What Europe Wanted and What Flanders Achieved: Intentions *vs* Results after 15 Years of Bologna

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The Flemish government used the Bologna Process as a window of opportunity to implement thorough changes in the higher education system. From the academic year 2004–2005 onwards, the question arises what the actual effects of the policy changes have been and whether these effects are still in line with the initial goals of the Bologna Process. In order to assess the possible divergence between the intentions of Bologna and the results of this process, we applied Pettigrew's model (1987; Pettigrew *et al.*, 1992) of organizational change to developments in Higher Education (HE) in Flanders. In a broad sense, Flanders has, together with other European countries, met the intended goals. When we focus on the details, gaps become apparent between the intended policy goals and the results at the system level. Flanders has been quick to adopt the Bologna goals, but has also been quick in adapting them. On the basis of the Flemish case, we conclude more in general that the Bologna Process has been broadened in scope in the course of its existence, partly based on an overly optimistic assessment of reaching the intended results. It might be time to refocus the process on a more limited number of goals, in order to leave room for every HE system to catch up with the original goals and to avoid a further deviation towards alternate results that might no longer be in line with was intended initially.

Introduction

In any large policy process a difference can be expected between policy goals or what is intended with the policy, and the results that stem from the implementation of the policy. The Bologna Process that started some 15 years ago is no exception. Following its adoption, the international goals had to be translated to, and implemented in national policy contexts. Moreover, national policies often left room to manoeuvre for higher education institutions (HEIs) to implement these policies at the institutional level. These implementation processes have been extensively

researched both on the system level (e.g. Witte, 2006, 2008; Westerheijden *et al.*, 2010) and on the institutional level (e.g. Reichert and Tauch, 2003, 2005). However, the majority of the studies looking into Bologna only focus on the implementation process itself and not on the results of the implementation (Wihlborg and Teelken, 2014). On top of that, the official Bologna Follow-up reports 'mostly suggest an unrealistic and over-smooth policy picture of the Higher Education (HE) Systems and their institutions' (Wihlborg and Teelken, 2014). This article wants to make a start with counteracting that deficit and wants to analyse to what extent the actual results of the implementation on the level of the HE system are still in accordance with the goals and the intentions as stipulated by the Bologna process. As this requires a detailed assessment of system level policies, the article focuses on one system of HE, that is, the HE system in Flanders. This is an interesting case because Flanders was an early Bologna adopter and most of the Bologna goals are generally believed to have been translated in the national context and fully implemented (Dittrich *et al.*, 2004; see also the recent Bologna Process Implementation Report: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). The question however is whether this might not be an over-smooth picture. We will first present the conceptual model, which will allow us to look systematically at this possible implementation gap. In the second paragraph, we will go deeper into the research questions and the methodology. Then we will look at three Bologna goals and the results of their implementation in Flanders. In the last paragraph, we will summarize the findings and draw conclusions on the implementation gap and its possible explanations.

A Conceptual Model of Change

In this article, we want to analyse change at the system level of HE from a point of view that interprets the Bologna process as a process of organizational change. Generally, three 'orders' of organizational change can be distinguished (Bartunek and Moch, 1987). First-order changes take place within an organization and focus on the implementation of new techniques, processes and systems, such as the introduction of quality measurement instruments or a new financial system in a HEI. First-order changes are evolutionary and limited in scope. Second-order change deals with re-organizations at the level of an organization as a whole, impacting its organizational culture, climate and behaviour. A typical example is the implementation of Business Process Reengineering where organizational processes are fundamentally redesigned to improve cost, quality, service delivery and efficiency (McNulthy and Ferlie, 2004). Second-order changes touch at the core elements of the organization and are transformational. Finally, third-order changes are sector-wide (cross-organizational) large reorganizations with an impact on identity (Kuipers *et al*, 2014). The Bologna reform is a typical example of third-order change: it affects the

whole sector, implements fundamental changes touching at the identity of former established structures, is cross-organizational and cross-national.

In other words, organizational change can happen at three relevant levels of organization, and models of organizational change can be applied to any of these three levels. In this article, we will use the model of organizational change developed by Pettigrew (1987), Pettigrew *et al.* (1992) to systematically describe changes at the system level of HE in Flanders. We focus on the Bologna process, or more to the point, on the translation and implementation of the Bologna goals into national policy, as a third-order organizational change, that is, a change that affects the way the whole sector is organized. Pettigrew's model of organizational change is based on research on firms, but is more widely applicable on other types of organizations and different levels of organization as well. For instance, the model was also used as a theoretical framework in a far-reaching reform project of the Flemish public service (Putseys *et al.*, 2003).

