

A REVIEW OF IMPACT OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES IN IRAQI HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL

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1. Abstract

These challenges are not simply higher education institutions' responsibility, but it presents a serious prospect for and a significant challenge to Iraqi universities. Given the vast diversity of teaching and learning in the culture of universities in Iraq over many centuries, these challenges are more complex and uncertain. Consequently, the central issue for Iraqi universities is how it can involve the substantial and swift transformation in teaching/learning/pedagogic practice, culture, and structures. How is it possible to engage Iraqi staff and students in the development and increase the quality of their educational experience? This is likely to transform the existing culture and become much more active rather than teacher centered. Cognitive teaching and learning processes have to reflect the critical dimension. Exploiting the use of diverse types of ICT and applying a range of methods for teaching, assessment, and quality enhancement are central to good teaching and the enhancement of learning outcomes. Iraqi higher education institutions have the responsibility of preparing a trained workforce capable of contributing to the country's development. For wide international recognition of Iraqi qualifications, a fundamental issue is the necessity to provide a fair, reliable, and valid establishing system that clarifies the content of learning and performance of students. The Bologna Process seems to resolve these issues. Then, the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research issued a resolution to implement the Bologna Process elements in 2008. This resolution calls for adopting the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement. Another consequence of Bologna Process adoption will cause the Iraqi universities to establish and show transparently the learning competence that includes both subject-specific and generic competences.

Keywords: Bologna Process, Higher education, teaching practices, Learning practices, Iraqi universities

2. Introduction

This research paper explores the Bologna Process and the resulting formation of the European Higher Education Area, illustrating the observed changes and their consequent influence on higher education policies and procedures. The article aims to provide an analysis of the evolution of the Bologna Process and the subsequent European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in launching European Programs. First, an investigation of key political interventions and reshaped national legislative aspects would be instrumental in exploring the level of achievement through formal inclusion. More specifically, I believe it would be useful to show A contrast between the European

Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Iraq National Higher Education Plan., looking at the strategic priorities and actions planned to boost education quality in terms of regulatory and internationalization policies. Data collection can provide information regarding which Bologna requirements are embedded in the selected rating agency's international standards for quality assessment.

This study explicates The Bologna Process and the consequent creation of the European Higher Education Area, demonstrating the changes witnessed and their subsequent impact on higher education directives and practices. More specifically, by focusing on the experiences of EU member states and EEA/EFTA members associated with the Bologna Process and the European integration project, the article outlines the main ambitions and characteristics of this long-term initiative. It is suggested here that those who are part of this collective action with a shared political aim have reshaped their agendas to comply with the Bologna Process Europeanizing rules thanks to quality-driven education policy and the common "soft" tool to be used. Finally, the matrix tells us that academic practices, institutional changes, and policy discourse are contributing to the definition of what European higher education is and should be in terms of objectives and functions.

2.1. Background of the Bologna Process

The Bologna Declaration established several action lines that could be implemented by ministers in their countries. These include the establishment of a program of degrees that are simple to understand and compare, the introduction of a system primarily consisting of two structured levels (undergraduate and graduate), and a credit system that encourages movement and acknowledgment of academic achievements. It also provides for the adoption of a national system of quality assurance, the promotion of the European dimension of higher education and cooperation in quality assurance, the testing and reshaping of their directions, the promotion of mobility and European cooperation in quality assurance, the establishment of a higher education degree and research system, encouragement of lifelong learning through the system's faculty, introduction of strategic management tools, support for the reinforcement of the social Dedication to advanced learning and integration of the Bologna Process principles into applicable education strategies.

A subsequent examination of the effects of the Bologna Process on Italian academics revealed that it led to an enhanced and more efficient academic setting for student exchanges and scholarly initiatives. At the same time, academics experienced increased pressure and a greater workload. The document aimed to promote the establishment of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), facilitating the comparability and compatibility of the educational qualifications of the signatory countries and promoting the models of mobility and cooperation between universities.

