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The Bologna 2020 Ghent Conference, 18-20 May, 2008 - Towards Conclusions from a General Rapporteur



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Overview

1. Setting the Stage
2. Selected Issues from Presentations (and Workshops) (macro-, meso-, and micro-levels)
3. Towards Conclusions and Recommendations

Setting the Stage (1)

- The three quotations below to start with, to show the gravity of ongoing, and expected, transformations of HE in Europe: by OECD, EC, and EUA *Trends V* report.

(1) “The University is no longer a quiet place to teach and do scholarly work at a measured pace and contemplate the universe as in centuries past. It is a big, complex, demanding, competitive business, requiring large-scale ongoing investment”, Malcolm Skilbeck, quoted in OECD, *On the Edge: Securing a Sustainable Future for HE*, 2003.

Setting the Stage (2)

- (2) “After remaining a comparatively isolated universe for a very long period, both in relation to society and to the rest of the world, with funding guaranteed and a status protected by respect for their autonomy, European universities have gone through the second half of the 20th-century without really calling into question the role or the nature of what they should be contributing to society” (EC, *The Role of Universities in the Europe of Knowledge*, 2003, emphasis mine).

Setting the Stage (3)

- (3) “There is an increasing awareness that the most significant legacy of the [Bologna] process will be a change of educational paradigm across the continent. Institutions are slowly moving away from a system of teacher-driven provision, and towards a student-centered concept of higher education. Thus the reforms are laying the foundations for a system adapted to respond to a growing variety of student needs. Institutions and their staff are still at the early stages of realizing the potential of reforms for these purposes (*Trends V Report*, EUA, 2007, p. 8, emphasis mine).

Issues from Presentations (1)

- Two critical concepts emerged in discussions: “diversity” and “balance”. Most possible scenarios for the future are linked to various dimensions of diversity – and there is a strong need to find a good balance of conflicting demands and expectations from HE.
- Growing diversity means a much more complex environment for HE. (Diversity = a level of variety in a system; differentiation/diversification = the process in which the diversity of a system increases).
- Linking HE to the labor market seems critical, theme emerged several times. Involves the examination of the mismatch (in demand/supply of graduates) and a catalogue of “skill needs” for Europe until 2020.

Issues from Presentations (2)

- Bologna Process should not be viewed in isolation from global processes – it is an example of a response to global integration, massification of HE and the accompanying financial resource challenge. Also it should not be viewed in isolation from European societies and economies.
- Global “multiple reference points” in viewing HE transformations: Bologna should not be inward-looking; issues shaping EHEA are generated outside of Europe. Danger 1: losing sight of global transformations. Danger 2: to maintain openness in current market- and competition-driven transformations (no “fortress Europe” for other world regions).
- Tough times are coming – but change is always tough! Things are going to change fundamentally.

Issues from Presentations (3)

- Two major larger themes to view EHEA: globalization (universities functioning in a global, comparative context) and demographics (universities functioning in aging societies, amidst their changing needs and priorities).
- So far Bologna has been focusing on structural issues – now it is high time to focus on content-related, discipline-specific issues, on practice.
- EHEA should be prepared for both known and unknown: to survive in the unexpected circumstances, to use unexpected opportunities (theme well known in transition economies). Towards flexible, adaptable institutions.
- The focus on revenues vs. the focus on allocation of competitive funds (individual, beyond institutions: USA).

Issues from Presentations (4)

- Challenges for European HE for 2010-2020 are different at different levels. Policy making in HE often driven by global agendas, though (e.g. by globalization, changing demographics, new technologies, public sector reforms, economic competitiveness between nations and regions):
 - Challenges at a macro level (European level).
 - Challenges at a meso level (national level, including the welfare state and the nation-state dimensions).
 - Challenges at a micro level of individual HEIs.

Issues from Presentations (5)

- Macro level challenges include:
 - How to coordinate (at an EU-level?) more open (less-nationally focused) systems of HE in Europe – in face of diminishing role of national responsibilities in HE?
 - How to compete globally (with the USA, Japan, and China/India) – what are conditions for “attractive” European HE systems? Is “attractive” European HE – merely “distinctive” HE?
 - Understanding integration of HE in Europe = related to understanding wider European integration processes?
 - Needed understanding of the mediation of global and EU pressures on HE by national circumstances?

Issues from Presentations (6)

- Macro level challenges include (cont.):
 - “Borderless” (and for-profit) HE in Europe: its impact on future differentiation of HEIs and their more market-oriented perspectives?
 - Public sector reforms and HE reforms: convergent EU and national agendas of both reforms?
 - New EC and OECD discourses on HE: is the social equity argument (HE for individuals) already subsidiary to the economic argument (HE for economy)?
 - Economics in HE (and economic dimension of HE) increasingly matters today!

Issues from Presentations (7)

- Macro level challenges include (cont.):
 - How to make EHEA an attractive workplace for academics and students (the diminishing attractiveness for both; studying conditions, working conditions)?
 - How to protect the legacy of European universities – their values, rich and diverse cultural heritage – in increasingly marketized HE systems (marketized societies/economies), amidst the “academic arms race”?
 - How to combine current mostly vertical stratification of institutions – with a horizontal and functional diversity?
 - How to maintain a balance between economic functions of HE and its wider social functions (equity and access issues)?

Issues from Presentations (8)

- Macro level challenges include (cont.):
 - International mobility of EU students (non-fee based) vs. mobility of non-EU students (fee-based). How to balance the proportions while the latter bring more prestige and additional funding? How to avoid the consequences of “zones of mutual trust” in intra-European mobility (i.e. highly stratified exchanges: from second-tier HEIs to second-tier HEIs only)?