The model emphasizes three elements: context, content and process, which study respectively '*why* strategic change occurs ', '*what* strategic change is' and '*how* change takes place' (Stetler *et al.*, 2007). The context refers to the external and the internal environment. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) emphasize in this respect the influence of external socio-economic or political factors, decision making by elites, and important events (for instance scandals) on reforms. With respect to the Bologna Process it seems that the political climate and economic perspective of the European Union was decisive regarding the reform of the HE system. In Flanders the Bologna Process was in effect seized as an opportunity to change the framework for HE quite drastically, with a view on improving the international position of Flemish HE and its graduates (Verhesschen and De Wit, 2008). For the *inner* context the internal environment of the organization is important, because it indicates the extent to which a change can be institutionalized. It incorporates cultural elements and structural characteristics (Stetler *et al.*, 2007), for example in the Flemish HE system cultural characteristics such as open access, and structural characteristics such as the structure of the programmes.

The 'content' in Pettigrew's model refers to the content of the change itself, that is its purposes and goals. In our analysis this refers to the goals of Bologna and the translation of these European goals into national policy in Flanders. The 'process' in the model emphasizes the interventions and processes that are taking place during the implementation (Kuipers *et al*, 2014).

The figure below (Hondeghem *et al.*, 2005) visualizes how change is perceived. Situation X, as the starting position, represents the HE system in Europe before the Bologna process took place. Situation Y is the desired or intended result, while situation Y' is the actually achieved result. It is the gap between Y and Y' that is at the center of the article. The inner context refers to the internal environment and can be perceived as the willingness of the HE sector to change according to the principles of Bologna. The outer context is formed by historical, social, economic, cultural and
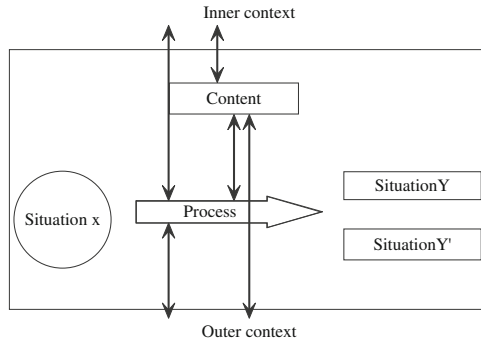
Figure 1. Change model based on Pettigrew (Hondeghem *et al.*, 2005).

political factors influencing the change process. This model clarifies that content, context and process are not isolated from each other: they influence each other during the change process, which highlights the fluctuation of change over time. The model will be used as a conceptual framework to analyse the Bologna process at the level of a national HE system, in this case the HE system level in Flanders. (Figure 1)

Research Questions and Methodology

It is generally known that the principal goal of the Bologna Process, which started in 1999, was to create a more comparable and compatible system of HE in Europe (EHEA, 2014). The Bologna declaration, originally signed by 29 countries, was an explicit commitment to enhance the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) while maintaining the autonomy of the individual European institutions. In that declaration a commitment to the following policy goals was set out (Bologna Declaration, 1999):

- The creation of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- The adoption of a system based on two main cycles, that is, undergraduate and graduate.
- The establishment of a system of credits as a mean to promote student mobility;
- The promotion of mobility, European co-operation in quality assurance and the European dimension in higher education.

Since the Bologna Declaration other countries have joined, resulting in 48 participating countries in 2015. During that period the number of policy goals has increased. For instance, in 2001 the Prague Communiqué formulated goals in terms of lifelong learning, increasing the involvement of students as partners and

enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA (Prague Communiqué, 2001) and 2 years later the Berlin Communiqué (2003) stressed the desire to link the EHEA to the European Research Area and the promotion of quality assurance. With the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009) a new orientation of the Bologna process was stressed, towards a more in-depth approach, by setting out the working areas for the next decade based on both existing and new goals: social dimension, lifelong learning, employability, student centred learning and the teaching mission of education, international openness, mobility, education, research & innovation, as well as data collection, funding of HE and multidimensional transparency tools.

In terms of the change model described above, the situation X in Europe was a HE area with diversity, efficiency loss because of that diversity, and a lack of comparability and compatibility. Moreover with the successive communiqués policy goals have been rewritten and added during the process, and have been influenced by specific circumstances such as the economic crisis (outer context). Notice that the constantly increasing ambition of Bologna stresses the dynamism of this particular change process.

For our analysis we have focused on three fundamental policy goals: student mobility, the two-cycle structure with the system of comparable degrees, and quality assurance. For each we want to know to what extent the stipulated goals have yielded the desired policy results, how big the gap is between desired and achieved results, and what factors can explain the observations.

