

Bologna Process Implementation in the Israeli Higher-Education System

The Bologna Process, launched in 1999, is the result of decisions made by international committees of the participating states' ministries of education. The process takes place in numerous countries in Western and Eastern Europe, the Balkan, North Africa and the Middle East (Bologna Declaration, 1999; Voegtli, Knill & Dobbins, 2011). The process purports to create cultural and structural changes both in established medieval higher education systems, and also in recently-established systems in newly-independent states. The Bologna Process' initial objective is the institutional standardization of higher education in the participating states. Yet, higher-Education standardization has wide-ranging extra-academic effects, clearly evident in the economic, social and political arenas.

The Bologna Process subscribes to the unification of Europe and its neighbors into a single powerful entity, which could compete globally with economic superpowers such as the USA, China, Japan and India. To achieve such unity, European Union member states cannot limit their efforts to an economic community characterized by a single currency and a unified, holistic economic policy. Rather, they must create broad infrastructures, commonly consolidating education, welfare, employment, etc. Higher education plays a central role in the infrastructural consolidation of Europe and its neighbors: future major-scale transformations in each state's education system will impact professional training and mobility throughout and outside the continent. These transformations are designed to restructure European culture, society and economy; and also to establish a comprehensively potent common denominator and an influential mobilizing force that will buttress European competitiveness vis-à-vis the superpowers, and concomitantly will contribute to the wellbeing of the participating states.

These are the six major aspects of the Bologna Process (Bologna Declaration, 1999):

1. Adopting a three-cycle system of study (bachelor, master, doctorate)
2. ECTS: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. Creating a standardized system for cross-European higher education performance and attainment.
3. The Diploma Supplement (DS): higher education diploma, providing a standardized description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder.
4. National academic training.
5. Independent systems for national academic assessment.
6. Treaty of Lisbon.

Israel's initial application to the Bologna process was submitted in January 2007. The application's re-submission in 2008 was rejected. The rejection appears to rest on formal-political grounds: non-European states cannot sign the Bologna Declaration and join the process; they may only observe the process and its implementation. Nevertheless, Israeli students and researchers do participate in EU programs under the Bologna Process, e.g., "Erasmus Mundus" and "Tempus".

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These programs promote academic and research cooperation between Bologna Process participants and non-participant states; this cooperation purports to bolster Europe's global status and extend the process to neighboring geographical areas.

In order to include Israeli higher education system in European academic transformations, the Israeli Council for Higher Education (CHE) joined the Tempus program, launching a national office supported by EU funding.

 Excerpted from Dr. Miri Yemini and Prof. Yossi Ben-Artzi's essay, *Dapim Journal*, 2013, Vol. 55. Internationalisation

The international activities of universities dramatically expanded in volume, scope, and complexity during the past decades. To address the integration of international, intercultural and global dimension into the purpose, function and delivery of higher education, we usually use the term 'internationalisation', as it is commonly applied in this context (Knight, 2004). Several studies (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Beerkens et al., 2010) indicated an increase in the importance of and attention granted to supporting internationalisation in the higher education sector in recent years. Internationalisation over last years has moved from a reactive to a pro-active strategic issue, from added value to mainstream, and its focus, scope and content evolved substantially (de Wit, 2010). This growing interest has translated into active development of policies, programs, and infrastructure at institutional, local and national levels. As this expansion and investment in internationalisation are welcome and indeed requisite in this global era, institutions and even nations have recognized the need to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of this process as an urgent priority. Moreover, as internationalisation is perceived as a vital process for further development of higher education, differences in the intensity and scope of internationalisation, and certainly the inability to internationalize, might affect the competitiveness and even the survival of higher education institutions (Yemini, 2012). The academic debate on internationalisation assessment is including differing visions of the purposes of assessment (should it serve as an internal improvement measure, or for the purpose of comparative ranking or benchmarking); the agency responsible for the assessment (internal versus external); the frequency and means of assessment (surveys, observations, etc.); the diversity in assessment models needed for different types of institutions (research universities versus teaching-orientated academies); and the role of assessment in different countries (Europe versus US and Asia) (Beerkens et al. 2010; de Wit 2010). Ultimately, the reasons behind institutions' differences in internationalisation levels and the factors that affect the intensity and scope of internationalisation have not yet been fully revealed.

Resources

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Internationalization in Teacher-Training Institution (Pia-Maria Rabenstener)

Problems and Challenges in Implementing Internationalization Strategy/A>(Marek Polak)

Research into Practice? How Can Research Make a 'Difference' in Internationalising Higher Education?(Sheila Trahar)

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