



EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area



Bologna Process Malta Seminars

*Bologna Expert Training Session,
Student-Centred Learning,
International Openness & The External Dimension
and Learning Outcomes*

Information Booklet

NATIONAL TEAM OF BOLOGNA EXPERTS MALTA 2009-2011

Bologna Process

Malta Seminars

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Student-Centred Learning,
International Openness & the External Dimension
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National Team of Bologna Experts Malta (2009-2011)

A report prepared for the National Team of Bologna Experts (Malta) by Dr. Justin Fenech, Managing Director of Knowledge Innovation Centre (Malta) and edited by Ms. Debbie Lora Dimech, Commission Officer, National Commission for Higher Education.

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The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the National Team of Bologna Experts. Every attempt has been made to provide the most current information at the time of printing.

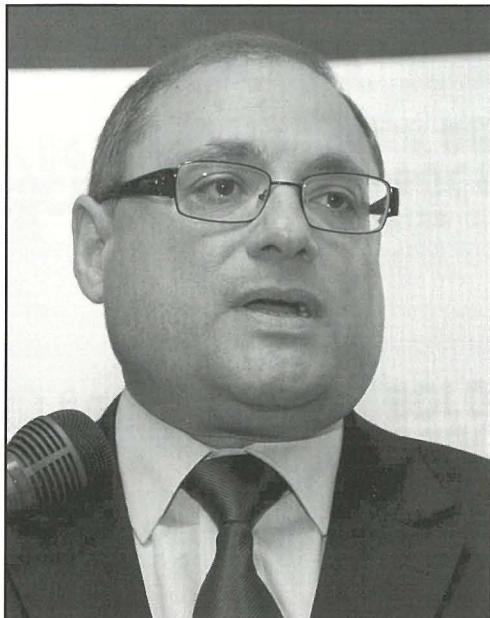
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Dr. James Calleja, Coordinator, National Team of Bologna Experts (Malta)



This document gives an overview of four priority areas within the Bologna Process which were addressed in four different Bologna Seminars held in Malta as part of the Bologna Process activities for the 2009-2011 cycle.

The National Team of Bologna Experts was set up in 2009 by the Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, the Hon. Dolores Cristina for a period of two years. Experts nominated for this period are: Dr. James Calleja, Coordinator, Dr. Roberta Avellino, Mr. Ray Farrugia, Ms. Veronica Grech, Mr. Carl Grech, Dr. Omar Grech, Mr. Henry Mifsud, Ms. Bernie Mizzi and Prof. Alfred Vella, as experts.

In 2010 and 2011 seven *Bologna* seminars have been organised as part of the 2009-2011 cycle. The response from foreign education experts as well as national stakeholders in the Education sector has been encouraging. The seminars have served as a contact point between all stakeholders in the Higher Education field. Some of the topics addressed include: Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Student-Centred Learning, and Employability. The individual information booklets gathered in this publication have been prepared for four seminars in particular which were:

The *Bologna* Process: A National *Bologna* Expert Training Session; Student-Centred Learning: A *Bologna* Process International Conference; International Openness and the External Dimension: A *Bologna* Process International Seminar and; Learning Outcomes: A *Bologna* Process Training Conference.

I take this opportunity to thank EUPA for organising the seminars and all national and international Bologna Experts and speakers for their active participation. Moreover I wish to thank Dr. Justin Fenech, Managing Director of Knowledge Innovation Centre (Malta), for the write-up of these booklets which were distributed to the participants attending the above mentioned seminars.

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Introduction

Dr. Justin Fenech, Managing Director, Knowledge Innovation Centre Malta

You have most probably heard or read about the four Ministers who met in Sorbonne and agreed on a joint declaration in 1998 which then lead to the launch of the Bologna Process in 1999. You probably have also heard in a conference or training seminar about the Bologna Process' aim to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) where students and academics would be mobile due to the creation of comparable and high quality, Higher Education.

After 10 years of Bologna Process there are indeed a number of successes that have been achieved, though there are also many more challenges that still need to be addressed. Thus the Bologna signatories have decided to extend the Process for another 10 years and have set further goals and initiated new reforms in order to keep true to their promise to create an attractive and competitive EHEA.

Irrespective of any subjective opinions on the Bologna Process, there have been many undeniable successes throughout the past years. Firstly the Bologna Process has brought with it an unprecedented level of cooperation on Higher Education in Europe. When considering that Europe spent most of the first 50 years of the 20th century in conflict, it is certainly an achievement that by the end of the same century a number of initiatives uniting Europe have been witnessed. The seeds of Europe-wide cooperation were sowed in 1953 when the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) was initiated and it further grew with the launch of the European Union (1993) and the creation of the Council of Europe (1949). These initiatives, coupled with an ever-increasing realisation that cooperation is a key factor in a globalised world, lead to the creation of the Bologna Process. The Process was so successful in its philosophy of cooperation and inclusion that by 2009 it not only had 48 signatories but also involved a number of countries outside the European Region in its debates.

Secondly the Bologna Process has brought with it a culture change by providing a new outlook on how knowledge is transferred. 10 years after its launch the main topics of discussion are student centred learning; qualifications based on learning outcomes; European/National Qualifications Frameworks and ECTS, amongst others. These are ideas that were very much alien in many of the signatory countries prior to the beginning of the Process. Of course, a culture change of such magnitude is not easily achievable – but the progress achieved so far can be seen easily. There is of course weight to the argument that a number of countries, wanting to be part of the Bologna Club, have not fully understood the *raison d'être* of the Bologna Process – but their involvement within the Process will aid them to realise what the true objectives are and this in turn will, together with help from other partner countries, bring with it the needed impetus for proper educational reform.

Thirdly, the Bologna Process has put Higher Education on top of the European Agenda. Education has always been seen as a building block for unlocking the human potential but never has there been a process that has stressed the importance of Higher Education for the creation of a knowledge-based society. Moreover, as opposed to other processes and discussions, the Bologna Process has recognised from the start the importance of the public responsibility towards the provision of high quality Higher Education that's accessible to all. So much so that the Bologna Process is one of the few processes where all stakeholders are involved at all levels.

To say that all the objectives of the Bologna Process have been completely achieved would not give proper weight to the scale of the reforms. Ministers at the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial Meeting (2009) agreed that further implementation and greater improvements are needed. It is important to realise, though, that the Bologna Process is an ongoing process that has already contributed extensively to the development of European Higher Education. With the continued involvement of stakeholders (teachers, students, universities, employers etc) and a stronger commitment from governments, the Bologna Process will continue to introduce innovative methodologies which are necessary for Europe to remain attractive and competitive.

This publication brings together four essays which were published for a number of Bologna Process conferences organised in Malta. The first essay, "The Bologna Process – An Overview", gives a summary of how the Bologna Process was launched, how it developed and what reforms it initiated. The remaining three essays revolve around important elements which have been brought to the forefront by the Bologna Process, namely "Student Centred Learning", "International Openness and the External Dimension" and "Learning Outcomes". Each essay explains the process through which the topic was developed, the issues at hand and, last but not least, what is being planned for the future.

I hope that these essays will enable a better understanding of the Bologna Process as well as entice readers to further delve into more detailed literature on the issues explored. I hope that you will enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed writing them.

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The Bologna Process: An Overview

The inception of the Bologna Declaration

On the 25th May 1998, The Sorbonne Declaration was signed in Paris by France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom and stated that further international collaboration was indeed needed in order "to realise a common European area of Higher Education, where the national identities and the communal interests could be integrated and mutually enforced to the benefit of Europe, the students, and more in general, the European citizens".

It was this call for the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that led the governments of 29 European countries to meet in Bologna on the 19th June 1999 and sign the Bologna Declaration which in turn initiated an important reform process aimed at the harmonization of European systems of Higher Education. This process became known as the Bologna Process.

At this historic meeting, the ministers of Higher Education decided that the EHEA should become a reality by 2010 and that its creation would not only increase the quality of Higher Education in Europe but also its international competitiveness. A harmonization process was imperative to make European university systems compatible and comparable. Thus the Bologna Declaration designated six principle objectives:

- (i) Adoption of a system of **easily readable and comparable degrees**;
- (ii) Adoption of a system based on **two main cycles**, undergraduate and graduate;
- (iii) Establishment of a common **system of credits**;
- (iv) Promotion of **mobility** for students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff;
- (v) Promotion of **European co-operation in quality assurance**;
- (vi) Promotion of the **European dimensions in Higher Education**.