Our methodology hinges on three angles. First, the authors are experts in the Flemish HE policy sector, which is 'an extremely valuable source of information' (Jorgensen, 1989) in that the work experience of the authors allows them to build expertise and provides them with better access to data and contacts with other experts and policymakers at different levels. Second, we used a large number of secondary data: policy documents from the European level (the different communiqués, and reports and background documents available at the website of the EHEA, www.ehea.info), policy documents from the Flemish level (the relevant legislation and explanatory memoranda to the legislation, and policy letters from the ministers for education) and published research on the Flemish situation. Third, we analysed quantitative data from the Flemish Ministry of Education, particularly regarding mobility. On this threefold basis, we have critically investigated the legal and policy changes that have occurred in Flanders in the last 15 years, up to and including the current state of affairs. We use Pettigrew's model and its focus on context, process, and content to develop an analytical perspective on changes in, and the current state of, the Flemish HE system with regard to the three Bologna goals. As Flanders was an early adopter of the Bologna Process and started to translate the policy goals into the national context early on, it makes a good case to assess what is still left of the original policy goals 15 years later.

Between Goals and Results

Quality assurance

In the Bologna Process, quality and quality assurance (QA) have become central. The building block was the emphasis put on learning outcomes, thereby making a paradigm shift from teacher-centred to student-centred learning (EUA, 2014). In Bergen (2005), the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for QA in the EHEA were adopted, followed by the foundation in 2008 of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). Next to the ESG, another 'Bologna tool' allows to look at QA in different countries in term of learning outcomes, that is the European Qualification Framework (EQF). In 2010, member countries were expected to develop national qualification frameworks compatible with the EQF (Bologna, 2010). The ENQA (2009) report identified as main QA objectives in the EHEA, (1) the setting up a common framework to use as a reference in order to achieve more comparability, (2) the creation of a transparent QA structure wherein the playing rules are identical for every institution. Those two objectives are situation Y in the Pettigrew model.

The Flemish quality evaluation is operational since 1995 (Vlaamse Regering, 2011). Three levels can be identified: auto-evaluation, external assessment and accreditation. In Flanders, it is the Quality Assurance Agency of VLUHR (the Flemish Board of Universities and University Colleges) that organizes the review committees (Vlaamse Universiteiten en Hogescholenraad, 2012). This committee uses the accreditation framework of the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO, 2015)). On the basis of the report that is produced by the review committee, the NVAO takes a formal decision whether or not to accredit the program (Hogeronderwijsregister, 2011). In 2013, a new accreditation system has been developed that includes an institutional accreditation, to evaluate the way an institution guarantees the quality of its education. When not accredited, an institution loses the right to act as an educational provider. The external visitation of an institution is carried out by the NVAO.

Despite the fact that the description above provides an easy picture, there seems to be a large number of bodies involved with quality and accreditation, having an impact on Flemish HE (Ruebens, 2012): no less than eight organizations, including ENQA and EQAR, inter-institutional councils of colleges and universities, a governmental QA agency (AKOV), the NVAO, the European Consortium for Accreditation and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. This list hints at an increase in complexity: because of the growing necessity of accreditation there is a trend towards specialization and proliferation of organizations in the field of QA (Ruebens, 2012). On the one hand, specialization can increase efficiency, but on the other hand, a high degree of specialization leads frequently to excessive differentiation and fragmentation (Leat *et al.*, 2002; Verhoest *et al.*, 2007). The possibility of efficiency increase through specialization would

contribute to the achievement of the goals as stipulated by Bologna, and could be considered to contribute to Y. However, a too high degree of specialization leading to fragmentation would render the system of QA and accreditation inaccessible and non-transparent, which would only increase the distance between Y and Y'. Ruebens (2012) concludes that the Flemish accreditation system is a hierarchical pyramid. The interactions between stakeholders are formal with a focus on protocols, rules and standards. The government determines the rules of the accreditation process, and decides whether an institution will be funded and be able to hand out diplomas. The NVAO also has an important influential position, since she determines the guidelines for the review committees of the VLUHR and decides if an institution will be accredited. In other words: to stimulate the implementation of a comparable and transparent system of quality and accreditation as stipulated by Bologna, for the HE system a legislative and regulatory system was built consisting of rules, standards, protocols and official organizations necessary to design and maintain that quality system. This means that, during the change process, the distance towards transparency and accessibility has only increased. Owing to an influential outer context, that is because of the economic relevance of knowledge and political pressure, the quality of education has only become more important, further stimulating an increase in the number of different QA organizations at European level. Taking into account this European level, the Flemish situation becomes even more complex: at the European level, there is a market of profession-specific accrediting bodies (e.g. CTI for engineering, EQUIS for economics). This means that HEIs can pick a QA agency to perform the external evaluation of its educational program. From a quality perspective, it is interesting that an institution may choose an accreditation organization with the necessary expertise. However, the question remains whether the choice is based on quality or on other arguments. In Flanders, it is known that faculties are analysing the market of accreditation bodies to see which body is best suited to accredit their programs, and are lobbying for mutual recognition of a profession-specific accreditation body by the NVAO. The arguments used for selection are not only based on quality, but also on price, procedural easiness and expertise. In other words, actors within the inner context can try to influence the system to adjust imposed quality measures in such a way that their needs are better met. The autonomous character of HEI's and the level of policy freedom universities have are both influencing strategic decisions made by HEI's regarding this issue: HEI's try to implement the imposed legislative rules, but in such a way that is best for their situation.

