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The Bologna Process after the Bucharest Summit – Future Challenges for Quality Assurance and EQAR

Keynote presentation
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It is rare to find an institution which is at once so **uniform** and so **diverse**; it is recognisable in all the guises it takes, but in no one place is it identical with what it is in any other. This **unity and diversity** constitute the final proof of the extent to which the **university** was the spontaneous product of mediaeval life; for it is only living things which can in this way, while fully retaining their identity, bend and adapt themselves to a whole variety of circumstances and environments.

– Emile Durkheim (*The Evolution of Educational Thought*, 1902/1977)

- **Bologna Process**
- **Quality Assurance and Governance**
- **EQAR: trust and strategy**

Bologna Process

- Integration initiatives in European HE since 1950s

- Actual process 'bumpy ride' : celebration of inter-country HE diversity

- Major events in 1999 (Bologna Declaration) and 2000 (Lisbon Summit): from focus on diversity to common interests

- Implementation of Bologna process: created important momentum for change in European HE

- But: Bologna Declaration *translated* into national contexts, not *diffused* throughout 'Bologna countries'

  Consequence: 'multi-speed' EHEA or differentiated integration

Bologna Process (cont.)

- Early 2000s (until 2006) growing competency of EC wrt HE

- Modernisation Agenda for Universities (2006) 'breaking point'

- Since 2006: 're-nationalisation' of HE policy responsibilities (see, e.g. The 2011 HE Modernisation Agenda)

- In addition, renewal of Bologna process in 2009/10 experienced differently in different parts of the EHEA

- Current status of Bologna process?

- Nature of governance structure of EHEA:

"Layered cake federalism" wrt HE in Europe?

"Marble cake federalism"

"No rigid delineation of which level of government held authority over which set of activities"
(Donahue 1996)

Bologna Process (cont.)

Bucharest Communiqué (2012)

- Economic/financial crisis
    - 1. insecure funding & job prospects
    - 2. HE important part of solution
- Improvement of data collection and transparency to underpin political goals
- Main goals 2012-2015:
    - 1. quality HE for all;
    - 2. improve graduates employability;
    - 3. strengthen mobility

Bologna Process (cont.)

Bucharest Communiqué (2012)

· Terms and concepts apparently of relevance to EQAR:

– Employability
– Learning outcomes
– Qualifications frameworks

As well as:

– Focus on joint and double degree programmes

Bologna Process (cont.)

Bucharest Communiqué (2012)

· Based on 3 overarching goals 20 Priorities for 2012-2015, i.e.,

10 at national level, incl.:

1. "Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements"

and 10 at European level, incl.:

2. "Develop a proposal for a revised version of the ESG for adoption"

Bologna Process (cont.)

Bucharest Communiqué (2012)

·   Underlying assumptions wrt further development of EHEA:

EHEA is based on cross-country and cross-institutional trust and transparency, which are important conditions for mobility;

EQAR is expected to contribute to the strengthening of trust and transparency, which as such will make mobility a more natural part of the EHEA

Bologna Process (cont.)

Trust

·   Bologna process has created trust in European HE outside Europe (see, e.g. studies by Jane Knight)

·   Has Bologna contributed to strengthening intra-European trust in HE? Inside Europe important issue when it comes to trust in HE in other countries is 'multi-speed' EHEA.

Quality Assurance and the Governance of European Higher Education

- Since mid-1980s HE Quality Assurance core issue in changing steering (or governance) relationship between HE and the State.

  In this process quality assurance has changed from:

  a. Academic Ownership to Externally Driven Processes
  b. Central State Control to Institutional Responsibility and European Concern
  c. Intrinsic to Explicit
  d. Focused on student characteristics (Input) to learning outcomes (Output)
  e. HE Quality being in the 'Eyes of the Beholder' to quality interpreted on the basis of 'sets of standardized indicators'

Quality Assurance and the Governance of European Higher Education (cont.)

- Original focus in national HE quality & governance debates not on academic quality as such, but on responsibility for assuring quality of educational programmes (and degrees awarded).

