

**Governmentality in a context of governance without
government:
The case of the Bologna Process**

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¹ This is a draft paper. Please do not quote

This paper aims to explore the Bologna Process as a possible manifestation of governmentality in a context of governance without government. My main interest with this paper is to present the theoretical and analytical work on Bologna that my PhD research is based on, raise points for feedback. In relation to my conclusions. I will not engage in an extensive presentation of the Bologna Process here due to the nature of this conference. However, I consider it worthwhile to present the theoretical, methodological and analytical approaches that I adopted in my research. More importantly, this paper is an attempt to present my reflections on the analytical descriptions of the data collected for my PhD thesis. For this reason, only a small amount of data will be presented in the form of quotes. Instead, I will give a schematic overview of my main findings based on a discursive analysis of the Bologna Process official documents and my primary collected data.

The Bologna Process, education policy and discourse

In my research the Bologna Process is considered to be a European Union (EU) higher education policy and policy is regarded as discourse. The discussion that will follow aims to introduce the Bologna Process in terms of its discursive content, context and its probability as a discursive concept.

Even though I will not describe the BP extensively, I still need to introduce the features of the process that struck me as distinguishing. The BP is a European Ministerial education initiative aiming at the creation of a Common European Area in Higher Education (CEAHE) that has been adopted by the EU, which gives the BP an EU character. The Bologna Process's very distinctive characteristics, in which its realisation is based, can be summarised as follows: its non-legislative character; the voluntary adaptation and participation of the member-states to the process; the extension of the Process to non EU members; and, finally, its peculiarity as a set of common guidelines, the realisation of which differ within each member-state.

My approach to the Bologna Process derives from Sociology of Education, and particularly an Education Policy perspective. From this perspective I have built up the theoretical basis of my research using as a starting point Ball's 'policy cycle' (1990, 1993). According to Ball, policy is regarded as 'text' and as 'discourse'.

My research

My research is qualitative and covers the changes deriving from the Bologna Process specifically, in the countries (England and Greece) and the institutions in which is conducted. It is based on both primary and secondary data. The secondary data are made up of the official documents of the Bologna Process, either those that contribute to promoting the process or those that comment on the former. Primary data include semi-structured interviews conducted in Greece and England. I focused on two Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in each country. In each country, one institution was an 'old –university' and the other an ex-polytechnic (A-TEI in Greece²). In each institution I conducted interviews in two departments, one educational or social science oriented and one more science oriented. I tried to find interviewees who held different positions within each institution and each department. Therefore, the sample I draw from consists of academics, administrative staff and students. In total, I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews in Greece and 26 in England.

First analytical approach

The first analytical approach presented in this section is based on a discursive analysis of the official and commentary documents that constitute the BP. I

² In the English ex-polytechnics gained the status of university in 1992. However, the upgrading of the Greek TEI (Technological Vocational Institutions) polytechnics to ATEI (Highest Technological Vocational Institutions), that offered those institutions equal status with AEI (Highest Education Institutions) universities – up to that point TEI were considered Higher Education and not Highest - took place in 2001 with one single law. N. 2916/2001"Structural organisation of Highest Education and regulation of issues of its technological sector" upgrading of polytechnics to universities

will adopt a rather instrumental approach to the notion of discourse as the aim of this research is to diagnose not only the 'power' embedded in the official HE policy discourse on CEAHE, but also to reveal how this discourse is transformed into educational policy and how other related discourses influence and appear in relation to the official discourse. Discursive analysis, in my research, uses the Foucauldian notion of discourse in relation to the construction of objects and subjectivities as well as Ball's notion of the space of engagement with, within and between the discourses. In their words, discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak...discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention' (Foucault, 1974, p.49) and "discourses are about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when and with what authority" (Ball, 1990, p.2). In addition, discourses are also social creations by subjects in the reality of policy text production and at the same time the existence of the discourse is embedded in its use by subjects. Thus, while I aim to present a discursive analysis of the official BP process, this attempt has been enriched with features of the BP policy discourses drawn out of my primary data.

Throughout my discursive analysis of the BP official documents three issues of significance arose: firstly, that the BP policy discourse is based on and claims global competition for European HEI's (EHEI's); secondly, that it draws on the global discourse on HE; and thirdly, that it stresses the need for quality assurance as a prerequisite for global competitiveness.

