Is there an ideal road to Bologna?

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Structure

- The Bologna process: Main characteristics and dynamics of the process

- Diversity of "roads to Bologna": Country cases

- Lessons for Israel

Bologna process:
Main characteristics (I)

- *Intergovernmental process*, initiated by ministers of higher education – but increasingly interwoven with EU policies and processes

- Series of *legally non-binding* declarations and communiqués – but de facto binding character through path dependent dynamics between national and international levels

- *Incremental process*, evolving agenda (two- to three cycle degree structures, quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, lifelong learning, widening participation…) → process still on-going after "2010 deadline"

Bologna process:
Main characteristics (II)

- Immense *geographic dynamics and reach* - from 4 (Sorbonne) to 47 European countries (Leuven) – now including all Council of Europe Countries except Belarus

- Evolving *stakeholder participation*:
  - Add. full member: European Commission (Prague)
  - Consultative members: Council of Europe, EUA, EURASHE, ESU (Prague), UNESCO (Berlin), ENQA, Business Europe, Education International (Bergen)

- *Vagueness of commitments*, e.g. rhetoric of „EHEA", „first degree minimum of three years"

- *Tensions* between aims:
  - Convergence/comparability and diversity/autonomy
  - Cooperation and competition
  - Inward and outward orientation

Bologna process:
What explains its dynamics?

- Initiation outside of the EU framework, but use of EU framework and funding

- „If you can't beat them, join them"

- „It's the only party in town"

- Potential to use (alleged) international trends and commitments as support and arguments for national reforms

- Vagueness and openness of agenda allows different boats to sail under Bologna flag

- Some real shared challenges in European higher education system (access, drop-out, duration of studies, funding, quality assurance…)

- Special dynamics resulting of complex international process caused lock-in, including unintended effects („When constraining links emerge from loose cooperation," Ravinet 2006)

Bologna process:
Consequences of main characteristics

- Inadequate to speak of national „implementation" – better: „policy formulation" (Witte 2006) or „translation" (Gornitzka 2006)

- Nature of „implementation" in HE systems dependent on their HE policy system

- But: pure top-down process does not work in any country, variations of „negotiation in shadow of hierarchy" (Scharpf 1997)

- Diversity of national interpretations and misunderstandings

- Low level of convergence

- Hard to get accurate picture of developments and trends

- But: comparatively high level of change in national higher education systems

Diversity of „roads to Bologna": France

- Initiated Bologna process (Allègre, Sorbonne declaration 1998)

- International readability and attractiveness strong motivator ("grade de Master"!)

- New degree structure meant to simplify French degree jungle

- referred to as „LMD": licence – master – doctorat, 3-5-8

- No change of total length to Masters level (5 years)

- Maintenance of binary divide of universities (LMD) and *grandes écoles* (3+2) which are hardly engaged in reform

- Major curricular reform ambitions for universities

- Complicated bureaucracy-lead approach (incremental implementation "by decree")

- Strongly related to governance reforms (curricular autonomy)

- Abolition of curriculum templates – increase of curricular diversity, linked to changes in quality assurance regime

- Comparatively low degree of resistance

Diversity of „roads to Bologna": Germany

- Idea of Bachelor – Master structure around for a long time

- Bologna as "window of opportunity": change of national HE law 1998

- International "competitiveness" strong motivator, but even more so overcoming internal reform bottleneck

- Far-reaching reforms:
  - fundamental reform of degree length and structure, same degrees for universities and *Fachhochschulen* (colleges): Bachelor and Master (from 4,5 years to to 3+2, from 4,5 to 3+2 or 3,5+1,5)
  - Abolition of national curriculum framework regulations → curriculum diversity
  - Introduction of programme accreditation by agencies – currently move to "system accreditation"
  - Fundamental curriculum reforms: modularisation, ECTS, learning outcomes etc. was all new

- Complex incremental reform process, varying in 16 *Länder*
  - Reforms still fundamentally contested by (some) professors, (some) students and the media

Diversity of „roads to Bologna": Netherlands

- Pragmatic and "easy" approach

- International compatibility and recognition strong motivator

- Full support from universities and *hogescholen*

- Relatively quick and pragmatic shift to Bachelor-Master structure without *major* curricular reform (2002)

- Right to Masters access for all university Bachelor graduates

- Maintenance of binary divide of universities and *hogescholen* (colleges)

- No change of total length to Masters level (4 years)
  - universities: Bachelor – Master - 3+1 (or sometimes 2)
  - *hogescholen:* Bachelor only, self-funded Master - 4 (+1)

- Introduction of a new quality assurance regime: more external control, programme accreditation

Diversity of „roads to Bologna": England

- Particularly strong scepticism towards EU policies aimed at standardisation and regulation

- More orientation towards other English-speaking countries and Commonwealth

- Mixed feelings towards „Continental Europe catching up" and „being associated with Continental Europe"

- Legacy of institutional autonomy in curricular and degree matters

- Waking up to Bologna only from 2002 onwards (Europe Unit)

- Mounting concern with adjustment pressure coming from Europe

- Main issues:
  - One-year English Masters vs. two-year „European" Masters
  - Programme accreditation vs. institutional audit
  - ECTS vs. diverse „bottom-up" credit systems

- But:
  - Many English reforms, though independent of Bologna, strongly resonate with Bologna process
  - English actors influential in Bologna process, particularly on QA issues