Issues from Presentations (9)

- Meso level challenges include:
 - Institutional diversity vs. equitable access: where will the elite reproduction function go – to the European level? (leaving only mass function of HE at the national level?). How to reach a balance between horizontal and vertical diversification of HEIs and to avoid a rigid separation of mass and elite functions of HE?
 - Increasing diversity of stakeholders and their demands and interests in national systems: its impact on the teaching/research nexus? More teaching-only institutions?
 - Impact of diversification is reaching the doctoral level.
 - Knowledge-rich (and poor) regions, like knowledge-rich (and poor) individuals: the growing “regional” role of HE.

Issues from Presentations (10)

- Meso level challenges include (cont.):
 - Future state-market relationships: the role of protection of universities against market failures under the conditions of “quasi-market” competition?
 - Growing role of contractualization of relationships in HE in Europe in general, and casualization of contracts and employment for academics.
 - How to fund widening access to HE (how to strengthen the social equity and social cohesion rationales)? Where can new funding for expanding HE come from?

Issues from Presentations (11)

- Meso level challenges include (cont.):
 - Cost-sharing (mostly tuition fees) as an option?
 - The maximization of public benefits in HE increasingly open to market forces (public interest programs, targeted student loans)?
 - HEIs in a (“quasi-”) market: how to compete and cooperate in a (national, European, global) market? Balancing competition and cooperation in Bologna?
 - Universities as national institutions under global pressures have to compete: their role in knowledge societies (and knowledge economies) – social vs. economic functions?

Issues from Presentations (12)

- Meso level challenges include (cont.):
 - Future funding trends: expanding HE systems amidst growing financial austerity and public sector reforms? The answer through: more market forces, more competition, private funding, new student support mechanisms?
 - Diversity vs. isomorphism (mimicking most successful institutions – e.g. among private institutions)?
 - Higher education: spending vs. investing money; HE as cost (burden) vs. as investment (including tax consequences)?

Issues from Presentations (13)

- Micro level challenges include:
 - How to serve the three parallel functions: serving local communities, contributing to national innovation systems and economic prosperity, and being competitive on an international scale? Further functional diversification needed.
 - Changing organization of academic work and career management (possible international academic labor market in Europe?)
 - Academic capitalism and academic entrepreneurship challenging traditional academic values (more inequalities and conflicts amidst new modes of governance?)
 - Institutional mission differentiation: teaching- and research-centered HEIs? (and the impact on academic profession)
 - European agendas, filtered through national agendas, going down to institutions (and what is “lost in translation”)

Issues from Presentations (14)

- Micro level challenges include (cont.):
 - Scarcity of funds leads to more entrepreneurship, more managerialism, more competition: impact on academics and students? Rising costs of coordination?
 - Competition with low-access high-price private HE in the future (CEE)? Towards more teaching-only institutions (innovative, with a public purpose)?
 - More responsiveness to stakeholders: industry needs, students needs – in the context of the academic profession/job satisfaction? Responsiveness vs. attractiveness.
 - The “social dimension” includes deteriorating study conditions in Europe.

Towards Conclusions and Recommendations (1)

- Bologna is a specific (unique) European answer to global issues. The development of EHEA contributes to the global public good.
- Institutional cooperation with other world regions is of critical importance.
- There is a strong need of opening European academic labor market to other world regions (internationalization of curricula, multicultural faculty etc).
- A dialogue with employers/the business community is very important in developing EHEA.
- Employability refers also to people staying in employment (LLL), not only to recent graduates. University training needs to follow the changes in labor markets.

Towards Conclusions and Recommendations (2)

- Structural issues in Bologna Process are not aims in themselves – EHEA needs to know where it is heading (values) and needs a translation into contents and disciplines.
- Interdisciplinarity as a new methodology is needed – in face of problems which require creative, multidisciplinary approaches.
- There is a need for debate on student fees and accompanying student support schemes (and on academic entrepreneurship). Successful universities should not be punished (via reducing public funding) for their entrepreneurialism and resulting additional funds.

Towards Conclusions and Recommendations (3)

- Development of EHEA requires strong basis of public funding. Core funding is public; additional (supplementary) non-core funding is non-state.
- It is important to create favorable conditions (including legal framework) for universities to have sustainable funding from various sources, public and private (including philanthropy, via new tax regulations).
- Currently in Europe there is convergence in structures and diversity in terms of institutions, programs, functions, and types of learning. Each type has its merits, though.
- Multi-dimensional classifications and rankings can help to make diverse European education systems more transparent; they can support informed student choice.

Towards Conclusions and Recommendations (3)

- Various stakeholders should be involved in classifications and rankings – which should respect the diversity of HE institutions, their various missions (instruction, research and community service).
- Any introduction of cost-sharing mechanisms (fees) should be balanced with loans and grants systems. Diversity of funding models in European HE should be maintained.
- Current models of mobility and international cooperation can be obsolete – there is a need of new modes of partnerships (joint projects, degrees, alliances etc.). Better use of ICT in international cooperation needed – more hybrid (traditional/ICT-based) systems needed.

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Towards Conclusions and Recommendations (4)

- The need of promotion of “open systems” to non-European faculty (attractive labor market and favorable immigration policies, merit-based academic careers) and promotion of EHEA to European societies – in view of demographic changes (and accompanying possibly changing social priorities of ageing societies).
- The need of developing via EHEA the understanding of multicultural societies, intercultural competences, and responsible citizenship.
- THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!