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4 pm to 4:45

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"Quality policy in the Bologna process and in national responses"

Discussant : Abdulai **Abukari**

"Quality" in the Bologna process
and in the national responses to it[1]

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[1] The present paper presents one part of an ongoing doctoral research, due to be finished at the end of 2005. Therefore, it is a draft and not to be quoted without the writer's permission.

Introduction

The theoretical premise of this paper is that policy is constructed and presented discursively. This means that policy processes – also higher education policy processes – are discursive processes.

Policy changes take place as an interaction between national processes and international trends (Bleiklie & Kogan 2000, 11). Levin (1998) refers to the mechanism of policy transfer as >epidemics=. Catchwords and ideas spread across countries, but information about the effects and experiences in the national contexts is less easily transferred. (See also Halpin & Troyna 1995; Ball 1998.) Policy change may, consequently, result from the imitation of international models (Kogan & Bauer 2000, 50), but it may also be the result of persuasive change (cf. Becher & Kogan 1992, 22). Henry et al. (2001) refer to the same phenomenon as discursive processes. Nation states and their legislative bodies hold, at least for the time being, the authoritative power to change educational policies. The "persuasive" elements of policy change have been studied less. Quality policies present a prime example of how policy influences spread internationally. In this context, the so called "Bologna process" presents an interesting case.

The Bologna process, or the process aiming at a European Higher Education Area, presents us with a situation, where the quality policy goals are set jointly in transnational settings, requiring different kinds of negotiations and discursive strategies. The Bologna process is, in other words, a development where international influences find their ways into national policies persuasively rather than authoritatively (Becher & Kogan 1992), and which simultaneously stresses the local (institutional) level over the national one. The policy actors have no European decision making powers or authority, but the decisions written into communiqués and declarations are born as a consequence of discussions, negotiations etc.

Theoretical framework and methodology utilized

In this paper, some discourse analytical methods are used to analyze the potential meanings of "quality" in the European and national level of the Bologna process. More specifically, a preliminary analysis of intertextual features, word choice, and argumentation strategies will take place. Consequently, some observations about the potential consistencies / inconsistencies between the political goals of the Bologna process and its national implementations will be made. I will continue the more linguistic analysis of this material in my dissertation work; this paper presents the higher education policy aspects of the analysis. (Saarinen 2004a.)

Policy words as a focus of study

As stated above, this study begins with the theoretical assumption that policy processes as discursive processes. Policy is thus made and presented discursively. Discourse analysis of policy texts can thus be useful in tracing policy changes and describing them, but also in explaining and understanding some of the developments that lead up to the implementation of the policies and the (political) views which are embedded in the debates. Policy actors foreground problems, simultaneously narrowing the space for alternative views. By doing so, they also perpetuate some political views of the social reality. (Muntigl 2002.)

International policy actors, such as the OECD, create new concepts and consequently name and define problems (thus also "creating" them) (Henry et al. 2001). In solving these problems, those who have been involved in formulating the problem, have an advantage over those who haven't. In fact, it can be said that texts not only describe the world, they also create and recreate it. In policy texts, some things are foregrounded and others are forgotten. The texts of "quality policy" not only describe the spreading of the "quality epidemic", but they also create and recreate the international, national and local context in which the quality policies are implemented.

If we assume that policy processes are (also) discursive or persuasive by nature, then discourse analysis would present a natural starting point for the analysis of policy processes such as Bologna, where simultaneous and parallel quality policies at the international, national and local level develop in interaction with each other.

National education policies can be internationally influenced in a number of ways. Policy implementations may also be influenced by various national, international and local factors. Ball (1998, 126) has stated that the realization of international influences in national policies may, in the end, be quite haphazard and coincidental. The concepts of quality development and QA are operationalized in the Finnish context differently from for instance the British or French context.

Concepts such as "assessment" or "quality" do, in fact, receive their meaning when they are operationalized as higher education measures. (Saarinen & Huusko 2004; see also Vidovich & Porter 1999.)

From the point of view of quality policy, the Bologna process has its own special features. The central implementations of the 1980's quality wave were national, even if the "epidemic" (Levin, 1998) spread internationally. National quality policies may have had their origins in a more general demand for public accountability, as for instance in Great Britain during the conservative regime of the 1980's. Simultaneously in the Netherlands, quality policies were introduced as a consequence of decreases in public funding. The economic recession of the 1980's may have been an international phenomenon, but its implications and impacts were markedly national.