In relation to the first point on global competitiveness, the Bologna Declaration clearly stated the need for a CEHEA as the basis for the enhancement of European competitiveness. EHE is thus called upon to actively support the European labour market through the provision of qualifications to the labour force. This leads the discussion from higher education policy to the connection between higher education and the labour market and in particular the dependence of the higher education outcome on labour market demands or funding.

Concerning the second point presented above, I tried to highlight similarities and divergences between the global Higher Education (HE) discourse and the BP discourse. In doing so, both discourses – global and regional – were regarded from the perspective of a division of discourse as process and discourse as ideology (Hall and Harley 1995, Henry et al. 2001, Currie 1998, Lingard and Rizvi 1998). I would suggest that there are strong parallels between the two discourses, that is, globalisation and the BP. The ideological features of the globalisation discourse have been embodied in that of Bologna, as an education policy response to the global context. Due to the similarities of the two discourses, it could be claimed on one hand that the discourse is merely moving levels, from the global to the national, as its main features, that is, competitiveness, flexibility and quality, remain unchanged. On the other hand, the continuous reference to social and cultural issues in the BP discourse could suggest that the adoption of the globalisation discourse is not blindfold and silent, but is a process of constant discursive recontextualisation.

Coming to the third point, competitiveness and vocational training cannot stand on their own as features that define, preserve and sustain high-quality education. This is especially so because, in the Bologna context, modular credits are to be transferred not only within institutions but also within countries and differentiated higher education systems. The call for quality is at the forefront of the BP policy discourse. For example O'Mahony (2002) describes six action areas of the BP policy discourse. Those were "...the pillars upon [which] the Salamanca Statement³ should be constructed:

- **Freedom with responsibility:** empowering universities
- **Employability** on the European labour market
- **Mobility** in the higher education area
- **Compatibility:** a common but flexible qualifications framework
- **Quality assurance and certification** (accreditation)

³ Over 300 European higher education institutions and their main representative organisations gathered in Salamanca on 29-30 March 2001. Their purpose was to prepare their input to the Prague meeting of the ministers in charge of higher education in the countries involved in the Bologna Process.

- **Competitiveness** at home and in the world” (O’Mahony, 2002, p.45).

From the ‘six action areas’ or policy arenas presented above, the prioritisation of quality discourse comes naturally as the remaining five features of the policy are related to it either as a presupposition or as a result of quality. For example, the first feature of ‘freedom with responsibility’ for the empowerment of the universities is vital for the enforcement of competitive attitudes within HEI which have to “be free to make strategic choices, to concentrate on their core areas, to choose their partners, and to position themselves to compete to deliver quality education research and service” (O’Mahony, 2002, p.48). ‘Competitiveness at home and in the world’ on the other hand is bound to the established and acknowledged quality of an HEI. Moreover, the quality discourse within the BP guidelines has two points of focus. One can be described as internal as it is focused on the establishment of national and regional quality for HEIs. The other can be described as external as it is focused on quality for international competition.

Quality Culture

However, ‘quality’ can be understood in many ways. My concern is the way in which the culture of quality is imposed upon HEIs through the present education policy regime, the BP, as a form of power, creating a condition of ‘quality culture’ in higher education. As with any other power regime, the BP policy regime from its starting point gave birth to opposition, which largely arose from HEIs and their participants. These oppositions can be seen as forms of resistance either to the newly introduced policy regime or to the changes that the new policy would introduce to the constituted context of higher education. In any case, the expression of opposition through different forms of resistance produces struggles. In the EU higher education policy context, these struggles become real in the BP discourse, through the multiplicity of texts and meetings, the process of goal setting and, more importantly, the struggle over the definition of the terms and conditions of the policy realisation.

