

Higher Education and the World of Work: New Relationship Through Bologna Process

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Abstract

This paper builds on contemporary discourse on the response of higher education institutions to the needs of society. It reflects on the changing strategic paradigm in the field of higher education within the modern socio-economic context. The paper focuses on the redefinition of the relationship between employers and higher education, encouraged by the Bologna Process. The employability of graduates as the basic link between the world of work and higher education is examined with particular attention on the role and importance of employers as stakeholders in higher education. The findings of the paper are compared with the actual stage of implementation of the Bologna Process at the University of Prishtinë/Priština.

Keywords: Bologna Process, higher education, internationalisation, Europeanization, labour market, world of work, universities, higher education institutions, knowledge society, University of Prishtinë/Priština

Introduction

Many higher education systems in Europe and the respective higher education institutions have made steps towards European Higher Education Area - the aim of the Bologna Process. There have been many interpretations and courses of implementation

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of perhaps the most prominent transnational political initiative in the field of higher education in European history. The modern social and economic developments have played a significant role in such a revolutionary step done by European governments and higher education institutions.

Universities are part of society and despite high level of autonomy and academic freedom, need to live with the changing environment they operate in. Nevertheless democratic western societies are built on the same principles as the autonomous universities: free discussion, critical thought and exchange of information. For the democratic empowerment and progress of society an autonomous university is crucial. On the other hand, a well functioning higher education is determinant also for economic development, essentially embedded in the progress of society. Therefore the relationship between higher education and the world of work is an important segment of interaction between higher education and the society. The question remains how should the universities respond to the expectations and needs of the modern world of work. Since the Bologna Process emerged as the leading reform guideline across Europe, it is interesting to examine the elements of Bologna reform that address the relationship between higher education and the world of work.

The paper starts with the circumstances that lead to a necessary changes in higher education. Present conditions creating the need for the redefinition of relations between labour market and higher education institutions are presented. Second part discusses the Bologna Process as the leverage for higher education reforms in Europe. Elements of the reform that address the labour market are singled out in order to reveal the degree of influence on the relationship between higher education and the world of work. The last part of the paper focuses on the implementation of the Bologna reform at the largest university in Kosovo¹ in the segments previously identified as affecting the relationship between higher education and the world of work.

¹ This chapter is mainly based on the study of OSCE Mission in Kosovo. OSCE: *A Study on the Implementation of the Bologna Process at the University of Prishtinë/Priština*. Conducted by Dr. Angele Attard, 2009.

The study is supported with tools, such as references from other studies², observations, conference papers, briefings and other important legislative documents from this field as well as analysis of secondary sources, e.g. other papers.

The relationship between higher education institutions and employers is discussed only regarding the teaching and training of human resources. Research-scientific activity as one of the crucial links between universities and industry is not discussed in this article.

CHANGING CONTEXT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE

Reforms of large social subsystems like higher education are embedded in the changes of their socio-economic context. Democratic authorities act upon the interest of social groups. Only substantial changes in society give ground to the large scale shifts in institutions and policies on the policy areas of central importance, such as higher education. In the contemporary European society there is a number of changes possible to list among the external factors encouraging a thorough rethinking of higher education. Of course these external changes are not and will be not the same across different national contexts, being subject to a myriad of different variables such as structure of economy, availability of financial resources, social/cultural traditions etc. Despite this it is a fact that in one or another way the systems have to respond to the changes around them³.

² The findings are partly based on two studies: Miklavič, K. et al: *Bologna Process between the Employers and Higher Education*, Paper presented at *European Labour Market for Academic Graduates Conference 2006*, University of Maastricht, 2006 and Miklavič, K: *Bolonjski proces, pot v modernizacijo visokega solstva*. Magistrsko delo. Univerza v Ljubljani, FDV, 2008.

³ File, J. in Goedegebuure, L: On real time systems, change and challenges. Comparative reflections. V File, J. in Goedegebuure, L (eds.): *Real-time systems. Reflections on higher education in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia*. CHEPS, VUTIUM Press, 2003, p.239.

As grouped in Miklavič 2008⁴, there are three main external influences that represent the changing context and induce the necessity for change in higher education: 1. Massification of higher education; 2. Knowledge society and economy; 3. Globalisation and internationalisation of society.

1. Masification of higher education: In the late sixties of former century it was possible to observe the outset of a considerable growth in enrolment rates to higher education. The elite nature of the study at the universities faded. Higher education opened up to larger shares of each generation. Rapid growth of enrolment rates is one of the fundamental factors determining the contemporary higher education in Europe.⁵ Today in many European countries more than 50% of each generation cohort enrolls into higher education⁶. This phenomenon dramatically changed the organisational structure of the university community and inevitably affects the logic of teaching/learning/research. Even though different across Europe, the traditional University requires an adaptation to this reality.

