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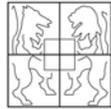# in European countries"

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9 am to 9:45

Anne **Corbett**
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"The forces for the creation of international relationships between universities"

Discussant : Nicoline **Frølich**

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The forces for the creation of international relationships between universities
Europeanisation and the Bologna Process

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Abstract
This paper addresses Europeanisation as a force for the creation of international relationships, taking the 'flexible coordination' case of the Bologna process. The underlying question which the paper poses is whether academics, who are the base of knowledge creation and the transmission of academic values, will find in the Bologna process a new site of competition and control, or whether other mechanisms have been found which preserve and even strengthen what Kogan has called 'academic essentialism'. Using analytic tools of agenda setting and policy change to examine examples of Europeanisation of higher education since 1955, this paper argues that the new form of flexible European coordination represented by the Bologna process is necessarily implemented at national level within the existing structures of higher education- government relations, but it offers a rich new venue for international relationships and the creation of policy norms to feed back into national processes.

Introduction

Authoritative sources present universities as essentially national institutions (Scott 1998:123). But only in the worst periods of history, such as under totalitarian regimes, have universities and individual academics been prevented from enjoying an international dimension. It is a fundamental principle of democratic societies that universities should be autonomous institutions with freedom is research and training. It is a characteristic of knowledge that it is not territorially bound. However institutions are torn between the two poles of their existence. Since Clark Kerr suggested that the internationalisation of learning and the nationalisation of purpose were 'two laws of motion' likely to be in conflict within universities (Kerr 1990) the international dimension has been strengthened by the possibilities that ICT provides for easy global contact, the growing multinational student populations, the cross -border institutional links and European sources of research funding, and the national demands on universities have increased.

This paper makes the assumption that policy choices involving universities are not just the outcome of the relationship between universities, the government and the market as so often assumed, building on the well known Clark triangle (Clark 1983). Following Becher and Kogan (1993) it sees the academic base as an essential entity.Furthermore, it needs to be remembered that the university systems of Europe have traditionally represented at least three conceptions of higher education – the German or Humboldt model primarily concerned with preparing students to do research, the French model which sets out to provide elite training treating *grandes écoles* as superior to the universities, and the British model, traditionally seen as providing an 'all-round' education (Gellert 1993). Culturally, linguistically and politically the universities exhibit

the further distinctions which come from their diverse origins. The associations built up over the years with the new accession countries of Eastern Europe and now of Russia itself, adds to the heterogeneity.

These are important points when linked to issues of European integration. There is a long history of the European Community wanting to use universities to advance its policies. There is also a long history of universities wanting to further a European dimension though not necessarily in an EC context (Corbett 2002)[1] The Council of Europe, OECD and bilateral arrangements have all played an important role.

However the examples of Europeanisation considered here are the higher education cooperation policies in which EC institutions, and intergovernmental instances linked to the EC, have been a driving force. The Bologna process is the most topical and challenging instance. There are now 40 European states which have signed the Bologna declaration of 1999 committing themselves to a clearly defined goal, an action plan and a deadline. These states include all EU Member States, and since 2003, Russia and the Balkan states.[2] They have between them over 4000 universities. In this example of 'governance without law' (Zeitlin 2004) which typifies much contemporary European integration, the goal is to create a barrier-free European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in which there will be 'compatibility and comparability' between the diverse higher education systems by 2010.

The aims of the process, as described in the Bologna Declaration, are to increase the international competitiveness of the 'European system' (sic) of higher education, and to ensure that it acquires a world wide degree of attractiveness equal to Europe's extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions. The action plan, which was developed at Bologna in 1999 and modified by two ministerial meetings in Prague in 2001, and Berlin in 2003, consists of five main commitments: to adopt a system of easily readable and comparable degrees and a Diploma Supplement for approved study abroad; to adopt a university structure, based on an undergraduate and postgraduate cycle, to establish a system of credits for transfer and accumulation, compatible with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), to promote cooperation in quality assurance according to agreed criteria agreed to promote of the European dimension in higher education, interpreted since the Prague meeting as working to common curricula criteria and being supported in joint modules, courses and curricula especially when designed for joint trans-national degrees .[3]

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[1] This paper builds on my thesis Corbett, A. (2002): *Ideas, Institutions and Policy Entrepreneurship in European Community Higher Education Policy 1955-95*, unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London.

[2] The signatory states in 1999 were Austria, Belgium (French community), Belgium (Flemish community), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Swiss Confederation, United Kingdom.

