed performances of the Italian version of the Bologna process is but a temporary result.

The relations between the political and the academic worlds which developed in the introduction of the Bologna process in Italy, if interpreted according to Clark's 'triangle of coordination', are driving the Italian system of higher education out of the academic oligarchy corner due to the growing importance of university autonomy. Whether the trajectory will be straight to the market corner of the triangle remains to be seen. Both the resistance of the state authority to providing complete university autonomy and the difficulties in realising a true market in the Italian higher education system as prevails in Anglo-Saxon countries (Clark 1983; Neave 2002) should be taken into consideration. The Italian case is an interesting example of the difficulties that the introduction of a higher education reform based on competition among autonomous universities, social imperatives and significant stakeholder influence on university governance may encounter in a society accustomed to a strong centralised state and a public service mentality based on the pursuit of equality.[7]

Notes

1. The survey – included in a monitoring project of the Italian reform implementation – was carried out with a CATI system of interviews on 5000 academic staff members of the six universities participating in the project. Two thousand, five hundred valid answers were obtained. Only 120 administrative staff members with managerial responsibility were interviewed.
2. Ministers who developed a policy of higher education system reform (Antonio Ruberti in the 1980s, Luigi Berlinguer in the 1990s) represented a minority of a modernising political milieu whose central purpose was related to the need for the internationalisation of higher education as a part of a more comprehensive policy devoted to the progressive involvement of the country in an European global strategy.
3. This attitude seems to be a confirmation of the little use of evaluation in implementing a reform as noted by Cerych and Sabatier (1986: 249) who mentioned Wildavsky's explanation of the resistance to evaluation as an activity of self-protection.
4. 'The strain is to unify. The golden rule is: systematize, systematize, do not let any exceptions escape your eyes' (Clark 1983: 208).
5. As an indicator, the percentage of students continuing their academic career at the second cycle is slowly declining – from 80% in the 2004–2005 academic year to 70% in 2005–2006.
6. Like all cultural changes implying beliefs and values.
7. The example is not a pure one because of a number of national peculiarities and the undeniable role of traditions, some of which have been mentioned in the previous pages.

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Parallel Universes and Common Themes: Reforms of Curricular Governance in The Bologna Context

Johanna Witte

1 Introduction

The reform of quality assurance systems has been one of the most important reform areas in the Bologna process and has in many countries been tied to the transition to a two-cycle structure of higher education programmes and degrees. While the "promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies" (Bologna Declaration 1999) was an explicit aim of the Bologna process early on and in fact one of the six action lines agreed to in the Bologna Declaration, national reforms in this area were – as I will show in this chapter – driven by considerations other than creating comparable systems of quality assurance throughout Europe.

Each country was individually concerned with how to improve and promote the quality of its higher education degree programmes and pursued its own logic of how this was to be achieved. At the point that the European ministers in charge of higher education called for the development of "a common framework of qualifications" and "coherent quality assurance and accreditation/certification mechanisms" to enhance the "readability and comparability of European higher education degrees world-wide" (Prague Communiqué 2001), the "Bologna reforms" had already led to significant reforms of national quality assurance systems that had not necessarily made them more similar. Only then was it put on the agenda that in order to promote the attractiveness of the European higher education area as a whole, a common framework for quality assurance of European higher education was needed. So, although quality assurance is today one of the major areas of European reform dialogue through the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European University Association (EUA) and other bodies including the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), this does not – yet – imply that national quality assurance systems are to any significant degree shaped by agreed and shared European policies.

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This does not mean, however, that national reforms of these systems were not influenced by perceptions of the European context and that, even where these reforms were driven by purely national dynamics and needs, there are no commonalities between the agendas and the way these were played out in the policy process. However, as I will show in this chapter, their perceptions of the European context have not been used by national policy makers to bring about real convergence with other systems, but to legitimate quite different national approaches. The commonalities between different national reforms that can nevertheless be observed seem to stem from similar trade-offs and tensions that each of the national systems tried to come to grips with individually, rather than from a coordinated reform.

This chapter seeks to empirically substantiate this finding and discuss the implications for the European governance of quality assurance arising thereof. It does so on the basis of a detailed analysis and comparison of reforms in four European higher education systems – Germany, the Netherlands, France and England – in the period from 1998 to 2004. It looks at quality assurance systems from the perspective of "curricular governance", which I define as the formal and informal distribution of control over the design and quality of higher education programmes between different actors in a national higher education system, such as the national (and state) ministries in charge of higher education, higher education institutions and intermediary bodies such as quality and accreditation agencies.

The chapter is based on my doctoral thesis (Witte 2006) and draws on its theoretical framework, a combination of Douglass North's (1990) model of institutional change and the perspective of actor-centred institutionalism developed by Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf (1995); Scharpf (1997). In a nutshell, the framework captures two main elements and their interaction: institutions – the institutional setting of national higher education systems; and actors – the organisational actors in national higher education policy. In line with North (1990), curricular governance is understood as part of the institutional setting of national higher education systems in which actors operate. Actors – and the perceptions, preferences and capabilities that characterise them – are influenced by this institutional context and in turn bring about institutional change. The sum of actor perceptions, preferences and capabilities is defined as the actor constellation, which then plays out dynamically through actor interaction in the policy formulation process.

For this chapter, this means that I look at the curricular governance systems prior to the Bologna process in 1998 and analyse in what ways the respective national settings conditioned the ensuing reforms. This part of the analysis adopts a historical perspective, tracing the influence of formal and informal institutional patterns – colloquially referred to as traditions – on the reforms adopted in different countries.[1] I also pay attention to the dynamics of actor interaction in explaining policy change up to 2004. The European context enters the picture mainly through actor perceptions of it, which are – as I will show – in turn filtered or biased by their preferences. I perform this analysis for each of the four countries individually before conducting a comparative analysis. The structuring dimensions for this comparison are chosen to highlight common themes across the parallel universes of the four systems: the challenge of dealing with the tension between (a) central and decentralised control;

(b) the logic of accreditation and audit; and (c) comparability and curricular diversity. I conclude by reflecting upon the implications of the findings on European governance in the field of quality assurance.

Empirically, the chapter is based on in-depth country case studies including the analysis of original national policy documents in the period from 1998 to 2004 and interviews with the representatives of all major organisational actors in higher education policy in these countries. This was complemented by a wide range of interviews with national higher education experts. Altogether, more than 95 formal interviews have been conducted.

2 Country Cases

2.1 Germany: Competitive Accreditation for Competitive Institutions

In Germany, a major concern shared by actors in national higher education policy such as the German rectors' conference (HRK), the federal ministry (BMBF) and the *Länder* ministries in charge of higher education in the late 1990s was how to allow for more diversity and innovation in, and empower higher education institutions to assume responsibility for, curricular design. This concern becomes understandable against the background of the inherited institutional setting. According to this setting, authority over curricula was basically in the hands of the 16 individual *Länder*, potentially leading to a patchwork of higher education programmes throughout Germany. Federal legislation, however, made the *Länder* responsible for ensuring "the equivalence of programme and examination achievements and degrees and the possibility to change higher education institutions" throughout Germany (own translation, Art. 9, federal framework law, HRG). This was achieved through a system of national subject-specific curriculum frameworks (*Rahmenprüfungsordnungen*, RPOs). These frameworks had to be negotiated and re-negotiated among the *Länder* and with stakeholders such as the respective disciplinary associations in a lengthy process. By 1998, this system was increasingly perceived to have become dysfunctional (see also Toens, forthcoming). As expressed by the former president of the HRK and president of the *Akkreditierungsrat* at the time:

> At the time, there was the intention, regarding the RPOs, to provide a more flexible framework and to open up the possibility for higher education institutions to react more swiftly to developments in the labour market and science (own translation).[2]

Similarly, a department head at the North-Rhine Westphalian ministry in charge of higher education expressed the view that:

> The RPOs implied a very bureaucratic process that did not provide any innovative impulses. I used to compare it with the party of institutionalised revolution in Mexico. It happens all the time, but has no effect and does not fulfil any of the original intentions. It was a

pure formality, lawyers were sitting together introducing never-ending amendments to some paragraphs and subparagraphs (own translation).[3]

Another concern was that the traditional system of programme authorisation by *Länder* ministries based on a control of input measures such as teaching capacities, contact hours, rooms and the like was not suited to capture factors that made a real difference in the quality of degrees. There was therefore wide agreement among actors in favour of moving to a more output-oriented system of quality control.

It has to be noted that based on the principle of "freedom of research and teaching" (Art. 4 HRG) constitutionally granted (Art. 5 *Grundgesetz*), individual academics had always had considerable leeway as to the content and method of teaching. But that had not translated into departments and higher education institutions systematically assuming responsibility for curricular design and quality.[4]

Prior to 1998, a broad consensus had thus developed that the system of RPOs should be abandoned to allow for more diversity and innovation in degree programmes. Interestingly, it was taken for granted in the debate that accreditation was the way forward. Accreditation was perceived as *the* quality assurance tool that would serve the new paradigm of "increased differentiation", "competition" and "profile building" (HRK 1998: 1). It was moreover seen as an international gold standard – the German rectors' conference cited the United States, Hungary and the French *grandes écoles* sector as examples – and the feeling prevailed that a similar system was needed in Germany to compete internationally (HRK 1998: 2). Interestingly, this perception was not based on any systematic analysis of quality assurance policies in other countries or of accreditation practices in those countries that were cited as examples. But this did not diminish the effect of the argument. In the words of the Standing Conference of the *Länder* ministers in charge of education (KMK), accreditation was supposed to account for "the necessary differentiation in the higher education sector and the increased quality demands due to intensifying international competition" (KMK 1998: 2).

Several of the main features of the German accreditation system were never subject to real dispute among the actors. These features include the following:

- to install a competitive accreditation system where higher education institutions should have the choice between various accreditation agencies overseen by a central accreditation council (the *Akkreditierungsrat*);
- that *Länder* should devolve some of their authority to other actors in higher education policy, implying a "corporatist" composition of the accreditation bodies;
- that accreditation agencies would accredit programmes (not departments or whole higher education institutions);
- that accreditation would be periodic; and
- that there would be one single accreditation system for universities and non-university higher education institutions, the *Fachhochschulen* (KMK 1998).

What was – and in parts still is – subject to dispute was the degree of central control of the *Akkreditierungsrat* over the agencies, the extent to which *Länder* would

devolve their authority, the exact balance of stakeholder representation in accreditation bodies and the funding of the system. In the meantime, also the principle of programme accreditation has been increasingly questioned due to the immense resources it requires and the detailed interference with curricular autonomy, the accreditation of institutions' quality assurance systems – referred to as "system accreditation" (*Systemakkreditierung*) – has been introduced as an alternative option for institutions (KMK 2007, Akkreditierungsrat 2008).

The fact that the *Akkreditierungsrat* was installed as a combination of a council and a tiny secretariat (about three staff members) attached to the KMK was a tribute of the HRK to the political resistance of some *Länder* ministries to devolving substantial authority to a central body and making available public resources for this purpose.[5] But it also reflects the unwillingness to create another "bureaucracy".[6] The limited readiness of the *Länder* to devolve authority also showed in the fact that the ultimate compromise involved a power sharing between state authorisation and accreditation; the *Länder* retained responsibility for macro and resource planning and delegated the responsibility for curricular design, subject-specific standards and professional relevance. The exact task distribution varies between the *Länder* and is subject to varying degrees of overlap.

Tensions also continue to exist between the aims of national coherence and common quality standards on the one hand and the competition paradigm on the other hand, according to which higher education institutions should be able to profile themselves through the choice of an accreditation agency. While agencies have developed strong institutional identities and centrifugal forces, competition between the six agencies naturally remains limited: there is no more than one specialised agency per subject area and several agencies de facto have close ties with their respective *Länder* ministry. Also, it remains unclear how students or other interested stakeholders are to understand the differences between accreditation by one or another agency, which will require much more transparency than currently exists.

It should be noted that the reform of the curricular governance system was closely tied to the introduction of the two-cycle degree structure, referred to as Bachelor and Masters in Germany. The introduction of the new degree structure was used as a vehicle for experimenting with this new system of curricular governance (KMK 2001, 2002a, b). While it is designed to apply to the entire system in the medium term, only new degree programmes – in practice this means only Bachelor and Masters programmes – are obliged to seek accreditation and the reach of the new system only successively extends with the transition to the new degree structure.

As for the funding of the new system, higher education institutions are expected to bear the cost of accreditation without extra public money being made available for them for this purpose. How they would generate this money was not considered when the system was designed. In theory, the resources that are freed in the *Länder* ministries by the devolution of control could be used, but in practice this has not been possible. Meanwhile, it has become clear that accrediting a single programme of the thousands of degree programmes in Germany involves about €12,500 in direct costs (ASIIN),[7] plus heavy time investment from the respective department and academic peers. A clear indication of these constraints is that, in August 2008,

only 28% of Bachelor and Masters degrees were yet accredited (HRK 2006:12). It is largely due to this that the alternative route of system accreditation was introduced. However to what extent this will reduce resource constraints in the accreditation system and the workload for institutions is yet to be seen (Nickel 2006a, Witte 2008a).

Whether the new system indeed increased curricular and programme diversity as intended when abolishing the national curriculum frameworks is still unclear. Isomorphic pressure emanates from subject and professional networks promoting inherited standards via accreditation, as well as from the risk aversion of higher education institutions. Formally, however, there are no subject-specific curriculum frameworks, just generic standards for Bachelor and Masters degrees issued by the *Akkreditierungsrat* upon request of the KMK (Akkreditierungsrat 2001). This creates formal freedom, but also uncertainty and leeway for accreditation agencies and peers employed by them to focus on certain requirements. The delegation of this discretion to private institutions is highly disputed among academics in German higher education institutions (Krücken et al. 2005).

Discussions also continue on whether the system is sufficiently transparent and internationally open: is it realistic that students will understand the difference between an accredited programme and one that is not – and even more so between programmes accredited by different agencies? And how can international accreditation be integrated into the system if requirements make it difficult for any international agency to be recognised by the *Akkreditierungsrat* (Bieri et al. 2001)?

To sum up, the introduction of an accreditation system in Germany was brought about by an agreement at a critical moment in time in 1998 between major actors in national higher education policy including the federal ministry and the *Länder* ministries in charge of higher education, as well as the national rectors' conference, that the inherited system of curricular governance needed to be abandoned in favour of a more decentralised and flexible approach. The rectors' conference was strongly interested in achieving a higher degree of curricular autonomy for higher education institutions, and the federal and *Länder* ministries were willing to grant it in light of the unfavourable experience with the inherited system and the new paradigms of competition, internationalisation and institutional autonomy (Rüttgers 1997). Perceptions that accreditation was the "international gold standard", promoted by the German rectors' conference, played an important role in this. Competitive accreditation was regarded as the suitable curricular governance model for the new Bachelor and Masters degrees, the introduction of which was guided by the paradigms of curricular diversity and competition in Germany. This match between the new degrees and a particular form of accreditation was treated as more or less self-evident in the debate. At the same time, the resource implications of the new accreditation system were not thought through and neither were the inherent tensions between the aims of common standards and the competition paradigm. Also, the *Länder* were only ready to delegate part of their authority over curricula. The effects of these unsolved issues determine political debates about the future of the system until today and make further rounds of policy change very likely.

2.2 The Netherlands: From Formative Peer Review to a Single Label Implying a Clear Yes/No Decision

The major drive for the reform of curricular governance in the Netherlands came from the national ministry in charge of higher education, the *Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap* (MOCenW): it wanted to create a transparent "quality label" that could be understood abroad and would give a clear yes/no type indication whether a programme fulfilled certain requirements (MOCenW 2000a: 2–3). This concern is to be understood against the established tradition of formative self-evaluation and peer review in the Dutch higher education system, organised by the rectors' conferences of universities and non-university higher education institutions, the hogescholen (referring to themselves as universities of applied sciences), under the supervision of the public agency, the *Onderwijsinspectie* (Education Inspectorate) (MOCenW 1999: 84–86). The inspectorate monitored the evaluation process and its follow-up and intervened in problematic cases (the so-called "meta-evaluation"), but in fact the system was largely run by academics themselves.

While this system of site visits (*visitatiestelsel*) engaged higher education institutions in regular evaluation of their programmes and implied a well-developed culture of institutional responsibility for curricular design and quality assurance, the ministry was concerned that given the small size of the Dutch higher education system, the system would not ensure sufficiently rigorous control and was prone to be inward looking. These ideas were put forward in the draft development plan (*Hoger Onderwijs en Onderzoek Plan*, HOOP) for the Dutch higher education system in 1999: "The vision is that external quality assessment will lead to the granting of a formal quality label in the form of accreditation" (MOCenW 1999: 89, own translation). The document left no doubt about the immense significance attached to the international context by the Dutch government: "The international context forms the framework for the assessment of the quality of Dutch higher education" (MOCenW 1999: 83, own translation).

Another major argument for the need for an accreditation system was a practice of *hogescholen* that had developed out of a deficiency of the Dutch regulatory framework. *Hogescholen* were formally not allowed to grant degrees under Dutch law. As they were eager to profile themselves internationally, they had developed an international route for offering their Masters degrees: they partnered with British universities (mainly former polytechnics), which through their degree-granting power accredited the degrees offered in the Netherlands by the *hogescholen* – a practice referred to as "u-turn construction" (Onderwijsraad 2000: 4). To enhance the legitimacy of these degrees in the Dutch context, the Dutch Validation Council (DVC) was established in 1997. This was, however, an interim solution and was perceived as such. A similar problem existed for universities offering so-called "post-initial" (*post-initiële*) Masters degrees – which could be studied on top of a traditional Masters-level degree (*doctorandus*). These were not covered by the national register of degrees (*Centraal Register Opleidingen Hoger Onderwijs,* CROHO), admission to which was the precondition for public funding (MOCenW 1999: 87–88). A widely shared hope was that the move to accreditation would solve this problem

and bring both the post-initial Masters programmes and those offered by *hogescholen* under public control.