2. Knowledge society and economy: Knowledge society/economy is perhaps one of the most popular slogans in nowadays European political discourses. Often it is used to portray the transition from the industrial production with low educated labour to industry and services based on knowledge and representing the spine of the entire economy.⁷ The discourse of the knowledge society/economy creates a certain political rationale whereby the universities become a service to economy and the basis for economic competitiveness. Goods and services, requiring a substantial scientific and technologic input, are the core elements of a strong economy.⁸ In the changing labour market, there is a notable tendency of emphasising the adequate

⁴ Miklavič, K: *Bolonjski proces, pot v modernizacijo visokega solstva*. Magistrsko delo. Univerza v Ljubljani, FDV, 2008.

⁵ Zgaga, P: *Bolonjski proces: oblikovanje skupnega evropskega visokošolskega prostora*. Univerza v Ljubljani, Pedagoška fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2004, p.12.

⁶ OECD: *Education at a Glance*. Published by OECD, 2007

⁷ Nokkala 2007, Robertson 2005, Van Damme 2002

⁸ Morely 2003, Pawlowski 2004, McNay 2006, Bucar 2001, Nokkala 2005

graduate competences as one of the priority tasks of higher education. The centrality of the question of competences in the knowledge society puts the university as a traditional institution in front of serious challenges.⁹

3. Globalisation, internationalisation and Europeanization: Globalisation as a larger change in society is considerably intertwined with the knowledge society/economy. Thereby it affects the academic world and the organizing of higher education and the behaviour of the universities¹⁰. In the last few decades it is possible to observe an increase in the internationalisation policies as a response of the governments and universities to the process of globalisation and the knowledge society./economy¹¹. In this context internationalisation is also part of the response of higher education to the globalisation of labour market¹². Van der Wende¹³ characterised the difference between globalisation and internationalisation of higher education by defining the second as a process where national authorities play a central role. Bologna Process is a combination of both, since besides the governments, also other stakeholders, organisations and European Commission are involved (see below). This hybrid process is often referred to as Europeanization of higher education.

⁹ Tomusk V: The War of Institutions, Episode I: The Rise, and the Rise of Private Higher Education in Eastern Europe. *Higher Education Policy*, 16, 2003, p.228.

¹⁰ Nokkala 2007, Van Damme 2002

¹¹ Nokkala, T: Constructing the Ideal University – The internationalisation of higher education in the comparative knowledge society. Tampere University Press, Tampere, 2007

¹² Nokkala, T: Knowledge society/knowledge economy discourse in internationalisation of higher education - A Case study in governmentality. Knowledge and Politics Conference, Bergen, Norway 18th to 20th May 2005, p.2.

¹³ Van der Wende, M.C. (2002): *Higher Education Globally: Towards New Frameworks for Research and Policy*. The CHEPs Inaugurals 2002. University of Twente Cheps, 2002,p.49.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE TRENDS IN THE WORLD OF WORK

The paper is focused on the relationship between higher education and the world of work. Therefore it is important to shed light on some major trends in the world of work that relate to the employment of graduates and higher education in general.

Changes in technology processes and globalisation of economy have created a unified and connected market with relations similar to the ones on internal markets¹⁴. The level of education of employees plays an ever more significant role in the companies in terms of increasing competitiveness and adding value to the produced goods and services. It also contributes to the employees to be more productive, independent, creative etc. Due to higher qualifications, they earn more, are more open to career changes and adapt to a new workplace more quickly. The only way to increase welfare is to increase the average education level of employees and, of course, general population.¹⁵

With the deregulated and globalised market, the need for broader, more general educational programmes emphasizing flexible, functional skills appropriate for many types of work has increased. Changes in technology procedures are also reflected in the work force structure. According to Betcherman, McMullen and Davidman¹⁶, the changes of the post-industrial labour market are results of:

- Changed employment structure (increasing information services and decreasing traditional production of goods and services);
- Changes in the share of new participants (increasing share of women work force, older employees on the labour market);
- Different types of employment contracts;
- Legalisation of certain non-standard types of employment and labour.

¹⁴ Kos, M. (2000): Menedžment dodane vrednosti. Teorija in praksa, Ljubljana.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Mirčeva, J: Razvoj izobraževanja na področju dela: kanadske izkušnje in raziskovalni pristopi. Andragoška spoznanja. Let. 6, št. 1, 2001, p.24.