[3] The action lines were confirmed at the latest ministerial meeting in Berlin Sept 2003

A developing theme since the Prague meeting has been the importance of social needs especially in relation to mobility and the integration of lifelong learning. The concept of relevance for first cycle university education to the labour market, present in the initial stages, appears to have been diluted. Since Berlin, a major new issue is how to create synergies between the EHEA and the EU's developing educational research area especially in relation to doctoral students. In Berlin, Ministers agreed that there should be a stocktaking report ready for the next ministerial meeting at Bergen in 2005. This would encompass progress on implementing the three intermediate objectives in quality assurance, the two cycle system and the recognition of degrees and periods of study. Under existing commitments ministers have said they will be implementing a two cycle system by 2005 and will undertake to have introduced a free diploma supplement by the same date.

Policies of European higher education have attracted relatively little attention from a political perspective (Bache 2004). In coming to that conclusion in the course of a doctorate, I have addressed the question of how and why the EC developed a policy of cooperation in higher education. I adopted a broadly new institutionalist perspective, using historical methods.[4] In wishing to make my work accessible to a general scholarly literature, I conceptualised my account of the creation and development of a higher education cooperation policy in terms of well known models of policy change which expect explanations to be multi-causal and the interlinkage of processes to be complex. The models I have taken are those of agenda setting and policy entrepreneurship derived from the 'garbage can' literature and linked to sociological institutionalism. I used Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (1984) to provide a way of analysing the trajectory of an idea in the pre-decision stage through the process of agenda setting. Kingdon's distinction is to have analysed the process of alternative specification in which ideas are refined and recombined until they can be presented as the recommended policy choice for decision makers – or something has happened to stop the process. Baumgartner and Jones' *Agendas and instability in American politics* (1993) whicj also aim to explain policy change through the agenda setting process enrich understanding with the concepts of issue, venue and domain seeing policy change as a product of their 'punctuated' equilibrium.

This paper draws on these insights to examine the development of an EC policy of higher education cooperation both in the process-based terms of Kingdon, and Baumgartner and Jones, and in terms of the relationship of the Bologna process to the earlier experience to Europeanisation. It presents the case in three stages: as to what Europeanisation is; how and why the EC has backed higher education cooperation; and why the Bologna process represents continuity as well as change .

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[4] This is broadly in the spirit of much current Europeanisation research, drew on both the formal institutional adaptation and change theorised in historical institutionalist perspectives (Thelen and Steinmo), and sociological institutionalist perspectives which theorise the socialisation effects of institutions on identities (Powell and DiMaggio

Europeanisation – incremental, irregular and uneven

In the academic literature most studies have taken Europeanisation to be the impact of the EU on its Member States. Ladrech provided an early and influential definition of Europeanisation as ' a process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organisational logic of national politics and policy-making' (Ladrech, 1994:69). But this is a lively and ongoing debate (see also Bulmer and Burch, 1998; Heriteir, 2001; Cowles et al, 2001; Olsen 2002; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003). Furthermore there is an interest in distinguishing between public administrative behaviour of domestic adaptation and the adaptation of other institutional actors (Featherstone 2003:7). However as Helen Wallace (2000) among others has argued ,that the EU is itself a feature of Europeanisation, which is a process with a longer history and broader geographical coverage than that of the EU. This is relevant to a consideration of higher education.

An important insight of the literature is that the Europeanisation - of both EU-specific and broader Europeanisation studies – does not lead to a single European institutional model. Europeanisation effects are different both across states and within states, and across different dimensions. The processes are incremental, irregular and uneven (Heritier 2001). The variation in impact across different institutions and different policy areas is widely explained by the recognition that two-way pressures operate to produce an interactive dynamic as Member States seek to 'upload' preferences to the European level, as well as 'downloading' European level decisions. It may be that the 'downward' flow of pressures is, as advanced by Bache (2004) 'a process of redirecting policies and/or practices and/or preferences in the domestic arena towards those advanced by dominant European level actors/institutions'.[5] But given the ambiguous ways national governments use Europe-generated policy issues, the definition must surely also encompass the purposely vague definition of Europeanisation given by Mény et al (1996) who have noted it as a process of convergence, in which there is a progressive emergence of common norms of action, the evolution of which escapes the control of any particular Member State and yet decisively influences the behaviour of public policy actors.'(Mény et al 1996:8-9).

We may thus conclude that the insights with particular relevance to the inter-governmental Bologna Process, is that Europeanisation of domestic policy is far from the 'one size fits all' suggested by critics of the Bologna Process, and that a fruitful line of research is to focus on creation of creating shared beliefs in issues.