As a result, given (1) the fragmentation and complexity of accreditation bodies (process), (2) the possibility the Flemish system creates for HEI's to pick a profession-oriented accreditation body (inner context), (3) the focus on protocols, rules and standards (outer context), we can come to several conclusions. First, there is a framework wherein Flemish institutions operate and that framework is in accordance with European regulations, but as faculties are trying to find the accreditation body meeting their needs

the best, it is unsure whether this is leading to a comparable quality and quality standard. Though every HEI uses internal quality measurement, they all tend to use a different definition of 'quality' (Dewaele *et al.*, 2013). It also seems to be that there is a large amount of distrust against review commissions (Dewaele *et al.*, 2013). As a result, the process of 'quality policy' is regularly adjusted because of conceptual incoherence, a competitive market and disagreement between the stakeholders in the HEIs and the policymakers. Second, the structure is quite complex and inhibits the transparency of QA (Ruebens, 2012; Dewaele *et al.*, 2013), which is in contrast with the objectives Bologna stipulated. Third, it does not seem that the 'playing rules' are identical for every HEI: since accreditation bodies can be chosen, the financial position of institutions can play a determining role, while proving quality seems to be more important than improving quality. This leads to more fragmentation and non-transparency. Apart from that, HEIs sense a lot of pressure to use instruments (for instance study load measurement) even when they have arguments against it (Dewaele *et al.*, 2013). The problems of the external QA in Flanders were acknowledged by the Flemish government already in 2012 and these would be an important argument leading to the adoption of the new QA system in 2013 (Vlaamse Overheid, 2012b). Westerheijden *et al.* (2014) summarize these problems as follows:

- Too much focus on basic quality without distinguishing enough between institutions
- Focus on process and procedures instead of outcomes and results
- Defensive behaviour: insufficient stimuli for quality improvement
- A lack of future orientation
- Insufficient focus on international dimension
- Administrative burden

Can we state that there is a large gap between Y and Y'? On the face of it the answer is negative, since structures and procedures are put in place to enhance comparable quality and transparency regarding everything that has to do with quality. In practice however, we notice gaps in the implementation, factors inhibiting transparency and impeding the focus on quality, inequality between HEIs and fragmentation in the market of accreditation bodies. In other words: the objectives of Bologna regarding quality did have, to some extent, quite the opposite effect. It is no wonder that in Flanders the rectors have recently put their veto on a new round of visitation processes since they want to wait until the first results on the new institutional accreditation system (Task Force Kwaliteitszorg HO, 2014). One of their arguments to do so, is that they are convinced that the policy level should put more trust into the competencies of the HEI's. As a result of this veto, new legislation on the QA process has indeed been adopted (Vlaamse Overheid, 2015). In the period 2015–2020, the auto-evaluation and the external assessment will no longer have to take place. Instead, each HEI can implement an own QA system, based on its own vision and taking into account the European standards and guidelines. The institutional accreditation of every institution (planned in 2016 and 2017)

will then be an assessment of whether an institution has developed a strong quality policy that can guarantee the quality of its education programmes (Westerheijden *et al.*, 2014). It remains to be seen whether the review at institutional level will bring Y and Y' closer together. But until now, the gap between the two situations remains.

Two-cycle structure

One of the goals of the Bologna process was to create a system of easily readable and comparable degrees based on two main cycles: undergraduate and graduate. The third level would be the Ph.D. level. As such the structure of HE in Europe would be less complex, enhance mobility (Onderwijs & Vorming, 2014) and transparency (Crosier and Parveva, 2013). This is situation Y. However, the Flemish structure has become more complex (Hogeronderwijsregister, 2014):

(1) At the bachelor level, Flanders distinguishes 'profession oriented bachelors' from 'academic oriented bachelors'. The former are provided by University Colleges and aim the development of professional competencies, the latter are provided by Universities and aim the development of academic competencies. This is the result of historical processes that have taken into account the former threefold HE structure that existed in Flanders for several decades, and are fundamental elements of the inner context of the Flemish HE system. The choice to distinguish between professional and academic degrees can be considered as a misinterpretation of the binary divide advocated by Bologna (Bollaert, 2009).