1.1 Ministerial Conferences - From Bologna to Vienna/Budapest

Today the Bologna Process is made up of 47 Countries and consults with 9 representative bodies. It functions with a three tier structure composed (in ascending order) of working groups, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)² and bi-annual Ministerial Conferences, which are organized by the BFUG with assistance by the Bologna Secretariat.

There have been a total of seven Bologna Ministerial Conferences. At each Communiqué is issued through which ministers reaffirm their commitment to the process, evaluate the progress of reform implementation and set additional targets.

1.2 The Principles of the Bologna Process

Throughout the process four key principles have emerged that shaped the Bologna Process into what it is today:

- (i) The importance of **international cooperation** as a cornerstone for creating the EHEA.
- (ii) The affirmation that "**Higher Education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility**"³.
- (iii) The need for the **involvement of stakeholders to ensure ownership of the reforms undertaken**.
- (iv) The necessity of having a Process based on **institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles**.

¹ Sorbonne Joint Declaration, Paris, the Sorbonne, May 25 1998 – Page 3.

² The BFUG is composed of representatives of the 47 signatory countries and the 9 representative bodies. Prior to 1st July 2010 it was chaired by the country holding the Presidency of the EU. Today, the Bologna Process and the BFUG is jointly chaired by the country holding the Presidency of the EU and a non-EU country.

³ Prague Communiqué, May 19th 2001 – Page 1.

1.3 Bologna Action Lines

The Bologna Declaration originally listed six action lines for the creation of the EHEA but more were added as the Process grew. These action lines have been discussed at working group and BFUG level and formalised through subsequent Communiqués.

Recognition of Qualifications

The recognition of Qualifications is imperative in order to allow learners to effectively use their qualifications in any country without the risk of losing their value. The *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region*, referred to as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted by national representatives in Lisbon on 11th April 1997. It has since been ratified by most European countries. The development of good practices, policy and the collection of information aimed at fostering a common understanding of 'recognition', was taken up by the UNESCO/CEPES, Council of Europe and the European Union through the coordination of the ENIC and NARIC Networks. ECTS, the Diploma Supplement and Qualification Frameworks are further tools introduced to facilitate the recognition of qualifications.

Qualification Frameworks and the Three Cycle System

The third cycle, or doctoral level, was introduced through the Berlin Communiqué where ministers stressed the importance of Research in the creation of a "Europe of Knowledge". It would also emphasise the "*importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of Higher Education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European Higher Education more generally.*"⁴ The three cycle system (Bachelor – Master – Doctorate) was further structured by the introduction of an 'Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area' (EQF) which was adopted in Bergen. Ministers also committed themselves to establish national frameworks for qualifications which would be compatible with this EQF by 2010.

Mobility

One of the main aims of the Bologna Process is fostering student and staff mobility for personal growth, international cooperation and enhancement of the EHEA. However many socio-economic and cultural barriers persist. In the London Communiqué ministers highlighted a number of barriers, namely; immigration issues (visas, residence and work permits etc), recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements. In the spirit of international collaboration, Higher Education institutions are also encouraged to combine their strengths and develop joint degrees which would lead to the creation of international, multi-dimensional curricula. As an added value, joint degrees would allow students and staff alike to practice new languages, expand their cultural skills and knowledge, enrich their ways of thinking and ultimately develop new learning and teaching methodologies.

Quality Assurance

From its offset, the Bologna Process promoted the importance of European cooperation in the development of policies, procedures and methodologies in quality assurance. The "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher education Area" (ESG) were drafted by the E4 Group⁵ and adopted in the Bergen Communiqué. Following further work by the E4 Group, the London Communiqué paved the way for the creation of a European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). In order to be listed in the register, quality assurance agencies are required to be in substantial compliance with the ESG.

The Social Dimension

The Social Dimension was introduced in Prague Communiqué on the suggestion of ESIB. Students opined that Bologna reforms could only achieve their desired objectives if they took into account students' socio-economic necessities. Through subsequent Communiqués, the Social Dimension has been elevated to an essential target

⁴ The Berlin Communiqué, 18th September 2003 – Page 7.

⁵ Made up of ENQA, EUA, ESU and EURASHE.

required for the success of the Process. The Bergen Communiqué stated that it "is a constituent part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA"⁶. The London Communiqué went one step further by stating that "Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society"⁷. In order to achieve these goals, governments need to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within Higher Education, and widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity. Bearing in mind the different situations in Bologna countries on this matter, instead of issuing criteria on what should be implemented Europe-wide, the BFUG working group on the Social Dimension recommended that each country develop its own national strategy and action plan in order to tackle this issue.

Employability

Employability was introduced as an action line in the London Communiqué where the BFUG was given the task to table a report on how employability could be improved with regards to the three cycles as well as lifelong learning. The EHEA was envisaged as a knowledge-based society and economy where learners could be equipped with the necessary skills and competences needed to "gain initial employment, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market"⁸. Suggestions put forward in the report included:

- (i) Raising awareness of the Bologna Process and the value of a first cycle/Bachelor degree;
- (ii) Promoting greater dialogue between Higher Education institutions and employers;
- (iii) Emphasizing the need to enhance Employability skills;
- (iv) Increasing information, advice and guidance.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Learning (LLL) was first mentioned in the Prague Communiqué where ministers declared that "In the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life"⁹. Since then, LLL has become an integral aspect of the Bologna Process. However, it is imperative to further improve the recognition of prior learning (including non formal and informal learning), create more flexible, student-centred learning and last but not least, widen the access to Higher Education. The role of stakeholders is also important in this field. It is through their active participation that such strategies can be created and implemented, fostering a culture of LLL within society.

European Higher Education in a Global Context

The further realization that the EHEA was in direct competition with other regions led ministers in Prague, to agree on "the importance of enhancing attractiveness of European Higher Education to students from Europe and other parts of the world"¹⁰. This initiative would later become known as the "External Dimension" of the Bologna Process which aimed at increasing the quality, readability and comparability of European degrees in order to facilitate trans-national education. At the London Ministerial conference, ministers adopted a strategy entitled "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting". The strategy encompassed a number of priorities including the improvement of information on the EHEA; the promotion of European Higher Education to enhance its world-wide attractiveness and competitiveness; intensifying policy dialogue; strengthening cooperation based on partnerships; and improving the recognition of qualifications.

⁶ Bergen Communiqué, 19th May 2005 – Page 4.

⁷ London Communiqué, 17th May 2007 - Page 5.

⁸ Definition of employability by the BFUG, see website of the EHEA at: <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=16> (last accessed 29th November 2010).

⁹ Prague Communiqué, May 19th 2001 – Page 2.

¹⁰ Prague Communiqué, May 19th 2001 – Page 3.

Stocktaking

Prior to Berlin, the implementation of Bologna guidelines was mainly done through the sharing of information and reports, the hosting of conferences and collection of data by the BFUG. In addition, EUA and ESU compiled their own data with the help of their members in a series of "Trends Reports" and "Bologna with Student Eyes". The ministers decided that further measures were needed for progress to be better recorded and thus introduced the concept of Stocktaking in the Berlin Communiqué. The BFUG was tasked to prepare detailed reports on the progress and implementation of quality assurance, the two-cycle system and the recognition of degrees and periods of studies for the Bergen Summit. At Bergen the stocktaking exercise was expanded to other action lines and National Bologna Reports were also introduced in order to evaluate each country's progress.

1.4 2010 and Beyond

The targets set by the Bologna Process were meant to be reached by 2010, though already in Bergen ministers stated that "*As the Bologna Process leads to the establishment of the EHEA, we have to consider the appropriate arrangements needed to support the continuing development beyond 2010, and we ask the Follow-up Group to explore these issues*"¹¹. Following reports from the BFUG and stakeholders, the Leuven/Louvain Communiqué established the priorities for Bologna after 2010, namely:

- (i) The social dimension: equitable access and completion;
- (ii) Lifelong learning;
- (iii) Employability;
- (iv) Student-centred learning and the teaching mission of Higher Education;
- (v) Education, research and innovation;
- (vi) International openness;
- (vii) Mobility;
- (viii) Data collection;
- (ix) Multidimensional transparency tools; and
- (x) Funding.

