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Bologna Process and its Implications: What does the Research Literature Tell us?

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Outline

- Bologna Process
  - Changes in Higher Education
  - Curricula Analysis
  - Employability
- Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions
Bologna Process
Changes in HE

To foster the **mobility** of students and academics which will promote the free movement of human capital.

**BOLOGNA PROCESS**
(Main Goal)

Harmonization of higher education systems
European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

A **three-cycle structure** of the university studies

A **comparable system** of higher education degrees

The **quality assurance** of higher education systems

The implementation of the **European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)**
New Credit System (ECTS)

New Paradigm of the organization of teaching:

• Student-centred and focus on learning and training

• Student as an active subject in the learning process

• Active learning of the student, considered the whole work training of the student, the contact hours, hours of project, hours of field work, individual study and activities related to assessment

• New methodologies of teaching / learning, which are based on a highly flexible curriculum

• New forms of learning and assessment
Bologna Process
Changes in HE

- Educational Reorganization

- More flexible curriculum
- A distinct organization of teachers and students
- The adoption of schemes of tutorial support
- New ways of teaching and assessment
- New calendars evaluation procedures
- Greater coordination between research and teaching
- Smaller classes

(Lima, 2006:9)
Student centered curricula require changes in educational activities, assessment tasks and strategies, and a change in the organization of learning. This “new” approach emphasizes the student and his/her role in the organization of learning.

The importance of the development of technical and also transversal competencies, which allow students to communicate what they know and to use their knowledge in many different ways, is an important issue of this change.

This implies that Universities:

Enhance a novel mix of approaches to teaching and learning in order to encourage or allow the development of valuable qualities such as capacity for analysis and synthesis, independence of judgment, curiosity, teamwork, and ability to communicate.
In student centred learning environments, such as project approaches (Powell & Weenk, 2003) or other cooperative learning environments (Johnson & Johnson, 1990), students are encouraged to develop these generic abilities while applying and reinforcing technical competencies.

Assessment methods and criteria for evaluating performance should consider not only knowledge and contents but also transversal competencies.

This entails a shift:

from the traditional testing culture to an assessment culture which favours the integration of assessment, teaching and learning, through active student involvement and authentic assessment tasks which are based on a range of competencies (Sambell, MacDowell & Brown, 1997; Black and Wiliam, 1998).
The EHEA (European Higher Education Area) considers employability as one of the **10 commitments in 2020**:

“This calls for flexibility and innovation in the contents as well as in the structuring of higher education programs. The vision for 2020 is a Europe where governments, employers and HE institutions have increased their partnerships in order to create jobs for the graduates and graduates for the jobs” (EHEA, 2010).”

The **challenge** for the next years is to establish strategies for cooperation and partnerships between universities, employers and governments of the Bologna area.
Bologna Process
Employability

- Higher education is a privilege moment to prepare graduates for the labour market demands (Andrews & Higson, 2008);

- The competences provided by the Dublin descriptors (highlighted in London Communiqué) that are common for any knowledge area:
  - problem solving
  - ability to apply knowledge
  - ability to adapt to new situations
  - concern for quality
  - ability to work with information
  - teamwork
  - autonomy

- Several surveys reinforce the idea that it is important that graduates develop more than technical competences.
The main purpose of this study is to:

- understand **what we know** and also **what we need to know** – a decade about Bologna Process

- data collection was based on a **literature review**
  
  - publications in the social sciences field (particularly those that address issues related to Higher Education)
  - 2000-2010
  - 5 journals with impact factor (ISI)
  - 24 journals from other data bases
  - total of 124 papers were identified
Methodology

Data Analysis - five categories:

1. Policies - issues related to institutional implementation of the Bologna Process in member countries;

2. Teaching and Learning - issues related to the new paradigm shift with implications for the role of teacher and student in the teaching-learning process, and the adoption of active learning methodologies and new modes of assessment in Higher Education;

3. Degrees and Curricula - issues related to changes in the curricula, according to the cycles of study and ECTS;

4. Employability / Professional Profile - features related to the period after the initial training, including development of employability skills of graduates and the satisfaction related to the professional area;

5. Quality Assurance - issues relating to standards of excellence expected at the professional level and the level of student learning, complementing the theme of evaluation.
Methodology

- Key dimensions related to the level of curriculum practice:
  - Teaching and Learning
  - Degrees and Curricula
  - Employability / Professional Profile
  - Quality Assurance

- represent 40% of the total publications

- categories and sub-themes
Findings

- Teaching and Learning
  - assessment and teacher’s role
  - only one paper discusses the student’s role

- Degrees and Curricula
  - curriculum design is one of the strongest scope of research
  - more than 80% focused on the implementation of the Bologna Process
  - issues of the European Qualification Framework
Findings

- Employability/Professional Profile
  - only four articles discuss this feature
  - related to employability skills
  - satisfaction of graduates in relation to professional practice (perspective of the graduates)

- Quality assurance
  - professional level
  - student learning level
Conclusions

- Preliminary phase
  - Identify published papers related to the Bologna Process
  - Work in progress

- Further developments
  - Selection of papers directly related to three key dimensions: assessment, learning and teaching
  - Identify the research methods adopted
  - Identify sources of data collection
  - Compare and contrast major findings arising from empirical work
Discussion

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