Developing EC higher education solutions

Most accounts of the development of Community cooperation see it starting with a developmental phase from 1971 when ministers of education of the EC states agreed to political cooperation on education using EC institutions (Neave 1984, de Witte 1989, MacMahon 1995, Field 1998, Shaw 1999, Moschonas 1998, Beukel 2001). By 1984 the

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[5] Bache 2004 www and Sheffield website for comprehensive treatment

foundations of cooperation had been laid. A combination of actions by the Commission and the European Parliament, and some favourable interpretations by the European Court of Justice, enabled the Commission to propose funded pilot programmes, notably the Action Programme on education of 1976.[6]

 It is widely agreed that there was a new wage of integration in the mid 1980s stimulated by the appointment of a new activist Commission in 1985 and success in agreeing the Single European Act for completing the single market. This led to the formal adoption of a number of EC programmes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, including: Comett (Community Programme for Education and Training in Technology); Erasmus (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students); Lingua (to fund and promote training and skills in foreign languages); Tempus(Trans-Mobility Programme for University Students) in the late 1980s. Erasmus itself stimulated much activity within the university policy domain. Another DG in the Commission initiated the Jean Monnet project. New and reorganised programmes were developed after the Community's subsidiary competence in education was defined for the first time by the Treaty of Maastricht, 1991. These were Leonardo da Vinci (to stimulate innovative training policies) and Socrates, which incorporated both Erasmus and Lingua,and extended activities to schools, through the Comenius. [7]

In attracting national government signatories throughout Europe for its action plan, the Bologna Declaration broke with such programme-based activity, albeit adopting and expanding many of the mechanisms. The initiative has been described as 'beyond' but not 'without' the EU.[8] Bache 2004 cites Wessels (2001) in noting the 'observer' position of the Commission in initiatives at the time led principally by the Member States. 'Member states did not officially state a common intention to use EU institutions to advance the project, especially in those fields which could lead to legislative proposals of the Commission.'

An agenda setting analysis of European cooperation in higher education

An analysis of these events in terms of an agenda setting model reveals, I suggest, a flaw in such accounts which hamper our understanding of the Bologna Process.

<u>The European University</u>
What we discover from an analysis of how and why higher education issues have reached the agendas of European decision-makers is how long EC leaders have been concerned to find a way of using higher education, and how difficult it has been to reach solutions acceptable to the policy community. From my evidence, we see that as early as 1958, the joint Councils of the EC were debating how universities could be used to advance European integration and the European economy, and some governments at least were interested in how Europe could be used as a resource to improve the quality of

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[6] OJ C ref
[7] Beukel 2001 gives details on these programmes
[8] Bache 2004:

universities and research institutes.[9] In 1960 a plan was produced which envisaged the Europeanising of all universities. All would be encouraged to have a European dimension with the Community providing funding for mobility. Research institutes would qualify for European status if they were accept a proportion of their academics and their students from other European countries. And at the top of the pyramid would be the European University which would include among its functions the education and training of those who would go on to run Europe (Palayret 1996).

The history of EC interest in higher education had begun with the meeting which made the decision to create a European Economic Community and a European Atomic Energy Community. On June 1, 1955, the place Messina, where the six Foreign Ministers of the European Coal and Steel Community member states were meeting to discuss the projects which they hoped would wipe out of the failure of their previous attempts to enhance European integration – namely a European Political Community and a European Defence Community. To general surprise the representative of the German Federal Republic, Walter Hallstein – later and better known as the EEC's Commission's first president – said the new EC should create a European University. 'The German government also wanted to make the new European construction relevant to the young.'(Palayret 1996). Hallstein and German colleagues argued the case in terms of Europe's need for a Community of the Intelligence. A university was the most magnificent creation of the human mind. A community university would provide Europeans with the appropriate skills as well as European minded citizens.

Although Hallstein's proposal achieved a treaty base in somewhat more ambiguous form, the European University failed to get from the stage of policy proposal to EC decision until it emerged in modified form in 1971 as an inter-governmental decision to create the European University Institute in Florence. The French argued from the start in 1958 that the Treaty did not provide Community competence for the creation of a full university – and eventually won the argument in 1961 when General de Gaulle linked the European University project to his larger ambitions to constrain EC competence. But in the early days an important reason for not proceeding was that the moment the Foreign Ministers, meeting in the Council of Ministers, started to discuss the issue they each had a different view of what a university was, related to their own national system. The opposition of national rectors, grouped from 1959 within the Conféderation de Recteurs Européens – forerunner of the European Universities Association (EUA) - was an important factor in undermining the European University project. Indeed it was seen by Hallstein, and Etienne Hirsch, president of the Euratom Commission who had the task of developing a blueprint for the European University as the main reason.[10]

The point of reference for university rectors was the resolution which they had been successful in getting approved at the founding conference of European unity, at the Hague in 1948, in favour of 'efforts tending towards a federation of European Universities and towards a guarantee of their freedom from state or political pressures' (Palayret 1996:21). They were thus favourable to the kind of contacts which would

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[9] Corbett 2002
[10] see Hallstein, Hirsch

further the circulation of ideas, and they considered themselves to be European institutions. But an EC-created university risked breaching the principle of intellectual autonomy which rectors in several countries had fought so hard to establish after their experience of Nazi or Fascist regimes. The diversion of resources from national systems, which the European University would require, was also a point of contention.