Although these action lines are based on previous ones, a number of interesting developments have been recorded. For the first time a concrete direction has been given with regards to the Social Dimension with the ministers stating that "*Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in Higher Education, to be reached by the end of the next decade*"¹². The Communiqué also sets 2012 as the new deadline for the completion of national qualifications frameworks. Of further note is the elevation of Student-Centred Learning which according to the Communiqué "*requires empowering individual learners, new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focused more clearly on the learner in all three cycles*"¹³. The external dimension has been 'repackaged' under the title of international openness, with ministers looking to enhance policy dialogue and cooperation with other regions of the world. Last but not least, the ministers pledged that by 2020, 20% of graduates in the EHEA would have studied abroad.

1.5 Conclusion

The Bologna Process aims to build a EHEA, however the transformation is not complete given the challenges inherent

¹¹ Bergen Communiqué, 19th May 2005 – Pg 6

¹² Leuven/Louvain Communiqué, 28th April 2009 – Page 2

¹³ Ibid. – Page 3

in the harmonization of 47 Higher Education systems. At the Ministerial Anniversary Conference hosted by Budapest and Vienna, the ministers declared that "*While much has been achieved in implementing the Bologna reforms, the reports also illustrate that EHEA action lines such as degree and curriculum reform, quality assurance, recognition, mobility and the social dimension are implemented to varying degrees. Recent protests in some countries, partly directed against developments and measures not related to the Bologna Process, have reminded us that some of the Bologna aims and reforms have not been properly implemented and explained*"¹⁴. It is important to bear in mind that for many, the Bologna Process is not perfect due to challenges in the implementation of the reforms, especially when it requires changes in the culture inherent in Higher Education systems.

Having said that, one cannot deny the progress achieved in the last 10 years in bringing Europe together to create the EHEA "*based on trust, cooperation and respect for the diversity of cultures, languages, and Higher Education systems*"¹⁵. If the Bologna Process remains true to its principles with the support of governments and stakeholders then another successful 10 years are sure to follow.

1.6 Stakeholders' view on the Bologna Process

1.6.1 Bologna process with student eyes – the perspective of the European Students' Union (ESU)

The Bologna process, whenever it developed in *bona fide*, has been quite supported by ESIB (later ESU), especially after it diversified to gain one of the most advanced cultures of student participation in the world and catered to student needs and desires – including the social dimension, mobility and flexibility of studies.

One problem remains that an intergovernmental process bodes little in the way of making implementation compulsory or clearly defined. Hence, Bologna has often merged with different national policies and has been open to a wide range of interpretations. This has meant long delays in implementation, various policies put under the "Bologna" label at national level having nothing to do with Bologna action lines, and an overall decline in popularity of Bologna at national levels, leading to reform fatigue and poor "a la carte" implementation.

One recent trend is the increasing adoption by countries of EU policies that impact education, even more than Bologna process provisions. This is to a degree understandable. While the Bologna process is applied to a heterogeneous group of countries that stretch from the Chinese border to the Atlantic, the EU/EEA countries have a common legislative framework, closer levels of socio-economic development, interests and objectives. Hence, the EU often comes with a "closer" set of policy objectives than those present in the Bologna process, formulated in a cross-national framework to which EU/EEA states are used.

Still, despite all these problems and trends, the Bologna process has had its fair share of successes. At the end of the day, while complaining about poor Bologna implementation is a motif that transcends stakeholders and actors in education, we have to look at the broader picture: Bologna has changed a great deal in the educational landscape of Europe. Borders have become more porous when it comes to mobility, educational procedures more comparable and compatible, and Europe has indeed become a smaller place, at least when it comes to the provision of education. As student representatives, one of our main wishes is to see neglected areas, such as social dimension, manage to trickle down towards implementation.

1.6.2 The perspective of Education International on the Bologna Process

Welcomed as a representative in 2005, EI contributed especially in the area of student and staff mobility, student-centred learning and worked on the global dimension, promotion of the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross Border Higher Education and supporting its members in Bologna Process countries.

¹⁴ Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 10th March 2010 – Page 1

¹⁵ ibid – Page 1

At the Bologna 10th Anniversary Conference in Budapest and Vienna EI published a study "Enhancing Quality – Academics' Perceptions of the Bologna Process"¹⁶ undertaken with 34 unions representing Higher Education staff across 26 European countries on academics' perceptions of the implementation of the Bologna Process in their countries 2005-2009. Academics stress that more is to be done for a proper and full implementation of the Bologna Process. A clear rise in bureaucratic work for academics; a deterioration in remuneration; declining teaching and research conditions in Central and Eastern Europe and deteriorating teaching conditions in Western Europe impact on how the Bologna Process has been noted. Improved working, teaching and research conditions for academic staff are seen as a prerequisite for a successful outcome to the Bologna Process. The academic staff participation in implementation at national and institutional levels has been found to be consistently weak and concomitantly detrimental to the implementation of the Process on the whole. Academics also consider it possible for the Process to open up to other continents for better comparability and further opportunities for students and academic staff.

¹⁶ Available at: http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EI_BolognaReport2010_EnhancingQuality.pdf (last accessed 29th November 2010).

The Bologna Process: Student-Centred Learning

2.1 What is Student Centred Learning?

Traditional Education systems have generally relied on the notion that study programmes, courses, modules, learning pedagogies as well as student assessment should be designed from a teacher's perspective. Thus the objective of a traditional Education system is focussed on the knowledge, skills and teaching methods the teacher believes to be relevant, rather than what the students deems important for their future career or which method best fits their learning style.

Student Centred Learning (SCL) aims at modernizing the learning process in such a way that it focuses on the needs of students rather than the needs or wishes of others. SCL focuses on the student's abilities, interests, aspirations, expectations for future employment and learning styles with the teacher acting as a facilitator rather than an instructor. SCL thus requires a teacher that on the one hand has the appropriate skill and knowledge to act as a facilitator and on the other hand students who are active and responsible participants in their own learning. There is more focus on workload, more emphasis on recognition of prior learning and a stronger need of proper student support (academic, social, psychological, career guidance). SCL aims at empowering students to take hold of their own education and achieve the established learning outcomes which will aid them to live life to the fullest as an independent and critical thinker.

The European Students' Union (ESU) and Education International (EI) in their Student Centred Learning Toolkit put forward the following definition of SCL:

"Student-Centred Learning represents both a mindset and a culture within a given Higher Education institution and is a learning approach which is broadly related to, and supported by, constructivist theories of learning. It is characterised by innovative methods of teaching which aim to promote learning in communication with teachers and other learners and which take students seriously as active participants in their own learning, fostering transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and reflective thinking"¹⁷.

SCL is a new paradigm shift in Education though it is not a new concept. One can trace SCL to the work of Hayward in 1905 which was then further developed by subsequent theorists like John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Malcolm Knowles and Carl Rogers. In his book "Freedom to Learn", Rogers promoted SCL as the foundation for the formation of the individual. SCL gained prominence in Europe through its introduction in the Bologna Process. The first official mention of SCL can be found in the London Communiqué which stated that "*there is an increasing awareness that a significant outcome of the process will be a move towards student-centred Higher Education and away from teacher driven provision*"¹⁸; though it was in the subsequent Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué that SCL was given the prominence it has today.

2.2 Student Centred Learning and the Bologna Process

The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué set SCL as one of the main goals of the Bologna Process and raised three important issues relevant to its implementation. Firstly, it put forward the reason why SCL is indeed imperative for the success of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): "*European Higher Education also faces the major challenge and the ensuing opportunities of globalisation and accelerated technological developments with new providers, new learners and new types of learning. Student-centred learning and mobility will help students develop the competences they need in a changing labour market and will empower them to become active and responsible citizens*"¹⁹. Thus in order for the EHEA to be competitive on the global market and in order for Europe to be able to empower its students to become "active and responsible citizens" it is vital that SCL replaces the more traditional method of learning.

¹⁷ Student Centred Learning – Toolkit for students, staff and Higher Education institutions. Page 5.

¹⁸ London Communiqué - London Ministerial Summit - 2007 - Page 2.

¹⁹ Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué - Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial Summit - 2009 - Page 1.