Higher education is thus important for the labour market and vice versa since they are increasingly intermingled. We could ascertain that the present conditions in the world of work demand a growing interaction between the labour market and higher education. Modern workplaces require qualified labour force, while the nature of work is ever more dynamic. It is therefore reasonable to find an effective way of communication enabling higher education institutions to respond to the new conditions in the world of work.

BOLOGNA PROCESS – A POLICY RESPONSE TO THE CHANGING CONTEXT

The Bologna Process is a common initiative of European countries in cooperation with international organisations from the field of education, universities, students' organisations and social partners. It is characterised by cooperation and unification of approaches to solving challenges and current problems concerning key concepts, strategies and development policies of higher education in the process of the European integration and globalisation. The process has a long history; It officially started with the signing of the Bologna Declaration (1999), whereby the participating Member States (29) agreed to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) until 2010¹⁷.

The Bologna Process adhering countries are implementing changes to adopt a system of easily readable and comparable degrees. Qualifications should be described in terms of learning outcomes, competences, student's workload, level of education and graduate's profile (Berlin Communiqué, 2003; Bologna Working Group, 2005). The criteria are defined in standardised tools for transparency, such as Qualification framework and Diploma supplement. These can help employers who want to employ graduates coming from various countries and possessing different qualifications.

¹⁷ Zgaga, P. (2004): Bolonjski proces: oblikovanje skupnega evropskega visokošolskega prostora. Univerza v Ljubljani, Pedagoška fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2004, p.11.

The origin and the content of the Bologna documents is easier to understand if it is not read as an academic document, but rather an agenda for change in higher education driven by social and economic considerations¹⁸. It is unequivocally also a result of the EU labour market integration and other profound changes in the world of work. Employability appeared as one of the key concepts already in the Bologna Declaration in 1999 and has been present all the way through the evolving of the process.

If seen from a different perspective, the Bologna Process has contributed much to the discussion on the relationships between the world of work and higher education. Teichler¹⁹ sees the Bologna Process as “the real opportunity /.../ to reconsider and reshape the relationships between higher education and the world of work”. After signing the Bologna Declaration, European countries have taken actions to increase graduates’ employability on the national as well as common market of labour. The growing awareness of the need for providing and increasing graduates’ employability encourages changes and reforms in higher education.

The call for a greater responsiveness to the new reality in the ever more integrated EU labour market also appears in EU documents and strategies. The European Commission (EC) plays an important role in the advancement of the Bologna Process. A strong focal point of the EC is combining the Bologna Process with its agenda on research area in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. “Its policy texts call for Higher education Activities to be responsive to the »needs« of the labour market and industry”²⁰. The Bologna

¹⁸ Haug, G: The public responsibility for higher education: preparation for the labour market. In Weber, L. & Bergan, S. eds, (2005) *The public responsibility for higher education and research*. Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005,p.203.

¹⁹ Teichler, U. (2004): *Changes in the Relationships between Higher Education and the World of Work on the Way towards the European Higher Education Area*. Keynote speech at the EUA Conference “University and Society: Engaging Stakeholders”, Marseille, 1-3 April 2004,p.2. <http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp//upload/Ulrich%20Teichler%20speech.1080891100325.doc> (10. August 2006)

²⁰ Keeling, R. (2006): *The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Research Agenda: the European Commission’s expanding role in higher education discourse*. *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 41, No.2, 2006,p.209.

Process together with the strategic initiatives in the research area are to the EC indispensable mechanisms for improvement of university graduates' employability²¹. Before the summit of the ministers responsible for higher education in London (2007) the EC stated that it encourages the modernisation of higher education systems in order to cope with the challenges of globalisation and the increasing demand for competences and skills on the European labour market for innovation²². Thus, even though the leading actors in the Bologna Process are European countries with their governments, the European Commission is an important inter governmental coordinator of economic strategies and development of the employment policy within the EU and therefore a considerable stakeholder in the Bologna Process.

Employers, through their representation organisation, were formally included in the Bologna Process only in 2005, even though the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) had already expressed its opinion about the Bologna Process earlier. They expect better mobility of students, flexibility of studies, greater transparency of degrees and qualifications of graduates from different countries and better cooperation between institutions of higher education and business companies. According to UNICE documents²³, one of the most important areas of cooperation is graduates' "employability", which should already be considered at the stage of programme planning.