European initiatives outside international organisations were, on the other hand, attractive to universities – or certain academics. These ranged from CERN, which grew out of a network created by the philosopher Denis de Rougement, to a variety of university-based associations which functioned during the 1960s and 1970s and which developed European studies, and in some cases ambitious cooperation schemes for joint degrees.

The issue of higher education only became stabilised with governments' agreement to make the agenda primarily one of cooperation, as happened in the period 1969-71, in response to a proposal by the French minister of education, Olivier Guichard, to set up a centre for educational cooperation and development within the EC. This acceptance of this new conceptualisation of what the EC might do was greatly aided by the political opportunity provided by the Hague Summit – one of those summits which had an expansive agenda and which eventually led to UK entry. But the years 1969-71 also represented one of those periods in which there was the conjunction between the political opportunity, the definition of the problem as cooperation, which appealed to all ministers especially in the wake of events of 1968. Furthermore if there was not, as yet, a well defined policy to put into operation, the issue of educational cooperation had concerned ministers of education for some time, mostly in the Council of Europe. There were also various mechanisms which helped to stabilise the policy making venue. The Ministers of Education had agreed to create an EC venue. The Commission took the opportunity to create a rudimentary bureaucracy, inspired by these moves.

In thi account it is clear that there were no shared beliefs. The university community refused to give support (Ruegg 1999). conclude that the initial failure of the European University can be explained in process terms by the lack of match between issue, venue and domain. In 1958 there was no domain. No government other than that so the German Federal Republic had been 'softened up'. The venue in which the issue was discussed was that of the foreign ministers or the officials in charge of a nuclear programme and hence with other issues taking priority. The policy entrepreneurs, Hallstein and Hirsch, similarly had many other issues to deal with. Thus quite apart from the intervening effect of specific historic events – such as de Gaulle's 'Non' to a nuclear treaty university which were the immediate cause of failure - the processes were themselves fragile.

The Action Programme
What an agenda setting approach also reveals is that once the issue was stabilised, it was possible to create a policy design, and craft a solution for governance - a particular challenge in a policy sector seen as so distinctively national.

In terms of relations with the Member States, as important as the substantive content of the programme, was the creation of flexible and reinforced cooperation mechanisms long

before the terms were used. agreed to institute a dual committee of Council and Commission to initiate policy ideas and advise the ministers instead of the usual Commission body for Community action and Council committees for political cooperation. They also agreed to decision-taking by a mixed process of Council and Ministers meeting within the Council.

This willingness to experiment with new governance formulae exemplified a measure of goodwill and trust. If ministers had recognised the interest of bundling together Treaty and non-Treaty issues, it was because they had wanted Community financial support to make the non-Treaty process of educational cooperation dynamic. The action programme decision marked the conjunction of a problem well defined – the need to make higher education and education cooperation work – with viable policy proposals and a political dynamic which flowed from the commitment made at the pre-Enlargement summit in 1972 that the Community had 'immaterial' values as well as economic interests.

But the success in creating new institutions was linked to ministerial support for the policy ideas which they problematised as an issue they w anted to resolve and on which they basically shared the same issue image (Baumgartner and Jones). Ministers were inspired by the proposals which could trace their origins back to the political enthusiasm generated by the Hague summit included Enlargement , the acceptance of new policy domains for the Community and a new Commission, reorganised accordingly. One of its early actions of the Commission's education unit established in 1973 was to work for an action programme in education in cooperation with the Council's Education Committee which built on what teachers and academics wanted, or was consistent with the ethos of the time in favour of extending equal opportunities. The draft programme as it was presented to ministers in 1975, covered six themes and consisted of around action lines.

The proposed action in higher education was both important and concrete. The Commission had picked up from their discussions with university associations and other bodies that the most effective strategy was to aim to provide academics with a resource for those interested in closer links between the universities of the EC . The Commission's help went into formulating proposals which Europe-minded academic bodies had long thought important, such as academic mobility. A consequence was two pilot programmes. One was for joint study programmes (JSPs), the other for short stud visits by academics and administrators (SSVs). The JSPs funded partnerships for joint curriculum development and agreements between universities – usually at department level – to enable students to undertake study in the university of another system without facing the usual barriers of nationally specific admission rules.(see Fogg and Jones 1985).