Secondly, the Communiqué put forward the requirements for the successful implementation of SCL: "*Student-centred learning requires empowering individual learners, new approaches to teaching and learning, effective support and guidance structures and a curriculum focused more clearly on the learner in all three cycles. Curricular reform will thus be an ongoing process leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths.*"²⁰ Thus, according to the Communiqué, SCL implementation requires a number of crucial elements:

- (i) **Empowering individuals** – SCL is about the individual rather than the collective (flexible curricula as opposed to "mass produced" curricula).
- (ii) **Learning new approaches to teaching** – SCL requires that teachers be taught new learning approaches.
- (iii) **Learning new approaches to learning** – SCL requires that students be taught new methods of learning
- (iv) **Effective support and guidance** – SCL requires that both teachers and students have the continuous support and guidance structures needed to adapt to this new learning paradigm.
- (v) **Focusing on the Learners** – SCL moves the focus from the teacher to the learner and thus allows curricula to be formulated based on the needs of the learner.

Thirdly, the Communiqué stated that the development and promotion of SCL should be a joint endeavour of academics, institutions, students and employer representatives. This reflects the general principle that the Bologna Process and its reforms need to be stakeholder oriented in order to be successful.

It is important to note that many of the Bologna Action Lines, such as qualification frameworks, learning outcomes, ECTS, mobility etc, compliment and facilitate the introduction of SCL. Having said this, implementation of SCL is not an easy task because it also requires a cultural change from a traditional model of learning to a SCL model of learning. The fact that the Bologna Process has not been fully and properly implemented by a number of countries is a clear example of how difficult it is to change the culture of how Europe deals with Higher Education. This is clearly evidenced in the Budapest-Vienna Declaration which states that: "*While much has been achieved in implementing the Bologna reforms, the reports also illustrate that EHEA action lines such as degree and curriculum reform, quality assurance, recognition, mobility and the social dimension are implemented to varying degrees. Recent protests in some countries, partly directed against developments and measures not related to the Bologna Process, have reminded us that some of the Bologna aims and reforms have not been properly implemented and explained.*"²¹

Nevertheless, SCL has already been implemented in a number of European Universities, even prior to its introduction in the Bologna Process, and thus with the proper promotion and development this good practice has the potential to spread widely across the rest of EHEA.

2.3 A Culture Changing Paradigm

As we have seen from the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, SCL is important for the realization of the EHEA. There are four important principles that need to be understood and adhered to in order for SCL to be properly implemented. These are the following:

SCL is a flexible learning process which means that courses and/or modules should be continuously improved and adapted in order to ensure that the learning experience of students leads to a set of learning outcomes achieved in a way that stimulates students' critical thinking and transferable skills.

SCL is a diverse learning process because students have different learning styles and varied interests. SCL aims at addressing these different pedagogical needs. Teachers also have different teaching styles and should also be given the adequate support needed in order to improve and diversify their teaching methods.

20 Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué - Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial Summit - 2009 - Page 3.

21 Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area – 12th March 2010 – Page 1.

SCL is a process where students have control over their learning. This is a principle that has always been fostered by the Bologna Process even prior to the introduction of SCL. Empowering students to be involved in the design of curricula and its evaluation gives them greater responsibility, makes them feel involved and improves their knowledge acquisition and critical thinking.

SCL is a process that involves cooperation between students and academics. Such cooperation is central to the philosophy of SCL since learning is seen as the constructive interaction between teacher and learner.

As one looks at the above principles it is clear that SCL brings with it a strong challenge since, shifting from an input-focused one way learning paradigm, to an outcome-based and two-way learning paradigm is not easy. Resistance to any sort of reform will always be encountered and this is primarily due to the fact that changing culture, in this case the culture of how we look at learning, is a slow process. It is important to keep in mind that in order to introduce a culture based on SCL, a number of barriers need to be overcome. For the latter to occur, there must be:

(i) Public commitment and resources - SCL can only be properly implemented if governments and all stakeholders are committed to the cause. This commitment means that human and financial resources need to be made available for training, for the creation of student support services and for the development of curricula. Ultimately, changing a learning culture also entails changing the organization of how one teaches and learns.

(ii) Institutional and academic commitment - SCL can only be properly implemented if there is the courage and the commitment to actually change the learning culture. Changing procedures or renaming already existing learning structures will not do. If we look at the implementation of other Bologna reforms we can see a number of instances where implementation was done on the surface level because the people paramount to the reform implementation were not adequately involved in its development and execution. ECTS, for example, has not led to greater flexibility in some institutions because the system was not implemented properly. Learning outcomes are more than just descriptors, they are targets based on a realistic and meaningful calculation of student workload which should be acquired through participation in a curriculum. It is thus important that Higher Education institutions and academics approach the SCL reform in a dedicated and proper manner and implement it with the abovementioned principles in mind.

(iii) Individual Commitment by Students - At the moment, the current paradigm, in many European countries, is to spoon feed students throughout their education. This paradigm however, changes immediately once the students enter the workforce. Graduates are suddenly expected to be innovative and lead the way. With the increased relevance of lifelong learning and the need to have a flexible workforce which is up to date, the spoon feeding paradigm is obsolete. SCL aims to use education (at any level) as the key to unlock a student's potential. Thus in order for SCL to be properly implemented, students need to be involved in the creation and quality assurance of their education and should be given co-ownership of the process. Students have to take on the responsibility of their own education. If this is achieved, graduates will be better prepared for the labour market and will be able to be more active and responsible within their society.

2.4 Conclusion

While the concept of SCL predates the Bologna process and has been developed for all levels of education, it is still a new paradigm within the EHEA. Its introduction in the Bologna Process will aid its widespread implementation. However, whether such implementation will be done in a proper manner or not relies mostly on how well the teaching and learning culture can be changed to encompass the principles fostered by SCL. Proper realization of other Bologna Process action lines, such as National Qualifications Frameworks, ECTS, learning outcomes and student involvement in governance will also enhance the adoption of SCL. Most importantly, the constant support and involvement of governments and stakeholders in the process is crucial to the success of this European-wide Endeavour.

2.5 Stakeholders' Feedback on Student Centred Learning

The Bologna Process promotes stakeholder involvement as the cornerstone for the successful creation of a European Higher Education Area. Here follows the feedback on Student Centred Learning from the European Representative Structures of Teachers, Universities and Students:

2.5.1 Education International and Student Centred Learning

Monique Fouilhoux – Deputy General Secretary, Education International

Education International and the European Students' Union have participated in a one year project »Time for Student Centred Learning« which promoted the paradigm shift needed for the implementation of SCL. EI's dedication to the concept of SCL has been proven through this European wide campaign which was a pioneering step for the European Higher Education Area. For more information about the project, please visit the website: www.t4scl.eu

The positions of the academic staff towards SCL, reflected in the survey conducted as part of the project, have highlighted the structural problems that require more resources to support the growing demands being placed on academic staff. Academics and students are ready to create a stimulating learning environment but the HEIs need to provide the necessary support. Without a supportive environment, some steps can be undertaken and we are already witnessing numerous individual initiatives, but for an overall qualitative change in the pedagogical approach, a change on the institutional level is crucial.

EI perceives the dialogue between students and teachers as essential for progress in the cultural change in academia and is dedicated to continue its efforts towards the promotion of the concept of SCL. SCL is central to the adaptation of the new context of Higher Education, essential for quality education in the times of the massification of Higher Education. Education International recognizes that SCL is not a new concept in teaching and many professors have been already using this approach. The changes in the EHEA require a European wide change in the pedagogy and concepts of teaching and learning.

Education International, together with the European Students' Union, will continue to promote SCL as a backbone of the Bologna Process.

2.5.2 EUA and Student Centred Learning

Lea Brunner – Project Officer Higher Education Policy Unit, European University Association (EUA). The following text is adapted from: Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Higher Education, by Andrée Sursock and Hanne Smidt, EUA 2010.

Paradigm shift requires cultural change and additional funding for HEI

After a decade of HE reforms, there is some progress in shifting to modularisation, learning outcomes and to student-centred learning. This paradigm shift to student-centred learning, which is critical to improving education, represents both a cultural challenge to some teaching traditions and a financial one to address costlier requirements such as human resource development, new classroom infrastructures and smaller student-staff ratios.