Despite considerable focus on the modern world of work, the European Higher Education Area is not restricted only to the modernisation of higher education systems and training for

²¹ Evropska Komisija (2003): Vloga univerz v Evropi znanja. Sporočilo komisije evropskih skupnosti (2003) http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0058en01.pdf (27. 3. 2005)

²² European Commission (2007): From Bergen to London. The contribution of the European Commission to the Bologna Process. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/report06.pdf> (22. 1. 2008)

²³ UNICE (2004): The Bologna Process, UNICE's Position and Expectations (October), <http://www.unice.org/1/PGDNNPDCKGCAAINJHCDHIPMMPDBK9DWWTK9LI71KM/UNICE/docs/DLS/2004-01874-EN.pdf> (30. 8. 2006)

the needs of economic development. Changes in the world of work are only part of large-scale changes in society that Bologna Process is addressing. It should, therefore, not be considered as a political strategy aiming at serving the needs of corporate business and modern economy. Beside preparing the individual for the labour market, the higher education institutions also prepare students for active citizenship in a democratic society, contribute to their personal growth, as well as maintain and develop an advanced knowledge base²⁴. "The Bologna Process builds on the heritage of European universities, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances is very much a part of this heritage. The public responsibility for higher education also means conserving and building on this heritage and to transfer it to future generations" ²⁵.

BOLOGNA PROCESS BETWEEN THE WORLD OF WORK AND HIGHER EDUCATION

An in-depth analyses of the documents related to the Bologna Process shows a clear and constant reference of the reforms to the labour market²⁶. Europeanization of higher education is therefore aiming at redefinition of relationship between the world of work and higher education. The involvement of the employers' organisations in the process confirms the growing interest from the other side - the world of work - for higher education too.

The protagonists of the Bologna reforms are the universities and to certain extent the governments. The decisive step towards the change of relationship between higher education and the world of work is therefore up to the academic community and

²⁴ Bergan, S: Higher education as a "pubic good and public responsibility": what does it mean? In Weber, L. & Bergan, S. eds, (2005) *The public responsibility for higher education and research*. Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005,p.27.

²⁵ *Ibid.*,p.25.

²⁶ Miklavič, K: *Bolonjski proces, pot v modernizacijo visokega solstva*. Magistrsko delo. Univerza v Ljubljani, FDV, 2008,p.86.

democratic authorities. Bologna Process offers a Europe-wide tuned framework in order to facilitate that step. Among a myriad of tools and reform elements it is possible to single out three main ones that address the interface between employers and higher education²⁷: 1. Mobility of students; 2. Inclusion of stakeholders in the structures and processes; 3. New degree structure and employability as increasingly popular concept. In the next paragraphs the three elements are described.

1. Mobility of Students

Mobility of students across the European higher education area is the transversal strategic goal of the Bologna Process. Majority of tools and elements are aiming at facilitating the cross border mobility of students, teaching staff and researchers (ECTS, Diploma supplement, Qualification framework, Recognition convention etc.). The idea of large scale mobility of students in Europe dates back to the initiatives of European Commission in the eighties (Socrates Erasmus programme) and has been the major overlap policy aim between the Bologna Process and the European Commission initiatives in the field of labour market²⁸. In the last two decades studies show the correlation between the mobility of students and employability²⁹. A mobile student is better prepared for the integrated EU labour market and globalised economy. Skills and competences acquired in various cultural settings represent an advantage in adjusting to the jobs in different countries. The employers underline the importance of student mobility through their representative organisations³⁰.

²⁷ Ibid.p.86-92

²⁸ Haug, G: The public responsibility for higher education: preparation for the labour market. In Weber, L. & Bergan, S. eds, *The public responsibility for higher education and research*. Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005.

²⁹ Haug 2005, Teichler 1999

³⁰ UNICE: The Bologna Process, UNICE's Position and Expectations (October 2004).

<http://www.unice.org/1/PGDNNPDCKGCAAJNHCDHIPMMPDBK9DWWTK9LI71KM/UNICE/docs/DLS/2004-01874-EN.pdf> (30. 8. 2006)

2. Inclusion of Stakeholders in Structures and Processes

The Bologna Process is a sort of democratic forum consisting of many different members. The forum, which was first introduced by European ministers, has expanded its membership, including not only new countries (in 2001, 2003 and 2005) and the European Commission (2001), but also NGOs (in 2001 and 2003) and social partners (in 2005-see below). The influence of European higher education institutions and students is prevalent in the forum, but lately also the influence of trade unions and employers' organisations can be recognized³¹.