Critical discourse analysis in HE policy studies

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is basically a collection of theoretical and methodological views, set in the tradition of critical linguistics. These different views share a need to see "discourse" as a "social practice from a critical point of view". (Pietikäinen 2000). This presentation looks into the theoretical and methodological contribution of CDA for HE policy research; particularly, in this case, the Bologna process.

In higher education policy research large masses of text may be used as primary data. However, they are often taken as given (Rhoades 2001), without the benefit of text analytical methods. Methods of linguistics have thus far been used to analyze for instance cultural differences between different fields of study, by using the typical argumentation strategies or other linguistic features as a means. (Bazerman 1992). From the point of view of academic cultures this is theoretically an interesting and relevant viewpoint. From the point of view of higher education policy research, however, a more systematic use of linguistic measures is necessary when large text corpuses are analyzed.

The presentation is also a prelude into the ways in which means offered by CDA may be used to examine and analyze the political attractiveness and the realizations of "quality policies" in higher education. Simultaneously, when continuing my dissertation work, will also have to take a stand with CDA's emasipatory goals and their relevance to HE policy research. The present article looks at the Bologna process from a higher education policy view, but the underlying tone is set by the critical discourse analysis approach.

The data is relatively large, so the presentation focuses on a few of its traits. The linguistic analysis focuses on the different meanings of "quality" from the point of view of word choice, metaphors and argumentation strategies. The discursive analysis focuses on the intertextual features of the texts produced on different levels of the Bologna process. On the level of social practices I will in the next phase of my work look into the relationships between actors from different levels (experts, ministerial meetings, national ministries) as they appear in the quality policy texts of the Bologna process. Thus I will also be able to draw some preliminary conclusions about the international goals and their national interpretations in the Bologna process.

The data of the presentation are the official declarations and communiqués of the Bologna process (Sorbonne declaration 1998; Bologna declaration 1999; Prague communiqué 2001; Berlin communiqué 2003); the most important background reports of the process (the so-called Trends I-III reports, the Lourtie report; the Zgaga report); and national follow-up reports from Finland and Sweden.

The data is presented in a chronological order in picture 1.

Date	Title	Author / responsible party	Other info
5/98	Joint declaration on harmonization of the architecture of the European higher education system, Paris, the Sorbonne, May 25, 1998 ("Sorbonne declaration")	Signed by four European countries (Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy)	
6/99	Trends in learning structures in higher education ("Trends 1")	Haug (part I) & Kirstein (part II)	Financed by CRE and the Commission
6/99	"The European Higher Education Area". Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education Convened in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999 ("Bologna declaration")	29 signatories;	Took place in connection with a CRE meeting
4/01	Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education (II). Follow-up Report prepared for the Salamanca and Prague Conferences of March / May 2001 ("Trends II")	Haug & Tauch	Financial support from the European Commission
5/01	Furthering the Bologna process. Report to the Ministers of Education of the signatory countries	Lourtie	
5/01	Towards the European higher education area. Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on May 19th 2001 ("Prague communiqué")	32 signatories	
4/03	Country report of the Netherlands: achievements so far relating to the goals mentioned in the Bologna declaration and in the Prague communiqué		
4/03	Report on the Swedish follow-up of the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué		
7/03	Trends 2003. Progress towards the European Higher Education Area. Bologna two years after: steps towards sustainable reform of higher education in Europe ("Trends 3")	Reichert & Tauch	Funded by the Commission / Socrates Programme
8/03	Report on the Finnish implementation of the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué		
9/03	Bologna process between Prague and Berlin. Report to the Ministers of Education of the signatory countries.	Zgaga	Commissioned by the Bologna process follow-up group; funded by the Commission
9/03	Realizing the European Higher Education Area": Communiqué of the conference of Ministers responsible for higher education in Berlin 19.3.2003. "(Berlin communiqué")	33 signatories (extended later to 40)	

Table 1. The documents used as text data

The paper aims at answering the following questions:

- With what kinds of metaphors and word choices is "quality" presented in the documents of the Bologna process (declarations and communiqués, as well as the background reports to it)?
- What is the occurrence of "quality" in the documents during the 5 years?
- What kind of "quality" is presented in the national (Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands) responses to the Bologna process? Are these meanings assigned to "quality" compatible, or do they present different quality policies?