LLL is a central aspect of student-centred learning

In the majority of European countries, lifelong learning is considered as a set of activities provided outside mainstream education, in relation to which Bologna tools such as learning outcomes and academic credits are only rarely defined

or attached. Therefore, there is a clear need for European HEIs and national authorities – together – to connect policies in order to create accessible, flexible and transparent student-centred learning and to monitor and evaluate implementation continuously. This is necessary in order to ensure that all education provision is seen within a lifelong perspective and in specific national, regional, local and institutional contexts. The joint approach advocated in the EUA's *Lifelong Learning Charter*, requiring the joint commitment of governments and HEIs, is essential in order to achieve success. It will also be important to act together at regional level and promote cooperation between regional stakeholders, including employers and HEIs.

Student services central for a student-centred approach

The importance of student services has been relatively ignored as policy priority throughout the Bologna decade, even though it is central to the shift towards a student-centred approach and student attainment. The Trends 2010 questionnaire data on this topic and the site-visit reports suggest that career guidance is the fastest growing area, followed by growth in psychological counselling services. This indicates that the focus is moving, to a certain extent, from providing student guidance primarily during the pre-admission phase to improving student retention and preparing students for employment.

2.5.3 ESU and Student Centred Learning

Robert Santa - Executive Committee, European Students' Union

ESU believes that student-centred learning is a natural next step for the development of Higher Education in Europe. In particular, this is a unique opportunity to address both a rapidly changing society as well as to bring back focus on teaching and learning; focus often lost in favour of much more prestigious research activities.

One of the main reasons why SCL is deemed an important part of the current and future educational landscape is the increasingly stringent need to deal with a diversified student body. The massification of Higher Education has not brought about any change in the way educational processes cater to individual students. Student-centred learning brings a revolution by the simple attempt at making education better fit the particular needs and personal learning styles of students, and by encouraging the development of soft and transversal skills that complement basic generic knowledge.

This is of course not the only side of SCL. In a world that is increasingly predicted to rely on life-long learning to keep pace with rapid advances, SCL is fast becoming a possible cornerstone in helping universities form the perfect life-long learner: a student that is both autonomous as a learner and capable of identifying and using sources of information with less guidance than ever before. The critically thinking life-long learner can indeed be seen as a potential outcome of SCL as well as one of the faces of change in modern times.

Last, but not least, SCL is an opportunity to bring more feedback into education. Good sense dictates that nothing works flawlessly from the onset, and by overturning traditional hierarchies, SCL provides the opportunity to bring direct input from students into the learning process, and hence make the entire concept of education more flexible around an improved set of relationships within the academic community.

The Bologna Process: International Openness and the External Dimension

3.1 Introduction

International Openness, as a principle, has always been at the heart of the Bologna Process. At the first meeting in Sorbonne (1998) and at the declaration of the Bologna Process (1999) it was established that the promotion of the European dimension in Higher Education was imperative for the successful implementation of the *Bologna Reforms*. Furthermore, the Bologna Declaration states that the Process aims "*to ensure that the European Higher Education system acquires a worldwide degree of attraction equal to our exceptional cultural and scientific traditions*"²². Thus, at the inception of the Bologna Process it was already clear that, in order to establish a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the process of reforms had to be based on open dialogue between any countries that wished to be part of the reforms.

As the Bologna Process evolved, it became clear that the attractiveness of the EHEA was important within the global context. The global competition to attract and retain the "best brains" meant that the EHEA had to be attractive enough to catch the attention of learners within and outside of Europe. Thus, the concepts of mobility, quality assurance and recognition of degrees, amongst others, had to be viewed in both a European and a Global context.

3.2 From National to European to International

It's important to note that the internationalization of Higher Education started before the launch of the Bologna Process. In the beginning, internationalization could be attributed to the different initiatives in different countries by individual academics "*whose enthusiasm and personal commitment sustained and built up networks*"²³. In the mid-1980s the European Commission established action programmes for research and student mobility. This endeavour, amongst others, started what we can call the "Europeanization" of Higher Education – which was an internal process limited to EU member states only. With the fall of the Berlin wall and the iron curtain and with the introduction of study programmes aimed at students from non-EU countries, such as the Tempus programme, an external process of "Europeanization" began. These developments lead to a new concept of the word 'internationalization' which was now referred to as "*a component of planning and administration in Higher Education institutions in all participating countries*"²⁴.

It was this surge of activity on a European level that prompted the creation of the Bologna Process. The latter, on the one hand continued the Europeanization of Higher Education and on the other projected the EHEA on a global stage. These two movements became known as the "European Dimension" and the "External Dimension" respectively. As the Process evolved, it became clear that both dimensions were imperative since, European degrees would not be generally accepted in a global context if they were not primarily accepted in Europe. Thus, in Prague (2001), Ministers not only called for further improvements within the Bologna reforms but also called for increased collaboration between European countries regarding the implications and perspectives of trans-national education.

3.3 From Competitiveness to Attractiveness, Openness and Cooperation

The Bologna Declaration states that one of the objectives of the process is to increase "*the international competitiveness of the European system of Higher Education*"²⁵. As was previously said, this was a statement that encompassed the realization that the EHEA would be vying for the top position on the global scene. As the Process evolved, both in terms of policy as well as members, it became clear that the basis of the external dimension could not be restricted merely to competition.

In May 2002, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) set up a special working group on the external dimension and entrusted it to prepare a relevant report²⁶ for the Berlin Summit. The report moved away from the concept of

²² The Bologna Declaration – 1999 - Page 3.

²³ Eurydice – Two Decades of Reform in Higher Education in Europe: 1980 onwards - 2000 – Page 160.

²⁴ Eurydice – Two Decades of Reform in Higher Education in Europe: 1980 onwards - 2000 – Page 168-169.

²⁵ The Bologna Declaration – 1999 – Page 2.

²⁶ "Attractiveness, Openness and Co-operation. The European Higher Education Area and third countries" – BFUG Report - 2003 .

"competitiveness" and introduced three main factors that solidified the external dimension of the Bologna Process. The three factors were:

- "Attractiveness" – refers to a quality that is made up of various factors. However, the key elements making the EHEA attractive are: (i) quality, (ii) transparency, (iii) diversity and (iv) visibility.
- "Openness" – indicates that the EHEA should be open to students from all over the world. Thus the working group recommended the further development of scholarship programmes and the simplification of visas and entry requirements.
- "Cooperation" – specifies that the EHEA should be open to collaboration with non-European countries. The working group stated that "the Bologna-countries should cooperate in an open manner with regions and countries in other parts of the world by promoting the idea and practice of regional cooperation and through practical cooperation and dissemination of experiences." The report also went so far as to identify priority regions²⁷ of interest for such cooperation.

The recommendations of the Report were endorsed by the Ministers at the Berlin meeting. Based on the outcomes of the report, the Communiqué introduced two new initiatives:

- (i) the development of scholarships for students from third countries (in order to increase Attractiveness and Openness) and
- (ii) cooperation "*with regions of the world by opening Bologna seminars and conferences to representatives of these regions*"²⁸. Regarding the development of scholarships, it is interesting to note that the Erasmus Mundus programme was originally discussed in 2001. A proposal for the programme was drafted in July 2002 and was finally adopted in December 2003, after the Berlin Summit and several rounds of discussions. The aim of the Erasmus Mundus programme was to offer a valuable framework for exchange and dialogue between cultures, through the support of student and academic mobility around the world. The Erasmus Mundus programme entered into force in January 2004.

The Berlin Communiqué also brought with it a definite delineation of the internal and external processes of the Bologna Process. Before Berlin, eligibility for participation in the Bologna Process was still limited to the countries participating in the European Community programmes such as: Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci or Tempus. This became too narrow a definition for the evolution of the Bologna Process and therefore, at the Berlin Ministerial meeting, it was decided that participation should be available to all countries forming part of the European Cultural Convention. A provision was also included – countries would be eligible "*provided that they at the same time declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of Higher Education.*"²⁹ Applications also had to contain detailed information on the implementation of principles and objectives of the Process in that particular country– thus strengthening further the "Europeanization" of Higher Education.