Trough the active involvement and the role given by the ministers, the above mentioned stakeholders influenced considerably the course of the Bologna Process³². This indeed sent a signal to the national level and promoted their active involvement at the stage of incorporating Bologna elements into national higher education system. The permanent presence of stakeholders in higher education is seen mainly on two levels. On the institutional level they are often included in the university boards or similar organs, meanwhile on the system level they have ever grater role within the quality assurance structures. The latter has been encouraged also by the involvement of the stakeholders on European level in creating the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

Employers in Europe seem to be included in the Bologna Process relatively slowly. Despite of its already existing viewpoints (UNICE, 2004), the UNICE was formally included in the Bologna Process as a consultative member on the Conference of ministers responsible for higher education in Bergen in May 2005³³. By then, employers had implicitly been referred to as "an interest group" or "partners".

³¹ Zgaga, P: Bolonjski proces: oblikovanje skupnega evropskega visokošolskega prostora. Univerza v Ljubljani, Pedagoška fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2004.

³² Miklavič, K: Bolonjski proces, pot v modernizacijo visokega solstva. Magistrsko delo. Univerza v Ljubljani, FDV, 2008.

³³ Bergen Communiqué: The European higher Education Area- Achieving the Goals. Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in 40 European countries (May 2005).

UNICE representatives express the high expectations they share in both processes relating to higher education reforms very clearly. When talking about the EU Lisbon Strategy, they emphasize university research³⁴, and propose far-reaching and detailed solutions for a better connection between higher education and the world of work. Not only in-company practices, but also teachers coming from the profession, case study and field experts should be involved in the development of study programmes and curricula³⁵. Employers demand more flexible study programmes to increase better students' mobility which could improve the mobility of graduates or highly qualified work force.³⁶ Beside subject-specific knowledge, graduates should have skills contributing to the flexibility of the changing and complex nature of workplaces. Graduates' employability and mobility are crucial motives for including European employers into the higher education reforms.

The question arises if, with the inclusion of external stakeholders into higher education puts at risk some essential functions of a university and education in society. The demand for an extensive response of universities to the needs of the industry at one hand and primary functions of the university on the other, could lead to potential conflicts.

³⁴ UNICE: Lisbon Strategy; Status 2003; Time is Running Out, Action needed now, 2003.

<http://212.3.246.117/1/CFNHMHBCFHEMMIAFMEKHPNCA PDB69DB1CG9LI71KM/UNICE/docs/DLS/2003-00589-EN.pdf> (30.8.2006)

³⁵ UNICE (2004): The Bologna Process, UNICE's Position and Expectations (October),

<http://www.unice.org/1/PGDNNPDCCKGCAAJNHCDHIPMMPDBK9DWWTK9LI71KM/UNICE/docs/DLS/2004-01874-EN.pdf> (30.8.2006)

³⁶ UNICE (2005): Position on Commissions Consultation on a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong-Learning.

<http://www.unice.org/1/KCPJHDKCJDHEDKFCNLCKAANNPDB19DWGCY9LI71KM/UNICE/docs/DLS/2005-01981-EN.pdf> (30.8.2006)

3. New Degree Structure and Employability as Increasingly Popular Concept

The concept of employability appears in all official documents of the Bologna Process as the key concept, which has been given priority in higher education reform in the European countries. However, due to various approaches to the definition of the concept no agreement has been reached regarding the actual meaning of employability to this time.

Employability can absolutely not be described as employment and - as agreed by most authors - cannot be merely measured by employment rate of the graduates completing higher education. The British Enhancing Student Employability Coordination (ESECT) uses the following definition of employability: "a set of achievements — skills, understandings and personal attributes — that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the work force, the community and the economy"³⁷. Graduates' employability is influenced by: individual's work experience, skills-building modules in higher education programmes, careers service during the studies, portfolios or progress files achieved during the study³⁸.

According to Teichler³⁹, modern individuals wishing to improve their employability potentials should be able to:

- transfer knowledge to work assignments and understand what the work tasks require to be taken up successfully ("problem-solving abilities"),

³⁷ Yorke, M. & Knight, P.T: The Undergraduate Curriculum and Employability, a briefing pape, 2003. p.2, http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/application.asp?app=resources.asp&process=full_record§ion=generic&id=248 (10 august 2006).

³⁸ Knight, P.T. & Yorke, M: Employability and Good Learning in Higher Education, teaching in Higher Education, Vol. 8, No.1, 2003, p.4.

³⁹ Teichler, U: Changes in the Relationships between Higher Education and the World of Work on the Way towards the European Higher Education Area. Keynote speech at the EUA Conference "University and Society: Engaging Stakeholders", Marseille, 1-3 April 2004, p.6. <http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp//upload/Ulrich%20Teichler%20speech.1080891100325.doc> (10 August 2006).