In general, the Dutch government did not interfere with the development of curricula: frameworks were agreed to by disciplinary associations working under the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands) and HBO-*raad* (Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences). Curricular diversity was significantly higher in the university than the *hogeschool* sector, where about two-thirds of the curriculum tended to be commonly defined in terms of learning outcomes.[8] There was, however, one exception to this principle: a commission called *Adviescommissie Onderwijsaanbod* (ACO) was charged with ensuring the overall coherence, relevance and efficiency of the national programme offer of Dutch higher education institutions (henceforth referred to as "macro-efficiency"). Their agreement was conditional for registration in the CROHO. It was possible that the ACO would reject a new degree programme put forward by a higher education institution on the grounds that it created redundancy with existing programmes. Another aim of the national ministry strongly pushed by the then minister Hermans was to abandon the check of macro-efficiency by the ACO as a condition for CROHO registration as the central part of his deregulation agenda (MOCenW 1999: 40). The minister's idea was that higher education institutions should be able to independently decide whether a programme was needed from a macro-economic point of view based on market research and voluntary coordination. Only the quality of programmes should continue to be subject to external control.

As in Germany, a couple of basic features of the accreditation system were agreed upon early and not subject to any serious discussion:

- that an "accreditation *body*" should be established – as opposed to a *council* (it should not imply direct representation of stakeholder interests);
- that the accreditation system should build upon the existing peer-review system instead of replacing it;
- that the accreditation decision should be the precondition for the public recognition of degrees (= CROHO registration) and the granting of publicly protected degree titles, but independent from the decision upon public funding; and
- that the inspectorate's role would be reduced to that of "meta-evaluation".

Most of these ideas were sketched by the Dutch *Onderwijsraad* (Education Council), a high-level public consultative council, as early as 2000 (MOCenW 2000b: 181–186).

However, there was also a range of points that was not at all clear from the beginning, notably, whether there should be separate accreditation bodies for universities and *hogescholen* and to what extent other agencies should be admitted besides the existing evaluation departments of the two rectors' conferences. While the ministry was in favour of a common system for both institutional types, it had no intention to push it through against the will of the universities. Different from Germany, this was a major issue in the debate. Universities and *hogescholen* were represented in separate rectors' conferences and the gap between the institutional

types was considerable in several respects, notably, with respect to the degree levels and types they were allowed to grant (Witte 2006: 209). Another issue between the ministry and universities was whether the system should be opened to competition from agencies other than those stemming from the former peer review organised by higher education institutions. Here, the ministry was determined to make this possible, allowing not only for other national, but also for international, agencies (Tweede Kamer 1999).

The system that was ultimately enacted by parliament in summer 2002 (Staatsblad 2002) entailed the following features:

- A single national accreditation body was established, but with separate accreditation frameworks for "academic" and "higher professional" degrees (formerly offered by universities and *hogescholen* only, respectively). Although universities and *hogescholen* could in principle submit both types of programmes for accreditation, this was virtually impossible in practice as the criteria reflected the inherited binary divide.
- The international outlook of the system was operationalised in two major ways: first, the accreditation body merged with the Flemish one soon after its constitution and was formally charged with ensuring international cooperation in the development of its frameworks; and second, international agencies were admitted to the system.
- Similar to the Germans, the Dutch went for periodic programme accreditation. Interestingly, they distinguished between "accreditation" and a "quality check for new programmes" (*toets nieuwe opleiding*), the former being applicable only to running programmes, the latter to the paper version of newly developed ones.[9]
- While accreditation applied in principle to all programmes, Bachelor and Masters programmes that were developed by re-labelling or re-structuring existing programmes were exempted for a number of years if they had recently been subjected to the traditional peer-review system. This decision reflects the continuity between the old and the new system of curricular governance.
- While the agencies were charged with carrying out the site visits, the accreditation decision was always to be taken by the central accreditation body.
- The ACO was abolished, but the great increase in institutional responsibility for the "macro-efficiency" of programmes did not materialise due to resistance in the Lower House. Instead, the decision on "macro-efficiency" was now located in the ministry. In principle, only accredited programmes were entitled to public funding and degrees could only be granted for accredited programmes. On the basis of having responsibility for "macro-efficiency", the higher education minister could, however, decide to fund a programme that did not gain accreditation and was entitled to withdraw authorisation from an accredited programme.

To sum up, the interest of the ministry in charge of higher education to create a single, clear "quality label" for Dutch higher education that could be easily understood internationally was both a major driving force behind the introduction of accreditation in the Netherlands and an important determinant of the way the system

was designed. The national rectors' conferences of universities and *hogescholen* did not oppose the principles of this idea, but they were not the driving forces behind its implementation – different from the move to the Bachelor–Masters system where they played a leading role. This constellation has to be understood against the background of a well-developed tradition of system-wide evaluation based on the principle of peer review that was firmly in the hands of the rectors' conferences. The new accreditation system built on this system of formative evaluation and, by complementing it with an external, summative yes/no decision, transformed it. Perceptions of how the Netherlands was perceived abroad played an important role in the design of the system: they provided the major argument for change. As in Germany, the competition paradigm showed in the creation of a system in which several agencies compete, but the argument that a single label was needed internationally was constitutive for the choice of a system in which each single accreditation decision was ultimately taken by a central body, the NVAO (*Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie*). The strong international orientation also shows in the early merger with the Flemish accreditation system, in the admission of international agencies and in the creation of a single accreditation system for universities and *hogescholen.*

An issue of continued debate among actors in Dutch higher education is how the formative qualities of the traditional peer-review system can be safeguarded under the new accreditation system: institutions still engage in formative evaluation as a first step in the accreditation process, but the question is if their self-assessment will be as critical as before given that the procedure ultimately culminates in a yes/no decision (Scheele 2004: 19). Also, how can the system be kept credible by failing a "sufficient" number of programmes,[10] and how can student rights and interests be safeguarded if a programme is failed (ISO 2004)? Another issue is the introduction of institutional audit as an alternative or complement to programme accreditation (Report Committee Review Degrees 2005: 45). Here some basic changes have just been agreed by the Dutch Parliament in 2008: From 2010 onwards, institutional audits will take place with the intention to reduce the bureaucratic burden of programme accreditation on institutions. If the result of these audits is positive – i.e. if an institution can demonstrate that it can take care of quality assurance of their programmes itself – this implies that the next round of programme accreditations will be "light touch". Pilots will take place in 2008 and 2009 which might lead to adjustments of the approach.

2.3 France: Stimulating Diversity in a Central State Accreditation System

In France, the major concern of the national ministry in charge of higher education was, similar to the predominant motives of actors in German higher education, to increase curricular diversity and the autonomy of higher education institutions in curricular planning (Lang 2001).[11] This concern applied particularly to the university sector which was traditionally under its close control (as opposed to the *grandes*

écoles sector that came under the control of various state bodies and had developed its own system of curricular governance that I will explain below). As in Germany, university degrees were traditionally governed by national subject-specific curriculum frameworks (referred to as *maquettes*) detailing inputs such as teaching hours in various subjects, etc. While these frameworks were in fact rather loose and only applied up to the Bachelor level (*licence*), they were traditionally seen as guaranteeing a uniform standard and level of degrees across universities, a notion referred to as *diplôme national* that was a kind of sacred cow in the French higher education system. However, below the surface of the *diplôme national*, quality and content of curricula were already differentiated across France and the *maquettes* were seen as stifling curricular innovation and autonomy.

An important ministerial aim of the reform of curricular governance in France in the context of the Bologna process was therefore to abandon the *maquettes* and encourage universities to come up with their own curricula for the new degrees in the two-cycle degree structure (referred to as LMD in France denoting the first two cycles *licence* and *master* as well as the third cycle, *doctorat*). The underlying philosophy to increase curricular autonomy was justified by the national ministry with reference to international competitiveness: "To allow French universities to propose their programmes and degrees as done by all important universities in the world" (MEN 2002b: preface, own translation). In other words: it was seen as a prerequisite for improved quality and profile of French universities that they would assume increasing responsibility for curricular design. The use of the European context for national reform is even more explicit in the following quote:

> Every country will soon be in a position to have to present and defend at European level its national methods of evaluation – that is, for France, the heart of the principle of the '*diplôme national*' and the role of the state in the matter (MEN 2001).

At the time, this intention did not, however, entail any discussion about a delegation of state power to other stakeholders in the authorisation of degrees. In France, all degree programmes under the supervision of the ministry in charge of higher education were traditionally "accredited"[12] by the state, a process referred to as *habilitation*. Under the system of *habilitation*, all university programmes had to be submitted to the ministry for re-accreditation every four years. The *habilitation* was performed in the context of a system of management by contracts, by which the performance of each institution was evaluated and the new budget allocated.[13] While the process was largely carried out by ministerial bureaucrats in the higher education department (DES), it did involve the input of two types of peers: disciplinary experts (*conseillers pédagogiques*) and institutional experts (*conseillers d'établissement*), the latter often former university vice-chancellors. Moreover, a range of specific commissions existed for certain types of programmes.

Already prior to the Bologna process, the ministry had made efforts to move away from an isolated review of individual subjects and to strengthen a holistic evaluation of an institution's overall programme supply (Musselin 2004: 67 ff.). This impetus was now strengthened in the course of the transition to the LMD system – with institutions being encouraged to design and submit their programme supply

as a whole and bring it in line with the overall institutional strategy and profile (MEN 2002a). Moreover, they were asked to take into account the task distribution among higher education institutions in a region, concentrate on their strengths and cooperate with neighbouring higher education institutions where needed – a French variant of the Dutch concern with "macro-efficiency" (MEN 2002b).

Finally, another very important motive of the national ministry was to use the reform of curricular governance to extend its influence over the *grandes écoles* and bring them under national quality control.[14] Quality assurance in the *grandes écoles* sector was very unevenly developed. Traditionally, the engineering schools represented in the *Conférence des directeurs d'écoles et formations d'ingénieurs* (CDEFI) operated their own system of quality assurance in which they took great pride. An independent engineering commission, the *commission des titres d'ingénieur* (CTI), was responsible for *habilitating* engineering degrees on behalf of the education ministry, which normally would formally confirm the decision. Since 1995, this procedure was repeated in a six-year rhythm. The title of advanced engineering degrees, *diplôme d'ingénieur*, was thereby protected.[15] Other *grandes écoles*, notably in the area of business studies, did not have a comparable system, a frequently criticised situation which led to a wide quality spread in this sector.[16,17] The national ministry aimed at both integrating the CTI more closely into its regime and establishing a national quality control of degrees in business studies in the first place (*Décret no. 2001–295*, 2001).

There was no significant disagreement about the course of reforms between the national ministry and the French university rectors' conference.[18,19] The main criticism regarding reforms in the governance of university curricula came from student and staff unions (*Union Nationale des Étudiants de France – le syndicat étudiant*, UNEF and *Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Supérieur*, SNESUP) that felt that the increase in curricular diversity would threaten the notion of the *diplôme national*, namely, equal quality and value of university degrees throughout France (UNEF 2004; SNESUP 2004). Also, the unions felt that the move to *habilitation* of the entire programme supply of a university in one go practically limited their ability to influence the *habilitation* decision, in which they formally had a say through a higher education council called CNESER (*Conseil national d'éducation supérieur et de recherche*).[20] The ministry nevertheless pushed ahead with its plans, the only concession it made was that it did not formally put into question the concept of the *diplôme national*, just changed the method and liberalised the criteria for ensuring its quality (MEN 2001, 2002a).

As regards the *grandes écoles*, the ministry in charge of higher education applied a subtle and incremental strategy, gradually bringing their Masters-level programmes under its realm and making the quality assurance of their programmes more similar to that of universities. In a first step, it introduced the *grade de master* in 1999 (*Décret no. 99–747*, 1999), an umbrella degree that could be granted by universities and *grandes écoles* alike without preconditions and without having to adapt their degrees – with the exception of the business schools, which had to submit their Masters-level programmes to national *habilitation* for the first time; in their case by a commission set up especially for this purpose, the Helfer Commission (*Décret no. 2001–295*, 2001). For engineering schools, accreditation by the CTI was

sufficient. In a second step, the ministry further tightened criteria: it introduced a state-controlled *diplôme national de master* that was based on strict criteria such as a sufficient research base in the respective field of studies. If *grandes écoles* wanted to award this degree, they had to subject themselves to the same quality criteria as university programmes. The Duby Commission was created to achieve this for engineering degrees for foreigners.

In the meantime, interest has grown among *grandes écoles* to offer research Masters programmes, and to a lesser extent professional Masters programmes, to French students. Consequently, a trend towards a common quality assurance regime at the graduate level and increased cooperation of universities and *grandes écoles* in the provision of graduate degrees can be anticipated. Smaller *grandes écoles*, in particular, have strong incentives to cooperate with universities to increase their institutional research capacity and meet the ministry's strict preconditions for the *habilitation* of research Masters programmes.[21]

To conclude, in France, the initiative for a reform of curricular governance clearly emanated from the national ministry in charge of higher education, which formed an alliance with the national university rectors' conference. The central aim was to increase the curricular autonomy of universities and to stimulate them to make use of it. Very different from Germany, this thrust met opposition from some of the student and staff unions who feared that it would threaten the equivalence of degrees throughout France. But as in Germany and the Netherlands, the ministry justified the reform by reference to the international context. The devolvement of authority in France did not go as far as in Germany or as far as was already the case in the Netherlands: the "accreditation" (*habilitation*) of degree programmes stayed firmly in the hands of the national ministry, only the methods of the process were reformed to allow more curricular variation and a more holistic view of the programme offer of a university. A second aim of the ministry was to bring the university and the *grandes écoles* sector more close together and to gain some control over the quality of the provision of *grandes écoles*. It did so through the creation of incentives: if the *grandes écoles* wanted to offer certain newly created Masters degrees under the new degree structure, they had to submit themselves to this control.

In France, too, capacity constraints remain a major challenge for the reformed system of curricular governance. With one-fourth of French universities submitting their entire programme supply every autumn for re-accreditation (*habilitation*), one can imagine the sheer scale of the exercise. Nevertheless, a serious discussion about the decentralisation of the system or a move in the direction of institutional accreditation has not yet started.

2.4 England: Getting Rid of Subject Review and Coming to Rely Entirely on Institutional Audit

The English reforms of curricular governance in the period under consideration were very different from those in the other three higher education systems. First, because England was the only country in which these reforms were not discussed in, and

framed by, the context of the Bologna process and not related to a reform of the national degree structure. Second, because the institutional starting point for reforms was so very different from those in the other three countries.

In practical terms, English higher education institutions did not depend upon state authorisation for their degree programmes. Universities' degree awarding power implied that they were free to set up programmes and design curricula without state interference (Brennan and Williams 2004). They even had the power to "accredit" or "validate" – this was the British use of the term – other higher education institutions such as higher education colleges to award degrees under their supervision. English higher education institutions looked back on a strong tradition of assuming responsibility for their degrees based on the principle of peer review (Brennan and Williams 2004; QAA 2003a). Since very recently, these audits and the somewhat different subject reviews were carried out under the auspices of a newly created buffer organisation, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The effect of these exercises was purely through the power of publicity and its impact on reputation and market competitiveness; the QAA had no formal powers to withdraw authorisation, although its judgments could, in theory, have funding implications. "Accreditation" in the continental-European meaning of the term existed only in a number of professional fields and did not systematically cover the entire system (Brennan and Williams 2004; Harvey and Mason 1995). Curricular diversity – including diversity of degrees and degree titles – was accordingly high, and academic qualifications were not national awards. There was no public agency looking after the coherence of the overall provision in English higher education. While the procedures for funding partly ensured this by channelling public funds into priority areas, the main responsibility for meeting the demands of students and labour markets was borne by higher education institutions themselves.

The reform issues in English curricular governance in the period from 1998 to 2004 were driven by the institutional legacy of the history behind the creation of the QAA and the opposing streams it united by carrying out both "institutional audits" and "subject reviews" (Findlay 2004). The "institutional audits" went back to a tradition of university self-governance. Since 1990, the academic audit unit set up by the university rectors' conference had undertaken systematic "institutional audits" of universities' internal management of academic quality and standards. These were based on a combination of internal and external evaluation and largely organised by universities themselves. Since 1992, the "new universities" had joined these processes and the tradition was continued by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC).

The "subject reviews", on the other hand, stood for public control of universities. Since 1993, a division of the funding council had undertaken these reviews, which were also referred to as "teaching quality assessments" (QAA 2003b). They took place at the level of the subject or department and focused directly on the quality of curriculum design and teaching and learning (Findlay 2004). In 1998, the HEQC and funding council's quality assessment division had just merged to form the QAA, following a recommendation of the influential Dearing Report (1997). This merger reflected a compromise between stronger public demands for the accountability of higher education institutions and the tradition of curricular autonomy.

The QAA initially continued to undertake both the inherited audits and the subject reviews (Findlay 2004) according to its mission "to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education" (QAA 2003a: 3).