3. Historical Overview of Higher Education in Iraq

Several of the most important civilizations in the world emerged in Iraq. Given this significant historical background, it could be expected that the country would be a leader in higher education. With the establishment of Al-Mutarif (2004), which was recently called Al-Rashid University, and Al-Karkh College (2004), higher education was the start of a new era in Iraq until leading to the

birth of the present-day University of Kufa, which became the first faculty in Najaf Governorate characterized by scientific and cultural activity [1].

Higher education in Iraq has an old historical background, rooted in ancient civilizations such as the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. The first form of higher education in Iraq emerged from within the religious sectors in the mosques of Baghdad and other cities, including Al-Nahda School, also known as the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma), during the time of the Islamic Renaissance in the Abbasid Empire, i.e. between the 8th and 20th centuries AD, when the Emirate of Bab al-Siqagal was established and the capital was shifted from Damascus to Baghdad. This scientific revival combined Greek, Indian, Persian, and ancient Arabic knowledge. The 19th century was the beginning of a new era in Iraq when Al-Nahda schools (religious and traditional) were founded until the establishment of faculty institutions [3].

4. Bologna Process and Education Technology

Barr and Crawford (2005) argue that the current landscape of the higher education system has rendered centralized planning impractical and unworkable. This statement recognizes that the student body is increasingly becoming more dynamic and diverse with changing needs and requirements within a continuously changing educational landscape. It has come to some emerged understanding that traditional hierarchical ways of planning and decision making are not enough in properly responding to this multifaceted complexity of challenges faced by the institutions of learning in modern times. To survive and succeed, there is need for a move towards decentralized decision-making as well as the adoption of more flexible structures. By allowing individual faculties and departments autonomy to make decisions that are relevant, it becomes possible for students' unique needs to be met within an environment where innovation never stops. Not only does this lead to faster process but also develops a highly responsive system that can deal with any problems or concerns whenever they arise. Nevertheless, while it is necessary for effective decentralized planning to cater for the diverse needs of our student populace; strategic coordination as well as collaboration among different units in the university cannot be overlooked either. This guarantees coherence thereby allowing future collective visions to be planted.

in 2006, Fejes posited that the process of restructuring higher education has stark similarities to an artificial or standardized approach, being heavily influenced by neo-liberal governmentality instead of legislation. Moreover, it is put forth that those states which have consented to such restructuring have wholeheartedly embraced the notion of standardizing higher education, without raising any critical queries about the underlying process and its implications [4].

Several studies have documented the educational transformations brought about The Bologna Process and its core principles have been examined in terms of their adoption and implementation in the countries that are part of the agreement. In 2012, Curaj et al [2] found that differences in implementation primarily stem from the fact that the Bologna Process lacks legally binding requirements. Consequently, signatory countries are not obligated to adhere to any specific conditions or Legal standards should be met, but it is also advantageous to incorporate Bologna policies through working together and anticipating the potential advantages in the future .European

Higher Education Area (EHEA) outcome. The diverse array of higher education systems across Europe presents challenges that impede the rapid and effective adoption of the new Bologna higher education framework.

In 2010 Lažetić There has been a discussion about how the Bologna Process, due to being voluntary, can result in uneven implementation. The main goal of the Bologna Process is to achieve agreement on policy creation across Europe, with member states and institutions responsible for implementing these policies indirectly. It was concluded that a significant challenge of the Bologna Process lies in maintaining political momentum and the interest of political leadership and policy entrepreneurs in the reform process, while also preventing excessive bureaucratization. Scholars observed evidence of convergence in higher education policies, especially in terms of the structure of higher education systems (e.g., degree structures) and the use of specific policy instruments (e.g., national quality assurance and accreditation schemes) [2].

