

From Tripl-E to TripletS: *Quality, Employment and Europe in Three Scenarios for the Future of Higher Education*

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Contents

- The assignment to be employment-relevant and the European developments: Bologna Process
- Sketch of a triplet of scenarios for future European higher education
- Conclusion: does it make a difference for employment and Europe which one of the triplet scenarios will be realised?



The Bologna Declaration

Aim and Rationales

- **Main aim:** To establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010
- **Main European rationales:**
 - ◆ Increase 'the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education' in the world
 - ◆ Promote mobility within Europe
 - Europe = all countries undersigning 'Bologna'
 - ◆ Better relationship higher education → labour market underlying on both rationales



The Bologna Declaration

Why Did Ministers Sign?

- **My opinion:** There were 29 Bologna Declarations
- Each country had a national agenda
 - ◆ National reform: e.g. Germany wanted shorter time to degree
 - ◆ National aims with internationalisation: e.g. the Netherlands wanted better international recognition
- The Bologna Process got its own dynamics afterwards, with unexpected consequences, e.g.
 - ◆ Seen as part of the *acquis communautaire*
 - ◆ Expectation of cooperation



The Bologna Declaration: 6 Objectives (1-5)

- ◆ ‘easily readable and comparable degrees’
 - ‘also through ... the Diploma Supplement’
- ◆ ‘two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate’
 - 1st cycle: ≥ 3 years
 - 1st cycle: ‘relevant to the European labour market’
- ◆ ‘a system of credits - such as in the ECTS system’
 - ‘also ... acquired in non-higher education contexts’
- ◆ ‘Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles’
- ◆ ‘European dimensions in higher education’
 - ‘curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.’



The Bologna Declaration: 6 Objectives (6)

- 'Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies'
- **Comment:** Bologna Declaration is vague about quality assurance
- Role for quality assurance: it is the mechanism to provide much-needed transparency



Follow-Up Conferences Prague, Berlin, Bergen

- 'quality ... has proven to be at the heart' of EHEA (*Berlin*)
- ENQA as 'champion' of the further process (*Prague*)
 - ◆ European Association of Quality Assurance Agencies
 - Originally: 'European' = European Union = 25 countries, Extended to all Bologna countries, in 2004
 - Relation with European Register of QAA's?
- Accreditation 'or comparable' scheme prescribed (by 2005)
- Connection with qualification frameworks
 - ◆ Defining higher education outcomes → link with employment in quality criteria
 - What about employment input in processes?



Design Rules for Quality Assurance from 'Bologna'

- The object of evaluation has to be the degree
 - ◆ Because that is the 'passport' that students get
 - to study abroad
 - to enter the European labour market
 - ◆ Programme accreditation is logical preference
 - ◆ But: 1000s of programmes per country
 - Alternative: institutional evaluation
 - ✧ more feasible, less informative
- Europe-wide transparency
 - ◆ What is specific, what is common to degrees from Poland and Holland etc.?
 - ◆ **My opinion:** we do not have to aim for uniform B.Sc., etc.



Is European Quality Assurance Needed for European Labour Market? (1)

- Distinguish initial \leftrightarrow post-initial higher education
- Initial higher education
 - ◆ Usual degree: ‘bachelor’.
 - ◆ Functions: Initiation and transformation of students
 - ◆ Mostly local or regional catch-basin for students
- Implies: mostly local or regional information on quality needed—more efficiently at national level?



Is European Quality Assurance Needed for European Labour Market? (2)

- Post-initial higher education
 - ◆ Titles: ‘master’, ‘Ph.D.’, ‘bachelor’[!]
... and diverse forms of life-long learning
 - ◆ These students are ‘informed consumers’
 - ◆ Sometimes local/regional, sometimes European market
- There is a need for European quality information on post-initial higher education
 - ◆ But this can include ‘bachelor’,
 - ◆ *ergo* cannot be operationally distinguished from initial higher education.



Is European Quality Assurance Needed for European Labour Market? (3)

- Users' information needs are, I maintain:
 - ◆ Robust, not esoteric distinctions
 - ◆ *Effectus civilis*, that is: What is the meaning of the degree on the labour market?
 - official accreditation and recognition regulations may be less important than ...
 - ... a good answer to the question how to achieve trust in degrees from different study programmes in the eyes of employers or society?