However, the tensions between the two streams continued within the QAA. Higher education institutions were increasingly dissatisfied with the level of intrusiveness of the QAA's method, which, according to them, "amounted – and was designed to amount – to a massive undermining of the academic autonomy of individual higher education institutions" (Alderman 2001). Particularly, the Russell Group of leading research universities and the rectors' conference of higher education colleges called for a confinement of the QAA to institutional audits. The subject reviews inherited from the funding council were seen as far too costly and bureaucratic and moreover ineffective (Furedi 2001).[22,23,24] In response to mounting levels of criticism, John Randall resigned from his position as Chief Executive of the QAA in August 2001 and was followed by Peter Williams, the former Director of the institutional audit processes inherited from the HEQC. Under the new leadership, the QAA abandoned the subject reviews and came to rely entirely on institutional audits.

The new methodology for England was developed in partnership with the funding council, the rectors' conferences of universities and of higher education colleges and the English ministry in charge of higher education (referred to as the "department") and was published in July 2002 (QAA 2002). The new institutional audits focused on three main areas:

1. the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms;
2. the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information that an institution publishes about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards; and
3. several examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work at the level of the programme . . . or across the institution as a whole . . . (QAA 2002: 3).

Institutional audits were introduced progressively from 2002 to 2003, while subject reviews were successively phased out. In the transition period from 2002 to 2004, the QAA still undertook "development-focused engagements at discipline-level intended to offer institutions an opportunity to test, in co-operation with the Agency, their internal procedures for assuring quality and standards" (QAA 2002: 2).

While moving from subject reviews to audit represented a "victory" of university interests over the demands of detailed public accountability, the audit was embedded in a newly established, wider set of tools for curricular governance designed to ensure that universities would make responsible use of their freedom. This was referred to as the "academic infrastructure" and included a code of practice, a

national framework of higher education qualifications, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications.

The *code of practice* set out the main elements of internal quality assurance mechanisms institutions were expected to have in place. The *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QAA 2001) constituted a first attempt of the government, through the QAA, to bring national consistency to the diverse degrees and degree titles that higher education institutions were offering based on tradition and rooted in their inherited independence in awarding degrees. The framework defined generic levels of competence at five levels: Certificate, Intermediate, Honours, Masters and Doctorate. *Subject benchmark statements* were the result of an effort by academics, facilitated by the QAA, to agree on "expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas" in terms of competencies and skills (QAA 2003a: 12). While they were not binding, higher education institutions had to demonstrate that they had taken them into account when designing their programmes. In the *programme specifications*, institutions were expected to give "a concise description of the intended outcomes of learning . . . and the means by which these outcomes are achieved and demonstrated" (QAA 2003a: 12). Finally, it was envisaged that institutions would have to make information on their programmes available to students and employers, following a systematic format defined by the QAA and the funding council, leading to the later Teaching Quality Information (TQI) website.

So, while the abolition of subject reviews constituted a marked increase of curricular autonomy of higher education institutions, the new overall framework including institutional audits and the "academic infrastructure" provided a clearly defined limiting framework for that freedom. Against the background of the English experience, it becomes understandable that moving to programme accreditation was out of the question for actors in the English system:

> The UK's experience with course-based review is that it is unnecessarily bureaucratic and costly. Where institutions have strong internal quality procedures, as in the UK, institutional based review/audit has proved to be effective and cost-efficient (HLPF 2003).

Therefore, they were extremely wary of any European tendency or attempt to install programme accreditation as the norm, making clear that "the UK would resist attempts to introduce a European system of external course evaluation, a single pan-European quality system or form of course-based system" (HLPF 2003). The QAA was strongly involved in ENQA, where it promoted this position.[25]

In England, the initiative for the reform of curricular governance in the period from 1998 to 2004 clearly emanated from the university sector, which was unhappy with what was perceived as excessive public interference with university autonomy, as well as an excessive bureaucratic burden upon institutions. What looked like a dispute between higher education institutions and the QAA was openly carried out and intensively debated in the media. Behind it, however, laid the more substantial conflict between higher education institutions and government with the QAA the agency caught in the middle. The dispute ultimately led to a change in the leadership of the QAA, with the new head being much closer to the university perspective.

It also resulted in the phasing out of subject reviews in favour of complete reliance upon institutional audits.

3 Comparative Analysis

What we can observe across systems is an interesting double phenomenon. On the one hand, curricular governance systems in the four countries developed without any significant cross-references over the period from 1998 to 2004 and with only marginal references to the concrete European context: as if reforms took place in different universes. On the other hand, common themes can be found across these systems – each system struggles in its own way and receives a particular "colouring" according to the specific institutional context. Taking note of the different choices and trade-offs made in the neighbouring systems can therefore potentially help to open up the "possibility space" in the respective national debates beyond what is currently considered. I will now delineate some of these common themes and try to explain the respective national choices against the institutional settings, actor constellations and their interaction.

3.1 Central Versus Decentralised Systems

All four curricular governance systems seek to balance the merits of decentralised decision making over curricula with a coherent national framework. The French system is the most centralised among the four, with all accreditation decisions directly taken by the national ministry itself in the framework of a nation-wide system of contract management. While academic peers from the various disciplines play an important role in the process, they work under the authority of the ministry that assumes the ultimate responsibility itself. In this regard, there was no change in the French system over the period; all the reform energy went into allowing for more autonomy for universities *within* a centralised system of curricular governance, which was already a big and disputed step. The strong French tradition of centralism may help to explain why not even a debate about the delegation of responsibility emerged in the period.

In England, the task of quality assurance is assumed by the QAA as a buffer organisation formally owned by universities, the funding councils and the government. In this sense, the QAA reflects devolvement of central government control to stakeholders. However, the QAA remains one single body for the entire UK and operates a unified framework for the whole of England and in that sense is centralised. While it is common among English academics to complain about the burden of quality assurance procedures imposed by the QAA, the idea of introducing choice or competition between agencies did not emerge in the English debate. Instead, subject-specific concerns are dealt with through groups or councils under the common umbrella of the QAA. An explanation might be that English higher education

institutions do not see audit as a way to profile themselves, but as a collective exercise undertaken according to the shared standards of the academic community. This constitution of the system renders the idea of accepting other agencies' decisions as alternative to QAA audit a particularly alien thought to actors in the English system.

The Dutch and German accreditation systems look quite similar at first sight as they both combine a central accreditation body or council with a number of decentralised agencies carrying out the site visits. The big difference is, however, that in the Netherlands, the ultimate accreditation decision is always taken by the national body, while it lies in the hands of the agencies in Germany. This feature renders the German accreditation system the most decentralised among the four. There are two main explanations for this unique German solution with several agencies and a weak national body: first, it reflects the federal system, where the *Länder* were unwilling to delegate substantial power to a national accreditation organisation. Already that fact that higher education institutions can now (in principle) choose their agency across *Länder* borders was a concession. Second, "competition" and "profile-building" were highly popular in the German higher education reform discourse of recent years and the concepts were transferred from higher education institutions to the framework in which they were acting: competition of agencies should allow higher education institutions to become more competitive themselves.

In the Netherlands, similar ideas were around and motivated the admission of further agencies besides the ones originating in the national rectors' conferences. However, the attraction towards a competitive system was outweighed by the dominant concern of the national ministry to create one single "quality label" that would be easily understood abroad: transparency was given priority over competition. Different from Germany, where a central accreditation body carrying out the actual accreditation would have been seen in tension with the aim of curricular diversity, there was no such fear given the strong tradition of institutions assuming responsibility of curricular design in the Netherlands and the widely shared respect for their autonomy.

3.2 Programme Accreditation Versus Institutional Audit

All four curricular governance systems struggled with finding the right balance between the interest in the assurance of the quality of each single programme on the one hand and resource constraints and the value of institutional autonomy on the other. In England, programme accreditation had never been an option. Universities had just gone through a full cycle of subject-based review and it was felt that, if it had been a valuable exercise – which was questioned by many academics – there was no need to redo it, as no major flaws had been discovered. Basically, universities were seen as capable of running their own internal quality assurance systems so that it was sufficient for the QAA to check the quality of these *systems* and to look more deeply at the subject level only if there was a concrete indication of the need for it. As for the concept of "accreditation", it was at odds with the tradition of universities being self-accrediting, degree-awarding institutions.

In France, where it was customary for all higher education institutions to have their programmes "re-accredited" by the state in four-year intervals, this principle remained unchallenged. But, from the beginning of the reform, the need to come to a more integrated overall assessment of universities' programme supply was stressed by the ministry. Universities were encouraged to come up with an overall concept for their programme supply (*offre de formation*) based on an analysis of their strengths and in line with their institutional profile and to set up internal evaluation systems. These moves can be regarded as the first shy steps in the direction of institutional accreditation.

Both Germany and the Netherlands opted for programme accreditation for some common and some different reasons: both tied the introduction of accreditation to the move to a Bachelor–Masters degree structure, so basically the system was meant to ensure and promote the quality of the new degrees. In Germany, an additional reason was that institutional quality assurance systems and responsibility for curricular design were poorly developed in higher education institutions and it was therefore deemed necessary to have an external check of each single programme. In the Netherlands, the argument was more consumerist: students both from the country and from abroad should get a clear indication if the programme of their choice was OK. In both countries, resource constraints and tensions with university autonomy soon triggered discussions about more synergetic forms of accreditation, including the move to institutional accreditation (referred to as "system accreditation" in Germany). Reforms are underway in both countries, but no experience with the new system is yet available.

One internal contradiction was shared by all three countries with accreditation-type systems of curricular governance, Germany, the Netherlands and France: on the one hand, the credibility of accreditation – and the idea of a clear yes/no decision – requires that not all programmes pass the test; on the other hand, it is extremely difficult to fail programmes and deal with the consequences in a public education system. Therefore, very few programmes are failed in these systems; it is more common for accreditors to engage in a formative process to help institutions meet the standards. This in turn blurs the boundaries between accreditation and evaluation. Against this background, the English solution of "audit" appears as a particularly honest and consistent form of quality assurance: no institution is "failed", but if audit results are made public, they nevertheless have the desired steering effect.

3.3 Comparability Versus Curricular Diversity

The reforms in all four countries can be interpreted as efforts to find a new balance between what was seen as desirable curricular diversity on the one hand and the national coherence of degrees on the other. An increase in curricular diversity in Germany and France was achieved by the abolition of national curricular frameworks and the stimulation of curricular innovation by higher education institutions. In both countries, the abolished curricular frameworks did continue to serve as orientation marks however and disciplinary and professional associations and cultures

continued to have a standardising effect (see also Krücken et al. 2005; Musselin 2006).[26] In both countries, the strong impetus for increasing curricular diversity was a direct reflection of the deficiencies of the inherited institutional setting and can be seen as compensating for an earlier lack of freedom in this regard. Basically, the French and German systems were only introducing something that was already in place in England and the Netherlands. Of course, the results of this policy raised new challenges of how to maintain the possibilities for national student mobility and recognition in face of the increased diversity of programme contents and degrees. These tensions between the Bologna agenda of "comparability" and the national agenda of "diversity" are very strongly felt in the German higher education system with its traditionally high level of national student mobility within programmes.

In England, the efforts of the QAA to establish a qualifications framework for England and Wales and to introduce subject benchmark statements can be seen as a public effort not to reduce curricular diversity, but to increase coherence, comparability and clarity of qualification levels and associated competencies without interfering with curricula.

In the Netherlands, the introduction of accreditation was associated with neither an increase nor a decrease in curricular diversity or with any agenda in either direction: accreditation criteria were generic and did not interfere with the curricular autonomy of institutions; this holds at least at the system level. Overall, the Dutch system was more successful than the German and French systems in beating back informal tendencies to re-regulate. It gave more curricular autonomy to higher education institutions in practice, perhaps due to their longer tradition in this respect.

3.4 Conclusions

In the period between 1998 and 2004, curricular governance underwent major changes in Germany, the Netherlands, France and England. In all countries, except England, these changes were framed in the context of the Bologna process and linked to the reform of degree structures; that is, the move to a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Comparing these changes across the four countries, they are characterised by a curious mixture of "common themes" such as "curricular diversity and autonomy" or "increasing the attractiveness of national higher education vis-à-vis other countries" and "parallel universes" such as the early decision for a decentralised and competitive programme accreditation system in Germany, the concern with a clear and single national "quality label" in the Netherlands, ambitious adjustments of the inherited system of *habilitation* in France and the farewell to QAA subject reviews and reliance on institutional audit in England.

I have presented and compared the reforms in the four countries, highlighted national characteristics and commonalities and explained the developments against the background of the different institutional starting points, constellations of actors in national higher education policy and the dynamics of the policy formulation

processes. I have shown how European policies and trends were interpreted differently at national level and how this led to the specific mixture of commonalities and differences that characterises not only this dimension of the Bologna process.

While perceptions of international trends played an important role in justifying reforms of curricular governance in all countries – maybe with the exception of England – there was little reference in national policy formulation on curricular governance to the European agreements made and the European policy dialogue taking place in the context of the Bologna process. Partly, this is because the course for the reform of curricular governance systems in most countries was set before quality assurance became an issue of serious exchange and effort at European level. But, more importantly, it seems that the reforms of curricular governance were to a much more significant degree driven by national agendas, with perceptions of the international context serving to legitimate diverse national reforms rather than the aim of European comparability of quality assurance systems, let along the building of a *European* system of curricular governance, being a political end of national actors.

Importantly, this finding holds not only for the three large countries investigated – Germany, France and England – but also for the small country included in the sample, the Netherlands. While international arguments played a particularly strong role in the Dutch reform process, these were used as selectively as in the other countries to legitimate a particular system design; a more sincere effort than in other countries to base reforms on an empirical assessment of overall international trends cannot be identified. So, the sensible expectation that smaller countries are to a larger degree influenced by the European context than the larger ones – maybe because they can least afford to ignore it – is only partly confirmed by the Dutch case study.

It should also be stressed that the four countries chosen for closer investigation in this study are not meant in any way to be representative of other countries taking part in the Bologna process.[27] Accordingly, the extent to which the results can be generalised is limited. Nevertheless, it seems fair to expect that certain patterns can be found in other European systems as well. This holds notably for the finding that reforms of national curricular governance systems were largely determined by the heritage of national higher education systems and the internal dynamics of their political processes. Also, the fact that these four countries alone display such a wide variety of national quality assurance systems shows that any effort to identify a European trend, let alone signs of convergence, should be treated with great caution. The range of models in this small sample alone reaches from state approval of institutional programme supply (France) through institutional audit (England) to different forms of programme accreditation systems that are currently being complemented by variants of institutional audit/accreditation (The Netherlands, Germany). This finding of diversity is in line with the results of a broader survey of European quality assurance systems by Schwarz and Westerheijden (2004) and recent ENQA studies (Crozier et al. 2005; The Danish Evaluation Institute 2003). So far, the scope for a common European model or system of curricular governance seems to be quite limited.

4 Implications for European Governance

What do these findings imply for the European governance of quality assurance and the recent European initiatives in this field?

First, it has to be noted that the conclusions presented above are not confined to the field of quality assurance. They are a reflection of a much more general tension inherent in the entire Bologna process between the aims of convergence on the one hand and institutional autonomy and diversity on the other (Witte 2008b). As the "right" balance between the two has not been defined by the signatories to the Bologna process' declarations and communiqués, it is in a way only natural that the issue stays with us and is periodically reconsidered by the actors involved.

Second, it should be noted that, particularly in the field of quality assurance, the Bologna process and European Union (EU) processes have already formed a dense net that is not easy to disentangle, but that in general the EU processes tend to shift the balance towards the "convergence" side, that is, the fulfilment of common standards. Already in September 1998, before the Bologna Declaration, the European Council published a recommendation "on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education" (European Council 1998) in which it stipulated a set of principles on which national quality assurance systems should be based. These included the autonomy and independence of the bodies, the combination of internal and external assessment, stakeholder inclusion and the publication of evaluation reports. ENQA, which has become a major actor in the Bologna process, was created as a direct result of this recommendation (European Commission 2004a). At the Berlin Conference in September 2003, ministers committed themselves to "supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level". They stressed "the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance" and called "upon ENQA through its members, in cooperation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance [and] to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance agencies and/or accreditation agencies or bodies" (Berlin Communiqué 2003: 3). These standards and guidelines were published by ENQA in 2005 (ENQA 2005) and adopted by the ministers at the Bergen Conference in the same year (Bergen Communiqué 2005). Before they did so, the European Commission put forward another, more far-reaching proposal on how these standards and guidelines should be used, namely, to set up a "European register of quality assurance and accreditation agencies" (European Commission 2004b). It made a radical proposal potentially undermining the national authority over quality assurance, namely, that "higher education institutions should be given the freedom to choose an agency [from the register] which meets their needs" (European Commission 2004b: 4) and that member states should "accept the assessments made by all the... agencies listed in the European Register as a basis for decisions on licensing or funding of higher education institutions" (European Commission 2004b: 5). At the Bergen Conference, the ministers in charge of higher education welcomed the idea of the register, but did not comment upon the ideas for its use. In 2006,

the European Parliament and Council translated the commission's initiative from 2004 into a formal recommendation with only minor modifications (European Parliament and Council 2006).[28] These few examples alone show the ping-pong game between EU and Bologna players and processes in the field of quality assurance.