(2) At the master level, only 'academic' programmes are offered, and it is a precondition to have an academic bachelor degree to enter the master level. This is not different than in other countries. However, it is possible to move from a professional degree to a master level via a 'bridging programme': they are tailored programmes for professional bachelors and act as a bridge between their bachelor and an academic master. It is also possible to enter a master programme that does not follow logically from the academic bachelor by taking up a preparatory programme (voorbereidingsprogramma). Notice that bridging and preparatory programmes do not have any market value.

(3) After the professional bachelor or after the master programme, it is possible to specialize in a certain field, by following a bachelor-after-bachelor programme or a master-after-master programme.

(4) There is a structure within the HE to follow a 'teachers' track', which allows to enter the job market of high school teachers with an academic degree.

(5) The Ph.D. level, with a Ph.D. programme differs from faculty to faculty.

(6) There is a large diversity of different types of programmes in the field of lifelong learning.

The structure without the teachers' track and the lifelong learning is visualized below. (Figure 2)
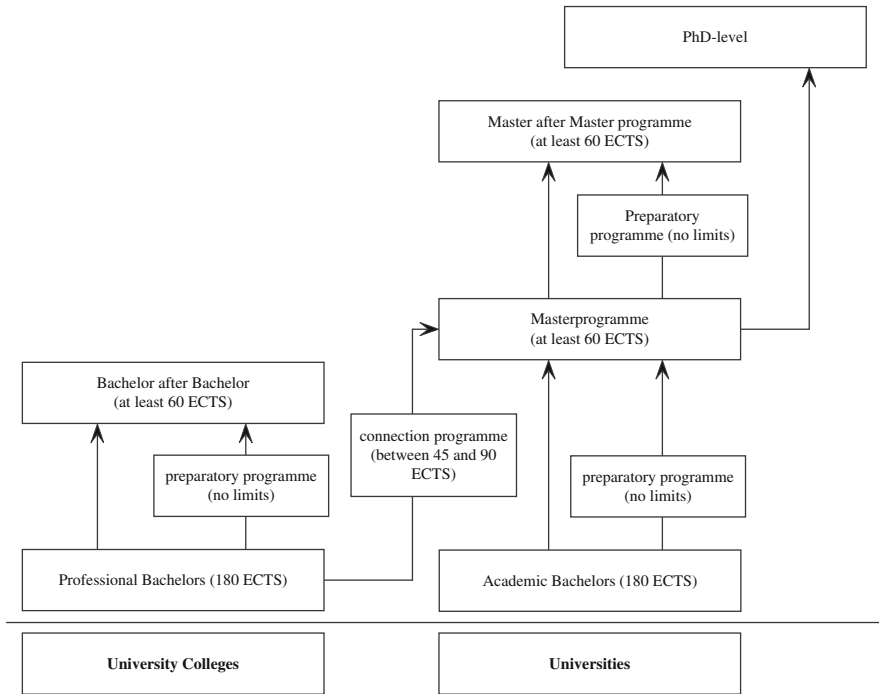
Figure 2. HE structure in Flanders.

Since students can switch from one system to another at different levels and periods, the complexity of the system, or at the very least the perception of its complexity, increases for both Flemish and international students. Given the diversity among European programmes regarding the implementation of the two-cycle structure (Crosier and Parveva, 2013), it is doubtful that the way Flanders has implemented it contributes to an increase in transparency and comparability of the degrees it offers. This can mostly be attributed to features of the inner context: the Bachelor-Master structure in Flanders is as main model comparable to and in accordance with the stipulations, but at the same time, elements of the old system have been maintained and have been somewhat repositioned in terms of the bachelor-master idea.

In 2009, there has been a report of the verification committee, that is, the Committee for the verification of the Dutch and Flemish National Quality Frameworks, regarding the Flemish accreditation issues and its education structure (Verification Committee, 2009). Most of the conclusions made are still valid (EQAR, 2013):

- The acceptance and development of the academic Bachelor's degree needs more time as far as labour market relevance is concerned.
- There is a concern about the international recognition of professional bachelor degrees.
- International recognition of study periods is problematic. There seems to be a difference in opinion between accreditation and international recognition communities on the issue of non-recognition because of 'substantial differences', especially where duration or study load is concerned. EQAR concluded, with respect to the Flemish situation: 'an efficient procedure of recognition with a shorter and simplified process and better cooperation between institutions can increase incoming and outgoing mobility and provide direct access to the labour market'. EQAR also stated that 'the recognition is not automatic since a check is required', especially for those universities that offer programs, which are not recognized by an accreditation body registered in the EQAR-list (EQAR, 2013).
- In contrast to many European countries where master programmes have 120 ECTS (Crosier and Parveva, 2013), many master programmes in Flanders consist of 60 ECTS, making recognition of diplomas and courses more complex.