The level of struggle that took place during the making of the Bologna Declaration, which is obvious in the numerous explanatory and commentary documents that followed it, and which continues now, is not merely a struggle over meaning. As Foucault suggests, “no doubt communicating is always a certain way of acting upon another person or persons. But the production and circulation of elements of meaning can have as their objective or as their consequences certain results in the realm of power; the latter are not simply an aspect of the former” (Foucault, 2000, p.13). The struggle appears to be spread within and across the different levels that the BP as policy imbricates. In this instance, by using the term ‘struggle’, I am trying to cover a whole range of forms of engagement with the BP policy discourse. The levels of struggle within the BP policy discourse entail, on the one hand, a spatial context of struggle and, on the other, struggles over the societal implications of the policy realisation. Three main levels are located in the spatial context (see table 1): a) regional b) national c) institutional. In the context of societal implications, connotations on a) the political, b) the economic and c) the social levels can be found.

On a regional level the Ministers of Education were asked to focus not on the similarities between the higher education system of their country of origin and the HE systems of other member states, but instead on their differences. That was in order to find ways to overcome these differences on a regional level. Interestingly though, the BP discourse recontextualised on a national level was stressing the commonalities of different member states higher education systems.

On a state level the production of the Bologna Declaration document was the policy’s move from the abstract conceptual level of its production to its practical application on the national level. In other words, the next set of struggles appears in the way in which each member state responded to the policy targets were responded. However, the extent of the intensity of the struggle at a national level demonstrates differences between different member states.

Table 1

BP Policy: Levels of struggle			
Spatial context		Societal implications	
Global: globalisation, complexity, fluidity, time/space compression, information transition, diminution of the nation state		Globalisation: Similar policies on higher education in different part of the world. Demand for HE to participate in the global economic market/competition. Demand for labour force qualifications and mobility, HE reform	
Regional	Member-states' education ministers collectively set in place the beginning of a EU HE policy	Political	Correlation between member-states, EU and Commission on education policy issues
National	Governments set their national HE policy framework according to Bologna targets	Economic	EU's ability to successfully compete in global context
Institutional	Setting internal procedures to meet national and regional policy goals. Struggles for retaining a 'space' within the realisation of policy goals.	Social	Creation of EU citizenship – affinity

On an institutional level is found the actual realisation of the Bologna policy discourse within HEIs. At this level we can identify the struggles of individual institutions in three dimensions: a) to adapt to policies or guidelines deriving from their national governments, b) to adapt to Bologna policy discourse as regional guidelines and c) the need for HEIs to preserve their existence and autonomy within a context of reform. The HEIs have to deal with national and regional demands in terms of quality, which plays an important role in funding. This consequently influences the range of research that a university can undertake as well as the autonomy that the institution has in terms of subject areas and courses that it offers.

Moving to the second type of struggle, related to the societal implications of the policy realisation, I shall start the discussion from the political dimension. As the politics related to European higher education and especially those related to the BP are rather interesting, I will expand on them here.

As reported in Balanya et al. (2000, p. 21) the ERT (European Roundtable of Industrialists) played an important role in the establishment of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, sooner than it was expected to take place by the EU member-states.

“in a 1993 television interview, Delors recognised the ‘continuing pressure’ of the ERT, claiming that it was ‘one of the main driving forces behind the Single Market’.” (Balanya et al. p. 22)

The ERT, seeing the establishment of European economic convergence as in their own financial interests, put pressure on the Commission. Gradually the ERT showed interest in European infrastructures and in European higher education, particularly in respect to vocational qualifications, and the readability, comparability and credibility of degrees, as much as in their quality. Again in Balanya et al., the opinion of the ERT on education is given: “The ERT has historically stressed the need to leave education in the hands of industry instead of people ‘who appear to have no dialogue with, nor understanding of, industry and the path of progress’” (Balanya et al. p. 31). This was a struggle, within the EU HE policy discourse, over who gets to be heard, as the ERT sought to displace more traditional voices in discourses of higher education.

However, in terms of the convergence of higher education, the European Commission was able to introduce its own agenda for the social and cultural aspects of higher education, along with its economic character. The Commission had been trying to promote the idea of EHE convergence since the 1980s, for example, via the establishment of the ‘SOCRATES’ programme. Thus, the member states were left in the complex situation of needing to respond to the expectations and demands of the ERT in relation to higher education while retaining their authority over national higher education

systems, without the interference of the Commission. The Sorbonne Declaration in 1998 came as a response, put together by the four most influential EU member states⁴, and expanded to 29 participating EU and non member states a year later with the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The Commission, eventually, adopted the process and thus found a way to promote its agenda on Higher Education through the BP. The politics of Bologna then continue in different arenas, those of the struggles between the member states and the Commission, and concerning the way in which the BP was to be presented in the nation states by their governments. In each arena, level, or dimension of the BP, oppositional struggles or struggles over the realisation of the initiatives are present.