As hinted above, European contributions to the area of curricular governance display different degrees of sensitivity to the existing diversity of national systems. The ENQA "standards and guidelines", which were developed in a consultative process by the quality assurance agencies themselves (as ENQA members) and the European representative organisations of higher education institutions and students, are a clear example of such sensitivity. In fields where a high degree of consensus exists throughout Europe, such as the internal quality assurance within higher education institutions, they are relatively specific; in fields that display huge diversity, such as the design and functioning of external quality assurance agencies, they are very broad (ENQA 2005).

The European Commission recommendation from 2004, on the other hand, displays signs of bias towards certain types of national quality assurance systems. The idea of free choice of agency by higher education institutions clearly fits better with a decentralised quality assurance system with a range of agencies also within the national higher education system than with a centralised system with one national body in charge. It is also more suitable for systems based on accreditation than for systems based on state approval and it sits better with a system where quality is checked at the programme level than with a system where the institutional level is the unit of investigation. It is hard to conceive that in a system such as the French one, where all university programmes are subject to the same state approval requirements (*habilitation*), the national ministry would allow some of the higher education institutions under its control to get this approval abroad – when this possibility does not even exist within France. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine that in the English system, where all universities have to undergo institutional audit by the QAA at regular intervals, one university could simply choose to "opt out". In other words, the entire proposal is biased towards a competitive programme accreditation system such as the German – and to some extent also the Dutch – one. This also shows in the fact that these systems are cited as good practices in the paper (European Commission 2004b: 5). Furthermore, the proposal does not reflect the issue of misfit between different types of quality assurance agencies. In the Netherlands, for example, where programme accreditation has so far been compulsory, going for institutional audit by, for example, the QAA instead, is not a feasible option for higher education institutions. And how would the QAA apply its "academic infrastructure" which has been tailored to the British context? To give another example: in Germany it is in principle possible for foreign accreditation agencies to be approved, but in practice certain requirements render this very difficult, such as the regulation that an agency may not be confined to a certain field of studies.

These examples illustrate vividly the tensions between the stated value of national and institutional diversity and the principles of decentralisation,

subsidiarity and autonomy on the one hand and the efforts of the European Commission and other European actors to institutionalise a European governance structure in the field of quality assurance, on the other.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that the centralisation tendencies exemplified by proposals such as the establishment of a European register of agencies are put forward under a "competition agenda", that is, they are meant to both develop and safeguard a European-wide *market* for quality assurance and expose national agencies to international competition (ENQA 2005: 27). This highlights an inherent paradox of new public management, namely, that the quasi-markets that are part of its functioning have in the first place to be created by the state (Nickel 2006b).

The aim to create a transparent European-wide "system" of quality assurance also receives legitimacy from the realistic "threat" that "without European accreditation, universities, which perceive a need for an accreditation which goes beyond their own country, may be tempted to seek to obtain labels from outside Europe and notably from agencies in the United States" (European Commission 2004b: 6). The Lisbon strategy's aim to turn European education and training systems into a "world quality reference" lends further urgency to this aim (European Council 2002). At the same time, as Crozier et al. (2005: 17) rightly stress, "authority on the regulation and control of education systems in Europe [so far!] continues to be retained at national level".

To conclude, the tensions in the field of curricular governance between standards and autonomy, between convergence and diversity can be expected to stay with us for the time being, and trivial solutions in one or the other direction are not in sight. There are reasonable arguments for the agreement of common standards and possibly also for the conscious delegation of some degree of control by national authorities to inter and supranational actors and bodies, as long as these do not negatively affect a principle that is widely agreed to among ministers, higher education institutions and the European Commission, namely, that "the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself" (Berlin Communiqué 2003: 3). What is problematic, however, are the path-dependent dynamics of many aspects of the Bologna process which impede conscious political decision-making processes, dilute agency and make it difficult to distinguish what was decided, when and by whom.

Notes

1. A similar perspective is pursued by Neave (2002).
2. Interview Erichsen, H.-U. 26 July 2004, 15.00–17.00, University of Münster. Chairman of the Akkreditierungsrat (since 07/2002); Vice-Chairman of the Akkreditierungsrat (07/1999–06/2002); President of the HRK (08/1990–07/1997); President of the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences (01/1996–06/1999); Vice-President of the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences (07/1999–07/2000).
3. Interview Fangmann, H. 3 August 2004, 10.45–12.45, Düsseldorf. Head of Department: General Issues of Higher Education System (since 05/2002); before that Senior Vice-Principal (Kanzler), University of Freiburg.

4. While a combination of internal and external programme evaluation had become increasingly common in the years prior to 1998, arrangements differed between the *Länder* and there was no systematic coverage and established tradition yet.

5. In fact the *Akkreditierungsrat* was kicked off with project funding from an association of industry foundations, the *Stifterverband* (KMK 1998: 5).

6. Interview Landfried, K. 19 August 2004, 13.00–15.00, Heidelberg. Former President, HRK (08/1997–08/2003).

7. Information from an ASIIN official, November 2006. Currently, an accreditation procedure for a Bachelor or a Masters degree costs about €10,500 plus value added tax. There are strong efforts to bring this price down by measures such as simultaneous accreditation of several programmes. If an accreditation team covers more degree programmes in one process, the average cost per programme decreases by up to €4,000.

8. Interview Leijnse, F. and Staa, A. 22 September 2004, 11.00–12.30, Den Haag. Prof. dr. Frans Leijnse, President; and drs. Arian van Staa, Director of Policy Development, HBO-*raad*.

9. In other words, what qualifies as "accreditation" in the German system would be called "quality check" in the Dutch one.

10. Interview Dittrich, Karl. 23 September 2004, 14.00–15.30, Den Haag, NVAO. dr. K.L.L.M. (Karl) Dittrich, Vice-President.

11. Interview Demichel, F. 9 October 2004, 9.30–12.00, Paris. Former Director of the Higher Education Directorate (*Directrice de l'Enseignement Supérieur*) (1997–2002).

12. The term "accréditation" has a different meaning in France and is only used in relation to the *habilitation* of *magistère* programmes and graduate schools (*écoles doctorales*). The term *accréditation* was chosen for the *magistère* to signal "that the *magistère* shall escape the framework of the *diplôme national* in order to offer universities more freedom to organise them" (CNE 1995: 15), but basically it shared the same notion of an official act of recognition by the education ministry. In this chapter, the term "state accreditation" is used as an English translation for *habilitation*.

13. For the purposes of the four-year review cycle, all French universities were divided into four groups to allow for a staged rhythm of this process, referred to as "waves" A to D (*vagues,* henceforth "groups").

14. Interview Demichel, see footnote 11.

15. This was actually the system that the German rectors' conference referred to as a role model for the establishment of accreditation in German higher education.

16. These deficits also explain why French business schools were among the initiators of the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), an international institutional accreditation body in the field of business administration.

17. For a comprehensive presentation of the French system of curricular governance, see also Chevaillier (2004).

18. Interview Froment, Prof. Eric. 6 October 2004, 10.00–11.30, Paris, CSO. Délégué Générale (09/1998–01/2000), CPU; CRE treasurer (until 1998) and President of the EUA (since 03/2001).

19. Interview Belloc, Prof. Bernard. 7 October 2004, 8.30–10.00, Paris, CPU. Vice-President (Vice-Président) (12/2000–2002).

20. Interview Lauton, M. 29 October 2004, 10.30–12.00, Paris. SNESUP Representative at CNESER.

21. Interview Korolitski, J.-P. 28 September 2004, 14.30–16.00, Paris. Vice-Director of the Higher Education Directorate (*Adjoint au Directeur de l'Enseignement Supérieur*), Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research.

22. Interview Bourke, T. 20 October 2004, 15.30–17.00, London (and repeated exchange via email afterwards). Manager, UK Higher Education Europe Unit.

23. Interview Floud, R. 26 October 2004, 14.15–15.45, London Metropolitan University. President, London Metropolitan University (since 04/2004); Board Member, EUA (since 03/2001);

Member, Quality Working Group, EUA (since 2002); former President, Universities UK (08/2001–07/2003); former Vice-President and Chair of England and Northern Ireland Council, CVCP/Universities UK (08/1998–08/2001); former British Council Member of CRE (1998–2001).

24. In the words of the former President of Universities UK, Roderick Floud, subject reviews were "an extremely expensive case of showing that everything was all right" (see note 23).

25. There will also be some mention of the European Standards and Guidelines in the new audit methodology for 2006–2011, which is being prepared for publication and consultation.

26. For the French case, Barraud and Mignot-Gérard (2005) and Musselin (2006) argue that the accompanying measures of the reform of degree structures such as the mainstreaming of ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), modularisation and competence-based learning, are leading to a standardisation of learning modes while diversification of curricula takes place. They also interpret the creation of a common Masters degree for universities and *grandes écoles* as a standardising tendency. These aspects are not included in this assessment.

27. For the reasons for the choice of the sample, see Witte (2006: 97–122).

28. Among others, they softened the formulation regarding the free choice of a quality assurance agency, recommending that member states should "enable higher education institutions active within their territory to choose among quality assurance or accreditation agencies in the European Register an agency which meets their needs and profile, provided that this is compatible with their national legislation or permitted by their national authorities" (European Parliament and Council 2006: recommendation 4).

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Europeanisation of Higher Education Governance in the Post-Communist Context: The Case of the Czech Republic

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1 Introduction

Even though the interrelationship between European integration and higher education has attracted growing scholarly attention in recent years, most of the studies published on this topic concentrate on countries "inside" the current integration processes. In particular, researchers from Western Europe largely tend to ignore the existence of Europe beyond the West and to generalise solely from studies of Western European countries which they extrapolate to the whole of Europe. However, the experience of European integration in the non-member and candidate countries differs profoundly from that of Western Europe. The expansion of both the European Union and the Bologna process is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. This chapter deals with the impact of European integration on higher education viewed from a post-communist country, the Czech Republic, which, over the last 15 years, has undergone development from a position outside the integration processes through the accession stage to full membership in the Bologna process and the EU. The analysis of the Czech experience will allow us to study the impact of European integration at various stages towards the existing integration processes.

When, at the turn of the 1990s, the post-communist countries decided to join the Western European integration process, this process had already been underway for several decades. As non-members, the post-communist countries thus not only experienced the integration process from the outside, they also lagged behind and thus faced the formidable task of catching-up. For these countries, this particular situation generated a different dynamic in European integration, which a growing number of social scientists have recently acknowledged:

> [T]he tremendous benefits combined with the enormous requirements for joining the EU create incentives for compliance that are different in kind and trigger different mechanisms of domestic change in candidates than in existing members of the EU (Vachudova 2005: 7).

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On the basis of existing studies (e.g. Dančák et al. 2005; Vachudova 2005), three different phases in the interaction between the post-communist countries and the European integration processes may be identified. In the first that followed immediately the change in regime, post-communist countries expressed the wish to join the venture of integration – in effect, to "return to Europe" while still remaining outside it. The second phase began when the post-communist countries were invited to join but did not yet meet the criteria for entry. They participated in the integration from the "outside" as candidate or acceding countries. Finally, the third phase emerged when these countries acquired status as full members or as equal participants in the drive towards integration.

2 Framework of Analysis

The framework of analysis revolves around the concept of Europeanisation, which in its common usage refers to the growing impact of the various processes of European integration on a country's domestic development. It also refers to the growing convergence of these domestic settings towards a common European model or models (e.g. Dančák et al. 2005). Different concepts of Europeanisation tend to dominate in the debates about the interrelationship between post-communist countries and European integration. In the first phase, the concept most commonly used was that of "transitological Europeanisation", that is, an emulation of Western European institutions, processes and examples. Discussions during the second phase were dominated by the concept of "accession Europeanisation", which focused on the impact of the processes of European integration on acceding countries. In the third phase, as the post-communist countries became full members in the drive towards European integration, the concept of "membership Europeanisation" rose to prominence.

The three parts that form the core of this chapter correspond to these three phases in European integration and to the three concepts of Europeanisation. The first part asks how far during the first years of the post-communist regime was the reform of Czech higher education governance based on Western European models? Did it bring about convergence with Western European higher education systems? Despite the widespread perception of Western Europe as a model, very little policy transfer took place. Reform did not bring about significant convergence with Western European higher education systems. The second part assesses the extent changes to Czech higher education governance were brought about by the Czech Republic's acceding to the EU. It argues that the influence exercised by both accession conditionality and the EU aid programmes was limited to the level of policy, without any noticeable impact on governance. The final part deals with the impact of the Bologna process on higher education governance in the Czech Republic. Arguably, the process did not change the institutional framework of higher education governance. To sum up, no significant Europeanisation of Czech higher education governance took place in any of the three phases of interaction with the process of European integration.

3 Phase One: Transitological Europeanisation

Both scholarly and public discussions of the changes in European post-communist countries are dominated by a single paradigm usually referred to as transitology. This neologism reflects the fact that "much of the discourse on post-communism is framed as a transition to democracy and capitalism" (Gans-Morse 2004: 336). Hence, scholars working within this paradigm "understand the transition ultimately as a political and cultural convergence of the ex-communist societies with Western Europe" (Blokker 2005: 503). The emphasis on "transition" as convergence has given rise to a specific terminology within the concept of Europeanisation. This is "transitological Europeanisation", that is, Europeanisation as a spontaneous emulation of institutions and processes from Western European countries and their application to the transition countries of Eastern Europe (Dančák, Fiala and Hloušek 2005: 14). Included in this notion are such aspects as institutional engineering based on Western European models, the drawing of lessons and the transfer of policy.

This part of the chapter assesses the appropriateness of the concept of transitological Europeanisation for understanding the developments in Czech higher education governance. The catchphrase "the return to Europe" that went the rounds in the first months of post-communist change is useful here. How much convergence in effect resulted from the "return to Europe"?

Changes in higher education and its governance in the Czech Republic were indeed perceived in terms of the "return to Europe" and explicitly based on drawing lessons from the West. However, this "discourse of convergence" did not bring about convergence of practice – for two reasons. First, the discourse of the "return to Europe" was not substantiated by systematic policy transfer – the reform of Czech higher education governance was not preceded by studies of Western European models, nor of available policy options. Second, and more importantly, the interests of domestic actors played a crucial role in the interpretations placed on Western models. The discourse of lesson drawing was often used only to support such domestic interests.

3.1 Emerging Post-communist Governance Model: The 1990 Higher Education Act

The first post-communist Higher Education Act, adopted early in 1990, set the framework for the development of Czech higher education in general and its governance in particular (cf. Harach et al. 1992: 26–31; Beneš et al. 2006a). It is appropriate then to analyse both the process and circumstances of its adoption so as to determine how far it may illustrate the concept of transitological Europeanisation. The focus will be on parliamentary debates as well as on the main provisions of the act.

The parliamentary debate was firmly framed in terms of the "return to Europe". Already the introductory speech set the tone. Those drafting the bill were motivated by the desire "to enter Europe and the world".[1] They sought to base the law

on a plan "... compatible with the contemporary level of higher education in the developed countries of the world".[2] Explicitly or implicitly, all participants in the debate accepted this framework.

The bill included two provisions explicitly based on international models. The first was the "Anglo-Saxon model of three degree levels" (bachelor, master and doctoral) which according to the parliamentarians constituted "a generally recognized international degree system".[3] The second provision is more important for our discussion. It called for ending the state's central control over higher education and the adoption of the principle of institutional autonomy, with a structure of institutional governance based on a model of "representative democracy".[4]

The wording of these statements makes it clear that, despite the accompanying rhetoric, the bill was only very loosely based on foreign policy models. This is quite evident in the case of the degree system. The act effectively introduced the Anglo-Saxon three-level model simply as a slight modification to the traditional unitary long-cycle degree system. Under the new law, the traditional degree programmes acquired the status of master programmes. Bachelor programmes were defined as an optional part of the master programmes. In reality, most institutions, students – and employers as well – opted for the traditional long-cycle programmes (Matějů 2001).

The act introduced more extensive changes in the area of higher education governance. At systems level, it abolished virtually all means of state intervention in institutional affairs. The institutions became autonomous in staff recruitment, establishment of study programmes and curriculum design and numbers enrolled as well as conditions of access. In 1992, this autonomy was further augmented when line–item incremental budgeting, inherited from the communist era, was replaced by formula-based lump-sum funding (Čermáková et al. 1994; Turner 1994). At institutional level, the act introduced two important measures. First, it weakened the institutional executive while strengthening representative bodies. Second, it increased the influence of individual faculties at the expense of the university. This, it did by concentrating important powers in the hands of the senate whose members were elected from academic staff (irrespective of rank), students and administrative staff. The senate elected the rector (to be appointed by the president of the country) from among institutional academic staff members for a limited tenure. The act also established a representative body of higher education institutions, to which delegates were elected by the senates of both universities and their faculties. This further strengthened the position of faculties in relation to the university and of senates in relation to the executive (Harach et al. 1992: 35–60).

3.2 Outcomes of the First Phase: How Much Convergence?

None of these provisions in the act, including the degree system in the governance model, can serve as an example of convergence between the evolving Czech higher education and higher education systems of Western Europe. At the level of degree structures, the act preserved the unitary system of long-cycle degrees, common

to many continental countries (both Western and Eastern European) without fully adopting the Anglo-Saxon model. It thus introduced a kind of "third way", albeit without explicitly aiming at it. The absence of convergence is even more striking in the case of governance structures. Even the drafters and advocates of the act failed to provide a reference point more specific than "Western-style democratic governance" and "world trends in higher education".[5] The analysis of the discussions surrounding the adoption of the Higher Education Act revealed a far more complex picture than simply the "replication of institutions and processes from Western European countries" (Dančák et al. 2005: 14).