Has Flanders implemented the Bologna goals with regard to the two-cycle structure? Yes, but with large complexity and without easy comparability: the equivalence check and recognition of foreign degrees is not straightforward and the HE structure in itself is not always compatible with other universities' systems. Nevertheless, this structure more than before allows comparability and mobility because of the implemented instruments such as ECTS.

Mobility

One of the key goals of the EU has been to promote and improve mobility, especially for students. The well-known Erasmus Programme has existed for almost 30 years now and has become known as the flagship of the EU's initiatives in higher education. Mobility is considered as a major driver of internationalization in HE, and is commonly used as an output indicator in this respect (Teichler, 2009). The Bologna process has also adopted the promotion of mobility as one of its foremost goals from the beginning (Bologna Experten, 2011). The goal was defined as 'Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement'. At the meeting in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009 the ministers agreed on a clear target: 'In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study period abroad'. In 2012, at Bucharest the ministers agreed on a mobility strategy for the EHEA (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012; EHEA, 2012). The mobility strategy reiterates the target of 20% and discusses the measures needed to achieve this target. It states, among other things, that all countries of the EHEA should 'develop and implement their own internationalisation and mobility strategies or policies with concrete aims and

measurable mobility targets', that obstacles to mobility should be removed, that incoming and outgoing mobility should be balanced both within the EHEA and with countries outside the EHEA, and that QA and transparency tools should be used to enhance mutual trust between HE systems and to provide clear information about professional perspectives of study programmes in the EHEA. The mobility strategy also advocates the autonomy of HEIs and the restriction of state regulation, calling for 'the greatest possible room for manoeuvre' for HEIs to cooperate and set up joint programmes. With regard to the institutions themselves, the mobility strategy urges them to take internationalization and mobility seriously and to improve possibilities, also for virtual mobility and internationalization@home.

When looking at the Flemish internationalization policy, it is clear that student mobility is the main issue. Since the inception of the Erasmus Programme, Flanders has been involved in student mobility at the European level and many course programmes were adapted to allow the inclusion of a study period abroad. More recently the former Flemish government has issued an action plan on mobility (Departement Onderwijs en Vorming, 2013). That plan confirms the goal of having 20% HE graduates with a mobility experience in 2020 and, moreover, sets a more far-reaching ambition of increasing the percentage to 33%. Among the proposed measures are information and communication to students about for example the possibility of preparatory language courses, adapting the structure of curricula, and improving the international 'climate' of programmes. The action plan calls for high quality mobility, to be achieved by clearly defining the learning outcomes linked to the mobility and verifying whether students have achieved the necessary competences. The action plan proposes to develop a generic system of mobility scholarships for students and to include financial incentives for the HEIs.

It must be noted, however, that the action plan has not been implemented yet and that it is as yet unclear whether the new government coalition will continue to support its implementation.

Staff mobility in principle is considered to be complimentary to student mobility by the Flemish Government, but no real action plan has as yet been drafted.

Although student mobility is central to the Flemish government's internationalization policy, it is clear that the goals set out are not easily achieved. If we take the 20% goal, the actual figures currently are 9% in the non-university sector and 14% in the university sector (Departement Onderwijs en Vorming, 2013). In the latest stocktaking report, the Flemish system is characterized as a system with low outward mobility (EACEA *et al.*, 2012). The mobility action plan states that currently 11% of graduates have a mobility experience. At the same time, it is acknowledged that Erasmus mobility grows only slowly (3907 Flemish students in the academic year 2010–2011, 4001 in 2011–2012).

The obstacles that impede students' mobility are well-documented (see, for instance, Eurostudent, 2008; EUA, 2010) and include among others a lack of financial support, a lack of language skills, a lack of motivation, and a lack of

support at the participating institutions. Moreover, a number of obstacles that impede outgoing mobility seem to be specific for Flanders (Department Onderwijs en Vorming, 2013), and which can highly be attributed to the inner context, and more specifically to typical Flemish culture: the skepticism towards quality of study abroad, towards the relevance for one's own curriculum and the overall Flemish stay-at-home mentality (VLOR, 2007; De Wit, 2008).

With regard to incoming mobility, the language regulations are a worry for HEIs. The Flemish government has imposed strict language regulations, restricting the number of courses and programmes that can be offered in a foreign language. Moreover, the government has decided that every lecturer who teaches in a foreign language has to pass an official test in that particular language. This is a clearly political influence from the outer context impeding internationalization policy in the HE system.

