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.

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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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