

Running Head: BILDUNG, AUSBILDUNG, AND THE FUTURE

Bildung, Ausbildung, and the Future of European Higher Education:

Understanding the Bologna Process from a German Perspective

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Introduction

The class began with a question: “*Wie viele Studenten brauchen von diesem Proseminar ECTS Kreditpunkte?*” Half of the students in Barbara Henze’s theology course at *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* in Freiburg, Germany raised their hands. “*Na, und, wie viele?*” she asked each student, hearing numbers ranging from three to sixteen in return. Flustered by the variety of ways in which her students would need to be accommodated, Frau Henze informed the class that she would need time to think about how she would deal with this range of needs before informing them of the class’ final requirements.

This situation is not unique to professors at *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*. Students, faculty, and staff across Europe have been experiencing a myriad of changes to the structure and content of their educational experience over the past ten years. These changes were set off by the Bologna Declaration. Signed by 29 nations in 1999 and now comprised of 46 member nations, this process seeks to enhance the cultural climate of Europe, and thereby stimulate its economic growth (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

In theory, the member nations of the Bologna Process will, by 2010, be bound together in the *European Higher Education Area*, a borderless, harmonious educational region throughout which a student can travel without worrying about credits transferring or completing their studies in a specific period of time. Student mobility and employability are two key foci of the changes; they are to be fostered by comparable courses of study. In addition, students will all study towards new degrees: the Bachelor and Master. These degrees are to be equivalent across the European Higher Education Area and be recognized no matter what country it is in which a student is applying for a job or graduate school. European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) points, like those needed by students in Freiburg’s theology seminar, are to serve as the common

currency of education, so to speak. As the Euro allows citizens to move between countries without having to worry about exchanging money, so too should ECTS points allow students to travel between European universities without worrying about transferring their credits.

These all seem like promising ideas. However, given the current state of higher education in Europe, it is clear that these goals will not all be reached by 2010. While most countries have set some changes in motion, the sheer enormity of the task has made it nearly impossible to fulfill within the proposed deadline. Somewhat ironically, the two biggest goals of the Bologna Process (student mobility and employability) have been two of the largest issues plaguing the process. By the start of 2010, the 46 member nations will need to meet and assess their path for the next decade and beyond if they want these changes to be fully implemented and serve their purpose.

This thesis will lay out a clear overview of this broad-sweeping reform of higher education in Europe and offer suggestions for its progress after 2010. First, the events and factors that led up to the signing of the Bologna Declaration by the original 29 member states will be explored. Many nations worked towards reforming European higher education before the Bologna Process was actually put into motion, and the various agreements and declarations that contributed to making the Bologna Process what it is today will be explained. In addition, student programs like ERASMUS and EUCOR, which attempted to allow students efficient mobility across national boundaries before formal educational reforms were put into place, will be explored. Finally, the six main goals of the Bologna Process as outlined in the Bologna Declaration, and the means with which member nations plan to attain these goals will be described.

Germany's successes and struggles in the context of the yet-incomplete European Higher Education Area will be the focus of the second chapter of this thesis. First, reports of Germany's situation as reported by official government sources, such as the German National Progress Report, will be analyzed. To augment the information found in these reports, the example of *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* and their curriculum for the Bachelors degree will serve as an illustration of the changes at German universities as a whole. Because documents produced by government officials and universities may have an obvious bias due to their authors' relationship to the reforms, the opinions of students and staff were sought out. These thoughts and opinions from those who are actually on the ground at German universities were compiled from newspapers, scholarly journals, and student publications at the universities. The students and faculty directly affected by the Bologna Process tend to present views of the reforms that conflict with those found in the official documents. Faced with the confusion of such wide-spread implementation, many of them are frustrated with the results they see so far.

The final chapter will explore the trouble Europeans (and particularly Germans) are having with the implementation of the Bologna Process. Based on these issues, it is clear that serious assessment needs to occur at the reform's 2010 checkpoint deadline in order to see the European Higher Education Area come to fruition. To facilitate the process, the overarching ideas behind the Bologna Declaration need to be put into perspective and discussed before setting out with more concrete measures to meet its goals. The all-encompassing nature of the reforms ends up pitting some of its goals against one another, making it nearly impossible for students to reap all the benefits the Bologna Process is meant to provide them. Taking a step back from the reforms and seeing them from a macro-level could help member nations in their attempt to improve their systems of higher education.

In order to successfully progress past 2010, member nations will need to decide on a centering paradigm around which to operate. Specifically, they must decide whether their goal is to foster the culture of Europe or the economy of Europe. At the current moment, it seems that they have bitten off more than they can chew, and sloppy implementation is leading to confusion and discontent among European citizens. Creating a unified purpose and prioritizing the concrete steps that will be used to attain this goal will be more effective than the broad but haphazard measures that have been taken to date.