The Bologna Process as an example of transnational developments in European higher education policy

The Bologna process, or the process aiming at a European Higher Education Area, offers an interesting window into the European dimension of "quality policy" on one hand and to the national responses to that policy on the other. In the Bologna process, goals of the process are set in an international / supranational context, by discussions, background reports and political processes. In the national reports, drawn on the development of the process, this "quality" may appear very different.

From the point of view of the quality policies of Higher Education, the promotion of a European wide quality assurance (hereafter QA) system is central to the Bologna process. The motive behind this quality work is to ease the recognition and comparison of higher education systems and degrees. It will be interesting to see, how the demands for QA and accreditation are met nationally and on the institutional level by the year 2005. At least in Finland, the change from a system which stresses assessment as a tool for development into a system of comparable quality criteria or even accreditation should be significant (Saarinen 2004b).

The Bologna process presents an interesting turning point in the internationalization of European higher education in general, and in the "quality policy" of European higher education in particular. The process is not a development of some international organization's efforts, but rather an indication of convergence (or even harmonization) which was unthinkable some 10-15 years ago. European Higher Education policy has since the 1980's been made under the ideas of comparability, transferability and mobility. The controversiality of harmonization of systems is depicted in the debate surrounding the 1991 Memorandum on higher education. (COM(91); O'Callaghan 1993). At most, the convergence of the educational systems has been referred to. The pressures towards harmonization begun to accumulate in the 1990's as the internationalization – or "Europeanization" - of education became a goal. These pressures discharged in the Bologna process, outside the European Union.

The participants of the Bologna process; more concretely, the education ministers of the participating countries, signed in September 2003 in Berlin a communiqué which calls for very concrete measures of comparability and transferability by the year 2005. (Berlin 2003). From the very general co-operation goals of the Sorbonne declaration of 1998 (signed by four countries' education ministers), a long way has been traveled in a short time.

"Quality" in the Bologna process

"Quality" has become a keyword of higher education policies in the 1980's and 1990's. In several western countries, quality assessment and assurance agencies have been formed since the 1990's. As a concept, however, "quality" is still largely unproblematized (for an early exception, see Harvey & Green 1993).

The following looks into some central publications (see table 1) of the Bologna process from the point of view of quality policy. The focus of the paper is on "quality" and its meanings as they are realized in the texts of the declarations and other documents.

The early stages: Sorbonne declaration, Trends I report and Bologna declaration

The Sorbonne declaration was a by-product of a meeting of ministers of Education at the anniversary celebration of the University of Paris (The Sorbonne) in 1998. The declaration was signed by education ministers of four countries: France, Italy, Great Britain and Germany. It was very general, even elevated in its spirit. References were made to "Europe of Knowledge" or the "attractive potential" of European HE systems. Behind the declaration were the needs of (economic and labor market) competition, but they were supported by metaphors of openness (*an open Europe*). "Quality" was not mentioned in the Sorbonne declaration.

The Sorbonne declaration was received in Europe with mixed feelings. In the so-called Trends I report (1999) its contents were explained in at least the same extent as the original declaration.

In the Trends I report, published in June 1999 (two weeks before the Bologna meeting) the need for QA merited its own chapter in the report. In the report, there are altogether 59 occurrences of the word "quality". In Trends I, the implicit need for QA is the ideology of consumerism: the students and employers have a right, as consumers of education, to get information about the standard of education. Following this logic, the basis for QA in Trends I report is to create a professionally based QA system. The need for an explicitly European QA is argued with the *biased* nature of national QA systems. The European system, in turn, is assumed to produce quality assessments which are based on European standards (which are, by definition and self-evidently, impartial or unbiased), and which are not *distorted* by national ideas and values. The pressing need for this kind of a European system is emphasized by the use of the word *vacuum*, which implies a rule-of-nature mechanism in higher education policy:

> There is a pressing need to develop another type of evaluation, not based on national systems or institutions, but on subject areas, disciplines or professions. A missing element in Europe is that institutions do not have independent European bodies to which they could turn for an evaluation of their curricula that would not be biased by national stakes.
> There is a need in Europe to fill this vacuum and to create a number of agencies which […]:

In the Bologna declaration of 1999, the word >quality= occurs once. The context is promoting ΑEuropean co-operation in QA with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies".