In the economic dimension, broadly speaking, the main struggle can be defined as the ability of the EU to compete successfully in the global context. As has been discussed previously, the BP, as an initiative with policy features, was created in order to serve this purpose. However, the consequences of the proposed policy reform in EHE led to the reduction of state funding of higher education institutions, which meant that they were left to compete among themselves for external funding not only in the European but also the global context. For this reason, HEIs are led increasingly by the needs of business and industry, moving away from their traditional priority of disciplinary education to vocational subject areas that will provide qualified and specialised labour forces.

Finally, the social dimension of the BP policy discourse is enriched and also obliged towards the construction of what is called European citizenship, which is said to lead to 'European affinity'. Although this is not an issue that will be discussed in detail in the analysis, the data showed that none of the interviewees, either Greek or English, defined themselves as European.

⁴ The four countries represented by their ministers of education were France (*Claude Allègre, Minister of National Education, Research and Technology*), the United Kingdom (*Tessa Blackstone, Minister of Higher Education*), Germany (*Jürgen Rüttgers, Minister of Education, Science, Research and Technology*) and Italy (*Luigi Berlinguer, Minister of Public Education, Universities and Research*).

When they were specifically asked if they felt European, most of them expressed a problem in understanding the term. Although this research cannot claim any interest in the meaning and definition of European identity, still the way that European affinity is being constructed and imposed on subjects through the discourses of 'European citizenship' and 'European Identity' has some bearing on this research.

Summing up the above, in this research the BP is regarded as an EU education policy regime that aims to create a condition of 'quality culture' within EU higher education. In order to accomplish this, the BP policy discourse uses regulatory mechanisms for the management and organisation of the policy realisation such as module and course accreditation on an institutional level, follow-up groups of the process on an EU level and yearly reports on the progression of the realisation of the process on a state level.

Moving on, I should note that there is a significant but purposeful omission in the table of struggles and oppositions presented above (Table 1), which is the cultural dimension of the Bologna policy discourse. This is due to the fact that culture moves in between and within all the levels of the spatial context and also is embedded in all aspects of the societal implications. That is to say, the power of the BP policy regime, in order for a culture of quality to be established, uses primarily culturally embedded mechanisms, which translated into policy realisation language, are regulatory mechanisms and policy technologies.

In addition, the BP policy discourse emerges in an age in which neo-liberal approaches are at the forefront within political thought and action. Neo-liberalism appears as a criticism of the welfare state, which is seen as lacking in efficiency due to its bureaucratic and centralised character. Nonetheless, neo-liberalism is a mentality of government. It works on different levels, such as: the political, as a political philosophy and perspective, aiming to empower the subject through the development of a sense of autonomy and responsibility; the institutional, based on the marketisation of the previously publicly provided services such as education, health and pensions; and finally,

the ethical dimension, by constructing new values as it introduces new principles that govern the conduct of the subjects. Moreover, neo-liberalism aims at a cultural change that will be based on individual freedom, responsibility and choice and which is another way for regulating the conduct of the population. Interestingly, the population within this context conforms voluntarily to the new principles and values.

Drawing together the above threads, which attempt to conceptualise the realisation of the Bologna Process policy discourse, I have found it useful to deploy on both the descriptive and explanatory levels the Foucaultian concept of 'governmentality'. However, governmentality as a notion and concept is developed within the context of the nation-state government. I view this as problematic from the perspective of the non-legislative feature of the Bologna policy realisation. For this reason I have employed a term deriving from the field of international relations, that of 'governance' as outlined by Rosenau (1992). Accordingly, and to a certain degree in a playful way, I will explore the possibility of 'governmentality in a context of governance without government'.