It is essential to adhere to the required legal regulations, while also beneficial to integrate the Bologna policies by collaborating and proactively considering the potential benefits in the long term. (Elken et al. 2010). This diversity is the result of inherent contradictions within the Bologna Process, particularly in relation to the balance between convergence and diversity, as well as differences in national historical and cultural contexts, vague objectives, and the organizational structure of higher education institutions (Huisman 2009). The uneven implementation process can be attributed to varying contexts, The orientations, funding methods, and demographics in all the countries involved were examined (Education Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency 2012a). Heinze and Knill (2008) discovered that the impact of cultural, institutional, and economic influences on higher education systems, as well as their adoption of the Bologna Process, makes it unlikely for countries with larger gaps to come together and adopt and execute the Bologna Process. The process varies depending on implementation structures, approaches, and priorities, achievements, and challenges are specific to each participating country, a discussion on the impact of the Bologna process in Iraq will be presented [5].

5-Bologna Process Policy Implementation in Iraq

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Naim Al-Aboudi (2022) [3] Iraqi's incorporation of Bologna principles focused on the key areas of field of higher education, are crucial components for ensuring and maintaining the high standard and effectiveness of academic programs. These elements play a significant role in guaranteeing the quality and consistency of educational offerings and in promoting the continuous improvement and development of the educational system. Iraqi Higher Education Area . In accordance with the Bologna Process, the government has recorded tangible achievements and put in place an Action Plan for its implementation through 2021. For more about Iraq's significant leaps from 2015, please check out The 2018 Bologna National Report and the Bologna Stocktaking Report (BSR) from 2018 which has made important findings concerning the Bologna process

According to Nyborg's study in 2004 [6], the European countries have been very supportive and helpful toward the Bologna process in areas beyond the European Union showing their commitment towards a common higher education system. This is an important move that is aimed at enhancing clarity and consistency. Standardization plus global mobility within higher education has crossed borders and gone as far as African countries where its effects have been conspicuous. In addition, several South American countries together with US have shown interest in it; they have considered how much it will be of importance to them to adopt this process. The Bologna process is being adopted by many regions across the world which shows that its impact is great and crucial because it still captures others outside Europe too.

In the year 2004, Kwiek [7] pointed out that it may be easy to alter higher education laws in order to conform them with western standards for promotional purposes. Nevertheless, changing the laws alone is not enough to achieve the goals of the Bologna Process as some government authorities believed. Thus, it is clear why Ukraine faces problems when implementing the Bologna Process. It is important to take into account how difficult it becomes while trying to change a whole educational system. For Ukraine to fully embrace Bologna process, regulations need re-evaluation and faculty development/scholarship support should be given priority too. This way, all levels of education will experience necessary changes hence having an inclusive and more efficient learning environment in place. Moreover, working with global institutions and scholars can provide useful insights and advice on this transformative journey. By planning prudently alongside commitment towards these ideals of the Bologna Process, Ukraine can change her higher education system completely and emerge as a significant player within the global academic community henceforth. Though hardly; gains from successfully adopting the Bologna Process are invaluable for future Ukr.

In 2005, Etzkowitz and Klofsten conducted a study on the effects of Europeanization, internationalization, and globalization on higher education in Europe. These influences have led to a necessity for cooperation and organization among national systems in order to advance the knowledge economy. Europe aims to make use of its combined intellectual resources to establish an environment that fosters academic excellence, innovation, and cultural diversity. This collaboration involves sharing best practices, promoting international student mobility, and creating joint research initiatives that go beyond geographical boundaries. By working together, European countries aim to create a robust and interconnected higher education landscape that can meet the changing needs of society and the demands of a rapidly evolving world. Through this collective effort, Europe seeks to become a global leader in education, driving economic growth, societal progress, and cross-cultural understanding on a significant scale.

The insightful and groundbreaking research conducted by Plumper and Schneider in the year 2007 [9] effectively demonstrates and highlights the immense pressure that institutions are currently experiencing from numerous diverse sources. These institutions are compelled to diligently and promptly adjust their existing structures in order to effectively address and counteract the ever evolving and emerging trends that demand attention and action.

This has a considerable impact on both the public education system and universities as critical areas of policy., but also has a direct impact on national policies overall. The education policy is a crucial component of the national policy framework, as it represents a significant part of the national welfare systems.