> […] Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies […]

When the meaning potential of the word >quality= is considered, it could be said that quality is here subordinated to the >comparable criteria=; in other words, quality is a relative concept rather than described by excellence. QA is placed in the focus of quality co-operation. Behind this need for QA, in turn, are comparability of degree structures and consequently the needs of mobility and employment policy. In the declaration itself, however, this is not said.

From Bologna to Prague: Trends II report, Lourtie report and Prague Communiqué

The Trends II report is a continuation to the Trends I report in a sense that it addresses the same questions as the Trends I, but includes all signatories, whereas Trends I concentrated on the EU/EEA countries. The report was commissioned as a background paper for the Convention of European Higher Education institutions in Salamanca in March, 2001, and for the Prague summit in May, 2001. There are altogether 81 occurrences of "quality" in the Trends II report.

In Trends II, the developments towards "QA" are described as a "powerful movement". These are emotional words: we generally tend to think of bottom-up mass actions of individual people or groups of people when "movements[2]" are discussed (think, for instance, of the "civil rights' movement"). This is followed by a reference to an "unclear" relationship between QA and accreditation. This sets out the tone of Trends II, which concentrates heavily on the need for clarification of the issues of accreditation in European countries:

> There is a powerful movement towards more quality assurance (new agencies, ENQA network), but in very different ways: unclear relationship between "quality assurance" and "accreditation", applied to all or only part of the higher education system, focussing on programmes (sometimes along subject lines across a whole country) or on institutions, with different types of consequences.

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2) Oxford English Dictionary & Thesaurus (2001): *Movement (3) group of people with common object (campaign, crusade…).* Merriam-Webster (1993) collegiate dictionary 10th ed. : *Movement: An organized effort to promote or attain an end (the civil rights movement)*

In the quality segments of the Trends II, the emphasis on accreditation is, in fact, becoming more visible. A reference is made to "many non EU/EEA countries" which have accreditation. But as Westerheijden (2001) points out, the accreditation schemes of the CEEC (Central and Eastern European Countries) are perhaps not a suitable model for the Bologna era accreditation[3]. Also, the CEEC accreditation schemes were introduced in a different time, in a different political context, and were in general not a result of the Bologna process. Still, it may be a good strategy in this context to bring them forth as forerunners in accreditation.

> The development of "accreditation" is now more easily recognisable than in the Trends 1 report: many non EU/EEA countries have accreditation, and several others are considering the possibility or have firm plans for a new accreditation agency (separate from the quality assurance agency or combined with it). In some countries that wish to increase the international acceptance of their new degrees, accreditation is seen as a *sine qua non* . There is however still confusion about the benefits and the meaning of accreditation.

The German National Accreditation Council, which was created in 1999, is brought in as a possible "inspiration" to other countries, thus simultaneously recommending this system to others. The German accreditation system was also referred to in a way which suggested that it would suit the needs of a multitude of needs, be they European, national or local:

> The decentralised approach to quality assurance/accreditation (sometimes referred to as "meta accreditation") which is being experimented in one country may provide inspiration for European mechanisms based on mutual acceptance of quality assurance decisions, respecting national and subject differences and not overloading universities.

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3) Even at this moment, something called "accreditation" is done in many European countries, but its forms vary remarkably. Westerheijden (2001) divides accreditation systems into two generations. The first generation accreditation systems are mostly controlled, at least *de facto*, by the academic oligarchy. The focus was on academic quality and control of inputs. (Westerheijden 2001.) With "second generation accreditation", Westerheijden in turn, means the post-Bologna systems and calls for a "multiple accreditation" system, where accreditation is not only in the hands of the academics, and its purpose is not only to control academic standards, but they should lead into "transparency" – a favorite metaphor of European policies in general (Westerheijden 2001).

All in all, in calling for more convergence in European QA, Trends II stresses the assumed universal acceptance of QA as a political and practical aim almost too eagerly. Stressing that the European dimension is "vital" to, ultimately, "Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness in the world", or that its "importance was widely recognized, or indeed, emphasised" may, however, lead us to suspect that their acceptance is not so unanimous after all:

> The European dimension in quality assurance foreseen in the Bologna Declaration is a vital aspect of any system of easily readable and comparable degrees as well as of Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness in the world. Its importance is widely recognised or indeed emphasised in the vast majority of European countries, in order to ease recognition procedures, facilitate mobility, increase confidence and avoid any lowering of standards. Its development is seen as a necessary complement to increased curricular autonomy of universities.