- develop typical working styles (e.g. working under pressure, working without clearly set assignments),
- pursue certain values and affective competences relevant for work (“loyalty”, “achievement orientation”, etc),
- perform in social settings and therefore have “social skills” (“leadership”, “team work” etc. abilities),
- understand the context in which they act and have to choose appropriate ways of action (“adaptation”, “reflection”, etc).

Teichler concludes that “higher education has to be more active than ever before to foster these competences”.

Knight and Yorke⁴⁰ share the opinion that employability can be acquired through various approaches of teaching based on different factors, such as: theory of self-growth and self-fulfilment, reflection and other social interactions. From this perspective, employability should be developed by those responsible for curriculum. In other words, employability can become part of a curriculum or can be achieved through teaching organisational adaptation and educational methods as well as curriculum planning.

From the employers prospective, UNICE places employability into the centre of the higher education system. UNICE documents call for more emphasis on cross-disciplinary⁴¹ skills and competences acquired during the course of study. According to them, these skills and competences should be achieved with closer cooperation with companies in curriculum and programme development⁴².

Similar conclusions can be reached from the Bologna Reform: in addition to reforming studies’ structure and applying tools used for transparency of qualifications, the Bologna reform also offers opportunities to introduce student-

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ This term does not include study-specific, but rather general skills. They are also often described as: generic skills, transferable skills and general skills.

⁴² UNICE: The Bologna Process, UNICE’s Position and Expectations (October 2004),

<http://www.unice.org/1/PGDNNPDCKGCAAJNHCDHIPMMPDBK9DWWTK9LI71KM/UNICE/docs/DLS/2004-01874-EN.pdf> (30.8.2006).

oriented learning/teaching, new teaching methods, study-oriented achievements, curriculum modularisation and similar⁴³. This part of the Bologna Process is an important component stimulating indirectly openness of higher education systems towards the labour market. The reforms do not demand employers' direct involvement but, above all, extensive acting of programme developers in higher education institutions. The Bologna Process's emphasis on employability does not in itself imply an invasion into universities' autonomous function of teaching and research or a direct invasion of employers into the field of academic freedom.

There is an intense discussion going on in most of the Bologna signatory countries on the role of bachelor level within the new degree structure. The employability of the bachelor level is becoming a category relevant for the accreditation of study programmes⁴⁴, meanwhile the Bologna Process adhering governments committed themselves to change the regulations for employment in the public administration in favour of bachelor graduates⁴⁵. Despite the formal consensus there are considerable problems on the implementation level. Several trend reports of European University Association⁴⁶ bring up the problem of incomplete first degree cycle and various interpretations of the role of the bachelor level. Bachelor level is often perceived as an intermediate break on the way to a "real degree" (masters) or it is overloaded because of squeezing the old first degree into shorter time period. After some years of ongoing Bologna Process it turned out that the reformed degree structure has been one of the largest conceptual changes in higher education. It will perhaps take some more time and

⁴³ Reichert, S. & Tauch, C: European Universities Implementing Bologna. EUA Trends IV Report . European University Association, Brussels, 2005.

⁴⁴ Haug, G: The public responsibility for higher education: preparation for the labour market. In Weber, L. & Bergan, S. eds, (2005) The public responsibility for higher education and research. Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005, p. 206.

⁴⁵ Bergen Communiqué: The European higher Education Area- Achieving the Goals. Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in 40 European countries, May 2005.

⁴⁶ Reichert and Tauch 2003, Reichert and Tauch 2005.

efforts for the academic community to accept the proposed change and labour market to understand the paradigm shift related to the new degree structure and respective graduates.

***BOLOGNA REFORM AFFECTING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE WORLD OF WORK AND HIGHER
EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISTINA***

Bologna Process suggests the reforms that are supposed to make higher education more responsive to the needs of modern labour market. However it is worth to emphasise that the role of higher education in the particular case of Kosovo is considerably different than in most of the European higher education area. A post conflict setting requires a restructuring of society, strengthening democracy, resuscitating the civil society etc. Therefore it is difficult to make a linear comparison between the goals and achievements of so different policy environments.

Nevertheless the role of higher education is important for the economic development of Kosovo and for the labour market needs, whatever specifics there might be. After analysing the role of the Bologna Process in revising the relationship between higher education and the world of work, I will reveal the implementation of Bologna reform at the university of Prishtinë/Priština in the segments that are singled out above. There has been little research done on the implementation of Bologna process in Kosovo and even less on the developing Kosovar labour market. Therefore the paper will be limited on the field research based report produced by OSCE Mission in Kosovo⁴⁷ from hereon referred to as the *OSCE study*.

⁴⁷ OSCE 2009: A Study on the Implementation of the Bologna Process at the University of Prishtinë/Priština. OSCE Mission in Kosovo (performed by Dr. Angele Attard).