As a result, the gap between Y and Y' with respect to mobility seems big: Flanders implemented language regulations impeding student mobility (impeding factor from the outer context), is confronted with a stay-at-home mentality, is not convinced of the added value of a study period abroad for the students' curriculum (inner context) and does not really seem to be putting the policy plan into concrete action.

Conclusion: Between Intentions and Results

In order to assess systematically the possible divergence between the intentions of Bologna as a large organizational change process and the results of this process in terms of translation to, and implementation in a national HE system, we applied Pettigrew's (1987), Pettigrew *et al.* (1992) model of organizational change to developments in HE in Flanders.

The use of this model allows us to move beyond a mere stocktaking exercise of nationally implemented policies, by giving a particular conceptual focus to our analysis. The model starts from intentions (in our case, the Bologna goals) and leads us to develop an understanding of the change process itself (the actors and means involved), while taking into account not only the content of the change (the translation and adaptation of the Bologna goals) but also the inner and outer context in which it takes place (political, social, economic, … pressures). In this way, it provides a framework for analysis that leads to an insight in why intentions do not result in the envisaged situation Y, but to an alternate situation Y'.

We have demonstrated the potential fruitfulness of the model for the analysis of organizational change in HE systems by applying it to the case of Flanders, a Bologna frontrunner in a number of respects (e.g. ECTS, accreditation). The figure below summarizes our main findings with regard to the three Bologna goals (QA, programme structure and mobility) and provides an overview and explanation of the differences between intentions and results. (Figure 3)
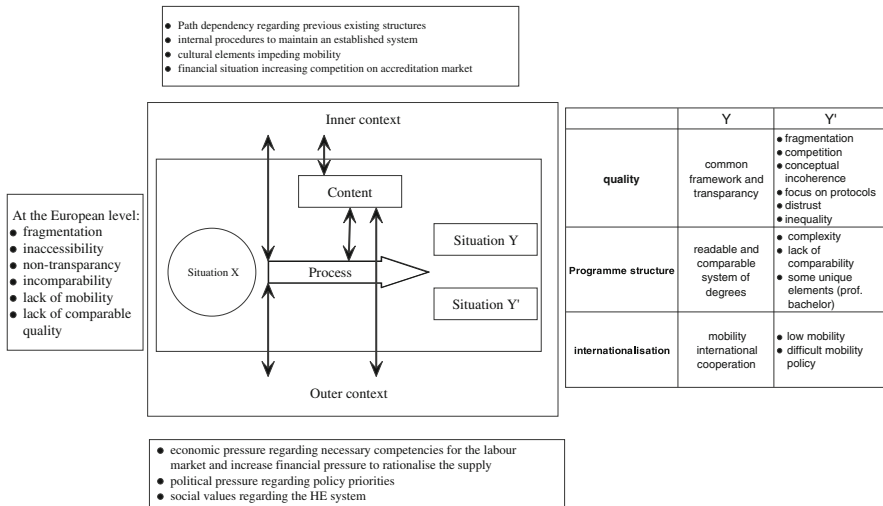
Figure 3. Applying Pettigrew's model on the Flemish HE System.

On the basis of our analysis, we can draw a number of conclusions. With regard to intentions, the Bologna process as a large organizational change process is an ongoing process that to some extent has open-ended goals. In a broad sense, Flanders has, together with other European countries, met the intended goals. The system of QA is in accordance with the general European framework; the two-layer structure has been implemented; and steps towards improving mobility have been made. In other words, in general terms the Bologna goals were translated to the level of the entire HE system in Flanders and have been achieved. This can be explained in that the relevant actors in the Flemish HE system could rather quickly agree on the broad principles that would guide the translation of Bologna into the HE system, and in that these principles meant a thorough change of the system, but allowed for existing structures and traditions to be part of the transformed system, making it easier to digest for those involved.

When we focus on the details of the implementation of the Bologna goals in the Flemish HE system, gaps become apparent between the intended policy goals and the results at the system level. Note that a difference between intentions and results is not wrong in itself, but to a certain extent is part and parcel of every change process (White, 2000; Oreg, 2006). The question is, however, if and when a gap occurs, is it a normal divergence that can be expected in any implementation, or do the results run counter the original goals? Our model allows to describe these implementation gaps and their origins in the context, content, and process of the change.

The implementation of the three Bologna goals in Flemish HE has been defined by a *process* in which the actors (the government, representative organizations, the

HEIs themselves, student organizations) could largely agree on a number of problems in Flemish HE (Vanderpoorten, 2002) and saw an opportunity in the Bologna process to address these problems. Examples are the imbalance in incoming and outgoing student mobility, or the threefold structure of HE. 'Bologna' was framed as an external pressure that necessitated a thorough restructuring of the Flemish HE system (Vlaamse Overheid, 2003a, b). Thus a sense of necessity of compliance was created, which is a factor that makes national adaptation to European initiatives more likely (Vukasovic, 2015).