My position on governmentality in this research is focused on the policy techniques that are used for the realisation of the BP as an EU policy for higher education integration. These policy techniques, as outlined in Ball's work (2003), have been identified as the distinctive features of the 'quality culture' discourse promoted by the BP discourse and are the 'market', 'managerialism' and 'performativity'. The efficiency of governance is both based on the voluntary, non-legislative character of policies on the one hand and, on the other, on the material conditions that construct the set of rules and regulations according to which institutions and individuals ought to operate for the attainment of order.

Second analytical approach

The second analytical approach is based on a reflective engagement of the previously elaborated points relating to the discursive analysis of the official

documents with the main analytical points drawn out from the primary data analysis.

Two features of the CEAHE are its obscurity and complexity as a policy discourse. Firstly, CEAHE policy-discourse embraces a whole range of current global orthodoxies concerning higher education, such as quality assurance, qualifications and HE management, but also regional issues such as degree recognition between EU countries and mobility. Secondly, although constructed at a regional EU level, its realisation as policy occurs not only at the state level but also at the institutional level.

In relation to the first feature mentioned above, what appears to happen is that 'CEAHE is the main EU education policy discourse and it has been willingly adopted by the states that have signed the Bologna Process. The *main discourse*, within the process of realisation, is reduced to smaller, *secondary discourses*. Secondary discourses appear as education policies at the state level and lower down on an institutional level. The outcome of secondary discourses in the everyday reality of an institution can be seen through the *tertiary discourses*. These are discourses concerned with quality assurance, with meeting the standards of a good institution, funding, research and divergences between academics and administrative staff. These are also the discourses that are commonly recognised, understood and appreciated by most of the participants in an institution.

Moving on to the second feature, I will propose a way of thinking about CEAHE as policy-discourse at different levels. That is to say, the main discourse works at the regional EU level, the secondary discourse at the state level and the tertiary at the institutional. Main, secondary and tertiary discourses are highly interrelated and imbricated. Interestingly, the way they are recontextualised at any level depends on the educational features of the state and status of the institution.

i. The model of analysis

Table 1 is organised according to discourses (vertically) and the elements that the discourse is applied to (horizontally).

Vertically, is the table begins with discourse as a notion (*this discourse is the discourse of globalisation, economic competition and regionalisation out of which the CEAHE discourse arose*) . In each part of the analysis the elements of the discourse change as it refers to specific and differentiated positions and conditions. According to the conditions, there are three accounts of discourse used as analytical tools. The first of these is the main discourse, which consists of a number of official EU documents addressing the creation of CEAHE. Then there are the secondary discourses that are conducted through each state's education policy as regards the CEAHE. There are also the tertiary discourses, which are embedded in the policy realisation process in each institution. Finally, as is highlighted by their description, discourses (main, secondary and tertiary) appear at different levels, that is, EU, state and institutional, which can be referred to as levels of coherence of the discourse.

Table 2

Discourse	Institutional Status (Type of Institution)	Voice of agents (Agent's institutional position)
Main Discourse (EU level)	<i>Institutional Positioning</i>	<i>Agent's Positioning</i>
Secondary Discourse (State level)		
Tertiary Discourse (Institutional level)		

Horizontally read, table 2 presents discourse as an analytical tool that can illuminate the processes of policy realisation by recognising its effects on the elements that it is applied to, which in this case are the institutions and the agents. However, policy processes and effects are differentiated according to the interplay of the discourse either with the institutional status or the agent's

institutional position. Institutional status can be defined as the position of an institution in relation to its position in the HE space, in a local and European context, and in relation to the values it represents. An agent's institutional position is the position that each of the interviewees held in their institution.

HEI's in the Bologna Process

At this point I will present the main trends of change due to the adaptation of the the Bologna Process by the HEIs I researched, as they appeared according to the coding of the primary data. Schematically the main features appear in Table 3 for England and Table 4 for Greece. I will briefly describe the main features in each institution and will be placing 'quality' at the centre of my analysis.