The structures of higher education governance set out in the act differed from any existing governance model in Western European countries. There is certainly a reason for interpreting the changes as a move away from the Soviet-style state centralist control (both at system and institutional levels) and towards the Humboldtian system of corporatist governance. The Czech post-communist model that emerged differed, however, from other expressions of this model (both foreign and Czech pre-communist) in several significant respects. First, the autonomy granted to universities vis-à-vis the state and to faculties vis-à-vis the university exceeded a level found in any other Humboldtian system. Second, and perhaps even more importantly, the Humboldtian institutions are dominated by senior academics (usually full professors). The 1990 Act established senates as representative bodies of the entire academic community, which included a strong student presence accounting for up to 50 per cent of votes.

How may one explain this absence of "transitological Europeanisation" in the field of higher education governance? Analysing the adoption of the Higher Education Act in 1990 reveals two main reasons: first, the absence of systematic policy transfer; and second, the pervasive influence of domestic actors and context.

If, in 1990, Czech policy makers had really been interested in aligning their higher education system with those in Western Europe, they would have relied on policy transfer as the main instrument of reform (cf. Dolowitz and Marsh 2000, 1996; Evans and Davies 1999; James and Lodge 2003). In the case of the Czech 1990 Higher Education Act, this was not so. The adoption of the act had not been preceded by meticulous studies of Western European higher education nor by careful consideration of available policy options. In the first months of the post-communist revolution, such a systematic approach was ruled out simply by the enormity of the task and the speed the changes demanded. This emerges from the discussion of two crucial issues – degree system and governance structures. The legal provisions in each case were inspired by different international models that were in no way interrelated. Their implementation differentiated them even from their original templates.

Instead of international policy transfer, domestic actors and interests were key. The preferences of academics, students and employers overrode the formal introduction of the three-level degree system, which had, incidentally, been considerably modified already by legislation. The importance of domestic considerations was even more crucial in the case of governance structures. Parliamentary debates made it clear that, despite the talk of the "return to Europe" and of the

"Western-style" institutional autonomy, the act essentially codified structures that had emerged in Czechoslovakian universities during the first weeks of the "Velvet Revolution". Universities were not only one of the important seedbeds of the revolutionary impulse, they were also one of its prime targets (cf. Agnew 2004: 284–306; Otáhal and Vaněk 1999). Reacting against earlier tight centralist control, the revolutionary groups threw out government directives and, as part of a broad-ranging democratisation, established strong representative senates as a counterbalance to the power of rectors and deans. The prominence of students as revolutionary actors conferred upon them a strong position in these representative bodies. Thus, parliamentary democracy provided a far more influential model for the new governance structures than any foreign system of institutional governance.

While there was little convergence between Czech higher education governance and its Western European counterpart, there were striking similarities with developments in other post-communist European countries. In the immediate aftermath of the "fall of the Wall", most experienced a surge of support for the principle of institutional autonomy, apparently inspired by the condition of Western universities but exceeding a level of autonomy to be found anywhere in Western Europe. In the words of Peter Scott (1993, quoted in Scott 2006: 431):

> The Central and Eastern European participants insisted on a ringing restatement of this idea [of the liberal university] in the purest, even absolutist, terms. The need, as the Eastern Europeans saw it, was to re-establish free universities – like free parliaments and free courts . . . In many debates during the Dialogue, its Central and Eastern European members seized the high moral ground, while their Western European and American colleagues were prepared to settle for the life of the 'market' and state accountability.

Thus, universities in many Eastern European countries found themselves enjoying an autonomy more extensive than their counterparts in the West (see e.g. OECD 2003: 59–78; Bekhradnia 2004).

3.3 Conclusion

This section has sought to assess the usefulness of the concept of "transitological Europeanisation" by considering the degree of convergence resulting from the post-communist "return to Europe". Despite the prevalence of "Westernisation" discourse, in which Western Europe and "the West" more generally were seen as a model and reference point, immediately after the Velvet Revolution very little transfer of institutions and processes from Western European countries occurred in Czech higher education governance. The first phase of post-communist higher education reforms thus did not bring about any significant convergence between Czech higher education and its Western European counterparts.

Quite the contrary. Though it would have been relatively straightforward for the Czechs to adopt solutions similar to those in Western Europe, Czech higher education policy opted – albeit unintentionally – for the path of divergence. Czech higher education could have retained the traditional model of unitary

long-cycle programmes which then prevailed in many Western European countries. Instead, policy makers introduced the Anglo-Saxon degree model, which was quite peripheral to the European scene. Nor was it necessary completely to overhaul the governance of the Czech higher education system. A simple replacement of the totalitarian state with a Western-style "benevolent state" (De Boer and Goedegebuure 2003: 219) would have made the Czech system not dissimilar to the French model of system governance. Instead, the post-communist developments resulted in "the most extreme case of the reinvention of government [that] could almost be equated with the abolition of government" (De Boer and Goedegebuure 2003: 219), a situation without its like in Western Europe.

4 Phase Two: "Accession Europeanisation"

The previous section discussed the process of spontaneous Europeanisation of the post-communist Czech higher education governance. Here, we turn to the effects of active involvement by Western European organisations in the post-communist transformation. From the very start of the Eastern European transformation, several Western governmental, non-governmental and international organisations offered expertise, funding and services to help the transition. Most of these organisations subscribed to the transitological paradigm. They considered Western Europe as the model for post-communist countries to emulate. Their expertise and funding were directed to projects explicitly aimed at policy transfer and lesson drawing. Here, the impact of these proposals on the governance of Czech higher education, focusing specifically on the role of the EU during the accession process, will be examined.

The role and importance of the EU for transforming the European post-communist countries have received considerable attention in social science research in the West and in the post-communist countries themselves. Recently, a number of studies have addressed the influence of EU policies on the democratisation process in the candidate countries and beyond (Grabbe 2006; Pridham 2005; Vachudova 2005; Kubicek 2003). Others have traced the impact of the accession process on specific policies (Guillén and Palier 2004; Ingham and Ingham 2002; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005), A third group has analysed its impact on governance in the accession countries (Grabbe 2001; O'Dwyer 2006). All, however, have one thing in common: they omit education and education policy, including higher education.

Immediately following the end of the communist regimes, governments of all Central European countries, including the Czech Republic, declared full membership of the EU to be their most important foreign policy goal. The EU member states, however, for several years ruled this possibility out. Only in 1993 did the EU officially open the prospect of membership to the European post-communist countries, provided they fulfil certain political and economic conditions. Ten post-communist countries made their formal applications between 1994 and 1996. The first accession negotiations started in 1997 and eight of the countries were concluded in 2002, with the entry of these countries into the EU in 2004. The remaining two joined in 2007.[6] Further EU enlargement will presumably cover the "Western Balkans", that

is, the countries of the former Yugoslavia plus Albania. Extending membership to the remaining post-Soviet countries lies in a very distant future at best (Blair 2005; Černoch 2003; Fajmon 2004; O'Brennan 2006).

Amongst the criteria for accession, candidate countries must have established a democratic polity and a market economy as well as implemented the *acquis communautaire* before they can enter the EU. The other aspect of the relations between the EU and the candidate countries is represented by the financial aid programme Phare, originally created to assist in the transformation process and subsequently reoriented to help candidates meet the accession criteria. From the beginning, Phare included programmes targeted at higher education, the most prominent among them being the Tempus programme (Hendrichová et al. 1998; Kehm 1997; Kehm et al. 1997; Roth 1997; Wilson 1993).

This section of the chapter will now assess the usefulness of the approaches (social–scientific and conceptual) to "accession Europeanisation" for the field of higher education governance. How far has higher education governance become Europeanised during the process of the Czech Republic's accession to the EU? The impact will be examined in terms of the two different accession mechanisms, that is, conditionality and aid. The first refers to the impact of the explicit conditions the Czech Republic had to meet to gain access to the EU. The second involves the various EU-funded programmes for the European post-communist countries.

Accession to the EU did not result in any significant Europeanisation of Czech higher education governance, largely because both conditionality and aid were limited in scope due to the limited nature of EU higher education policy. The impact of accession conditionality, was direct but restricted. The Czech Republic adopted all parts of the *acquis* relating to higher education but their very limited scope did not influence the governance of higher education. The impact of the aid programmes affected more areas of higher education but in the end it similarly had little impact since most accession aid focused on issues unrelated to governance. The aid programmes had more impact on "capacity building", on the development of administrative provision which specialised in international relations and fundraising. However, the importance of EU accession increased for aspiring candidate countries because the EU de facto extended higher education policy to include the Bologna agenda, which candidate countries are expected – and eager – to implement as part of their journey to full EU membership.

4.1 Adopting the Acquis Communautaire *in Higher Education*

The general political and economic conditions set out in the accession criteria did not affect Czech higher education. The Czech Republic met most of them even before the start of the talks, partly because developments in Czech higher education governance were largely independent from the relevant political and economic developments.

When the Czech Republic negotiated its entry to the EU, no higher education policy regulations were part of the *acquis communautaire* given the principle of

subsidiarity in education policy (Charlier and Croché 2006; Corbett 2005; Ertl and Phillips 2006; De Wit 2006). The only provisions related to higher education formed part of the common market policies – namely, the principles of free movement of persons and capital. The specific situation of the Czech Republic in implementing the *acquis* in this area required merely two legislative changes: first, the amendment to the Higher Education Act removing the Czech citizens' privilege (in practice non-existent anyway) of non-payment for higher education delivered in foreign languages; and second, the adoption of legislation on regulated professions (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 2004: 72–73).

4.2 EU Aid Programmes and the Establishment of the Professional Education Sector

The Tempus programme apart, the largest Phare programme in the Czech education was "Phare RES (Renewal of the Education System)" which operated between 1993 and 1996. One of its major components was funding the development of non-university professional higher education (Hendrichová et al. 1998; Zelený 1994). After several years experimenting with a number of institutions, the 1995 Amendment to the Education Act codified professional education as a self-standing component of Czech tertiary education. What role did EU support play in these developments? How did they affect the existing model of higher education governance?

The pilot project eventually leading to the creation of the professional sector commenced in 1991. The initial impulse came from the Dutch HBO-raad. It was quickly taken up by the Czech Ministry of Education, with the hope that a new sector would help absorb excess demand for higher education. The proposal fell on fertile ground. Several secondary professional schools welcomed the opportunity to expand into the tertiary sector (Čerych 1996; Karpíšek 1996). This view was supported by the 1992 OECD review of Czech higher education policy, which recommended establishing a professional sector in higher education as part of the broader diversification of higher education (OECD 1992; Šebková et al. 1992). These influences came together in 1992 with the first 21 institutions in the pilot programme receiving ministerial approval to deliver higher professional programmes (Karpíšek 1996).

The Dutch government provided funding for the project, supplemented by a Tempus programme grant. In 1993, the project was inserted into the Phare RES programme. By this time, higher professional institutions from Belgium and the UK had joined the project within the framework of the EU programmes. In addition, the Canadian government and the Mellon Foundation co-financed the involvement of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. The project also drew on the experience of short-cycle higher education in Germany, Austria, Finland and Ireland (Hendrichová 1998; Zelený 1994).

At the pilot stage, higher professional programmes were provided by secondary vocational schools. Often, these programmes built on the previously existing or

postsecondary programmes already in place. The 1995 amendment thoroughly changed the situation. First, it stipulated that higher professional programmes were to be provided by higher vocational institutions only, thus leading in most cases to the formal establishment of new institutions which nevertheless retained close ties with their "founder" secondary schools. Even today, secondary and higher vocational schools often constitute two parts of a single legal person called "secondary and higher professional school". This coexistence is facilitated by the fact that governance of higher professional education at both national and institutional level closely resembles the secondary school model. Second, the amendment abolished public funding for postsecondary programmes, inducing in most cases an upgrade of these programmes to higher professional status. Thus, the number of institutions providing higher vocational programmes more than tripled in one year, from 50 in 1995 to 157 in 1996. Third, the amendment made the duration of higher vocational programmes the same as bachelor programmes whilst preserving their distinctly lower status. Vertical mobility between university and vocational sectors remained very limited (Hendrichová 1998; Kirsch et al. 2003; Beneš et al. 2006b).

The new vocational sector grew rapidly. In 1995, only 6.5% of new tertiary education students enrolled in professional programmes; by 2004, their share almost tripled to 16.5%. The demand for higher professional education, however, reflected its disadvantaged status vis-à-vis academic higher education. While the number of applicants for bachelor and master programmes increased by a fifth between 1997 and 2004, higher vocational programmes experienced no noticeable increase (Institute for Information on Education 2005).

4.3 Outcomes of the Second Phase: EU Conditionality and Aid in Higher Education Governance

Both these developments illustrate how little the process of EU accession affected higher education governance in the Czech Republic. Conditionality worked in higher education as unfailingly as in other policy areas. Due to the very limited scope of EU higher education policies, it could substantially influence neither Czech higher education nor its governance.

This conclusion has a close parallel to developments in the field of social policy, which, on the EU level, is also governed by the principle of national sovereignty (Leibfried 2005; Threlfall 2003). Studies of the direct impact EU accession had on Czech social policy and its governance noted the predominance of domestic actors and the limited role of the EU among the external ones (Potůček 2004: 265). Other international organisations were more successful than the EU in shaping social policies in post-communist countries, especially the role played by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in reforming pension systems (Guillén and Palier 2004). This underlines further the conclusion that the impact of conditionality as part of the accession process depends on the scope of the EU policy under scrutiny.

Thus, the importance of EU accession for domestic change will increase with the enlargement of the scope of respective EU policies. This process is already evident in the countries currently outside the EU but planning on joining it later. In these countries, fulfilling the Bologna goals is widely perceived as an indispensable part of the integration process and even as one of the "requirements of the EU" (Polšek 2004; cf. also Cuckovic 2005; Glonti and Chitashvili 2006). In contrast, most policy makers in Russia, which has neither plans for, nor prospect of, entering the EU, perceive the Bologna process mostly in terms of a bilateral relationship between the EU and Russia, not as a unilateral process of implementing goals agreed to by the Bologna countries (Pursiainen and Medvedev 2005; Tomusk 2006b).

The analysis of the impact of accession aid reveals a picture more complex than the case of accession conditionality. First, while the EU Phare programme mediated the introduction of higher professional education based on foreign inspiration and experience, the specific realisation in the Czech Republic differed in significant respects from all other countries involved in the project (cf. Kirsch et al. 2003). The establishment of higher vocational institutions and programmes expanded the Czech higher education sector without transforming its governance. The governance of academic higher education was preserved intact since the governance of the two sectors was completely separated. No novel governance model was established for higher vocational education either. Instead, the secondary education model was adopted. In effect, international influence was confined to the general policy framework while domestic actors decisively shaped its implementation. Second, though the EU funding played a vital role, it is questionable whether international influence (limited as it was) may be called Europeanisation. The influence of the EU and its member states ran in parallel to the initiatives of countries outside the EU and other international organisations, in this case, the OECD. In contrast to the EU, international organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank had already developed more or less consistent higher education policies and were able to outpace the EU in the field of expertise. Thus, in the case of establishing a vocational sector in Czech higher education, given the generally limited impact of international actors and given too the "competition" the European actors faced from other non-European or international actors, one can hardly speak of Europeanisation.

The impact of other EU programmes on the governance of Czech higher education was similarly limited. Most of the projects carried out within the Tempus programme focused on curriculum development and on teacher mobility (Šťastná 2001), that is, on issues that do not directly influence either institutional or system governance structure. The international evaluation study of the Tempus programme even argued that the lack of attention given to governance weakened the curricular reforms themselves: "reforms of teaching and studying will be more successful and effective if they are integrated into a targeted higher education reform policy and appropriate structural reforms on the institutional level" (Kehm 1997: 53). In reaction to these criticisms, the second phase of the Tempus programme included "more projects dealing with internal structures of universities and strengthening university management" (Šťastná 2001: 476). These projects did not bring about changes in governance. Mostly, they remained on the level of "capacity building",

that is, the establishment of international relations units or continuing education centres (Šťastná 2001). Since 1997, the Czech Republic has participated fully in the EU education programmes. Erasmus has gained particular prominence in the internationalisation of Czech higher education (Kovář and Šťastná 2006). Despite their popularity, these programmes did not trigger any significant Europeanisation of higher education governance – neither in the Czech Republic nor anywhere else. As Papatsiba (2006: 93, 103) argued, the "system-level changes toward convergence and harmonization ... were not achieved through EU schemes of student mobility", which also failed "as a means of inducing institutional change at the level of HE institutions".

4.4 Conclusion

From the discussion of "accession Europeanisation", we may conclude that the process of preparing for entry into the EU did not bring about any significant Europeanisation of Czech higher education governance. Both accession conditionality and the EU aid programmes exercised noteworthy though limited influence on Czech higher education – mostly at the level of policy, not politics and polity. The Czech Republic adopted and implemented the higher education *acquis* but due to their very limited scope neither adoption nor implementation significantly influenced either higher education or its governance. The EU programmes, designed to aid and assist higher education in the post-communist countries, involved a larger range of issues than conditionality. Their impact on governance has, likewise, been relatively marginal. These programmes influenced Czech higher education policy (at both national and institutional level) mostly in areas of limited consequences for governance (e.g. mobility).

The limited impact of accession lies mostly in the limited scope of the EU higher education policy. By referring to the example of the current and potential candidate countries, arguably expanding policy scope at the European level in combination with the accession conditionality may prompt more extensive changes in domestic higher education and its governance. Higher education and its governance thus may become an example of a policy field where the influence of the EU will be more extensive in the candidate than in the member countries. This was not, however, the case in the Czech Republic.