The Lourtie report (2001) was also commissioned as a background report for the Prague summit. "Quality" is mentioned in 83 occurrences. While still supporting the general aims of developing QA, the Lourtie report seems to step back from the views of universal acceptance of QA practices presented in earlier declarations and reports, especially in Trends II. QA is no longer presented as self evidently accepted, and the presence of different stakeholders is recognized more clearly than in earlier reports and declarations.

> "[…] national systems vary in scope and approach. A fundamental objective of co-operation in quality assurance must be to develop mutual trust, leading every country and institution to trust the quality of the higher education programmes of their partners. […] The question of who is responsible for setting the reference standards has proved to be a delicate and controversial one, especially if it is considered at European level. Alongside those that firmly believe in accreditation, even at European level, there are those that fear externally imposed European standards, as inadequate to their national system or reality and a restriction on the institutional capacity to innovate."

In the Prague Communiqué (2001), the word >quality= occurs fourteen times, in four different spheres of meaning. One of these (a general reference to >quality of life=), is excluded from further analysis.

The majority (nine) of mentions occur together with >assurance=, in other words, >QA= systems, co-operation, and networks. On one occasion, >excellent= quality is defined by >comparable= quality: QA systems are expected to play a Avital role@ in Aensuring high quality standards".

Twice the word >quality= is mentioned in the context of >academic quality= or >quality of higher education and research=. Academic quality is mentioned in the context of Arelevance to lasting employability". Quality of higher education and research, in turn, find their motivation through AEurope's international attractiveness and competitiveness".

In one case, >quality= (this time standing on its own - the quality of what?) is announced to be the Abasic, underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness" in the European higher education area.

Accreditation, which is only mentioned three times towards the end of the document, suddenly gains a first billing in the final statement when the future of the process was stated. There, >accreditation= is used in the context of Acooperation concerning accreditation and QA". This kind of a turn, especially as it turns up towards the end of the document, can indicate an intertextual influence: the statement has perhaps turned up in the discussions late, or it has perhaps been too controversial to be taken up in the chapter where QA was mostly discussed. One of the means of persuasion is, in fact, to present difficult matters as self-evident and already existing (Fairclough 1992).

It is quite likely that at the time of the Prague meeting in 2001, national governments were not prepared for a fully fledged debate on accreditation systems. The >soft= introduction of accreditation brought the concept into foreground, and made further introduction of related actions possible in the Berlin convention of 2003.

Trends III, the Zgaga report and the Berlin Communiqué

The Trends III was a background report to the Berlin and came out in July 2003. It does not question the need for QA and / or accreditation. Rather, it takes these for granted and in fact refers to quality as the "motor" of the Bologna process. The report focuses on the more technical aspects of quality: what are the national systems like, and what kinds of systems seem to be giving the best results. There are 292 references to "quality" in the Trends III report, most of which are references to mechanical or technical aspects of QA and improvement systems, procedures or agencies.

In Trends III, the future challenges for QA are summed up as follows, again with the metaphors of transparency, diversity and competition:

The ultimate challenge for QA in Europe consists in creating transparency, exchange of good practice and enough common criteria to allow for mutual recognition of each others' procedures, without mainstreaming the system and undermining its positive forces of diversity and competition.

The Zgaga report, published on the eve of the Berlin meeting in 2003, contains altogethers 257 references to quality. Majority of these are straight-forward and unproblematically presented references to QA. It seems that as the number of occurrences increases, the content of the word "quality" is becoming more stagnated.

The Berlin Communiqué (2003) contains 17 references to quality, of which 11 occur in context with the development of a QA system. The QA systems are expected to be *effective;* they are to be developed *at the institutional, national and European level* (but primarily at the institutional); the criteria and methodologies for QA need to be mutually shared. QA is beginning to appear as a jointly accepted goal, and the need for common criteria is in no way questioned in the document. Accreditation appears only twice, but in a very strong context. By the year 2005 the national systems need to include

X A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.
X Evaluation of programs or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.
X A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.
X International participation, co-operation and networking.