3.4 Euro-centrism and Brain Drain

In the run up to the Bergen Summit, a lot of discussion took place on the importance of the External Dimension of the Bologna Process. Some prominent experts suggested that the Bologna Process was suffering from Euro-centrism especially since the External Dimension was still not given enough importance in practise. Prof. Ulrich Teichler, for instance, stated that "*Many observers have concluded that attention is increasingly paid in the Bologna Process to intra-European matters. Lists of objectives pursued in all the activities of establishing a European Higher Education and Research Area become longer, while links to the wider world remain a single item on these lists. Are the students from other parts of the world the 'forgotten half' of the key target population of the Bologna Declaration? Is the Bologna Process overshadowed by Euro-centrism?*"³⁰ The same concept was also expressed by the then President of the International Association of Universities (IAU) Goolam Mohamedbhai, who stated: "*I fear that the Bologna*

²⁷ Mediterranean countries, SNG/CIS countries, Caribbean and Latin America and South-East Asian countries.

²⁸ The Berlin Communiqué – 2003 – Page 6.

²⁹ The Berlin Communiqué – 2003 – Page 8.

³⁰ Muche, F. (ed.) - "Opening up to the Wider World: the External Dimension of the Bologna Process" - ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education – 2005 – Page 116.

reforms could lead to an isolation of HEIs in some parts of the world. With globalisation what is needed is greater international collaboration among universities in different parts of the world, not just among those in one region only. It is international collaboration among universities that can truly bring about inter-cultural dialogue and world understanding and peace [...] the question then is: should the Bologna reforms be extended to other parts of the world?"³¹

The issue of "Brain Drain" was also a highly debated topic. The creation of a competitive and attractive EHEA was envisaged in order to, on the one hand counter the brain drain from Europe to America that existed in the 80s and 90s, and on the other hand, attract foreign students from around the world. However, in order for the EHEA to base itself on the principles of "attractiveness", "openness" and "collaboration" it had to act responsibly and not cause 'brain drain' from neighbouring countries and regions which in turn would affect the Bologna Process' capability for self-development.

The Bergen Communiqué (2005) addressed both issues. Firstly, it made it clear that the Bologna Process did not aim to "brain drain" human resources from third countries; on the contrary, the Bologna initiatives and reforms were based on the principle of sustainable development. It was due to this principle that the ministers looked forward "*to enhancing the understanding of the Bologna Process in other continents by sharing our experiences of reform processes with neighbouring regions. We see the need to identify partner regions and intensify the exchange of ideas and experiences with those Regions*"³². The Ministers also stressed the need for dialogue and mutual understanding when discussing issues of common interest. Last but not least, the Ministers entrusted the BFUG to elaborate and agree on a strategy for the external dimension of the Bologna Process – a measure seen as a step forward in reducing the Euro-centrism of the Bologna Process.

3.5 The EHEA in a Global Context

Sjur Bergan, representative of the Council of Europe on the External Dimension Working Group, warned that "*the term 'the external dimension' seems to be more concerned with drawing a line between 'them' and 'us' than with fostering one of the key values of the university heritage – that of true international cooperation*"³³.

In this context, the words "External Dimension" started slowly being replaced by: "The EHEA in a Global Context". The strategy document³⁴ prepared by the BFUG was adopted through the London Communiqué (2007) and was based on three guiding principles, namely: (i) European heritage and values (ii) Stakeholder Participation and (iii) Geographical Scope. The strategy then proceeded to set the following priorities:

- Improving information on the European Higher Education Area (in order to increase visibility and reduce misperceptions/bologna myths);
- Promoting European Higher Education to enhance its world-wide attractiveness and competitiveness (through coordinated international promotion and facilitation of the granting of visas and portability of social security);
- Intensifying policy dialogue (through participation of non-EHEA countries at Bologna Process seminars and the organization of joint conferences);
- Strengthening cooperation based on partnership (through balanced student exchanges and capacity building measures to counter act 'brain drain', amongst others); and
- Furthering the recognition of qualifications (through a shift to an education that is based on learning outcomes; the recognition of prior learning and a better common understanding of the concept of 'substantial differences').

Apart from adopting the strategy, Ministers also indicated that work on these priorities ought to be done in relation to the OECD/UNESCO "Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education". They also stated that the BFUG should report on progress within this field by the 2009 summit with particular attention being given to

³¹ "Looking out: The Bologna Process in a Global Setting" – Pavel Zgaga – 2005 – Page 15.

³² The Bergen Communiqué – 2005 – Page 5.

³³ "Looking out: The Bologna Process in a Global Setting" – Pavel Zgaga – 2005 – Page 12.

³⁴ Strategy for EHEA in a Global Setting – Adopted in 2007.

improving the information available about the EHEA and to improve recognition of qualifications. With reference to the latter, the Communiqué concludes as follows:

We call on HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities within the EHEA to assess qualifications from other parts of the world with the same open mind with which they would expect European qualifications to be assessed elsewhere, and to base this recognition on the principles of the LRC.

(Lisbon Recognition Convention)³⁵

3.6 Conclusion

The Bologna Declaration was originally signed by 29 European Countries and thanks to its internal and external policies based on "attractiveness, openness and collaboration" it is now composed of 47 Countries and has attracted the interests of countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States as well as a number of South American, African and Middle-eastern countries. At the launch of the EHEA in 2010, the Ministers declared that "*The Bologna Process and the resulting European Higher Education Area, being unprecedented examples of regional, cross-border cooperation in Higher Education, have raised considerable interest in other parts of the world and made European Higher Education more visible on the global map. We welcome this interest and look forward to intensifying our policy dialogue and cooperation with partners across the world.*"³⁶

3.7 Stakeholders' Feedback on International Openness and the External dimension

3.7.1 International Openness with a student eye

Robert Santa - Executive Committee, European Students' Union

International openness facilitates, to a large degree, an ever broader access for students to quality education across borders. It also promotes an intercultural dimension to education and gives it a truly universal nature. Students who learn in an international environment automatically gain skills and competences that are geared to a globalized world, simply by experimenting multiculturalism first-hand.

However, international openness should not be described entirely through a rosy picture. Due to internationalization, the number of people learning across borders and continents is on the increase. During the past years there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of international students studying in Europe who often pay full costs and benefit from little support. Under these circumstances, there is a risk that international and intercontinental students become "cash cows" in an era of reduced public commitment to the financing of Higher Education.

Another down-side to an increase in the international dimension of education is the fact that it often opens the flood-gate to 'brain drain'. Many promising youngsters are recruited with the aid of fee-waivers and brought to contribute to research developments in industrialized nations. In these conditions, the countries of origin of some of the international students who never go back, tend to lose out from many points of view.

Despite all the drawbacks however, it is important to avoid isolation, and to continue to consider international openness as an opportunity, hopefully a better fully-thought through one in the future.

3.7.2 EURASHE's vision for 2020 on International Openness

Mr. Stefan Delplace - Secretary General, EURASHE

For EURASHE, International openness in HE is first of all a means to stimulate global awareness and a true sense of global citizenship among graduates and within the HE sector as a whole. Present-day problems are worldwide and cannot be solved in a definite geographical area like the EHEA, but require a global platform for global solutions.

³⁵ London Communiqué – 2007 – Page 7 .

³⁶ Budapest/Vienna Declaration – 2010 – Page 1.

Moreover, the creation of the knowledge society requires global responsibility, and HEIs can play an important role in raising consciousness and in finding solutions through the internationalisation of programmes and study environments.

Our vision for 2020 is an EHEA where the international dimension is perceived as an integrated part of the mission of HEI; where all study programs will offer students the possibility to carry out at least one semester abroad and where the positive significance of international openness also comprises immigrant students as important contributors to the internationalisation of HE.

Governments should develop the most effective policy options to abolish all legal mobility obstacles students and teachers face nowadays. In this context, one of the 2020 priorities set by EURASHE is the enhancement of international openness in the EHEA as well as within its member institutions. EURASHE shall stimulate the development of joint degrees across national borders; involve potential research players and stakeholders in international projects; initiate international cooperation to develop and implement comparable QA and accreditation systems and facilitate our members' active participation in international HE organizations and networks.

According to EURASHE, mobility is closely linked to the issue of International Openness because student and staff exchanges remain an important goal of the Bologna Process. Mobility is also important for sharing and disseminating knowledge and skills among students and professionals. It contributes to the personal development of the individual and it underpins the European identity and the multilingual tradition in a global context. EURASHE wants to contribute to achieving the goal of 20% mobile students by informing them about the specific advantages of studies or practical training abroad, and stimulating the interest of employers who accept foreign students for training as a part of their HE studies. We want to promote mobility in a harmonious way, avoiding the brain drain phenomenon.