5 Phase Three: Membership Europeanisation

This section deals with the third meaning of the Europeanisation concept. It asks how much Europeanisation resulted from the Czech membership in the EU and from participation in the Bologna process.

The research on the "EU Europeanisation", that is, on the process of policy change in member countries as a result of EU policies, has grown extensively in

recent years. However, this is not always so in the field of higher education policies, where studies of policy change as a reaction to EU policies remain relatively few. Furthermore, few adopt the framework and methodology of Europeanisation studies in other policy areas (Bache 2006; Charlier and Croché 2006; Rakic 2001; Trondal 2002). Higher education researchers devote considerably more attention to the Bologna process and its national implementation. Studies in this domain use the framework of Europeanisation even less (e.g. Tomusk 2006a; Witte 2006).

This section analyses how the governance of Czech higher education has changed in reaction to the full participation of the Czech Republic in the processes of European integration. It focuses on the impact of the Bologna process, using the example of the implementation of the two-tier degree structure, because its importance in the Czech higher education policy exceeds by far the role of EU education policies, such as the Lisbon process (Kovář and Šťastná 2006).

The Bologna process has not made Czech higher education governance similar to other participating countries. It has not resulted in convergence in these areas. However, the Bologna process has considerably influenced the functioning of the existing governance structure. First, it expanded the exclusively national framework of policy debates by introducing a supranational reference point, which is used by different actors at different levels of existing governance structures. The Bologna process thus accentuated the multi-level character of Czech higher education governance. Second, and partly in contradiction to the first trend, the Bologna process contributed to a tendency towards centralisation in higher education governance because all actors focused on "implementation". The focus on "downloading" European policies to the national and institutional level, at the expense of the bottom-up process of "uploading" institutional and national preferences to the European level, strengthens central executive bodies at both national and institutional levels.

5.1 Implementation of the Two-Tier Degree Structure

The Anglo-Saxon degree structure was introduced into Czech higher education in 1990. Its implementation in several key respects was imperfect. This was perceived as a weakness by a number of policy makers, though not necessarily by the majority of students and academics who preferred traditional long-cycle programmes. Nevertheless, the Higher Education Act of 1998 laid down a two-tier degree structure (bachelor and master programmes) in parallel to the traditional unitary long-cycle programmes. The following year, the Czech Minister of Education signed the Bologna Declaration. None of the new developments brought about any change in enrolment. If anything, the proportion of students enrolled in bachelor programmes declined in the years immediately following the 1998 Act and the Bologna Declaration (Institute for Information on Education 2005; Beneš et al. 2006a).

At this juncture, a group of right-wing parliamentarians proposed amending the recently adopted Higher Education Act.[7] The switch to the two-tier structure featured prominently among the terms of this proposal, as did the Bologna

Declaration as one of the justifications for the amendment. Closer inspection reveals, however, that the proposal outlined an agenda different from simply implementing the Bologna Declaration. The parliamentarians set out four aims: to implement the two-tier degree structure so as to facilitate access; to facilitate investment of higher education institutions in knowledge-related enterprises; to introduce dual-track funding of students (free and fee-based); and to increase the transparency of admission procedures (Matějů et al. 2000; Matějů 2001). In conceptual terms, they sought to ensure universal access, strengthen market forces in higher education and enhance accountability of higher education institutions. Together, it represents perhaps the clearest expression of neo-liberalism in Czech higher education policy.

The social-democratic cabinet resolutely opposed the proposal in its entirety. As regards the two-tier degree structure, the cabinet maintained that the parallel existence of the long-cycle and two-cycle programmes was entirely compatible with the Bologna Declaration, which merely defined the bachelor programme as the first higher education degree but did not affect the existence of the long-cycle degrees. The Council of Higher Education Institutions, the representative body of senates of higher education institutions and their faculties, seconded cabinet's position. The rector's conference adopted a more nuanced posture. It welcomed opening up entrepreneurial opportunities and accepted the shift to the two-tier degree structure but opposed the remaining provisions.[8]

In the end, parliament adopted the amendment thanks to the right-wing majority in both chambers, in face of opposition from the cabinet and higher education representatives. During the parliamentary debate, the chairman of the lower chamber even held the rector's conference up to scorn as "one of the hundreds of organizations that may have their say in discussing this Bill".[9] The parliamentary intervention contrasted sharply with the usual practices of higher education governance which were based on negotiations between the Education Ministry and higher education representatives. Once adopted, the amendment had a profound impact on enrolment patterns: the ratio of bachelor to master enrolments was reversed from about 1:3 in 2000 to 3:1 in 2004 (Institute for Information on Education 2005).

In reaction to the amendment, the rector of the second largest Czech university, Masaryk University, asked all faculties to introduce the two-tier degree structure into their programmes. Like the parliamentary initiative level, the proposal was presented as being in compliance with the Bologna Declaration. Not without coincidence, it shared the same neo-liberal perspective as the drafters of the amendment.[10] The proposed switch to the two-tier structure was fiercely opposed especially by academics from the Faculty of Medicine. After long debates and negotiations, even the Faculty of Medicine yielded to the rector's request and, at the beginning of 2003, submitted the proposed two-tier programmes to the Accreditation Commission for approval. The proposal, however, was rejected because the qualifications required in the field of healthcare, prepared by the Ministry of Health and adopted by parliament in 2004, did not list any occupation available to bachelor graduates in medicine (Táborská 2004).

5.2 Outcomes of the Third Phase: The Bologna Process and Europeanisation

Clearly, from this account, the Bologna process has not changed the institutional structure of higher education governance in the Czech Republic. Actors and stakeholders are the same as those recognised by the 1990 Higher Education Act. In this sense, there has been no Europeanisation of Czech higher education governance.

Obviously, this does not mean that the Bologna process had no effect at all on governance in Czech higher education. Both of these developments – one, the process of top-down legislation and the other, the bottom-up process of study programme development – reveal considerable changes in the functioning of higher education governance in the Czech Republic. If the Bologna process did not change the "polity" of Czech higher education, it certainly changed its politics. There are two ways to show how the Bologna process influenced the functioning of higher education governance.

On the one hand, the introduction of the two-tier degree structure saw various actors at different governance levels developing varied interpretations of the Bologna process in keeping with their own interests and policy preferences. The parliamentary right appropriated Bologna to defend their neo-liberal reforms against the cabinet of social democrats. The latter officially supported the Bologna process but interpreted it in a way more akin to the preferences of the majority of academics and their representatives. The neo-liberal rector, the medical faculty of his university, the Accreditation Commission and the Health Ministry all held differing views on the importance of Bologna in a field where widely diverging views exist on the European level as well. While several professional interest groups advocated the preservation of the long-cycle programmes in medicine,[11] some countries (e.g. Denmark) had already introduced two-tier degrees in this field (Eurydice 2005). The Bologna process thus allowed a wide range of actors in higher education governance to tie their demands and visions to the supranational level, even though formulated in the domestic and institutional contexts.

On the other hand, while multiple actors participated in the decision-making process, the views of the actors located at the top of the governance hierarchy prevailed. In the case of the 2001 higher education amendment, legislation adopted by parliament forced higher education institutions to comply despite the opposition of their representatives. In the case of the two-tier medicine programme, the medical faculty had to comply with the views of university management and, later on, with those of the Health Ministry and of the Accreditation Commission.

5.3 Contradictions

These two patterns of influence are not only contradictory, they also have important consequences for the debate over whether the Bologna process is best interpreted

through the lens of intergovernmentalism or as the development of European multi-level governance. Multi-level governance theory posits that European integration creates a new polity that may be best described as "governance without government". According to this approach, national governments are losing their decision-making powers, not only to supranational EU institutions, as federalists would have it, but also to a number of non-governmental actors. By contrast, intergovernmental theory claims that the process of European integration effectively strengthens national governments; they play a prominent role both in policy making on the European level and in policy implementation on the national level (cf. Pollack 2005).

Interpreting the implementation of the two-tier degree structure in the Czech Republic in the light of these two theories of European integration, clearly, both possess considerable explanatory power. On the one hand, that a number of actors at all governance levels appropriated the Bologna process for their purposes seems to support the multi-level governance approach. Furthermore, both institutional autonomy and the strong position of their representative bodies ensure that government has only partial control over the outcomes of public policies. On the other hand, the "hierarchisation" of the decision-making process lends support to the intergovernmentalist approach: in the end, the government was able to achieve its policy objectives. This holds true for the top-down legislation process. Parliament accomplished the goal of implementing a two-tier degree structure. It also holds true for the bottom-up process of programme development where the legal regulations ensured that the views of the Health Ministry on the inapplicability of this structure in the field of medicine were upheld in the accreditation process.

On balance, I am inclined to the view that this latter process of centralising higher education governance outweighs the first, namely, the empowering of non-governmental (institutional) actors. One further reason for this conclusion comes from the fact that most of the Czech higher education policy discourse focuses on the *implementation* of the Bologna process. Ministerial policy documents, minutes and resolutions of the higher education representative bodies all discussed Bologna almost exclusively as something that has to be *implemented*. The formulation of Czech national priorities with respect to the Bologna process received very little public attention and was never subjected to public policy debates. The focus on policy concentrated on the top-down process of "downloading" European decisions to the national and institutional levels rather than the bottom-up process of "uploading" institutional preferences to the national level and national preferences to the European level. This focus on implementation further reinforces the role of the central executive bodies in higher education governance.

5.4 Conclusion

This section analysed the degree and scope of Europeanisation that has resulted from the participation of the Czech Republic in the Bologna process. On the level of the institutional set-up (or the polity) of Czech higher education governance, virtually no change can be detected. The Bologna process introduced neither new institutions

nor stakeholders. However, it did contribute to shifting the balance between existing institutions and actors, thus influencing the functioning (or the politics) of Czech higher education governance. Several actors at both national and institutional levels assumed novel roles. They also based their claims on contending interpretations of the Bologna process. This process thus substantially increased the complexity of higher education policy making by adding a supranational governance level to which all domestic actors may relate. At the same time, hierarchisation in policy making accompanied this growing complexity. The actors located at the top of the governance hierarchy, both on the national and institutional level, are increasingly able to achieve their aims despite the opposition of others. This trend is further reinforced by the emphasis placed on the "implementation" of the Bologna goals, which empowered the executive at the expense of other actors (e.g. the representative bodies).

While participation in the Bologna process certainly facilitated considerable changes in the governance functioning, it remains uncertain whether these developments amount to the Europeanisation of the politics of higher education governance. First, the absence of similar studies in other countries makes it impossible to determine the extent to which these changes are unique to the Czech Republic or represent a broader trend. The existence of centralising tendencies in Czech higher education prior to the signing of the Bologna Declaration, both on the national and institutional level (Beneš et al. 2006b; Pabian et al. 2006), might suggest that the trends discussed in this section constitute a continuation of domestic developments rather than any Europeanisation of Czech higher education governance. Second, from our account of implementing the two-tier degree structure, it is clear that the Bologna process is not the only international influence on Czech higher education. The crucial legislative impulse was, in fact, boosted by the worldwide spread of neoliberal policy discourse. Bologna served as only an instrumental argument. Clearly, not all reforms presented as an implementation of the Bologna goals can be accepted as evidence of Europeanisation because the Bologna discourse may mask another agenda.

6 Conclusions

This chapter traced the extent of the Europeanisation of Czech higher education governance in the decade and a half since the end of the communist regime. The first part focused on the concept of "transitological Europeanisation". It asked how much convergence with Western Europe resulted from the first phase of the post-communist reforms of higher education governance. Despite Western Europe being generally seen as a model and reference point for the reform of Czech higher education governance, such a discourse was not accompanied by policy transfer or lesson drawing. It did not bring about any significant convergence with Western European higher education systems.

The second part addressed the concept of "accession Europeanisation". It dealt with the impact of EU enlargement on the governance of higher education in

the Czech Republic. It concluded that both accession conditionality and EU aid programmes exercised noteworthy though limited influence on Czech higher education, mostly on the level of policy, not of politics and polity.

The final part assessed the usefulness of the concept of "membership Europeanisation" through analysing the impact of the Bologna process on Czech higher education governance. Though the process did not change the structures of higher education governance, it increased its complexity by adding a new, European layer. It also strengthened executive bodies at the expense of representative institutions. To what extent these changes echo developments in other Bologna countries remains, however, unclear.

All in all, no significant Europeanisation of Czech higher education governance took place in any of the three phases and dimensions of Europeanisation analysed in this chapter. The main factor accounting for this lack of Europeanisation is the generally low level of international influences on Czech higher education policy making. The three parts of this chapter have made it clear that domestic actors defending their domestic interests have, so far, dominated Czech higher education governance. The first part showed that the first post-communist Higher Education Act codified governance structures that developed in universities during the first months of the revolution. This structure has set the framework of Czech higher education governance ever since. The second part has shown how domestic actors established the governance of a new higher professional sector in a way that diverged considerably from all the countries that participated in the development of this sector. In the final part, I have demonstrated that domestic actors very often make use of Bologna's rhetoric only as a strategy to legitimate and buttress their own interests.

Notes

1. M. Kusý, from minutes of the Czechoslovak parliament meeting, 3 May 1990, available at http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/eknih/1990 fs.
2. M. Kusý, from minutes of the Czechoslovak parliament meeting, 3 May 1990, available at http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/eknih/1990 fs.
3. M. Kusý, from minutes of the Czechoslovak parliament meeting, 3 May 1990, available at http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/eknih/1990 fs.
4. M. Grebeníček, from minutes of the Czechoslovak parliament meeting, 3 May 1990, available at http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/eknih/1990 fs.
5. M. Kusý, from minutes of the Czechoslovak parliament meeting, 3 May 1990, available at http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/eknih/1990 fs.
6. Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia acceded to the EU on 1 May 2004 and Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007.
7. The full texts of the draft amendment, parliamentary hearings as well as cabinet position papers are all available through the parliamentary digital library at http://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o3&T=665.

8. The statement of the Council of Higher Education Institutions is available at http://www.radavs.cz/archiv/nova/stale/struktura/predsed/zapisy/zaznam5p. htm. For the rectors' conference resolution, see http://crc.muni.cz/to.en/resolutions/52.html.

9. V. Klaus, from minutes of the Czechoslovak parliament meeting, 27 February 2001, available at http://www.psp.cz/cgi-bin/eng/eknih/1990 fs.

10. In 2006, for example, the rector joined the two principal drafters of the 2001 amendment to publish a critical analysis of the social-democratic higher education policies (Matějů et al. 2006).

11. See for example the policy statements on the two-tier degree structure by the Standing Committee of European Doctors at http://cpme.dyndns.org:591/adopted/CPME_AD_Brd_121104_109_EN.pdf, by the World Federation for Medical Education and Association for Medical Education in Europe at http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/03-Pos_pap-05/050221-WFME-AMEE.pdf and by the Medical Students of Europe at http://www.medisinstudent.no/asset/23901/2/23901_2.pdf.

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Part IV
Conclusions

On Bologna, Weasels and Creeping Competence

Alberto Amaral and Guy Neave

> *Weasel words: An equivocal word used to deprive a statement of its force or to evade a direct commitment. [From the weasel's habit of sucking the contents out of an egg without breaking the shell.]*
>
> *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*

> AMIENS: It will make you melancholy, Monsieur Jacques.
> JACQUES: I thank it. More, I prithee, more. *I can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs.* More, I prithee, more.
>
> Shakespeare *As You Like It*, II, 5

1 Introduction

In the sphere of higher education policy, the legal basis for Community intervention tends to be weak (Gornitzka, Chapter 4). Education has always been considered an area of national sensitivity (Gornitzka, Chapter 4) and that for a number of reasons. These range from the obligation of the state to provide compulsory education, "the role of educational institutions as nationally embedded socialising institutions" (Gornitzka, Chapter 4). They include responsibility for central coordination of curricular content in higher education programmes in those countries where legal homogeneity still prevails (Gornitzka et al. 2001). Finally, the outstanding contribution universities have made to building the nation state makes them indivisible from the cultural, historic and innovative settings that permeate and link them to the society that surrounds them and supports them (Neave 2001).

Yet, despite the tenuous nature of the legal basis that gives some substance to policy making at Community level, the European Community is taking on an increasing

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role in education, and particularly in higher education. The main vehicles for re-defining the Community's role in this domain embrace the implementation of both the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy. In this book, the Bologna process is analysed from two predominant angles: first, from the Community's evolving role, as fascinating as it is convoluted, in the area of higher education. Second, it also examines the reactions of member states themselves engaged in the Bologna process.

Rarely does the European Commission concede defeat. Rather, it returns time and again with new proposals for the same agenda, tirelessly questing for, and alert to, the favourable opening that will allow it to slip past the sometimes low-ered guard of member states whose opposition is neither persistent nor obdurate and still less systematic. The creeping competence of the Community has been sub-stantially bolstered by the way European legal and political documents are drafted. Carefully crafted drafting allied to delicately weighed wording are designed to pass lightly over and around the incapacity of member states to agree on essen-tial goals and priorities (Dehousse 2005). The use of "weasel words", which seek to deprive a statement of its force or to turn a direct commitment aside, allows not only for diverse interpretations of the treaties, it enhances and reinforces the supranational role of the European Court of Justice, a development that certain member states view as increasingly undermining the sovereignty of the nation state.

This book brings together a number of studies, which employ the implementation of the Bologna process as an opportunity to understand the instruments of "new governance" and the working of European policy implementation in an area of high sensitivity to the nation. Higher education is a sphere of permanent tension between the expanding agenda of the European Community and the unsystematic and often piecemeal opposition of its member states.