The Berlin Communiqué on one hand sets out an agenda for comparable and transparent QA systems, but on the other hand it stresses the role of individual institutions. This creates a potential for conflict later, when the varied institutional and national QA methods and systems are put in a comparable frame.

The Berlin Communiqué stresses the various levels – European, national, institutional – throughout the document. This implies the strengthening and activation of the academic interest groups during the period between Prague and Berlin. Student organizations and academic employer organizations, as well as consortia of universities and polytechnics have taken a more active role in the process. The beginnings of this development could already be seen in the Lourtie report's references to various stakeholder needs.

According to the Berlin Communiqué, the QA systems have to be developed on local, national and European level. The criteria and methods have to be shared. The responsibility for QA is in the end, according to the communiqué, with the institutions at the local level.

Finnish, Swedish and Dutch responses to the process

The following looks more deeply into the Finnish national responses to the Bologna process and reflects them on the Swedish and Dutch responses.

Finland was one of the 29 signatories of the Bologna declaration (Bologna 1999). The demands of the Bologna process have been met with some caution in Finland (Ahola & Mesikämmen 2003). This applies also to the demands of development of QA mechanisms. The Finnish "assessment for development" –approach has been marketed as Bologna-compatible during the process. The Ministry of Education report prepared for the Berlin meeting in 2003 is an example of this cautious approach. The report also quotes the Finnish legal demand on quality assessment. In the context of QA, the report mentions the role of FINHEEC. Accreditation, which has gained momentum in the Bologna process and will continue to do so, was not mentioned at all in the Ministry report. In other words, prior to the Berlin meeting the official stand presented in Finland was that the Bologna process made no demands on the Finnish QA system.

However, the goals presented in the Berlin meeting of 2003 place a lot of pressure on the individual universities' QA practices (Berlin 2003). From the point of view of the FINHEEC, the QA work of the universities is not very systematic (Huttula 2003). It seems likely the national QA development will face more pressures during the next two years than the Ministry of Education report on the Bologna process would seem to imply. It is interesting that Ministry of Education texts directed to an international audience represent a situation so different from the one that the universities face nationally (OPM 2003). It remains to be seen, how the varied national practices and the Finnish quality assessment system fit in with the European demands of "comparability" and "transparency".

It seems that from the point of view of the Ministry of Education, a joint European QA system does not seem too tempting. In its place, the recognition of the varied national QA systems is offered. This would, in turn, require the systematization of QA at the institutional level, as well as the drawing of national criteria for QA. (Lehikoinen 2003.)

The Swedish response (Sweden 2003) to the advancement of Bologna and Prague frames QA in the contexts of recurrent programme evaluations; assessment of right to award degrees; the Swedish membership of ENQA; and the students' stakeholder interest in quality assessment. In this, the Swedish response resembles the Finnish one. In fact, the Swedish response does not mention accreditation in the context of "the right to award degrees". Accreditation is, however, mentioned in a context where it is perhaps more established: the international accreditation agencies in particular sectors of HE, economics and business.

The Dutch response to the developments since Bologna and Prague links QA very explicitly with the developments of the degree structure and the establishment of an accreditation organization. Since the accreditation organization was established to "guarantee the quality of the bachelor and the master programmes", it can be said that the Dutch response to Bologna developments links quality assurance strongly with the degree system.

Discussion

When we look at the Bologna process documents during the last five years, three things seem to catch the eye:

1. the occurrences of "quality" increase over the years significantly, both absolutely and proportionately in relation to the total number of words in the documents
2. the meanings of quality seem to become more and more converged over the years, from varied aspect of customer ideology and ideas of European openness to the technical implementation details of QA systems in the signatory countries
3. The use of metaphors like "biased"; "vacuum"; "movement" seems to decrease over the years, as the political consensus over the actual actions of the process seem to grow.

Since one of the purposes of this paper was to prepare for a more thorough linguistic analysis of the documents in question, it would seem relevant to continue along these lines and to see, whether a more systematic analysis of metaphors and word choices supports these observations. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) focuses on societal contexts and connections and on making them visible. This is done by linguistic analysis. Simultaneously, CDA enables the study of power relations, ideologies and language relations. CDA offers methodological starting points for finding these connections hidden in the texts, and also gives the researcher a "permission" to define his/her position. Power relations can be found not only in relationships between individuals in particular power positions –teacher/student, doctor/patient, but also in controversial (educational) policy situations such as the Bologna process.