- 'Trade in HE governance negatiations'' consisted of combination of accepting increased institutional autonomy at the costs of increased, standardized reporting requirements on use of autonomy (accountability)

- Emerging post-1999 European governance layer wrt HE and EHEA led to increased demands for cross-institutional and cross-country standardization and organization of QA

The effects of formalizing QA of HE

·   Professionalization of QA in HEIs

·   Student empowerment

·   Enhancing knowledge on quality in HEIs and among external stakeholders

·   Contributing to institutional profiling of HEIs

Unclear:

·   Effects on public trust in HE

·   Effects on student choice

·   Effects on employability

·   Etc.

National QA systems as barriers for Bologna implementation?

"Many higher education systems are currently being held back from Bologna implementation – and thus from offering improved services to students and society - by national QA systems that are costly, offer no evidence of overall quality improvement, and stifle institutions' capacity to respond creatively to the demands of evolving European knowledge society" (Trends V: 2007: 59).

Core issue wrt HE governance: creating effective balance between unity vs diversity

Balance between system level need for order (unity) and institutional need for autonomy (diversity)

Clark (1983):
- **Forces that keep HE systems together (coordination)**
- **Forces that pull HE systems in different directions (diversity)**

Olsen (2007)
"Europe in Search of New Political Order"
- **System level need for order (unity)**
- **Need for institutional autonomy (diversity/disorder)**

Government challenge: How to create/maintain effective balance between unity and diversity in HE systems?

Creating unity/order in European HE systems traditionally national issue:
reform aimed at creating more effective balance between government control (unity) and institutional autonomy (diversity)

But … the creation of national HE system order is more and more connected to HE reforms and policy processes at European level

Bologna originally emphasized uniformity; recently growing focus on diversity, esp. inter-institutional diversity
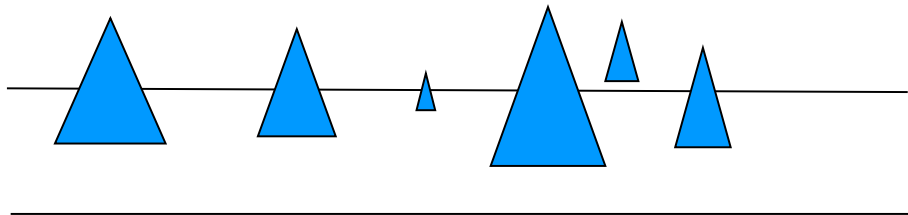
Nature of diversity drive in European HE systems: From traditionally binary HE systems to….

Univ.

Polytechnics/ Hogescholen/ Colleges
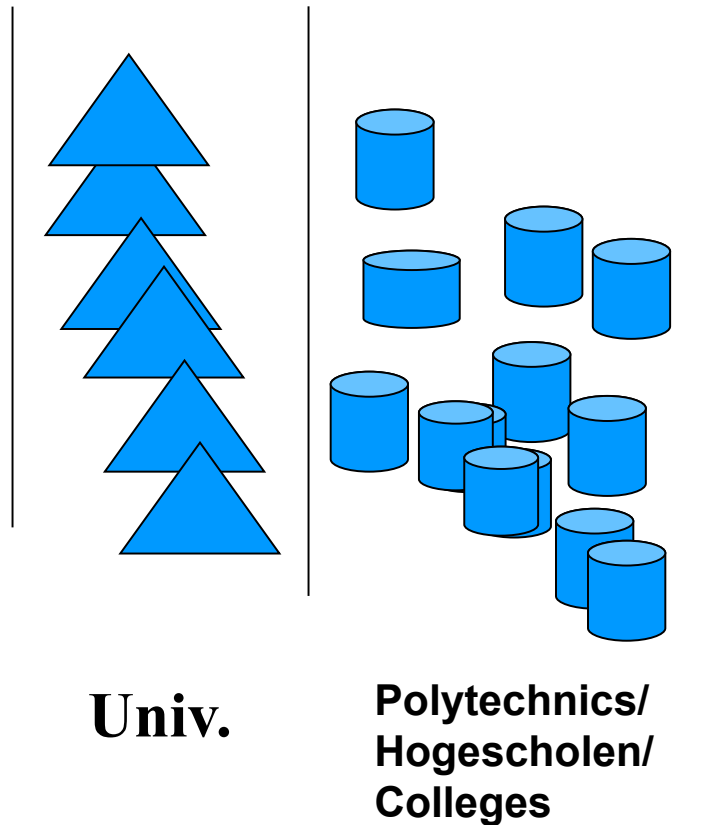
… inter- or intra-institutional diversity
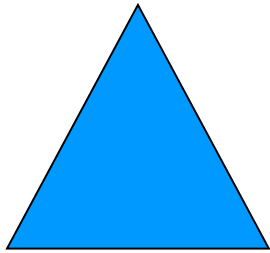
HE system: inter-institutional diversity