2 The Bologna Process as Alpha or Omega

Both Guy Neave and Ann Corbett in this volume pose a highly relevant ques-tion: is Bologna the start of something genuinely new or merely the end of some-thing authentically old? According to Ann Corbett, "the Bologna process appears novel to many on the European higher education scene. The Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, maintains that universities have never been so high on the Commission's agenda" (Corbett, Chapter 2).

For Neave, Bologna stands as a continuity to the reforms initiated by member states. In several instances, Bologna has a close kinship to the end phase of those reforms, which themselves represent "a profound shift in the ethical basis that tied institutions of learning to society" (Neave, Chapter 1). These reforms, in their turn, are the consequence that follows from "the rise to pre-eminence of Economics as the prime driving force in the higher education of non-totalitarian societies and very particularly those in Western Europe" (Neave 2004a: 131). For her part, Corbett concludes that the Bologna process and the construction of the European Higher

Education Area, although indeed programmes more ambitious by far than earlier initiatives, are not different from previous Community activities in the domain of higher education.

3 On the Repetition of Political Processes

In her chapter, Ann Corbett suggests that "History does not repeat itself but political processes do". She goes on to analyse two episodes in policy as a way of tracing the unfolding of higher education European policies within two different cycles in policy making. One, in the 1950s, involved the abortive effort to create a supranational European University, which sought "to be a model of excellence for the universities in Europe in general ... and provide a base for European research that would help overcome the gap with the US and act as a model for innovation" (Corbett, Chapter 2).

It is, however, fascinating that, more than half a century on, Ján Figel, European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, should reiterate this thesis:

> If Europe is to remain competitive, then we must ensure that we improve the relationship between education, research and innovation ... It is a common perception that in Europe, this relationship does not work as well as it could. Europe consistently falls short in turning R&D results into commercial opportunities, innovations and jobs (European Commission 2006a).

For his part, the President of the European Commission, alarmed that the EU spends considerably less on research and development than the US and Japan, called for the setting up of a "European Institute of Technology (EIT)", which "will be an education, research and innovation operator ... and will act as a catalyst for reform by inspiring change in existing institutions" where researchers "will work side by side with leading businesses in the development and exploitation of cutting-edge knowledge and research, thereby enhancing research and innovation management skills generally" (European Commission 2006b: 2). The EIT will "disseminate new organizational and governance models" (European Commission 2006b: 7) and will contribute "to bridge the innovation gap between the EU and its major competitors by promoting further the integration of the three sides of the knowledge triangle in a mutually-supportive manner and providing a world-class innovation-oriented critical mass at the EU level" (European Commission 2006c).

This vision looks strangely like a political process repeated, thereby confirming Corbett's assertion if not Marx's famous and even earlier remark in the *Dix Huit Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*.[1] Seizing on the need to close the gap between Europe and the US as a pretext, the commission proposed turning both Europe's universities and its research landscape head over heels by creating a model research institution, expensive, single, supranational, grounded on close ties with industry and blushingly open to the "cash nexus" (Neave, Chapter 1).

As with the initial attempt in the 1950s, so its successor in the New Millennium: the proposal met with the undisguised distrust and dismay of the World of Science, which saw the new institute gulping down money desperately needed to improve existing universities and research centres. The European University Association (2006: 1) questioned the "appropriateness of the proposed legal construction of the 'knowledge communities'" as it did the procedures and arrangements for secondment which, the Association felt, "risked bringing about greater fragmentation of Europe's Universities". Martin Rees, president of the Royal Society, the UK national academy of sciences, was equally forthright: "It is not clear how the proposed European Institute of Technology can achieve its defined aim of having 'its own distinctive place' without eroding the autonomy, funding and expertise of Europe's strongest university departments and research institutes" (cited in Laitner, Bounds and Cookson 2006). Curiously, this opinion found echo in industry which, according to the *Financial Times*,[2] remained unaffected by the optimistic projections and expectations of the European Commission. Michael Treschow (cited in Laitner, Bounds and Cookson 2006), chairman of the Swedish telecommunications group Ericsson which amongst EU companies possessed one of the biggest research and development budgets, did not think the EIT was the way to bridge the gap between Europe and the US.

4 Competence Creep from Rome to Maastricht and Beyond

> One of the greatest concerns has been what many hon. Members in the past few years have referred to as the 'creeping competence' that comes about either by the abuse of articles in the treaty or by judgments of the European Court of Justice (Prime Minister John Major, House of Commons 1992).

> . . . since this Government have been going to Bruxelles, we have been witnessing not creeping competence but galloping competence (Rt. Hon. John Redwood, House of Commons 2000).

Other developments of note and significance have made their appearance, not least of which is a very interesting phenomenon indeed. It is often alluded to as "the creeping competence of the Commission" (Pollack 1994, 2000). It sees the latter corporation enlarging its powers of intervention over an equally expanding European Community agenda. From the late 1960s, such comportment by the commission had brought about the dramatic upsurge in the EU range of activities:

> . . . in the years between the Treaties of Rome and the Treaty of Maastricht, the policy agenda and competencies of the EU expanded, particularly for regulatory policies, so that nearly every conceivable idea of policy is now subject to shared national and EU competence (Pollack 2000: 524).

In the early 1990s, Jacques Delors, the then President of the commission, confidently announced that some 80% of all European regulation would soon take place at European level (Pollack 2000). In Cram's (2001: 783) view "the Commission has historically been most influential when it makes less grandiose claims and acts

quietly and efficiently". As for the future, this same scholar reckoned "the pursuit of 'banal Europeanism', when individuals take for granted the services of the Commission, may be a sufficient goal" (Cram 2001: 783). Whenever the commission sought a more prominent role for itself, frequently it faced the suspicion of member states. A good illustration of this tension was evident in the 1991 presentation of the *Memorandum on Higher Education* (European Commission 1991). For the commission, the memorandum anticipated a more active role in EU higher education policy. The reaction of member states to such ambition was far from welcoming, which implied for some time at least "an end to the EU's ambitions to develop formal responsibility in the area of higher education policy" (Gornitzka, Chapter 4). Cram's studied opinion held that "the Commission needs to learn not simply to act opportunistically in pursuit of its purpose but also how to become a competent 'purposeful opportunist'" (Cram 2001: 783). Duchene, citing Jean Monnet a past master at this gambit of carefully seizing the appropriate opportunity, observed:

> In a crisis, ministers, who are far too busy to act unless forced to do so, face choices which are as unpleasant if they fail to act as if they do. They are temporarily open to, even eager for, advice. 'When ideas are lacking, they accept yours with gratitude – providing they can present them as their own' (Duchene 1994: 347).

The early 1990s saw further expansion of EU competencies driven back by growing criticism levelled against what seemed to be an unlimited erosion of the sovereignty of the nation state (Dehousse 2002: 2). In turn, this reaction brought about the revival of the subsidiarity principle in article 5 of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. The principle of subsidiarity states that:

> In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member State and can, therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community.

However, as Pollack recognised, the treaty did most assuredly *not* rule out future expansion of EU regulation. Indeed, Pollack (2000: 537) concluded: "EU regulation remains an active regulator across a wide range of issue-areas, and will continue to play a role of a regulatory state predicted for it by Delors in the halcyon days of the late 1980s". This is made easier because the notion of subsidiarity "is characterised as a concept by a high degree of fluidity and vagueness" (De Burca 1999: 9):

> European law has, as every EC lawyer knows, a rich tradition of evolving through the aid of such *weasel words*, in the sense of terms which are ambiguous and open, and which are even chosen for these very characteristics. Many other examples can be given of terms which are highly significant within the EU legal and political context, but which remain nonetheless or even deliberately uncertain in scope and meaning: ever closer union, exclusive competence, the internal market, and the acquis communautaire, to name but a few.

In effect, the unfolding of European higher education policies, starting with the 1957 Treaty of Rome, itself bereft of any explicit reference to education, on and up to the present day, is a graphic portrayal of the creeping political power for intervention that the commission has gathered around itself.

Ann Corbett places us before major developments in the area of higher education over 34 years – from 1955 to 1989. She uses two policy episodes: the proposal – stillborn – for a supranational European University outlined in 1950 and in 1987, the effective creation of the Erasmus programme. Initial steps were fraught. Attempts to open up education as a sphere for Community intervention were rejected by national governments and by their leaders. Thus, for instance, the counter proposal laid out in 1961 by De Gaulle that education and culture, like foreign affairs and defence, engaged national sovereignty. As such, they could be treated only on the legal basis of intergovernmental cooperation. The difficulties in implementing the Erasmus programme are equally revealing and led to a battle royal between national and Community interests (De Wit and Verhoeven 2001 cited in Gornitzka, Chapter 4). Enders and De Boer (Chapter 6) take a more detached stance. They consider that the trench warfare between the commission to extend its powers over higher education and the member states to limit the commission's powers, on the contrary, "triggered off a European policy of grass-root internationalization" (Teichler 1998: 88–89).

Yet, as Ann Corbett tells us, it is also a tale of persistence, of smart civil servants and wily bureaucrats seizing every possible opportunity to push the commission's proposals forward, using conditions of crisis to put in place little by little and progressively a small division, a capacity to act and a budget to sustain action (Corbett 2005).

5 Competence Creep and the Principal–Agent Dilemma

That said, friction and conflict in higher education policy cannot be explained simply in terms of national interest and commissioned ambition. There are other perspectives and the presence of policy evolving across multiple levels, across multiple national contexts and constructs provides a rich setting against which to test the power of theories developed earlier and in settings less complex. At the same time, bringing to bear the knowledge accumulated elsewhere and in a different setting to Bologna as a multi-nation strategy gives us further insight into the developing nature of the Bologna process itself. One of the more fruitful of these theories is "Principal–Agent" Theory.

The principal–agent theory aims at analysing contractual and hierarchical relations between actors in a firm (Kassim and Menon 2002). It has been used "to assess the efficacy of strategies and mechanisms devised to ensure agent compliance" (Kassim and Menon 2002: 2). Similarly, it has been used to analyse the role of external parties in overseeing public agencies (Prendergast 2001).

The principal–agent dilemma has been discussed in connection with the emergence of quasi-markets as instruments of public policy. The state no longer serves as a provider. It takes on the role as principal, representing the interests of consumers by passing contracts with competing institutions. This creates a quasi-market in which independent providers compete with each other in an internal market (Le Grand and Bartlett 1993).

Government agencies engaged in passing contracts in the name of consumers face the classical principal–agent dilemma: "How the principal can best motivate the agent to perform as the principal would prefer, taking into account the difficulties [the principal faces] in monitoring the agent's activities" (Sappington 1991: 45 cited in Dill and Soo 2004: 68).

The principal–agent relationship has been used to explore "the motivations that lead principals to delegate functions and confer authority to agents in the political world" (Kassim and Menon 2002: 3). By analogy, this perspective may be extended to include the workings of the EU and the European Commission that are in receipt of substantial delegated power from member states (Thatcher and Stone Sweet 2002). Considerable difficulties of ensuring compliance by the agent plus an awareness of the commission's tradition for creeping competence may serve to explain some of the recent developments in EU policy making. This includes the emergence of both soft law mechanisms and of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) (Veiga and Amaral, Chapter 5).

That national governments are becoming especially careful – if not downright wary – about further delegating power to the commission, as well the increasing appeal of the OMC in domestically sensitive political areas, both may be explained within this theoretical perspective:

> At least in formal terms the OMC leaves intact the subsidiarity principle, by which competences are to be kept at national level whenever possible. The OMC does not involve any further transference of competences from the national to the EU level (Borras and Jacobsson 2004: 197).

Scharpf (2006) considered that remaining in control is a necessary condition for governments to agree on Europeanisation. Dehousse (2005: 7) argued that the OMC "appeared as a compromise between a desire for common action, on the one hand, and the governments' desire to maintain some degree of control over tools they considered essential for their political future, on the other".

6 Creeping Competence and Bologna

In the sphere of higher education, the Bologna Declaration bade fair to provide the commission with a heaven-sent opportunity to expand its influence. By feigning modesty and assuming a low profile from the very beginning, the commission was able to take on and take over a central role in the Bologna process, a role that acquired a very particular consistency by associating Bologna with the Lisbon strategy. The Lisbon strategy is dominated by an economic rationale. And with the canons of neo-liberalism, the commission occupies the commanding heights.

Martens and Wolf (Chapter 3) see the golden opportunity Bologna presented as the outcome of attempts by some governments to instrumentalise the international level of the EU the better "to manipulate the domestic distribution of power". The ministers of education of France, Germany and Italy signed the Sorbonne Declaration as an intergovernmental process.[3] From this, the commission

was excluded. Clearly, ministerial purpose was to acquire leverage for domestic and national reforms. No reference was made to an economic rationale. Nor, when the Bologna Declaration was signed, did the commission figure as one of the signatories.

It was not long before the "competence" of the commission crept above the parapet and acquired visibility. This it did by providing technical support, financing a few projects related to implementing higher education policy (the Tuning Project is a good example) by paying for both the Bologna meeting and its preparation, though it was not permitted to set its hand to the document. Such largesse brought its own reward: the commission acquired the status of full member of the Bologna process, with the same role and privileges as member states (Martens and Wolf, Chapter 3). Once again the commission's tactical modesty, its discrete lurking in the shadows until recognised as indispensable on account of its expertise, of its capacity for coordination, as Master of the Coffers and provider of Manna and Quails, paid dividends. Thus, the commission was able to "buy in", to become an important partner in the Bologna process for only a minor outlay of resources.

The second golden opportunity came in 2000 with the council's approval of the Lisbon strategy. The strategy set itself the task to transform Europe into the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustained economic growth, more jobs, better jobs and greater social cohesion. Eric Froment, former President of the European University Association, pointed out some of the implications: "The current tendency at European level is to look at the Bologna process as an element of the Lisbon strategy. This is the result of the European Commission actions, and has important consequences . . ." (Froment 2007: 12).

The commission was quick to grasp the opportunity by claiming that universities were an indispensable component in the new knowledge society – that construct which would endow Europe with a decisive advantage over its main competitors, at present the US and Japan, in the future China and India as well. The commission insinuated itself into a position of legitimacy that allowed it to intervene in the areas of research, innovation and higher education, the three sides of that self-same triangle the commission proposed to bring together in the shape of that new supranational institution, the EIT. The commission not only leveraged the economic rationale into the policy agenda of higher education by linking the Bologna objectives "directly to economic gains expected from a common education area" (Martens and Wolf, Chapter 3), it also unveiled a model (EIT) supposed to foster innovation in the management and governance of university and research and to point both in the direction of practices in the private sector. The new model exalts a university that "is dynamic and adaptive to consumers and that gives priority to innovation, entrepreneurship and market orientation" (Olsen and Maassen 2007: 4).

The adoption of a decidedly neo-liberal vision of higher education had a second unintended and perverse effect. For its part, the "neo-liberal" vision of how the Bologna process ought to be implemented also clamoured loudly for institutions to be granted more autonomy, a course that if nothing else would move them beyond government intervention and regulation. The commission's "very

model of a modern university" stood in curious – and perhaps unwitting – contrast with the orthodoxies of neo-liberal politicians, who "consider(ed) that government intervention and regulation were excessive, and the mother of all the sins of the welfare state (inefficiency, wastage of money, unfair sharing of resources ...), the 'market' being the solution of all these problems" (Amaral and Magalhães 2001: 11). In the view of Martens and Wolf (Chapter 3) "by involving the Commission in the Bologna process while trying to control it at the same time, governments paid the double price of making education an economic issue and spreading new modes of governance which weakened their own importance".

Interestingly, the four larger higher education systems in mainland Europe (France, Germany, Italy and Spain) were precisely those operating under a restricted degree of institutional autonomy, particularly in the definition and control over student supply and inflow. A system of state control plus the constraints inherent in the principle of legal homogeneity both held in place a rigid system of study programmes, closely scrutinised by central authority. Such, for instance, was the role of *tabelle* in Italy, of *maquettes* in France and in Spain of the National University Council. In all these systems, pedagogic autonomy[4] was devolved to institutions so they could implement Bologna without having recourse to central state regulation: "national regulators [did] transfer a substantial part of their norm-setting power to university institutions, which accepted their autonomy and made use of it boldly" (Kohler 2004: 10). Nevertheless, in France, for instance, "this left the universities which first implemented the reform rather perplexed as they were accustomed to much more precise and restrictive notices from the ministry" (Musselin, Chapter 7). The final outcome of this initiative lay in two areas: first, "institutions *do* matter once again" (Martens and Wolf, Chapter 3); second, it revived the power of the academic, resuscitated the Italian "barone", re-animated the mandarinate German and French. Higher education institutions in those systems, lacking a tradition of pedagogic autonomy and with no prior reform of the governance structures that had charge of it, were unable to create adequate procedures for coordination, still less to restrain the appetite of full professors for possession of those areas and functions that involved designating the power of academic tribes and the delimitation of their territories (Musselin 2001; Enders and De Weert 2004).

7 Bologna, Soft Law and the OMC

The Bologna meeting (and also its immediate predecessor at the Sorbonne) was an initiative explicitly and knowingly taken outside the inner circles of Bruxelles. Bologna was launched as "an intergovernmental, weakly constraining Europeanisation process" (Musselin, Chapter 7). The ministers, assembled in Bologna, with common accord excluded the commission from signing the initial declaration, to the thunderous applause and even greater relief of the rectors present, all of whom had high hopes of being on the High Table of negotiations and being seated above the salt.