With respect to the *inner context*, a number of features of the current HE system highlight that Flanders has some strong principles that are not left behind easily regardless of changes in the external context. (1) There is a path dependency from the old threefold structure to the new two-cycle structure, in that the distinction between professional and academic bachelors has been kept. (2) Procedures are in place that in fact act to maintain the established system, for instance the difficult procedure to prove the international equivalence of degrees. (3) The autonomy of the HEIs to 'shop' on the accreditation bodies market creates a lack in transparency, inequality between HEIs and conceptual incoherence. (4) Cultural elements such as open access to HE or democratic decision making are left untouched.

The *outer context* too exerts a powerful influence on Flemish HE. (1) To begin with, the *political* level has a strong impact: it decides about the implementation of new programmes, what the rules for funding are, how accreditation must be organized, and so on. A highly regulated HE system such as Flanders (Broucker and De Wit, 2013) cannot easily adopt a new way of doing things if 'Europe' stipulates new paths to follow. There is a clear agenda-setting function of Bologna, but when looking at the translation into the Flemish HE system we can reiterate the view of other scholars that national implementation of European goals leads as much to diversity than to uniformity in realizing these goals (e.g. Enders and Fulton, 2002; Witte, 2006). Also on the political level, the influence of the political elite is noteworthy. Flanders has gone through a debate regarding the position of the Flemish language in HE. Introducing English courses and programmes has been limited (Vlaamse Overheid, 2012) and is controlled severely by the government. It is expected that this policy will not increase positively mobility of staff and students.

(2) On the *economic* level the market has an impact on the types of programmes offered. Companies and unions emphasize the importance of professional competencies, sometimes lacked by academic programmes. Introducing new programmes can only be done by consulting the market and in that respect the labour market has a strong influence on the supply side of HE. At the same time, financial pressures make rationalization of the supply a regular theme on the HE policy agenda. More in general, the free movement of people and the ensuing battle for talent, with HE as an economic sector in which competition between HEIs takes place, has from the beginning been one of the arguments for Flanders to try to stay at the forefront of the Bologna Process.

(3) On the *social* level, some principles and social and cultural values have a strong impact on the Flemish situation. For instance, the openness of the higher education system is a long-standing tradition. It has resulted in a relatively high level of enrolment but also to a high level of failure, especially in the first year. It also influences the structures put in place to provide for equal opportunities. Another cultural element is the (perceived) stay-at-home mentality of many students, hindering the level of outgoing mobility.

Turning then to the *content* of the reform, it is clear that what was intended with the Bologna Process entailed broad goals that had to be translated into national policy. In that sense, an implementation gap is 'part of the implementation' since every HE system explicitly has the possibility to reform HE taking into account contextual factors. It is therefore obvious that every country will have its own alternate situation Y', creating within Europe diversity in homogeneity. To some extent this is necessary and fruitful: a predominant model would neglect the richness of the HE systems in Europe and would diminish the attractiveness for students and staff wanting to be internationally mobile. For Flanders specifically, what was intended with Bologna has been adapted to incorporate the local context, values and policy objectives of relevant actors. The goals of Bologna have certainly set the agenda. But the HE system has turned out to be more complex, less transparent, less readable and to an extent more nationally or locally oriented than Bologna would have intended.

The Bologna process will need to enter a decade of consolidation in order not to create a new heterogeneity within Europe instead of the 'old' pre-Bologna heterogeneity. Flanders has been quick to adopt the Bologna goals, but has also been quick in adapting them. This has resulted in a clear gap between intended results Y and the alternate results Y'. Flanders is currently still, after 15 years of Bologna, improving some of the elements in the HE system that seem to have failed or where lacks have been discovered. It seems necessary, therefore, to allow HE systems time to work further on the realization of the Bologna goals. The Bologna Process has been broadened in scope in the course of its existence, partly based on an overly optimistic assessment of reaching the intended results. It might be time to refocus the process on a more limited number of goals, in order to leave room for every HE system to catch up with the original goals and to avoid a further deviation towards alternate results that might no longer be in line with was intended initially.

For scholars, it would be interesting to map other European countries with respect to Y and Y' according to a number of selected parameters. Further research could concentrate on the development on a typology able to measure for every country where it is situated from the Bologna goals. This typology should go beyond broad exercises such as the stocktaking reports and should look at the actual, possibly alternate results. It should address not only the achievement of broad policy goals, but also the details and peculiarities of the results of the implementation. By developing such a typology, it would become possible to see if divergence or convergence is the main thrust in the EHEA.

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