The Erasmus programme
In June 1987, the Erasmus programme, designed to simulate student mobility and university cooperation, achieved the initially improbable feat of being legislated for, and funded by entirely Community processes, the first education programme to achieve this, other than Comett. What an agenda setting approach reveals is that this major procedural

jump from the action programme resolution, to full Community decision, in a domain where the Community did not have competence, was possible because of the combination of factors which included academics' interest and commitment and the inheritance of the Action programme which had made idea for Community support not only acceptable, but popular. The pilot projects for university cooperation and student mobility had also attracted general political interests from the European Council since 1983, when they approved the Stuttgart Solemn Declaration[11] and the references to joint programmes in the People's Europe report of 1985. The viability of the policy proposal was not in doubt. It was made more ambitious by the inclusion of a number of experimental ideas for more effective cooperation. Since the earliest concerns of all the institutions involved had been connected with the barriers to mobility, the programme incorporated several measures for improved academic recognition of periods of study and degrees. This included proposals that the ECTS should be used and joint curriculum development projects developed on a voluntary but funded basis.

The difficulty in getting a decision lay in getting sufficient political dynamic within the venue that counted, that of the Council. Ministers was reluctant to accept the Erasmus Decision. Some of the ministers of education and their diplomatic advisers retained a suspicion that the Commission was trying to expand its competence in ways that were incompatible with the Treaty and/or out of line with domestic instructions. The suspicion dated from a conflict in 1977 after which the ministers refused to meet for two years on the grounds that the Commission had no competence for education other than to support intergovernmental cooperation. Divided among themselves– the Mediterranean countries generally wanted more action on education - ministers united to refuse decision-making by the 'mixed' process. When they did have higher education on their agenda in this period they were only prepared to draw conclusions. They were not willing to find a Community mechanism as in 1976. That limited them to the classic intergovernmental tools of exchange of information and persuasion.[12]

When on June 15, 1987 the Council of Ministers eventually agreed to create the Erasmus programme, there had been interventions from the European Council and prestigious groups of European rectors, many of them lobbying heads of state and prime ministers directly. There had also been the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice which in a celebrated case (Gravier: ECJ Case 293/83) interpreted the vocational training and non-discrimination articles of the Treaty of Rome EEC as including university education – a development which made the prospect of Community legislation more likely. There had been the tenacity of Hywel Ceri Jones, the official in charge of education policy from 1973-93, during which time he rose from a head of unit position to that of Director of the Task Force for Human Resources, Education and Training and Youth. The new Commissioner, Peter Sutherland, was a factor too. He had rapidly

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[11] The documents are cited in Council of the European Communities General Secretariat (1988) European education policy statements 3rd ed 1987 Luxembourg Office of Official Publications of the European Communities.

[12] Conclusions of the Council and of the ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 2 June 1983 in Council 1988

decided on taking office that the Erasmus proposal fitted well with the strategic goal for the Community taken up by Jacques Delors, the new Commission president, to complete the single market by 1992. The projection of Erasmus as an instrument to develop the appropriate 'human resources' which the Community needed in the single market helped the project to make sense to fellow Commissioners, for whom higher education was marginal or not the Community's business.

When the Erasmus Decision was made, it was accurately seen as the triumph for a higher education issue which had been on a policy agenda for decades. The popularity of Community support for mobility was highly popular with the university community. Within a few years almost every university had some link with the programme. Academics created departmental or subject exchange networks. Rectors created university networks such as the well known COIMBRA group. Business schools created their networks such as CHEMS. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 increased the momentum for cooperation with Eastern Europe, encouraging the Commission to propose the programme Tempus. Erasmus also inspired the corporate body of universities, the CRE, to define universities' vocation in terms of the principles fundamental to the functioning of universities in a democracy, and to set up a monitoring body. The principles were

- That the university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies - differently organised because of geography and historical heritage - ..produces examines appraises and hand down culture by teaching and research…
- Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable of their tuition is not to lag between changing needs, the demands of society and advances in scientific knowledge
- Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement
- A university is a trustee of the European humanist tradition: its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical ad political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different culture to know and influence each other…
- Therefore, as in the earliest years of their history, they encourage mobility among teachers and students: furthermore they consider a general policy of equivalent status, titles, examinations (without prejudice to national diplomas) and award of scholarships essential to the fulfilment of their missions in the conditions prevailing today…

The Treaty of Maastricht, 1991, giving the Community a supporting role on education to stimulate quality, allowed the Commission to reaffirm the commitment to mobility and academic recognition, but to re-orient its aims to the larger developing agenda of growth and competitiveness, heralded by Delors' White Paper of 1993.[13] For the first time the

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[13] COM (93) 700 Growth, competitiveness and employment: the challenges and the way forward into the 21st century

Community institutions could back the development of quality education and training. In the Socrates programme proposal of 1995– the first post Maastricht programme in education, it did so, and added and the ambition to create an open European area – a sign of what was to become the EHEA.