None of those ministers present at Bologna had the slightest intention of allowing the national agenda above all in an area of high political salience, as indeed higher education was, to become hostage to Bruxelles. The declaration was carefully drafted. Every word weighed up to avoid embarrassing any country present. Thus, the term "harmonisation" used in the Sorbonne Declaration was stricken. It might raise the spectre of uniformity. Harmonisation was replaced by "convergence". In the words of the Portuguese Minister of Education who set his hand to the Bologna Declaration ". . . all its words were analysed in great detail to avoid excessive embarrassment to any country . . . Such a document is both remarkable and vague. What is important is to understand that it is a political declaration, each party having surely its own intentions in its own country" (Marçal Grilo cited in Veiga and Amaral, Chapter 5). Bologna was to be carried forward by using "soft law" procedures, which allowed each country to decide how to fulfil the agreed objectives. Each country would draw up a new legal framework that both provided for the implementation of Bologna and at the same time took account of national agendas and the unique characteristics of each higher education system.

That the commission was able, after the ministers' brush off, to infiltrate back to a position of influence in the Bologna process must surely be yet another example of the effective strategy Bruxelles employs to penetrate "in sensitive policy areas, which no member state seems prepared to grant" (Dehousse 2002: 11). Similar behaviour has been observed in other policy areas. In the area of employment, the same tactic was detected by Trubek and Mosher (2001: 11). In their analysis, the commission, by dint of assuming at first a low profile, has progressively increased its influence over employment policies (p. 11), "based on technical expertise and its knowledge of policy issues" (Dehousse 2002: 12).

In the case of Bologna, the commission initially limited its scope to support actions – funding reports and projects associated with implementation, making itself useful in its special capacity to coordinate processes Europe-wide. No great time elapsed before the commission became a major player in the Bologna process. This it achieved by bringing the Bologna Follow-up Group into the process (Veiga and Amaral, Chapter 5), a position reinforced further by the adoption of the Lisbon strategy, in which higher education was held to be an indispensable component in the new construct of the knowledge society. The commission could draw not only upon its strategic centrality in the European decision-making processes, it could also marshal its administrative capabilities, its capacity to act independently and bring to bear on the Bologna agenda the organised networks that revolved around the Directorate-General for Education (Gornitzka, Chapter 4).

Implementing the Bologna process has increasing recourse to the tools of the OMC. Thus, for example, governments were asked recently to draw up National Action Plans for Recognition, a typical instrument in the OMC armoury. Even so, under the influence of the commission (Froment 2007), converging the Bologna process with the Lisbon strategy may well have unintended consequences for the European Higher Education Area. In Froment's (2007) estimation, the Lisbon strategy "takes a narrower view of higher education activities". Mainly, it focuses on "research, innovation and the hard sciences" and will, so Froment believes, result

in the further stratification of the European Higher Education Area. Furthermore, the Lisbon strategy places priority upon vocational training, which "ignores the reform efforts of higher education institutions because the institutions are not party to the discussions" (Froment 2007). The upshot is the presence of two qualifications frameworks for Europe: one the fruit of the Copenhagen process, the other as part of the Bologna process.

If institutions complain they are not party to some of the discussions, what can be said about academics? "When one considers that the ultimate fate of Bologna rests on the good will and enthusiasm" (Neave and Amaral forthcoming) of academics, it is a trifle surprising that this corporation has long been the disenfranchised – the absentee stakeholders – from discussing the Bologna agenda. Students through European Students Information Bureau (ESIB) and rectors through the European University Association (EUA) were present at the process from its very inception, although it did not take long for these two organisations to find themselves relegated to the modest condition of consultative members within the Bologna Follow-up Group and, moreover, denuded of their voting rights! And this despite the vassal's tribute the European University Association paid at the Bologna Conference prior to the signature of the declaration. Yet until recently, academics have been conspicuously absent from the process. Today, they are represented by "ETUC, a Bruxelles-based European Teachers' Trades Union which reveals as nothing else the very surprising view of those who pressed for academia to be 'allocated' to this organisation, namely, the subordinate status of Europe's university professors and research scholars as educational employees" (Neave and Amaral forthcoming).

8 Bureaucratic Networks and Comitology

Gornitzka, following Olsen's (2001: 327) line of reasoning, argues that political integration can be seen as a form of institutionalisation that may serve to assess growth in European integration by examining the development of European institutions and their administrative capabilities (Chapter 4).

Gornitzka plots the progress of European administrative capacity in the area of education, initiated in 1973 with the reorganisation of the European Commission, followed by the launching in 1976 of the *Action Programme in the Field of Education.* The latter is interpreted as marking the institutionalisation of education as a European policy area (Chapter 4). She considers the "Directorate General Education and Culture's structure of committees and expert groups an indication of the networked administrative system that deals with education and training as a policy area".

"Comitology" *strictu sensu* may be defined as "those committees composed of national representatives, which assist or control the Commission in the exercise of its implementing powers". According to this definition, "comitology is part of the Commission implementation function and an expression of the Commission's delegating authority" (Gatto 2006: 12). To this narrow definition, there is also a broad meaning that encompasses "those that provide the opinion of broad socioeconomic

interest groups (interest committees) and scientific expertise and information (scientific committees)" (Gatto 2006: 12).

Sabel and Zeitlin (2006: 12) refer to the narrowly defined comitological committees as:

> Originally established by the member states to ensure that the Commission's elaboration of rules respected political compromises, comitological committees in short order moved from policing the outcome of rulemaking to technical collaboration with the rulemakers. Soon they became as much the artificers of Commission proposals as arbiters of their acceptability.

Such a dynamic may be construed as another instance of the commission's enlarging its sphere of competence by creeps and bounds. However, introducing the OMC entailed adding some new committees – employment, social protection, economic and political, economic and social. In the opinion of Borras and Jacobsson (2004: 198):

> These committees are unique in the sense that they hold a position in between the Council and the Commission. The Commission handles the secretariat and is also a full member of each committee, and the committees are to supply opinions on the request of either the Council or the Commission. This is different from both the implementation committees which are under the Commission (the Comitology) and the preparatory committees which are under either the Commission or the Council.

Despite education's sensitivity as a policy area, the commission was able to establish multi-level connections mainly through comitological and expert committees, which formed the basis for administrative networks. One may well observe "a wider ideational and normative convergence in this sector" which results from "national experts, ministry and agency representatives, meeting regularly in Commission committees and working groups, in seminars and conferences ... [creating conditions] that 'massaged' " the minds of national policy makers and the academic communities involved" (Gornitzka, Chapter 4). This hints at "more of a subtle than an overt challenge to the nation state's prerogative in higher education" (Gornitzka, Chapter 4). This challenge to the nation state may in effect gather force because "generally speaking, networks tend to resist any type of external control – be it hierarchical or democratic – insofar as this, by nature, upsets collective work" (Dehousse 2002: 18).

9 The Tools of Bologna and the OMC

The commission's implementation of policies in areas of political sensitivity does not rely solely on administrative networks. In addition, it uses a number of tools to promote the "activity" of member states. Some of these tools are specific to the Bologna process but there is a move towards the tools derived from the OMC. Amongst them, the production of national action plans, introduced for the first time for the 2007 London meeting of the ministers of education.

Veiga and Amaral (Chapter 5) analyse those tools. They conclude that they are quite efficient in promoting change but lack the capacity to ensure strict convergence around timing and between institutions and concrete solutions at the level of member states (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004). No one will deny that implementing the Bologna process has brought about significant change to the higher education systems of the signatory states. Yet, it is by no means clear how far Bologna is responsible for change or whether change has simply been used to legitimate ongoing national reforms and still less whether it has served as a lever to urge on the implementation of national reforms without strict reference to the processes of Europeanisation.

10 Bologna: A European Policy or a Scapegoat for the Nation State?

The use of the OMC as a policy instrument rooted in soft law is appropriate in areas of high political salience. Soft law enshrines the wish to show that European integration is progressing. At the same time, it allows national governments "to maintain some degree of control over tools they considered essential for their political future" (Dehousse 2002: 6).

However, the use of soft law as the new approach to European policy making presents serious problems for coordination. It allows national governments to "window dress" and to put up a sparkling façade (Netherlands Council for Social Development 2004). Zeitlin (2005) regards the OMC as little more than governments' repackaging existing policies the better to show apparent compliance with EU policies. No less apparent, the OMC method allows Europe to be held up "as a scapegoat to implement politically sensitive changes at national level" (De la Porte et al. 2001: 19). An alternative gambit has the OMC providing politicians with the "opportunity to shift the blame for unpopular decisions to the EU" (Kröger 2004: 7). Zeitlin (2005: 451) points out that governments may avail themselves of it "as a source of legitimation and blame-sharing in order to advance their own domestic agenda".

These views in turn pose a very interesting issue: how far has the Bologna process set down a convergent European Higher Education Area? To what extent are governments making use of Bologna to address internal problems of the nations' higher education systems whilst paying scant attention to either Europeanisation, to convergence or to both?

It seems clear that the Sorbonne Declaration, which preceded Bologna, was an attempt by the education ministers of France, Germany and Italy to use Europe both as a pretext and as a justification to lever the implementation of national reforms (Martens and Wolf, Chapter 3). In our view, implementing the Bologna process served to legitimise domestic policies of member states. Against this backdrop, it is interesting to note an earlier analysis jointly released on 29 February 2000 by the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences and the Association of European Universities (then the Conférence des Recteurs Européens).[5] The document set out the then current situation of the Bologna process:

Signatory countries are considering or planning legislative reforms and/or governmental action in relevant areas of their higher education systems; *convergent reforms* have already been introduced or are in progress in several European countries. They signal a move towards shorter studies, 2-tier degree structures, credit systems, external evaluation, more autonomy coupled with more accountability. Another trend is towards the blurring of boundaries between the different constituent sub-sectors of higher education.

This confirms Neave's so-called Omega thesis – namely, "the major reforms in re-engineering the task, the resources, the priorities and their verification that governments required of the world of higher education" (Neave, Chapter 1) were already underway when Bologna was signed. Furthermore, Witte (Chapter 10) suggests that in many countries curricular reform was in hand before quality became a serious issue at European level.

The analysis made in some case studies in this book, France (Musselin, Chapter 7), Italy (Moscati, Chapter 8), Germany and the Netherlands (Witte, Chapter 10) and the Czech Republic (Pabian, Chapter 9), confirms that "different re-nationalisation processes are having an impact on the implementation of the Bologna process" (Musselin, Chapter 7). Enders and De Boer (Chapter 6) suggest that "perceptions of policy actors of the changing European context supported national policy change, but only in conjunction with national policy agendas".

The Italian government, elected in 1996, launched a comprehensive reform well before the Sorbonne and the Bologna Declarations. The reform aimed at improving efficiency in the higher education system by tackling some of its lasting shortcomings: very low completion rates, very high level of dropout, excessively long completion times and the low employability of graduates. Apparently, the Italian ministry drew first upon the Sorbonne Declaration and later upon the Bologna process to lever internal reform. Such an approach emphasised the national dimensions in the reform in place of its European dimension. "At first, academia did not realise the Italian reform was inside the Bologna process" (Moscati, Chapter 8), a perception supported by the fact that the major objectives of the reform did not match those of Bologna.

In Chapter 10, Witte analyses the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms in four European countries (UK, France, Germany and the Netherlands). Witte argues reforms were "driven by purely national dynamics and needs", the international context being used more to legitimate reform rather than to address the objectives of European comparability.

In the case of the Czech Republic, similar developments are evident. Pabian (Chapter 9) argues that implementing the two-tier structure followed "an agenda different from simply implementing the Bologna Declaration" which served solely as "an instrumental argument". Further, he reports that implementation saw "various actors at different levels developing varied interpretations of the Bologna process in keeping with their own interests and political preferences".

Finally, Musselin (Chapter 7) concentrates on processes of re-nationalisation linked to the processes of Europeanisation. By doing so, she reveals that "the French ministry used the LMD[6] to achieve other domestic goals and thus re-nationalised the

process". Side effects resulting from implementation "were addressed with 'French' solutions, thus accentuating the re-nationalisation afferent to the Bologna process".

We may conclude that at very least for a significant number of member states, the logic of Europeanisation was under-cut by national political agendas. Frequently, Bologna served as a source of legitimacy for the carrying out of domestic policies. For Enders and De Boer (Chapter 6), Bologna provided "a powerful legitimating framework while the entire process was mainly driven by national reform interests". This also means that European reforms implemented under the OMC, such as the Bologna process, do not imply automatic convergence. Musselin (Chapter 7) whilst taking a different route, arrives at the same judgment:

> Even if the ritual signature of a new communiqué every two years regularly restates the commitment of each country to the implementation of the Bologna objectives, the local adaptations, national translations and side effects attached to each domestic implementation weaken the convergence potential of Bologna.

Jacobsson and Schmid argued in 2002 that the OMC aims at promoting national reforms with convergent objectives, not harmonisation. For Biagi (2000) convergence if it occurs at all is perceived as a side effect of jointly defined reform policies. However, as Armstrong (2003) and Neave (2004b, 2005) both emphasise, the crucial question is how far processes predicated upon the OMC – such as Bologna – can become embedded in the higher education systems of the signatory states?

However, we should be very chary of concluding that the Bologna process does not change national settings of institutions (Musselin, Chapter 7). And still less in dismissing the notion that the national reforms were not at one point or other shaped by perceptions of the European context (Witte, Chapter 10). As Veiga and Amaral (Chapter 5) remind us, "although soft law mechanisms are not efficient for strict coordination, they are quite capable of inducing change".

11 Envoi

Until very recently, most of the reports that dealt with implementing the Bologna process projected a vision of unlimited success and portrayed a march, resolute, relentless and glorious, towards the objectives set for 2010. Reports, though riddled with more than the usual number of weasel words, were an unstinting paen to the converging efforts of governments, institutions and academics, although the latter had rarely enjoyed any contact, let alone close or intimate, with the machinery of implementation.

Implementing the Bologna process has embarked upon a crucial phase. Its detailed implementation at institutional level will provide a decisive test of its "embeddedness", that is, whether "the key features of Bologna are durably set in practice or are simply taken on as lip service" (Neave 2005: 16). A similar demurral was voiced by the Netherlands Council for Social Development (2004: 5) *a propos* the use of the OMC as an instrument for Europeanisation: "the extent to which OMC

processes can be embedded or mainstreamed within domestic institutional contexts. Essentially, this is a question of the Europeanization of domestic structures".

The recent situation report on the progress of Bologna, known as Trends V and prepared by the European University Association for the 2007 London Ministerial Conference, includes for the first time questionnaires and interviews at institutional level. For the first time in a saga of some eight years maturing, a critical assessment of the state of the Bologna process appeared. It set out a number of problems. These ranged from a lack of employability through to the erroneous usage of the European Credit Transfer System, from ever-present barriers to mobility, on to issues involving the recognition of student learning and a worrisome lack of action in the area of national qualification frameworks. Such warnings provide further evidence for the critical analysis which allowed Neave (2004b) to draw a clear distinction:

> between 'the *pays politique*' and the '*pays reel*' – between the world where policy is a matter of intention and statement – hortatory, uplifting or even recriminatory – and the world where statements are made action, in the shape of programmes duly curtailed, reoriented towards 'employability', involving 'readability' of qualifications for employers and attractiveness to our students and to foreigners.

One may detect a permanent tension, on the one hand, between the activities of the commission for ensuring its creeping competence continues to creep and the network of administrative structures and committees (Gornitzka, Chapter 4) which open the way for it to intervene further and deeper in the national higher education systems, by defining a new rationale based on competition, institutional stratification and the cash nexus. On the other hand, stand the member states girt around with their national agendas "with their own logic and purpose, contributing to the persistence of old, and the emergence of new, variations across and within systems" (Enders and De Boer, Chapter 6). The final outcome of the Bologna process does not seem to be on course towards a convergent – let alone a converged – European Higher Education Area. Unless, that is, "convergence" takes on the quality of a new weasel word and by so doing confirms the intense creativity of weasels in the bestiary of Bruxelles!

In conclusion: it is time to re-set our research objectives away from Bologna, analysed as a multi-level political process and which, so far, have centred mainly at the European and nation state levels and to scrutinise implementation at the institutional level more closely. With the recent announcements that it is time to start thinking of a Bologna beyond 2010, this modest proposal is not devoid of justification.

Notes

1. "History repeats itself twice. The first time as tragedy, the second time as farce."
2. The *Financial Times* 18 October 2006 pointed out that "so far the institute has failed to attract private sector cash, with only €310m of its total budget identified. This money would come from existing EU innovation spending, which goes mostly to universities, leaving a €2.1bn funding gap" (Laitner, Bounds and Cookson 2006).

3. The Sorbonne meeting of May 1998 brought together the ministers responsible for higher education of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. And whilst the UK was signatory to the general conclusion, it was rather less concerned with using the occasion as a lever for domestic policy. For this see Witte (2006).
4. The notion of "pedagogic autonomy" derives from the Humboldtian principle of "Lehrfreiheit" defined as the freedom to teach conferred on individuals – in its original form, on full professors. The notion of pedagogic autonomy in its collective form is akin to the English concept of "institutional self-validation" that is, the right of establishments on their own initiative to develop and to "validate", to confer official recognition on and to accredit, new courses and programmes without requiring the usual external authorisation from the national ministry.
5. These two organisations were to merge originating the European University Association (EUA).
6. LMD – Licence, Master and Doctorate.

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