Diversity of „roads to Bologna":
Overall issues

- Diversity of
  - motivations
  - approaches to implementation
  - interpretations and dominant themes
  - implementation patterns, e.g.
    - degree structures (in years): 3+2, 4+1, 4+2 all existent, "various models" in one system as dominant model
    - Quality assurance regimes: programme accreditation or quality audits by several agencies or by one, approval by ministry…
    - Modularisation: From "breaking the programme into small bits" to "forming larger coherent units"

- Consequences:
  - Implementation of Bologna "instruments" does not guarantee realisation of aims like comparability, mobility, recognition
  - Using the same terminology does not guarantee meaning the same thing
  - International dialogue remains a challenge within EHEA and with systems outside

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Bologna:
Why it is relevant for Israel

- Increasing relevance of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as "frame of reference"
  - when partnering with European higher education institutions
  - when attracting foreign students or engaging in student exchange

- Bologna effort as "role model" for other regions?
  - Increasing interest from other parts of the world, e.g. Tuning Latin America Project (ALFA), China and Japan wanting to "join"

- Bologna instruments becoming "gold standard"?
  - e.g. qualification frameworks, workload-based credit systems, diploma supplements, double degrees (see Adelman 2009, "Bologna for US eyes")

What does this mean for Israel?
Overall lessons

- No implementation "to the letter" recommended

- Think and ask twice before taking a certain measure for granted as "Bologna conform" – there are 47 interpretations

- But: Show where you are already compatible (degree structure, modular structures)

- Use "Bologna language" and tools in international cooperation (ECTS, diploma supplement, quality assurance)

- Employ tools pragmatically to support recognition and mobility – pay attention that they do serve this aim

- Do not underestimate the importance of "non-technical" driving forces like people, research interest, culture

What does this mean for Israel?
Lessons for policy makers

- Invest resources in monitoring European developments broadly and critically

- Invest time and resources in national communication and discussion on Bologna

- Use broad stakeholder consultation:
    - in subject areas, e.g. history, mathematics, music
    - in professions, e.g. engineering, law, psychology
    - between academia and employers
    - with students
    - Between higher education institutions
    - Between universities and college

- Strive for national consensus in as many issues as possible

- Make the consultation process and policy decisions very transparent

- Do not "overload" the reform

What does this mean for Israel?
Lessons for institutions

- Strong institutional leadership needed

- Communicate the aims of certain measures (why the use of learning outcomes, why ECTS?)

- Invest time in discussion and sharing of experience

- Do not leave issuing of guidelines to administration

- When aiming for institutional coherence, do not loose sight of compatibility with outside (nationally, internationally)

- Assume institutional responsibility for programme quality: work on quality culture and set up quality management system

- Invest effort in programme partnerships for student mobility and recognition

What does this mean for Israel?
Lessons for academics

- Use Bologna as opportunity for *your* curriculum reform

- Use proactive approach to reform, do not "endure" it

- Question where directives come from (university leadership? Ministry? "Bologna"?) and seek dialogue to adjust them where needed

- Seek discussion in your discipline and jointly develop orientation "standards" or "benchmarks" (not prescriptive, outcome oriented)

- Seek continuous dialogue with students

Questions for discussion

- What are the main issues discussed or implemented under the flag of the Bologna process in Israel?

- How do these issues relate to what you have heard today about the Bologna process?

- What does this imply for Israel's approach to the Bologna process?

Appendix:
EHEA-wide issues and tensions:
Convergence vs diversity

- Convergence of systems, degree structures, instruments, discourses?

- So far low level of convergence, but seeds for more: e.g. qualifications frameworks, European register of QA agencies…

- Possible paths:
  - (1) Clear commitments for a higher degree of convergence,
  - (2) Process loosing momentum and national systems falling back into their own paths and inertia;
  - (3) Further convergence without formal commitments, by systems dynamics.

Appendix:
EHEA-wide issues and tensions:
Inward vs outward orientation

- Already now increasing interest from other parts of the world, e.g. Tuning Latin America Project (ALFA), China and Japan wanting to "join"

- "Strategy for EHEA in a Global Setting" adopted in 2007

- But also: Tensions between 3-year and 4-year Bachelor models, competition "for brains" between Europe, US and Asia; confusing complexity of Bologna and disillusions; competitive pressure between institutions and national systems in Europe increasing

- Possible paths:

    - (1) Europe becomes so preoccupied with internal coordination efforts that external attractiveness and readability is lost

    - (2) Bologna becomes diffused in worldwide cooperation efforts and competitive pressures

    - (3) Bologna effort as "role model" for other regions; Bologna instruments becoming "gold standard", e.g. Qualifications frameworks, workload-based credit systems, diploma supplements, double degree

Appendix:
EHEA-wide issues and tensions:
Mobility and permeability

- Hopes that structural reforms would "automatically" increase mobility disappointed

- Extra efforts at student and staff mobility needed (agenda French presidency)

- But: New degree structure has long-term implications, which need time to develop, flexibility will increase

- Need to distinguish horizontal and vertical mobility: different conditions and options

- Possible paths:
    - (1) Mobility and permeability will only function in organised partnerships with integrated curricula
    - (2) Market pressures and system learning will enhance permeability with continued diversity
    - (3) Additional structural convergence plus targeted EU measures will ease mobility and increase permeability