The comments of close observers of developments, such as Alan Smith (1996) and Ulrich Teichler (1996) provide convincing evidence that the organisational ideas behind the Bologna process did not come out of the blue. In defining the specific characteristics of EC cooperation in higher education in the early Erasmus years, they confirm that mobility was part of a larger scheme. The cooperation regional (European), it assumed study abroad to be integrated into the main study experience, mobility was essentially, collective, the linkages were at academic level, it assuming advice and preparation for those involved, it encouraged curricular integration, recognition of studies abroad, its partial and incentive funding scheme.

However, by the mid 1990s even the programme model of cooperation as defined in Socrates-Erasmus, with its licensed expansion into quality and the promotion of an open area of education, was causing dissatisfaction. In many ways some national governments, at least, found it too limited for a changing environment. At the same time they did not want to give the Community a larger remit. Bache, citing Beukel has defined the dilemma. On the one hand as Beukel (2001: 126) has argued that 'the very notion of "Europeanization of education" causes concern in most countries in Europe, one reason being that it is equated with homogenisation of the educational systems that could imply a loss of national identity'. Yet on the other, there is a strong logic for enhanced European cooperation in this sector: international competition between higher education institutions is intensifying and Europe-wide recognition makes sense for universities seeking to attract students and staff from an international marketplace. More generally, intensified global economic competition between states provides a strong logic for European cooperation on areas of research and skills development, which necessarily involves higher education (Bache 2004)

The Bologna process: continuity, change and challenges

Viewing the Bologna process in the light of these policy events, it is possible to point to factors of both continuity and change, and suggests where important challenges will appear. Most obviously, and in its initial form, the Bologna declaration demonstrated a linked commitment to a changed venue, an expanded domain of Europeanised higher education and re-packaging of familiar issues by the two main participants in national structures of higher education-government relations: the ministers and the universities, as represented by their rectors. We can assume that the Bologna process emerged because there was a shared 'issue image' as to what problems needed to be tackled and why to make higher education in many European countries more effective.

The issue, as initially articulated by Claude Allègre, the French minister of education and respected scientist, was both a celebration of European universities as pivotal institutions

in developing the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of the European continent, and a call to action which attracted university leaders. The signatories wanted to consolidate Europe's standing in the world by developing much closer institutional relationships and a 'common architecture' in national systems.[14]

Allègre, and the three ministers he enrolled as co-signatories of the Sorbonne declaration of 1998,[15] called on national governments to promote inter-university agreements within Europe, and to take more energetic national action on validation and recognition to promote joint diplomas, pilot initiatives and 'a dialogue with all concerned'. This was an essential part of a process of developing a common frame of reference to improve external recognition and promote student mobility. A European area of higher education where 'national identities and common interests can interact and strengthen each other for the benefit of Europe, of its students, and more generally of its citizens' should - without fear of loss of identity, or the diversity which characterises Europe - develop degree structures which could be recognised for international comparison and equivalence, and develop the use of credits which permitted mobility and access at any stage of life.

In 1999, when the the Bologna declaration was made public, the issue of European cooperation and convergence had been somewhat recast in course of making the the instruments for achieving the EHEA more precise. While the declaration retained the reference to the intellectual attraction of the European world of universities – its diversity, its base in the Magna Carta values – greater emphasis was given to the creation of an EHEA to meet the economic and social demands of the Europe of Knowledge.[16]

Nevertheless it is clear that to those key participants with a role at a European level, the conception of cooperation and problem solving as expressed at Bologna has been clear and acceptable. The numbers of signatories provide the evidence. At Bologna in 1999 29 governments signed up, by Prague (2001) it was 33 governments at Berlin (2003) 40, including Russia and the Baltic states. National governments are using 'Europe' as a lever for national reform.[17] According to the Trends survey produced for the Berlin ministerial meeting, (Reichart and Trauch 2003)[18] within four years over 80 per cent of the Bologna signatories were intending to introduce the two cycle structure if they had not already done so.