The Bologna Process and Learning Outcomes

4.1 Introduction

The Bologna Process has revolutionised European Higher Education thanks to the collaboration of 47 countries and the involvement of Higher Education stakeholders³⁷. The process of creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that provides high quality education recognisable on a global scale was never going to be easy, particularly due to the fact that various 'culture changes' were needed. For one, the EHEA was in need of an innovative way of teaching and thus the Bologna Process started fostering a change in the pedagogical paradigm. In order for the EHEA to be globally attractive and competitive it was recognised that a shift to student centred learning based on learning outcomes had to be achieved.

Learning Outcomes were formally mentioned for the first time in the Berlin Communiqué which stated that member states should "*elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their Higher Education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile*"³⁸.

4.2 What are Learning Outcomes?

Learning outcomes are statements that specify what learners will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity. Outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills, or competences:

Knowledge: refers to the acquisition of content related to the subject being studied (for example: learning mathematical formulae, chemical reactions, etc),

Skills: refers to the acquisition of abilities (for example: leadership skills, presentation skills, public speaking etc); and

Competences: refers to the acquisition of thought processes involved in deploying skills (for example: critical thinking, active listening, etc).

When designing a course, the teacher is expected to produce a course specification which includes the aims, the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria leading to the relevant award:

- The Aims of a course/module are broad general statements that indicate what the tutor intends to cover in terms of content.
- The Learning Outcomes of a course/module are brief, clear and specific statements that indicate what the student is expected to achieve and be able to do.
- The Assessment criteria of a course/module should be transparent and should indicate to what extent the learning outcomes have been achieved. The information needs to be clear to both student and teacher.

This construction (aim – learning outcome – assessment) should be done for every module of the course in order for the teacher to make sure that the overall aims and outcomes are clearly achievable through the fulfilment of the individual module aims and outcomes.

Here follows a short summary of how one would create a learning outcome based course:

Step 1: Identify aim(s) of the course/module

Step 2: Write learning outcomes [to set the expected outcome(s) of the course/module]

Step 3: Design assessment task(s) [to measure achievement of outcomes]

³⁷ European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), European Students' Union (ESU), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Education International (EI) and Business Europe. The Council of Europe (CoE) and UNESCO are also consultative members..

³⁸ Berlin Communiqué – 2003 – Page 2.

Step 4: Define threshold assessment criteria [to motivate students using grading assessment criteria – the threshold is the minimum acceptable standard expected to pass the course/module]

Step 5: Develop teaching & learning strategy [to enable learners to reach outcomes and meet criteria]

Step 6: Develop & rethink [to quality assure - based on experience and student/peer feedback]

4.3 Why are learning outcomes important?

Designing courses using learning outcomes leads to a more student-centred approach because it marks a shift from a content-centred system towards an outcome-based system. With the use of learning outcomes it becomes easier to understand what the student should be able to do once he has completed the course. Thus learning outcomes also allow for better quality assurance since it provides measurable outcomes that may be assessed in a qualitative manner. This is imperative when one keeps in mind the overall objective of creating an attractive and competitive EHEA which is based on the provision of high quality education and mobility of students.

Here are some other reasons why learning outcomes are important:

- Learning outcomes help guide students because they explain what is expected from them. This in turn helps students to succeed in their studies.
- Learning outcomes help staff focus on exactly what they want students to achieve in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.
- Learning outcomes provide a useful guide to inform potential candidates and employers about the knowledge, skills and competences that a graduate will possess. The importance of learning outcomes with regards to employability was further emphasised in the London Communiqué where ministers declared that institutions should "*further develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the on-going process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes*".³⁹"

4.4 Learning outcomes and the Bologna Process

The implementation of learning outcomes within European Higher Education has to be seen in light of other Bologna reforms.

The Bergen Communiqué clearly paved the way for the creation of a European Qualification/Competence Framework based on learning outcomes: "*We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles*".⁴⁰"

The EQF helped establish learning outcomes as one of the building blocks of European Higher Education and this in turn allowed for better quality assurance measures. This integral link between Qualification Frameworks and learning outcomes was further enhanced when the National Qualification Frameworks and the European Register for Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) were launched. EQAR manages a register of quality assurance agencies operating in Europe that substantially comply with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). The ESG clearly state that: "*The quality assurance of programmes and awards are expected to include the development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes*".⁴¹" Thus EQAR and the ESG promote learning outcomes as a tool for better quality assurance.

Qualification frameworks are also an important instrument if Europe is to achieve the comparability and transparency needed for improving mobility within and from outside the EHEA. According to the London Communiqué, Qualification Frameworks "also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and

³⁹ London Communiqué – 2007 – Page 6.

⁴⁰ Bergen Communiqué – 2005 – Page 2.

⁴¹ Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – 2005 – Page 16.

*improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning*⁴². With learning outcomes, degrees are more comparable, for it is easier to recognise and assess what the degree actually entails.

Learning outcomes also allow for better calculation of workload, which has always been an issue with the proper implementation of ECTS. This was further emphasized when Ministers declared that "*Efforts should concentrate [...] on proper implementation of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload*"⁴³. By creating aims, learning outcomes and assessment methods, course-designers can better weigh the workload involved and thus double-check if the programme is attainable within the foreseen timeframe.

Last but not least, learning outcomes ease flexibility, recognition and mobility – something which is at the heart of the Bologna Process. Since learning outcomes specify the end result (rather than the method) it is easier to compare qualifications which are based on learning outcomes – regardless of the method through which such outcomes have been achieved: "*Successful policies for lifelong learning will include basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes regardless of whether the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning paths*"⁴⁴.

4.5 Aiding the Culture Change

In Leuven/Louvain (2009), Ministers declared:

*We reassert the importance of the teaching mission of Higher Education institutions and the necessity for on-going curricular reform geared toward the development of learning outcomes*⁴⁵.

This on-going curricular reform is something that all stakeholders need to contribute so that changes in teaching and learning methods can be implemented throughout the whole Higher Education community. Thus it is imperative that all stakeholders are properly informed about the procedures related to the usage of learning outcomes. Academics and teachers should be given the proper resources and support to be able to fully comprehend and implement a learning outcome approach. Students should also be offered the proper resources and support to shift from the previous learning paradigm to a student-centred and more outcome based approach.

Ministers and politicians are encouraged to promote a philosophy of education (at all levels) which is student-centred and based on learning outcomes. This will make sure that the education system is consistent and that academics, teachers and students are motivated to adopt this new methodology.

Academics and teachers (regardless of the level) should accept and promote this outcome based approach since it is of direct benefit to themselves and to their students. They should assist their peers and work together, creating resources that will allow others to properly create their own outcome-based courses.

Business organisations should provide expertise on the skills, knowledge and competences expected out of graduates seeking employment and should, where possible, provide resources for projects to which they see a beneficial outcome.

Students should embrace and promote the importance of a learning outcome approach because it allows them to better assess their options (in terms of outcomes, workload and assessment) when choosing a degree and thus increasing their chances of successful completion.

The Student Centred Learning Toolkit⁴⁶ produced by Education International (EI) and the European Students Union (ESU) explains the issue of learning outcomes. It also puts forward a formula for change: $R = (D \times B \times V \times F) > C$. R stands for Readiness for change; D stands for Dissatisfaction with the status quo; B stands for the perceived Benefits of the change for the actor; V is the clarity of the shared Vision of what is possible; F stands for the Feasibility of the

⁴² London Communiqué – 2007 – Page 3.

⁴³ London Communiqué – 2007 – Page 2.

⁴⁴ Leuven/Louvain Communiqué – 2009 – Page 3.

⁴⁵ Leuven/Louvain Communiqué – 2009 – Page 3.

⁴⁶ Student-Centred Learning - Toolkit for students, staff and Higher Education institutions. Produced by Education International and the European Students Union in 2010. Page 23..

steps to implement new ideas; and C stands for the Costs of changing. This formula once again stresses the point that introducing change is not a simple task but requires the fulfilment of certain factors – such fulfilment, as we have seen throughout the Bologna Process, is made easier when all stakeholders work together.