i. 'Old' University in England

The most interesting point to emerge from my data on the 'old' university in the England was the lack of knowledge of the BP. Even though the participants that were interviewed claimed to recognise the value of cooperation between HEIs, they did not place it strictly within a European context. They also viewed it as a one-way process of accepting students from other universities and not sending their own abroad. The institution in question was highly research oriented, however, the funding for research, they explained, is seldom oriented towards the European Framework as the amount of money offered for research is less than what a state body would offer. As it was explained to me, a state body would offer an additional amount of 90% of the main research funding for administrative expenses, something that the Framework does not offer. It should be mentioned that in the English context funding is allocated to the institutions in relation to their QA rating, which means that the higher the rating the higher the funding and vice versa. According to the participants' views over the QA mechanisms adopted internally and externally in the old university, it can be said that the institution has high levels of confidence about the quality of education that it offers and for this reason its predominant concern is to ensure the minimum of

state control over its autonomy. This confidence could possibly be the reason for the lack of reference to the BP policy discourse. In terms of their approach to quality, the experience of the participants in the old university seems to be one of frustration in practical terms as they described the Quality Assurance Association (QAA) assessment as more of a bureaucratic burden than anything else.

Table 3

Old University England	Ex-polytechnic England
Research	Teaching and conditions of studying
Co-operation	Erasmus
Critical over quality culture	Restructuring -anxiety and pressure over quality
Overcome discourse due to status	Awareness of Bologna
Less knowledgeable of Bologna	Funding focusing on EU framework
Focusing on England Funding	

ii. Ex-polytechnic in England

In the ex-polytechnic, the BP policy discourse appears as a 'must do' condition for the board of the institution but it is questionable how far this process has gone in terms of the realisation of the Bologna institutional goals. Two issues are highlighted in the interviews: a) student mobility, even though there are attempts in this direction, has been overlooked because b) issues of quality, which embrace standards, inspections and equivalence, are at the forefront of attention. That is the case mainly due to the status of the institution, as the ex-polytechnic lacks, confidence by the Higher Education Agency (HEA).

This particular institution a few years ago faced the threat of being shut down due to a quality failure that led to an internal restructuring. When discussing the restructuring, the participants explained that the whole institution had to

adapt not only to the bureaucratic mechanisms of the QAA, but also had to develop a culture of internal evaluation and quality in order to reach the standards expected of HEIs. All members of staff and schools were given the responsibility for this and quality shifted from a top-down procedure to a cumulative awareness among individual academics, to schools, and to the whole of the institution.

In general, the ex-polytechnic prioritises the teaching and studying conditions of its students and most of the participants were aware of the existence of the BP policy discourse. Research is also a central issue, though funding is difficult to obtain as the institution lacks the high quality rating necessary for state funding. Possibly that is the reason that the institution is more inclined towards the European Framework for funding, another competitive funding body, and to co-operation with other European institutions.

Drawing attention to some general conclusions related to the position of the two institutions and from a rather cynical point of view, quality assurance seems to work more as a regulatory device for the process of knowledge production rather than as a check on the quality of the product itself. That is obvious on both institutions. Where the difference lies is in the level of autonomy that each one of them possesses. The 'old' institution has an established status that allows the space for greater autonomy in contrast to the ex-polytechnic. In the old university, quality is treated as a bureaucratic burden. In the ex-polytechnic the realisation of the quality discourse led to internal evaluation procedures and quality assurance agencies and committees, to institutional and departmental restructuring and to the repositioning of its participants' view of their role in the institution.

By no means am I trying to claim that old institutions do not face any challenges in terms of QA, but rather that their participants go over and through the external evaluative procedures with a security deriving from the status of the institution. Their anxiety then is focused on the preservation of this status. This is a rather difficult task within the BP policy discourse, as the global competition that EHEIs had been asked to participate in increasingly

becomes a European competition for funding, attracting students and gaining status.

In relation to the European dimension, the ex-polytechnic appears to be more advanced. It is the lack of state funding and the search for partners for the development of quality that has driven the institution towards more European solutions. In the ex-polytechnic, the BP policy discourse offers a possibility for expansion, research and development and if used in all of its extent, such institutions have the potential to move up the ladder of institutional ratings, precisely due to their European orientation.

iii. Old University in Greece

In the old-university (AEI), evaluation existed unofficially since 1998 as a way to adapt to the European higher education trend. Evaluation as a process was not obligatory, as it was an internal experiment focused on how the institution and its participants would react to such procedures. Thus, some departments did not participate in the process, and moreover did not accept to be evaluated. There are no interviews from people in those departments but other interviewees described the attitude of non-participation as stemming from fear of the outcome or as a political position of opposition to EU initiatives in higher education.