The usability of CDA in higher education policy research is increased by its focus on linguistic analysis in connection with analysis of social context. On the European level, for instance, joint QA will always represent some actor's interest, and one of the ways of grasping that interest is through a critical discourse analysis of the documents produced within the process. Also in higher education policy, some views may be presented as self-evident and others be hidden totally. One of the aims of CDA is to "make visible neutralized causal relationships between the text, the discursive practices and wider societal practices. (Pietikäinen 2000, 201). This remains a relevant goal, even without the emasipatory goal as such.

Table 2 presents a summary of evolution of the "meanings" of quality over the period of 5 years between Sorbonne and Berlin.

Text	Meanings of "quality"	"quality" N % of all words
Sorbonne declaration	NA	0
"Trends 1"	* "Quality" defined by customer metaphor / consumer ideology * national quality assurance mechanisms "distorted" or "biased by national league tables"; European QA systems "independent", filling a "void"	59 (0,19 %)
Bologna declaration	Quality = comparable criteria, promotion of competitive edge	1 (0,08%)
"Trends 2"	QA = tool, means. Need for QA self-evident, unquestioned. Rectors still act as representatives of their institutions (EAU)	81 (0,24%)
"Lourtie report"	Withdrawal from the self-evidency of "European QA": reference to "mutual trust", "partners"; Question of who set the standards is "delicate and controversial".	83 (0,52%)
Prague communiqué	Quality: "quality assurance","networks","cooperation". Students named particularly (ESIB). "Accreditation" suddenly mentioned towards the end, without any problematisation	14 (0,79%)
National Report the Netherlands	QA explicitly integrated in degree development and programme accreditation	11 (0,64%)
National Report Sweden	Quality: Systematic programmed assessment. Accreditation as activity mentioned, but the word is not used.	11 (0,42%)
"Trends 3"	Numeric account of existing QA systems in the Bologna process participant countries.	292 (0,43%)
Report on the Finnish implementation	Reference to the legal obligation to evaluate; reference to the Finnish National higher education evaluation council, reference to cooperation with ENQA. No reference to accreditation.	3 (0,18%)
Zgaga report	Practical and technical orientation to mainly QA	257 (0,47%)
Berlin Communiqué	Schedule for implementation of QA and accreditation	17 (0,55%)

Table 2. The evolution of "quality" in the Bologna Process

One of the characteristics of the Bologna process is that it simultaneously emphasizes the local and the transnational dimension of higher education QA. The task of the national level is to match the demands of comparability on the transnational level and the individual QA systems of local universities and other institutions on the other. Putting together local implementations, national policies and transnational goals contains possibilities for conflicts.

The central documents of the Bologna process give possibilities for very different kinds of national and local interpretations. In Finland, the debate on accreditation is still very much in the agenda.

It is easy to assume that when the words we use are the same, their meanings are also identical. In Finland, "quality assurance" is in the national policy translated as "quality development", as this would fit in well with the policy of "quality as development" (Saarinen 2004). Accreditation, in turn, has not been received with great enthusiasm in Finland. The International strategy of higher education institutions from 2001 states quite bluntly that at leas until now, there has been no need for accreditation in Finland (OPM 2001). One of the reasons for this is the formal Finnish "government accreditation" (Välimaa 2004), where the Council of State decides on the resourcing of a new university and its establishment is then recognized by law. It is quite natural that in the present Finnish context, it would be tempting to define the Bologna demand of "QA" from the point of view of the quality as development view promoted by the Ministry of education and the FINHEEC. Accreditation, on the other hand, has never been met with great enthusiasm in Finland. The mere mention of the word seems to be avoided.

At least in Finland, the change from a system which stresses assessment as a tool for development into a system of comparable quality criteria or even accreditation should be significant.

From the point of view of the quality policies of Higher Education, the promotion of a European wide QA system is central to the Bologna process. The motive behind quality work is now to ease the recognition and comparison of higher education systems and degrees. The few mentions of >academic quality= or >quality of higher education and research= have been subordinated to the comparability and attractiveness of European higher education. As the Bergen summit of 2005 draws closer, it will be interesting to see, how the demands for QA and accreditation are met nationally and on the institutional level.

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The data

See table 1