Limitations of Quality Assurance

- It leads to statements about study programmes or higher education institutions (faculties) ...
- ... not about individual graduates or students
- Moreover, credits, options, modularisation, recognition of previous work experience
'deconstruct' the idea of a coherent study programme as a recognisable unit for evaluation
- Conclusion: individual Diploma recognition remains important



A Triplet of Scenarios for 2020

- CHEPS developed three scenarios
 - ◆ Based on a 2-round Delphi study among 160 HE decision-makers and experts across Europe (2004)
- **Centralia**: based largely on majority opinions in Delphi study
- **Octavia**: most-preferred by audiences
- **Vitis Vinifera**: in contrast to Centralia



Scenarios in short



Centralia:

- Hierarchical co-ordination
- Power is centralised: Muscles from Brussels



Octavia:

- Network co-ordination
- Power is spread throughout the network



Vitis Vinifera:

- Market co-ordination
- Power lies with the individual institutions



Centralia Landscape

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- **Organized diversity: B- M- D- model is leading**
 - **Stratification: D- in the North/West, B- in South/East**

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- **Fairly large institutions**
 - **Predominantly public**

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- **Blended mode learning, life long learning**
 - **Research and teaching: basic versus R&D**



Centralia Education

- EU-wide, uniform 3+2+3 degree structure
- With more emphasis on competences

- Students are carefully guided
- Standardised course modules



Centralia Quality

- **Obligatory accreditation by the European Accreditation Agency (EAA):**
 - **Employability is the main criterion**
 - **Re-accreditation is semi-automatic**

- **Uniform EAA quality standards, but universities lobby for exceptions.**



Octavia Landscape



- A great variation in continuously changing networks
- Teaching concentrated in South/East Europe; research in North/West Europe



- Inter- and intra organizational networks
- Public, private and hybrids



- Teaching in learning- working pathways
- Research in public private innovation networks



Octavia Education



•3+2, 3+1+1, 4+1 degrees, ... and short-cycle programmes




•Higher education is a cross-institutional, cross-national journey, with diversified, modular programmes




Octavia Quality



• **Internal quality assurance has led to an internal quality culture**



• **Many ranking guides, with criteria that go beyond the traditional criteria (quality of services and workplaces)**



• **Diversified student body**
• **Mixture of skills and knowledge**
• **Quality continuously tested in the workplace**



Vitis Vinifera Landscape



- Anarchic diversity: HE too complex to classify
- Much diversity within, less across systems



- From small niche players to mega-universities
- One-third HEI is private



- All modes of learning
- Basic research and R&D

Vitis Vinifera Education



- Degree structures: B, M, D plus first and post graduate diplomas:
“some things are just unclassifiable”

- Private HE: often web-based and very strong in short cycle programmes



Vitis Vinifera Quality



- Few national quality assurance or accreditation schemes left at programme level



- Market demands innovation, responsiveness, renewal and mass individualisation



- Public concern about declining/differential quality
- Still less diverse than the USA



Some Issues for Q.A. and Employment Centralia

- Who controls the European Accreditation Agency?
 - ◆ What will be the balance between labour market needs and academic autonomy
- Who defines the quality criteria?
And the exceptions or regional adaptations?
 - ◆ What will be the balance between labour market needs and academic autonomy



Some Issues for Q.A. and Employment Octavia

- How to avoid a 'jungle of accreditations'?
 - ◆ Who is the 'spider in the web' to provide sufficient transparency?

- Is mutual recognition of evaluations understandable and trustworthy for 'end users' (students, employers, academics)?



Some Issues for Q.A. and Employment

Vitis Vinifera

- Much expected from market self-regulation
 - ◆ Learner must choose type of education: more 'training' or more '*Bildung*'

- Not cooperation but competition
 - ◆ Cooperation can be a competition strategy



Conclusion

- Different options sketched for establishing balance between higher education and labour market relevance of degrees
- Each scenario can lead to satisfactory futures from the point of view of employment/academy; the point is to get the right balance within each
- Challenge for universities: be ready for any scenario
 - ◆ Autonomous, balanced curriculum development
 - ◆ Quality assessment/accreditation must allow that