

The Bologna Process – reflections from an international perspective

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Five questions

- 1. What is known about the Bologna Process in the world of HE beyond Europe? Or more importantly how is it perceived?
- 2. What makes the Bologna Process a unique model of reform and to what extent is it applicable only in Europe?

Five Questions

- 3. If viewed as a ‘brand’ or a ‘trademark’, what is the Bologna Process marketing or exporting and to whom?
- 4. Is the Bologna Process only a phase in the construction of a global higher education area?
- 5. What benefits, challenges and risks may the Bologna Process bring to higher education worldwide?

1. What is known about the BP and how is it perceived beyond Europe?

External view always important – ‘an inside-outside’ process

Of huge interest but relatively superficial knowledge beyond major lines of structural reform

Highly positive assessment outside

Critics only found in Europe

1. Unique features need to be highlighted –political level

- voluntary process at state level
- incremental and pragmatic
- multi-stakeholder – bottom-up/top-down agenda setting
- strong and active student involvement
- loose infrastructure to sustain forward movement
- a central instrument (EU) to facilitate progress

1. Unique features need to be highlighted – academic level

More than new academic architecture of cycles
Pedagogical/cognitive impact on learning and
new focus on learning outcomes

ECTS unlike other credit systems – counting
overall learning effort; not only contact hours

**BP is a ‘package deal’ with internal integrity and
interconnected actions**

2. What makes the BP a unique model of reform; to what extent is it applicable only in Europe?

- Unique as a regional, multilateral reform process
- Many pre-Paris/Bologna building blocks
- Predisposed support infrastructure
- Several regional examples of BP-like efforts with much potential; BP acts as a strong catalyst worldwide

But

- No other region has the building blocks
- Too often process ruled from above
- Difficult to leapfrog in reform process and create ownership

3. If viewed as a 'brand or a 'trademark, what is the BP marketing or exporting and to whom?

Brenda Gourley's (OU) 7 features of a Bologna brand worthy HEI:

- Quality
- Democratic principles in governance
- Pluralism and diversity - achievements documented and transportable
- Staff mobility and ICT enhanced access to staff
- Better teaching and research opportunities than elsewhere
- Social dimension and student needs, including employability, considered
- HE as a public good and public responsibility with social consequences that flow from this

BP process as a brand

- Reform/change process based on multi-stakeholder dialogue
- Process that promotes cooperation and partnerships to balance competition
- Process that builds a strong HE for economic competitiveness but does not neglect the social cohesion agenda, nor global solidarity concerns

An opportunity and a responsibility to promote a sharing approach when internationalizing Bologna rather than a mercantile one

4. The BP, a phase in the growth of a global higher education space?

- The Bologna Process and/or/vs globalization
- BP a coordinated, structured approach – a collaborative response to globalization
- Past accomplishments in Europe provide opportunity and justification to set the agenda on the global scene
- A key step taken: European Quality Assurance Register – for Europe but open to non Europeans
- EQAR has potential to set ‘standards’ worldwide

5. What benefits, challenges and risks may the BP bring to higher education worldwide?

- Re-energized HE, increased attention paid to HE, repositioned Europe, made huge strides in European integration – many academic benefits for European HE and well beyond
- Of course, not perfect, not finished and not without challenges and risks both inside Europe and outside

5. What Benefits, Challenges and Risks?

- Dominance of English in European HEIs - Linguistic homogenization
- Challenge to improve student services
- Risk that BP brand promotion becomes BP a mass recruitment campaign with impact on fees and braindrain
- Challenge of keeping competition in check and valuing institutional diversity

5. What Benefits, Challenges and Risks?

- Maintaining social agenda in action as well as in rhetoric
- Keeping the State in check – expanding effective institutional autonomy
- Promote the strengthening, organisation and engagement of all stakeholder groups in Europe and in regions where the BP is being considered

Conclusion

- Two major developments in the past decade – since the UNESCO 1998 WCHE:
- The Bologna Process – by far the most comprehensive, far-reaching and profound process of change in higher education ever undertaken
- The rise in fashion and influence of Rankings and Comparisons of all kinds

Both will be debated at the upcoming IAU conference:

60
years of
IAU
1948-2008

Higher Education
and Research
Addressing Local
and Global Needs

IAU
13th General
Conference



**Both topics and many others
will be discussed at:**

- **IAU 13th General Conference
on *Higher Education and
Research Addressing Local
and Global Needs*, 15-18 July
2008. Utrecht, the
Netherlands**

Conclusion: Unlocking Europe's Potential Contributing to a Better World

How?

By safeguarding what is most valuable and universal in higher education, the core values, such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, equitable access to knowledge and learning of quality alongside with the responsibility to respond to the needs of society and to promote justice, freedom, respect for human rights, and solidarity.

In partnership within and beyond the large Europe of the Bologna Process

As an open community rather than a closed club.

Thank you

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