Moreover the venue offered the universities important opportunities for influencing the agenda, even though it is a *sine qua non* of the Bologna process that the willingness to act, the decisions on how to interpret it and how to implement it are made at national

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[14] see for example the Salamanca conference preceding the Prague ministerial conference 2001 (EUA website)

[15] Sorbonne joint declaration on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system by the four ministers in charge fir France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, Paris the Sorbonne, 25 May 1998

[16] See interview with Sylvain Kahn, Director of European Affairs, Sciences Po, Paris in AEF (L'Agence Education, Emploi, Formation 3 October 2003; also Reichart and Tauch; French press reports on the LMD

[17] Kahn

[18] web ref

level. This was important given the pressures most had been under in their national systems with smaller budgets and facing larger demands. Universities, collectively through the CRE/EU, and the coordinating body of national student unions, ESIB were quick to define a place for themselves in the process.[19] Bologna has thus become a venue for negotiation on such issues as the doctoral level and quality assurance. It is also being exploited as the opportunity for universities to project themselves on the wider European wide political stage as being a public responsibility, central to the development of European society, supportive of a strong trans-national research capacity, sharing core values of equity, quality and diversity, and recognising students are partners.[20]

But while the Bologna process offered a platform for universities, for ministers in particular, the ministers faced a new expression of the dilemma familiar in the intergovernmental processes of the late 1960s and 70s: how to maintain intergovernmental control, yet make the process dynamic, the Bologna signatories at Prague allowed the Commission to become a partner in the process and to fund pilot actions and communication.

The sector-linked consequences of the Commission's involvement are to be seen in the better flow of information and discussion – the national conferences, the Trends reports, the Tuning projects on joint curricula, the dynamic since Prague, to provide linkage between the national QA processes and a European level in the form – not of the widely opposed supranational agencies – but by forms of mutual recognition, based on existing national agencies, and geographical, linguistic or disciplinary entities,[21] of mutual recognition of agencies and the activities of the follow up group.[22]

But the link with Commission, in strengthening the dynamic for Bologna reforms, also strengthens the linkage with the other processes designed to advance the economic and social objectives of the Europe of Knowledge, notably the Lisbon process. The Lisbon European Council agreement of March 2000 approved the strategic goal to create by 2010 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. While there is a lively debate on the significance of the Lisbon method: is it a quantum leap in methods of European integration or a fig leaf to hide the lack of Community power (for a review see Shelkle 2004, Chalmers and Lodge 2003, Zeitlin 2004) it would be surprising if this linkage did not add to the pressures to implement Bologna goals, that is pressures on national governments to conform to the Bologna goals.

The main reason for this pressure would be that Lisbon - this 'governance without law' - works through a developed set of instruments of coordination, in policy areas including education, employment, social policy and research, in which national governments

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[19] web address
[20] See the Bologna Declaration: an explanation CRE 29 February 2000, the Salamanca Graz, Forward from Berlin: the role of universities EUA 4 July 2003 obtainable via the websites [MORE]
[21] see Guy Haug Le Monde 22 May 2001
[22] refs

submit agreed policies to peer review, indicators and benchmarking, as a way of providing a spur to agreed developments.

Although to date in research, the issues have been more to do with getting far more resources into research and creating better synergies with the universities, the likelihood is that by 2007, when a new framework programme begins, the EU will have in place both a European Research Council awarding funds on a fiercely competitive basis through an open method of coordination, and a strategy to persuade national governments not to supplicate efforts better undertaken at European level. Already the Commission has been working hard to create greater synergies between universities and research.[23] This is likely to aid the research intensive universities. More generally it is part of a Commission strategy to create 30-50 poles of excellence.[24]

A further prediction of some commentators is that the Bologna process is likely to be absorbed into the internal market in services, pulled by entrepreneurial public sector institutions and pushed by the increased private sector participation which characterises the accession countries (Hackl 2002, Davies 2004).[25] This may most aid the non-elite universities which aspire to become regional or trans-national hubs of diversified innovation chains. can aim to be the locus of knowledge production and of inward and onward knowledge transfer , deploying teaching and research to the best advantage of diverse client groups.[26] In any event, because the Bologna process will contribute to a situation in which comparisons of price, value for money and accessibility of services become possible, competitiveness is going to be increasingly a factor in shaping student mobility.

However if we believe that the success or otherwise of Bologna will depend on how academics respond, the situation may be more complicated. One factor will be how national governments choose to shape the options on competitiveness and cooperation which underpin the project and how much academics themselves choose to exploit the opportunities of new European networks, and in particular whether the resolution of that problem is to be found in creating greater institutional autonomy and giving universities the choice as to how they structure their trans-national relationships, or what will be the form of constraints which governments maintain in the name of universities as public institutions. Hackl's prediction that the significant differences we shall see will not be between national systems but between types of higher education institution, with the diversity being most marked within national systems, assumes much greater institutional autonomy. (Hackl 2002).