However, on a personal level, the Dean of the university was rather displeased with the overall idea that HEIs should follow specific criteria and procedures adopted from a European educational context developed on the idea of global economic competition. Specifically, most of the interviewees saw the BP policy discourse as *'an unavoidable and irreversible situation'*, exposed their dislike towards the direction that EHEI's are taking due to the process.

Discussing the changes in Greek universities the participants often move into a comparison with the universities in England as they were expressing their fears for Greek and European institutions, especially in relations to

institutional ranking, the way it happens in England. That is something that they would prefer to be avoided as this condition only creates more problems for average institutions by cutting down their funding from the government and supports the already well off institutions.

Participants in the university also were concerned with HEI quality, specifically in relation to the upgrading of TEI to ATEI. The oppositional point to the upgrading is that in the ATEI very few lectures have a PhD though in the university you cannot lecture without one and that is in their opinion a major quality issue.

Finally, the Greek university, within all its attempts to catch up with EU and BP directives and initiatives, does its best to be research driven and research oriented, however, funding is always an issue as the main source of big scale funding is from the European Framework. The participants show great awareness of the BP and have a critical view over it. They also do recognise its necessity for the ‘survival’ of the university in a EU and global competitive higher education environment but their main concern over their attempts is the traditional bureaucratic character of Greek institutions and their mal – functioning management that leads to inefficiency.

Table 4

Old University GR	Ex-polytechnic GR
Research	Teaching and conditions of studying
Co-operation (Erasmus)	Erasmus
Internal quality mechanisms before national law	Restructuring -anxiety and pressure over quality
Overcoming’ discourse due to non-efficient management	Awareness of Bologna
Great awareness of Bologna	Lack of research
Focusing on EU Funding	Greater access – weaker students
Greater need of EU connection	

iv. Ex-polytechnic in Greece

The Greek ex-polytechnic has a lot of obstacles to overcome in order to fully adapt to the BP policy discourse. This type of university legally had no support for research as it was structured to serve the strictly vocational training needs of its students. For this reason, the main priority of the institution was the quality of the teaching and of the conditions of studying. Moreover, the TEI graduates were not legally permitted to apply to do an MA at the Greek AElS. Consequently, most interviewees from the ex-polytechnic were concerned with the status of the degrees and the opportunities the students had to do MAs after the upgrading of the institution. The only option for the former ATEI students to continue their studies was to go abroad and enrol in other European HEIs. For this, the Erasmus programme was one of the main routes, which, as a result, has left the institutions with a very well organised Erasmus and ECTS scheme.

Quality in the ATEI is another important issue. The vice chancellor of the institution offered a very positive view, suggesting that as long as the academics of the ATEI that do not already have a PhD get one and as long as the institution follows the EU and BP quality guidelines and standards, the institution will be on the same level as the Greek AElS and other European HEIs. The pertinent point though, in my understanding, is that although all the participants in Greek HEIs, AElS and ATEIs, accept the quality gap between the two types of institutions, the government did go along⁵ with the upgrading of the latter, claiming that was adapting to the BP policy discourse.

Other interviewees offered different accounts of the quality of the institution. Summing up, there are two main points a) some departments in the ATEI had already started both internal and external evaluation procedures, independently of the institution, by asking fellow institutions to evaluate them and b) the institution, at the time that the interviews were held, was starting to organise a scheme to establish an internal evaluation mechanism, following the BP standards. Again the overall quality of the institution could be

⁵ There was great opposition among academics and students, participants in Greek AElS and some participants in ATEIs, to the way that the upgrading of the latter took place.

challenged, as the interviewees explained. The problem rests with the governmental arrangements for widening participation in HEIs. The concern is that the ATEI was already accepting students that did not do well in the national HE entrance exams, and to a great extent, these were academically weak students. Now these students will be able to get access to ATEIs, leaving ATEI places to be taken by even weaker students. In their understating, the participants in the ATEI said that this would be a major issue to tackle in terms of quality of teaching, as they will probably need to lower the standards for students to be able to graduate.