Mobility of Students

The International Relations Office (IRO) of the University of Prishtinë/Priština, under the guidance of the Vice-Rector for International Co-operation, is engaged in providing opportunities for short or long-term mobility programmes and for international exchange also through the organisation of intensive courses, trainings, seminars and study projects. The IRO also has designated activities for the work of its taskforces with a focus on the mobility of academic staff and students. It aims to provide academic staff with international experiences, to integrate international programmes into curricula, and to establish a centre for scientific research. It also aims to increase possibilities for students to study abroad, and to enhance the internationalisation of the university, particularly through the Prishtinë/Priština Summer University (PSU).

Most of the transparency tools such as ECTS and diploma supplement are in place or being developed across the university. However these elements are implemented on paper and less functional when it comes to the practical use. There is only a little possibility of recognition of parts of studies as replacements for the home prescribed courses within the university upon the return of mobile students.

Feedback received from participants interviewed during the course of the OSCE study indicates that *obstacles to both academic staff and student mobility* come in two main forms, namely: *travel requirements* (particularly visa requirement) and *language barriers*, as there is a severely limited number of students and staff at the university who are able to speak another language apart from their mother tongue. Furthermore, the university currently offers no *joint degree programmes*, therefore there is no possibility for students or staff to benefit from such programmes which in turn provides an opportunity for mobility.

Inclusion of Employers in Structures and Processes

In the same way as European Ministers reiterate, throughout the Communiqués of the Bologna process, their commitment to working with stakeholders, namely higher education institutions,

organisations representing business and the social partners at the European level, ministers are also expected to replicate the participatory nature of the Bologna Process at home, at the level of implementation. In turn, higher education institutions are to be involved in efforts by the ministry for the implementation of the process and are themselves to uphold the principles of partnership within the process, which make for the better implementation of the Bologna Process within the respective higher education institution.

The university has very good relations with a few commercial enterprises in Kosovo (for the purpose of internships). In turn, while some representatives of the labour market are involved in a number of projects of the university, feedback obtained during the course of this study indicates that the university considers its collaboration with industry inadequate. This is also due to the lack of research at the university, which could be the primary area for collaboration between the university and industry, apart from the provision of internships by industry for students. The university also lacks collaboration with industry in curriculum development.

New Degree Structure and Employability

The University of Prishtinë/Priština started with the implementation of the three cycle system from the inception of its efforts to align to the Bologna process in 2001. This action line is considered to be the area in which the university is most advanced in the reform process. The statute of the university makes provision for the three-cycle system of programmes, referring specifically to bachelor, master and doctorate study⁴⁸. The Law on Higher Education in Kosovo also makes provision for the three cycle degree structure.

Concomitant with the beginning of academic year 2008/9, the University of Prishtinë/Priština completed its migration from the old system to the three cycle system of bachelor,

⁴⁸ University of Prishtinë/Priština: Statute of the University of Prishtinë/Priština. Prishtinë/Priština, University of Prishtinë/Priština, 2004, p.64.

master and doctoral degree studies. In contrast, the old system used to comprise the following types of programmes:

- a four to five-year long first degree programme;
- a two-year *Magister* degree programme which was usually done by research; and
- a two-year research degree referred to as *PhD*.

The new type first cycle (*bachelor*) degree programmes are predominantly of three years duration. There are some exceptions to this rule. Among these exceptions, the medical faculty, the faculty of agriculture and veterinary, the faculty of mathematical and natural sciences, faculty of education and the faculty of philology.

The OSCE study indicates that first cycle degree programmes have been largely accepted and understood across the university. However, though the three-cycle structure is in place, some members of academic staff at the university are still struggling to understand certain key differences between the old and new regime of degree cycles. The study identified a number of issues in this respect. Among these, during the first two phases of curricular reform (2002, 2004), some members of academic staff simply split the old-type first degree into two - the first three years relating to bachelor studies and the last two years relating to master studies. This leaves considerable doubts about the employability of the bachelor degree graduates.

Improvements in such a situation came about with the latest curricular reform initiated in 2006, yet feedback obtained during the course of the OSCE study indicates that a large number of academic staff consider the bachelor degree to be a general degree without any specialisation and that they only consider graduates to have reached the level previously reached at the end of the first degree under the old system when they would have completed the second cycle degree under the new system. This problem is augmented due to the restricted provision of master degree programme at the university, as indicated below. In particular, some members of academic staff still find it difficult to understand the difference between an old-type *magister* and a new type master degree programme. This lack of understanding is clearer particularly

where the master programmes are of an applied or professional nature, and where the research component is largely inferior to that required of old-type *magister* degrees.