In 2007 Bhattacharya and Sharma, 2007 , [10] Moreover, there is an added benefit of a selection of prestigious and exceptional higher education institutions worldwide (Institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institute of Management (IIMs), Indian Institute of Science (ISC), National Institute of Technology (NITs), All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), and others, are crucial in driving knowledge and breakthroughs, supporting India's participation in the global economy, and establishing ambitious benchmarks for higher education in the nation.

In 2008, Zasp [11] [12] Students faced numerous challenges that were documented in 2009. These challenges included the need to develop a NQF that is in line with the EHEA overarching framework, establish new institutional structures, create programs for international students, adjust university programs to the Bologna structure, find ways to recognize prior learning, implement the UNESCO format for the Diploma Supplement, increase student mobility, ensure the transferability of student grants and loans, provide equal access to higher education, and modify curricula to meet the needs of the labor market. These challenges have sparked discussions about the practical implementation of reforms and whether the talk of reform is progressing faster than actual changes. In 2009 Altbach et al. [13] performed a massive examination which assessed how much the Bologna process has changed higher education systems. Additionally, it gave some useful insights into different aspects and closely examined the implications of Bologna declaration and process. Within this important conversation, which discussed if other countries can follow suit, we have thoroughly considered these initiatives' appropriateness to knowledge economy. Furthermore, no one can also forget about overwhelming impact of Lisbon Strategy in EU that basically showed European Union commitment to fostering and advancing economies driven by knowledge. As such, the investigation into many intriguing sides of Bologna declaration had been made therefore giving an insight into its wide-ranging consequences as well as worldwide chances. It was a comprehensive strategy consisting of policies and measures targeting at making Europe a world leader in terms of knowledge and innovation.

In 2009, Aittola [14] and colleagues identified a similar issue in higher education in the Kurdistan Region, as the rapid growth of universities has resulted in faculty and equipment shortages. The Ministry of Higher Education in Kurdistan must prioritize implementing the Bologna process to enhance the quality of education and bring higher education in line with global and European standards, while also acknowledging and preserving national diversity and uniqueness.

In 2011 GacelAvila, [15] [16] The Bologna Process aims to promote mobility, facilitate qualification recognition, and enhance education harmonization within the EHEA. It encourages exchanges, cooperation, and comparability of degrees. Through frameworks like ECTS and quality assurance mechanisms, it fosters excellence, innovation, and internationalization. Ultimately, it aims to enhance European higher education's competitiveness and relevance globally. Instead, it

aims to encourage and showcase progress and convergence while respecting national diversity. This flexibility allows for the implementation of the Bologna process and its criteria in various educational institutions, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and autonomy for universities and other institutions involved in the process.

In 2010 Terry [17], the Bologna process was officially established after more than 10 years of development. It has been implemented by over 48 countries and aims to reorganize European higher education by promoting mobility for both staff and students, as well as enhancing nursing high standards for the Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate three-cycle degree system.

(Kushnir, 2016; Gacel-Avila, 2011) [18] European nations have started to actively and gradually promote the Bologna process outside the European Union, demonstrating their dedication to advancing a unified higher education system. This influential initiative, intended to improve transparency, standardization, and international mobility within higher education, has crossed geographic boundaries and made an impact in African nations. Additionally, the Bologna process has attracted attention and sparked interest in several South American nations and the United States, where its potential benefits have been acknowledged. This impressive worldwide outreach demonstrates the significant impact and the significance of the Bologna process, as it relates to higher education, cannot be overstated. continues to inspire and resonate with regions beyond its origin.

According to Dobbins and Knill, 2014 [19] The implementation of the Bologna process It resulted in major transformations in the European higher education system, being adopted by many of the large European nations. The main goal of the initiative is to create a unified higher education area across Europe.

In 2019 Huisman [20] The Bologna process is guided by a number of key principles. This includes establishing objectives and benchmarks for European students and acknowledging their capacity to pursue education in diverse locations, the process aims to enhance quality assurance and elevate overall curricular standards.