4.6 Conclusion

Modernising how Europe deals with education provision was and still is a difficult process. After 10 years of Bologna reforms, progress has been recorded but further adoption is needed so that the members of the EHEA may be able to reach the targets set by the Bologna Process. In order to be competitive, the EHEA has to provide high quality education and the adoption of a learning outcomes based pedagogy. The implementation of learning outcomes is not only in the hands of academics – students, employers ,but all other stakeholders have to play their part in endorsing, promoting and ultimately acting in bringing in the needed change. At the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial conference, Ministers declared that:

Curricular reform will thus be an on-going process leading to high quality, flexible and more individually tailored education paths. Academics, in close cooperation with student and employer representatives, will continue to develop learning outcomes and international reference points for a growing number of subject areas.⁴⁷

4.7 Stakeholders' Feedback on Learning Outcomes

4.7.1 The Bologna Process and Learning Outcomes – EUA

Lea Brunner – Project Officer Higher Education Policy Unit, European University Association (EUA). The following text is adapted from: Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Higher Education, by Andrée Sursock and Hanne Smidt, EUA 2010.

In the last of EUA's Trends reports, its authors concluded that when "looking back over a decade of reform, it is clear that a great deal of progress has been made". They noted that the rapid implementation of "Bologna tools" peaked around 2007, and that in the last four years, the "change" agenda has shifted to the more complex, less quantifiable issues of cultural change and embedding the structural changes and individual Bologna tools in institutions⁴⁸. A perfect example of such an issue is the introduction of Learning Outcomes.

Since learning outcomes are described independently of inputs and of the context of learning, they enable learning undertaken in different contexts to be compared relatively transparently and free of preconceptions or prejudices, thus facilitating the comparison and recognition of learning between different contexts. Learning outcomes and level descriptors can be seen as the basic building blocks of the Bologna reforms, closely linked to tools like ECTS and the DS enabling the creation of flexible curricula, to the challenges of lifelong learning, widening participation and access including Recognition of Prior Learning and to QF's. The concept of Learning Outcomes is therefore at the heart of the paradigm shift from teacher centred to student-centred learning.⁴⁹

Learning Outcomes, however, are still an element of the Bologna reform that is at once the most radical and the least understood. Trends V observed in 2007 that "understanding and integrating the use of a learning outcome based approach remains a key medium-term challenge" (Trends V: 8). While no data is available on this specific question from previous Trends reports, the data from Trends 2010 regarding the development of learning outcomes, if taken at face value, is encouraging.⁵⁰

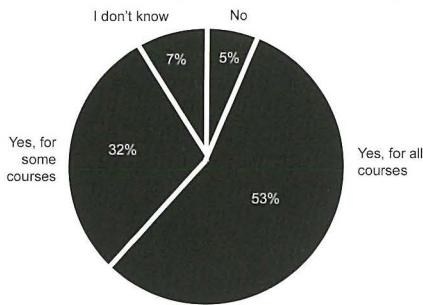
⁴⁷ Lueven/Louvain Communiqué – 2009 – Page 3.

⁴⁸ Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Higher Education, Andrée Sursock and Hanne Smidt, EUA 2010, p. 89..

⁴⁹ Trends 2010, page 65..

⁵⁰ Trends 2010, page 47..

Q 19. Have Learning Outcomes been developed?



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In conclusion, it is not yet clear that an understanding of the importance of learning outcomes is fully and widely understood in Europe⁵¹ and significant challenges remain. But the perceived shift of the Bologna discourse encourages the actors in HE to embrace the cultural change towards student-centred learning, modularisation and learning outcomes, and this can have a positive effect in creating a coherent framework that addresses the needs of a variety of learners:

- Modularisation and a learning-outcome approach can potentially stimulate the growth of interdisciplinary and optional courses in a study programme, thus increasing the potential for innovative studies that can better address each student's interests and potentially enhance employment opportunities.
- A learning-outcome approach can facilitate better links between research and teaching by introducing some research activities already in the first-cycle.
- A learning outcome approach can promote recognition of prior learning. Applicants can indicate in their applications/portfolio how their learning has been achieved. Their work can be compared to the level descriptors in the qualifications framework.⁵²

4.7.2 Education International (EI) and Learning Outcomes

Monique Fouilhoux – Deputy General Secretary, Education International

At the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial conference in 2010, EI's analysis of the Bologna Process carried the title 'Enhancing Quality'. This reflected the concern of our member organisations that the quality of Higher Education is under great pressure. Many of our internal debates address the problem that academics have less and less time to educate their students to the required level, while the "knowledge society" actually requires more exciting and new forms of learning. Reflecting on what a student should learn in a module allows us to set high standards, and to assess whether those standards are being maintained. Although it is proving harder to define learning outcomes than we previously thought, we still see it as a basic fact that every module, every study programme should have clearly defined learning outcomes.

Quality education is however not defined through learning outcomes alone. The debate on rankings and standardised testing are a good example of this problem. In recent years, we noticed that these tools have many methodological flaws, and provide little information on how to improve education quality. For EI, quality education should therefore be defined more contextually, reflecting the problem that quality is never deterministic; it is contingent upon creativity and constant development. We therefore think that education quality should be improved through its *inputs* (including students' backgrounds, teachers' qualifications, working conditions); the *education process* (including teaching, and different processes of learning) and projected *outcomes* together. A down-to-earth example of this vision would be to provide teachers with a more supportive working environment, reserving more working time to assess and provide feedback on students' work. It is almost a triple helix: only by improving the three dimensions at the same time will students experience a more exciting learning process and will we start building a genuine knowledge society.

51 Trends 2010, page 65.

52 Trends 2010, page 58-59.

4.7.3 Learning Outcomes from a Student Perspective

Robert Santa – Executive Committee of the European Students Union (ESU)

One of the simplest, yet most revolutionary ideas, that has gained wide circulation during the past few years of Bologna implementation is that of learning outcomes. These are not, of course, a Bologna innovation. The concept had already been used for several years in various universities, and had a very simple premise at its base: all learning should have a concrete and defined outcome.

The idea seems in itself so basic and so natural, that one could ask if there is any possible alternative. Apparently, there is: it is often a mere and not fully thought through repetition of teaching practices, without responsiveness to feedback and without clearly defined targets. This creates a number of problems for recognition, for measuring learning progress and for analyzing the effectiveness of the various learning methods employed in school.

While the idea seems natural to many, there is still inertia-based opposition to using learning outcomes at numerous levels of education. Much like opposition to the metric system: why does a system deeply rooted in our practices need to be measured and categorized artificially? Of course, the use of learning outcomes is always difficult in academic cultures not used to them. Is a lawyer the learning outcome of law school? Or should learning outcomes be more specific and put the onus on smaller components of the learning experience? These questions might seem basic for some, but they have actually been phrased at one LO-focused event in Eastern Europe.

The Bologna process has been accompanied by various tools that should help academics to be better in writing learning outcomes: publications, Dublin Descriptors, qualification frameworks, conferences and events – all of these have had the merit of trying to make LO easy to understand for the wider academic audience. But there is still a long way to go, a long way in which detractors need to understand that proper comparability and compatibility of studies across Europe needs a common denominator. In the absence of anything better, LO are the best chance we have of finding this denominator.

List of Seminars

2009-2011 *Bologna* cycle:

- Quality Assurance: A National *Bologna* Process Seminar, 19 November 2010.
- **The *Bologna* Process: A National *Bologna* Expert Training Session, 14 December 2010.**
- Employability: A National *Bologna* Process Seminar, 20 January 2011.
- **Student-Centred Learning: A *Bologna* Process International Conference, 16-17 February 2011.**
- Education, Research and Innovation: A National *Bologna* Process Seminar, 10 March 2011.
- **International Openness and the External Dimension: A *Bologna* Process International Seminar, 18-19 April 2011.**
- **Learning Outcomes: A *Bologna* Process Training Conference, 20 May 2011.**

List of Publications

2009-2011 *Bologna* cycle:

- *The Impact of the Bologna Process on Higher Education Institutions in Malta - An overview of the targets achieved and future challenges*
- *Quality Assurance, Employability and Education, Research & Innovation - A Report*
- *Bologna Expert Training Session & Learning Outcomes Seminar - A Report*
- *Student-Centred Learning A Bologna Process International Conference - A Report*
- *International Openness and the External Dimension Seminar - A Report*
- ***Bologna Expert Training Session, Student-Centred Learning, International Openness & the External Dimension and Learning Outcomes - Information Booklet***
- *Bologna Process Malta - At a Glance*



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