**HE system:
intra-institutional diversity**

In Europe quality assurance as HE policy issue more and more connected with HE diversity as policy issue (at European as well as national level)

Consequence:
Need to move from standardized to diversified quality assurance systems

Bucharest Communiqué only refers to links between quality and diversity, but does not discuss consequences

QA in HE vs other important HE governance issues

1. Relationship between HE Quality and HE Funding

2. Horizontalisation of HE governance and horizontalisation of HE learning

3. Growing policy interest in non-formal and informal learning (e.g. CEDEFOP studies)

EQAR: Trust and Strategy

- EQAR young association

- Clear organisational dynamics and institutionalisation process

- EQAR's organisational future currently linked to Bologna process and EHEA

EQAR: Trust and Strategy (cont.)

- Important challenges discussed in EQAR documents and Bologna progress report.

- Main challenge: limited incentives for cross-national quality assurance of HE institutions and programmes.

- HE governance (incl. quality assurance) and (equally important) HE funding still national responsibilities

EQAR: Trust and Strategy

EQAR's role and impact dependent on the creation and maintenance of *trust*.

- External trust, i.e. trust among countries (inside and outside Europe) and other relevant actors in the quality of European HE.

But, equally important:

- Internal trust, i.e. creating trust inside HE institutions in Europe in the relevance of and additional value of EQAR.

Current focus only on **external** trust

EQAR: Trust and Strategy (cont.)

- Core issue 1 to address in EQAR strategy: "EQAR a force for uniformity and conformity or competition and diversity?" (see: Review Panel and EQAR annual report 2011).

- Assumption: Diversity will be one of the core policy issues in European HE in the coming decades; therefore EQAR has to address in its strategy the ways in which it can become a force in a diversified EHEA

- One possible option: EQAR develops multiple QA registers

EQAR: Trust and Strategy (cont.)

- Multiple QA registers:

  1. Diversity wrt institutional/programme profiles

  2. Diversity wrt 'client' interests

  3. Diversity wrt QA models and approaches

- Various projects (European and national level), e.g.:

  1. U-Map

  2. U-Multirank

EQAR: Trust and Strategy (cont.)

- Core issue 2 to address in EQAR strategy: "Should EQAR contribute to policy debates and innovations in the area of quality assessment in HE, and if so, how?"

- Assumption: EQAR as independent European-level body in the area of QA in HE can contribute to further development of QA without being accused of 'interest promotion'

- One possible option: innovation e.g. through use of new media, open consultations and expertise debates: EQAR as clearinghouse for QA knowledge developments

EQAR: Trust and Strategy (cont.)

- Other issues that might be addressed in EQAR strategy:

  a. "How can EQAR contribute to reducing costs for QA in European HE?"

  b. "How can EQAR contribute to developing a more effective balance between standardization of QA versus the need for flexibility in QA in European HE?"

  c. "Should EQAR remain a separate QA body, or should it contribute to integrating QA more with other governance and funding procedures and processes?" Why should only QA be a European level governance issue in HE?

  d. "Should EQAR remain a European body?"

EQAR: Trust and Strategy (cont.)

1. Key challenges facing QA systems and EQAR in Europe?
   a) Linking QA as policy issue as well as organisationally with HE funding and diversity
   b) Need to create multiple QA systems and registers
   c) Challenge to overcome 'multi-speed' EHEA

2. How can external QA systems achieve trust to be internationally recognised?
   a) International recognition outside Europe linked to Bologna process
   b) International recognition inside Europe linked to 'multi-speed' EHEA
   c) Need to strengthen intra-institutional trust in QA systems

3. New Challenges arising from Bucharest Communique?
   a) Not so many new challenges, as well as confirmation of growing policy interest in non-formal and informal learning and qualifications

Thank you very much for your attention!