(BesgUI, 2014) [21] A subsequent Study on the consequences of the Bologna Process on Italian academics found that it resulted in an improved and more streamlined academic environment for student exchanges and scholarly programs. Meanwhile, academics faced heightened pressure and a greater number of responsibilities.

The researchers Yazar and Yazar (2017) [22] discovered that universities in Turkey have effectively satisfied numerous criteria outlined in the Bologna framework, and that the faculty has adapted to these new principles. Nevertheless, they contend that the implementation is perceived as a bureaucratic process that is imposing additional work on academics and lacks democratic involvement. Another issue in the case of Turkey is the issue of quality enhancement and inadequate funding resulting from a disparity between The interplay between supply and demand within their system of higher education.

As stated by Mngo, 2019 [23], the Bologna process is a joint endeavor to find different ways of enhancing educational and socio-economic collaboration among participating institutions. This

innovative initiative focuses on sharing knowledge, cutting-edge technology, and valuable resources. By encouraging a culture of working together and sharing, the Bologna process aims to create an environment that makes cooperation between educational institutions more effective and promotes mutual growth and development. Through this process, participants can use collaboration to expand their horizons, improve educational standards, and drive socio-economic progress. Together, they are laying the groundwork for a future where the collective sharing of knowledge, technology, and resources leads to innovation, bridging gaps, and strengthening bonds across borders.

The Bologna Declaration is deeply rooted in a set of essential principles that are paramount to achieving its objectives. It encompasses both overarching and ancillary principles that serve as the very bedrock of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and are indispensable to driving educational reforms in the participating countries. These reforms are driven by a shared vision for creating a cohesive and inclusive European Higher Education Area, characterized by its rich diversity and unwavering commitment to excellence. The Bologna Declaration lays down the blueprint for ongoing enhancements in the higher education systems of these nations, reflecting a collective determination to continually raise the bar of quality and innovation. By upholding the core values enshrined within the Bologna Declaration, participating countries are forging ahead on a transformative journey toward a brighter future for higher education. [24].

European countries and higher education institutions have embarked on a process aiming at creating the European Higher Education Area. This process is called the Bologna Process and is named after the Bologna Declaration, a document initially signed by 29 ministers of education at their meeting in 1999. An important aspect of the Bologna Process is the relative formality of structured exchanges. In contrast to earlier intergovernmental declarations, the Bologna Declaration contained a specific work program, a set of medium-term goals, and a precise schedule for recurrent ministerial meetings. Furthermore, the objectives, the main issues at stake, timeframe, and outcome of the process have been elaborated in much more detail compared to earlier declarations, in each subsequent communiqué, summarizing the follow-up of the process [25].

6. Conclusion

In addition, the search for involvement of relevant national bodies, including stakeholders (employers, employees, students, quality agencies), will in itself lead to improved mutual understanding. All in all, these are very deep impacts we may expect from the enhanced mechanisms of cooperation and international convergence at the European scale, as developed by the Bologna process. Nevertheless, it may also be useful to underline that in fulfilling the need for institutional responsibility and autonomy, we do not have to reach a mirror image of all our different bachelor and/or master's degrees as well. Indeed, differences are currently being introduced in the functioning of our largely public institutions as one of the main reforms of our higher education system.

Consequently, it is to be expected that quality culture, transparency, and fair processes of external quality assurance will be very much promoted by a greater application of internal quality assurance

as well. Once the whole range of objectives of the Bologna Higher Education Area is understood and respected in each country, it might be assumed that satisfying part of the objectives of a country will be more sustainable when the cost, whether it is in resources (manpower, finances, time) or in reputation and international relations, would indeed be high. Further, the necessary trade-offs can be designed as to minimize the loss of objectives of the HEA set by Bologna countries as a collective. To achieve this kind of consensus on the objectives of the countries will have a great impact on the type of measures rooted in internal quality assurance and the development of quality culture we have been discussing in this book.

7. References

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