Summing up the above, the main concern focuses on whether the Greek HEIs will be able to adapt fully to the BP quality guidelines. Interestingly, the institutions had long before recognized the demands of the BP policy discourse and had moved independently towards their realisation. What is noticeable though is the recontextualisation of the BP policy discourse from the regional to the national level. It appears that the perception was that the BP policy discourse had been realised through the passing of a law for the establishment of the national quality agency and another one on the harmonisation of ATEIs and ATEIs.

Conclusions: possibilities or not

There are many routes that can be taken towards drawing conclusions from the above theoretical and analytical discussion. I shall try to outline three directions and I would be grateful for your recommendations. The first point is related to issues of quality, the second to issues of education policy and finally, the third point looks at the role of HEIs. The points are drawn and extracted from all levels of analysis of the primary and secondary data used in my research, and are bound up in my personal appreciation of the BP policy discourse.

My first observation is that quality issues are dependent on the history of quality preservation mechanisms within different states and different institutions. And it is not difficult to suggest that most English HEIs are

significantly more advanced in quality mechanisms than the Greek ones. Moreover, in the previous section I presented the different accounts of quality in the four participating institutions. Even though the sample is only representative of the specific cases, the point that strongly is that HEIs are being divided by the QA mechanisms. This division between high- and low-rated institutions influences the type of students that enter different types of institutions and makes it hard for the low-rated institutions to keep up with the competition. Raising the quality of teaching and student support in these institutions is their only chance, even though these are highly expensive measures. However, the example of the Greek polytechnic in relation to the widening participation policy suggests that this is not the case. This particular institution, in order to reach the graduate requirement for QA, is considering as an option the lowering of the level of teaching, which would consequently decrease the quality of the teaching. Even though this may be one exceptional case, what cannot be denied is that the QA mechanism may lead not only to the division of institutions but also to the differentiation of standards for different institutions and consequently for different students. If this is the case at any point, it challenges both the notions of wide participation in HE, as HE will provide different qualifications to different students, and of CEHEA, as the idea of 'common' would be different for different institutions. Nevertheless, this scenario makes sense within a competitive market-oriented HE environment, even at a European level, so that the leading institutions are clearly identifiable.

The second point that I would like to raise is related to education policy, and specifically to the way it is being constructed, regulated and distributed. The primary data showed that it is mostly institutions 'in need' that are more likely to acknowledge the BP policy discourse, as it is perceived as an opportunity to survive the competition and develop. These institutions did not wait for the discourse to become national before adapting to its regional form. The question, then, is how did this happen? One explanation could be that academics that participated in the process formulated a policy-elite that works on a regional and institutional level supporting the direct circulation of information from the one level to the other. The national policy level is still

important as it helps the pace of the change by legalising in the national context. Finally, governance is not found only on the national level but primarily on the institutional level. For this reason, a neo-liberal perception of governmentality is vital for the acceptance by institutions and their participants of the new values of competitiveness, transparency, mobility, efficiency and effectiveness, which are bound to each and every unit of the participatory bodies that desire to be part of the EHEA.

Finally my third point is related to the role of EHEIs. Educational theorists stress the operational character that education, policy studies and furthermore higher education institutions have adopted within the New Right, Neo-Liberal perspective. The neo-liberal values such as efficiency, productivity, performativity, excellence, individual autonomy and individualisation do not carry with them the ideals and principals of moral values but instead are based on fragmented operational and/or instrumental values.

The intriguing feature of this present condition of not only European higher education, but education in general, is that schools, teachers, HEIs, academics and students adapt fast and with almost no resistance to the educational market. It is a change, and the universities cannot claim that things were perfect before. I do not claim that things should go back to elitist attitudes, bureaucracy, and a situation in which there is no pragmatic connection between education and labour. However, what is happening to HEIs and their participants is not a just a reorganisation, but a reconstruction of the reason for their existence and the purpose they serve. If universities were constructed for the education of the nation-state population, the evolution of society and the promotion of humanitarian values, and presently the nation-state is being reduced to a referee on the regional terrain, if society as Thatcher has expressed does not exist, if HEIs do not offer as much as they are supposed to in relation to the funding they get, I do not see why institutions that offer skilling and re-skilling should still keep the expired title of 'University'.

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