Feedback received during the course of the OSCE study indicates that the involvement of labour market representatives is a missing component in curricular development. In turn, curricula are not designed with the integrated aim of the employability of graduates, particularly at the level of Bachelor degree studies, which is further augmented by the impression that a large number of professors have with respect to first cycle studies as being very general and inadequate for preparation of students for the labour market as they are considerably shorter than first degree studies that used to apply under the old structure of degrees at the university. The comparison that is now made in this respect is that the current Bachelor degree qualification is equivalent to the old-style high school degree (e.g. qualification of engineer) and not the old style first study degree (e.g. *diplom* engineer), with the distinction that the latter used to be more specialised, used to take longer to complete, and was a qualification obtained from the university, as opposed to the former type of qualification which was obtained from a vocational-type high school. This comparison is detrimental, and is not keeping with the aims of the first cycle degree, which the various Bologna communiqués stress are to provide an entry point to the labour market, as well as to further education. The comparison is even more harmful when it is made by professors, who are the persons entrusted with designing the curriculum.

The LINK (Student Services) centre at the University of Prishtinë/Priština has gone to great lengths to provide opportunities for internships and post-graduation employment for university students and graduates. Student internships are primarily undertaken at public institutions such as PTK (Post and Telecommunications in Kosovo), KEK (Kosovo Energy Corporation) and the airport, courts and commercial banks in Kosovo. LINK follows up on internship placements undertaken by students to ensure the satisfaction of both the student and the employer with the experience undergone, and it provides training in job-hunting, CV-writing skills and other areas

related to employment. The university also organises internships for students under the frame of projects with international organisations present in Kosovo. So far, there have been little or no cases of involvement of industry in curriculum development, though as far as internal quality assurance is concerned, the peer review group for internal evaluations on a faculty-by-faculty basis are expected include one labour market representative.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the university and the LINK centre, employability of graduates remains a challenge, due to the above-mentioned issues as well as due to the overall lack of awareness that remains among students regarding the existence of the LINK centre, and, most importantly, due to a lack of synergy between the provision of higher education by the university and the requirements of the labour market. Statistical data on the labour market is poor, it is not well-studied and the Ministry for Education, Science and Technology and the University do not take labour market needs into consideration when determining the profile and the work of the university.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The Bologna Process can be described as a political initiative of European governments including relevant stakeholders in higher education and the European Commission. It is therefore possible to find both intergovernmental and supranational components in the process aiming at synchronising the European higher education systems. Formidable growth of enrolment rates, ever more central role of knowledge for the economy and society, and the rampant globalisation, change dramatically the setting for modern universities and higher education institutions. Bologna Process is a policy response to the changing socio-economic context whereby the relationship between higher education and the world of work is addressed in to a considerable extent through different approaches.

Employers expect the Bologna Reform to improve the transparency of qualifications and mobility of students. With adopting transparency tools and introduction of comparable

degrees, student mobility is expected to assume new dimensions. This would contribute to flexibility, mobility and adaptability of graduates to various cultural settings and thereby readiness for integrated European and global labour markets.

Involving stakeholders is one of the guiding principle of the Bologna Process. Among participating stakeholders there are also employers. UNICE documents reveal that employers recognise the importance of the Bologna Process on the European level in increasing mobility and transparency of qualifications as well as including employability as one of the studies' programme criteria. With the development of bologna reform stakeholders were included in the national higher education structures such as quality assurance and university governance.

One of the key concepts of the Bologna Process is the concept of employability. It is becoming one of the fundamental elements of the curricula. The responsibility for appropriate implementation of employability strategy lies therefore in the hands of higher education institutions and academic community. Employability is largely embedded in the new degree structure with particular importance on the bachelor level. However, due to the magnitude of the shift from the old to the new degree structure it will take some more time and efforts for the academic community, the employers and the society at large to absorb it. A conclusive bachelor study with graduates ready for the labour market is one of the most challenging policy objectives of the bologna process.

The reorganisation of relationships between employers and higher education is absolutely necessary and logical. However, more effort should be made to complete this process. The cooperation between higher education and the world of work is rather complex. The fundamental role a university plays in society, which is far greater than providing necessary human resources and research activities to the labour market, should not be overlooked. Universities' autonomy can be considered as one of the greatest achievements of the Western civilization and therefore, many functions of a university in society and culture should be taken into account while transforming higher

education. It could cause long term damage to employers as well as to the society at large if higher education was subject to an uncontrolled influence of the industry and requests from the labour market.

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