So it is interesting at this stage, that across the diverse spectrum of European universities, there are common concerns within most universities. The concept of employability in the context of study programmes at Bachelor level has to be interpreted in ways consistent

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[23] COM(2003) 58 final Communication from the Commission The role of universities in the Europe of Knowledge Brussels, 5 February 2003; Report on the Liege conference
[24] See Refs
[25] Davies , H What role
[26] Davies, What role

with a university function, if the nine out of ten higher education institutions which are in principle in strong support, convert that into action. There are shared concerns as to how workload-based credits are translated into units to be accumulated within a given programme; how the form of curricula design to take in descriptors of qualifications and levels – meaningful internal and external quality assurance procedures, rather than formal compliance mechanisms - and , a plea repeated over 40 years, how to be given the conditions for optimising mobility (Reichart et al 2003::8).

A particular concern for many of the continental universities are the 'systemic' implications as to where research fits into a new two cycle pattern – and how masters and doctoral teaching and research might be structured (Reichart et al 2003: 148). But they also note strange gaps. Why have language issues not been taken more seriously? Why there has been little attention paid to the facilitating a Europe-wide recruitment of professors – a matter which is taken up in the European Research Area but ignored so far in the EHEA.(Reichart et al 2003:149)

It will also be interesting to see the impact of the most obvious policy commitment to demonstrate the attraction of the European 'brand' -   2003 decision to create the Erasmus Mundus programme.
As of 2003, individual institutions were basically supportive of the Bologna process in the ration of 2:1. The only certainty is that the voice of academics' will need to be listened to more directly 'if the potential of the Bologna reform is not to be wasted.(Reichart et al 2003:150), heads of higher education institutions and other institutionally prominent individuals have been discovering how extensive the reform will be if taken holistically (Reichart and Trauch 2003:page?).

Conclusions

This account of the policy making trajectories associated with the European University, the Erasmus programme and the Bologna declaration has shown that policy activity and cooperation in higher education, in and around the Community, has long been a force for closer trans-national relations when certain processes have been linked. These processes have been defined by using the Kingdon concepts of agenda setting and pre-decisional choice to show that policy choices are made when political executives wish to solve a problem and have both a viable policy proposition and favourable political circumstances. It has allied Kingdon with Baumgartner and Jones to suggest that policy capacity must be identified too. Hence the matching which produces an outcome is likely to be explicable terms of issue, venue and domain.

In this light, the European University project can be seen to have failed not just because of the strongly unfavourable political context. The fact that the rectors, the key stakeholders within the universities of Europe at the time, were actively hostile to an idea in which the Community would be financing and managing a university institution, ensured its demise in the form imagined in 1960. There was no shared concept of the issue.. The venue dominated by foreign ministers was not one in which an acceptable

solution was likely to be brokered. The Erasmus programme had a very different fate. Although not warmly welcomed by the decision makers, the ministers of education, preoccupied with their domestic instructions as to whether or not to allow a Community initiative which was at the margins of the treaty, had long been welcomed by volunteer academics who over a decade had supported the Community's funding of closer European links. It was popular with the Community's political leaders who could link it to two of their preoccupations of the time – how to make Europe's unenthusiastic citizens feel more positively about the Community, and how to generate the highly skilled individuals at ease in different cultures and languages who were the human resources to fuel the single market.

These trajectories suggest that the Bologna process is working with familiar ideas but doing so in a new and complex venue. The complexity of the European policy-making process has been noted over the years as generating unexpected effects (Pierson 1996). This complexity is also seen as increasing the openness to stakeholders. In particular it increases the opportunities for agenda setting (Peters 1994, Pierson 1996) and the interpretation which is at the core of implementation (Heritier). We can surely expect to see some academic networks, national groups of rectors and institutional heads who seize the chance of a new venue with a European level to work to adapt criteria for policies they oppose at national level – for example quality assurance. And similarly – we should expect to see university interests making the pro-active choices which pre-empt the agenda setting that would otherwise be set by officials or administrators.[27]

If such a reading is accurate, the Bologna participants will behave in a national area where the Bologna decisions are interpreted and implemented in ways which will be marked by the contact with European policy making. This sounds like the kind of Europeanisation described by Mény et al which represents the progressive emergence of common norms of action (Mény et al). The flow of pressures to redirect policies and/or practices in the domestic arena can no longer be described simply in upwards versus downwards terms (Bache). This Europeanisation.process is circular, a novel force for creating trans-national, if not international, relationships.

[40993 signs]

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[27] The Political Studies Association has done precisely this to define the requirements of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in political science in Europe. (PSA newsletter 14(3) sept 2003

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