Chapter One: Changing the Face of European Higher Education

Prehistory of the Bologna Process

The 1998 Sorbonne Joint Declaration states, “The intellectual, cultural, social, and technical dimensions of [Europe]...have to a large extent been shaped by its universities, which continue to play a pivotal role for their development.” As the European Union (EU) has become larger and more structured, much discussion about the role of the university in European policy has occurred, particularly as part of the dialogue about a pan-European cultural and economic identity. Although, as the Sorbonne Joint Declaration states, universities have played a significant role in the shaping of Europe throughout history, the Founding Treaties of the EU made no specific mention of education on a pan-European scale (Neave, 2003). During the second half of the twentieth century, politicians, ministers of education, and university leaders engaged in a dialogue which attempted to find the proper place for education within EU policy.

Finally, in 1976, the member states of the EU reached an agreement about education. Individual member states would continue to hold control over the educational policies in their own countries, but they would accept an Education Action Program (EAP) put in place by the European Commission, which is the executive branch of the EU. The European Commission’s EAP led to minor changes and additions to European educational programs, but any programs having to do with the internationalization of higher education and student mobility were “small and largely experimental” (Neave, 2003).

The implementation of the European Commission’s EAP was dependent upon two very important conditions specified by member states and university leaders. First, no ideas of pan-European educational harmonization would be discussed; member states would be able to maintain the individual characteristics and identity of their educational systems. In addition, the

plans for and degree of implementation of the EAP would be determined by individual member states (Neave, 2003). Thus, in the 1970s, responsibility for higher education lay clearly with the individual member states, and the EU could only act as an overarching governing body if invited by one of its members.

Steps towards student mobilization

Throughout the rest of the 1970s and 1980s, international competition, specifically with the United States and Japan, began to rapidly increase. Europe risked trailing in two essential areas: “information and communications technology and *the rise of the knowledge society*” [emphasis mine] (Neave, 2003). In a knowledge society, knowledge and information are used to create economic wealth and cultural vibrancy. In order to support and encourage Europe’s competitive edge as a knowledge society in the global economy, politicians and educational ministers alike acknowledged that developing stronger human and social capital was of the utmost importance. Clearly, if building a knowledge society was to become a priority for economic growth, investment in education would be a key component in the development of greater European human capital. Due to the increasing concern about performance in global markets, the European Commission acquired some ability to influence pan-European higher education in the late 1980s, specifically in the form of programs that fostered student and faculty mobility (Neave, 2003).

ERASMUS

One such attempt to foster student mobility was founded in 1987. The European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) attempted to encourage student exchange between European nations. Intended to prepare students and graduates for the

increased mobility of the united European labor market, ERASMUS provided students the opportunity to study in another European country for at least three months (Bennhold, 2006).

However, the vast differences between educational degree programs and curricula between and even within countries led to growing frustration among EU member states and students attempting to take advantage of these mobility schemes. Seemingly, “more degree structures existed within the higher education system than there were systems of higher education in the European community” (Neave, 2003). The hope that there might be an easy route towards a unified, truly European system of higher education was shattered by the experiences of the first ERASMUS participants, who learned firsthand how complicated it was to align study in countries with different curricula, degree timeframes, and even academic calendars.

Differing European university systems

The German system of higher education, for instance, is characterized by strong federalism and a two-track system of universities (*Universitäten*) and technical colleges (*Fachhochschulen*) (Bienefeld, 2008). The federalist nature of the German system of higher education means that most of the responsibility for universities and technical colleges lies with the 16 German states (*Bundesländer*). Students’ tuition fees are typically low or nonexistent (“generally the equivalent of \$600”) and “about three fourths or more of the university budget” came from its *Bundesland* (Ash, 2006). German *Universitäten* and *Fachhochschulen* offer different foci; *Fachhochschulen* are more practice-oriented and offer shorter degree programs, whereas *Universitäten* require longer periods of study and focus more on research.¹

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus solely on the effects on *Universitäten*.

Before the Bologna Process began, a single-tiered degree structure was used in German *Universitäten*. These original degree structures are still available at many universities and are slowly being grandfathered out. The degree is given different names, depending upon the subject field. In the natural sciences and engineering, the degree is called a *Diplom*, in the humanities and many social sciences a *Magister*, and in programs ending in a state qualification, such as teaching or law programs, it is called a *Staatsexamen* (Bienefeld, 2008). Instructional content in these degree tracks is focused tightly on the student's concentration (*Hauptfach*) and lasts, by some estimates, "fourteen semesters, and between eleven and twelve semesters for a course of professional studies" (Bienefeld, 2008; Wex, 2007). The intensive focus on the student's *Hauptfach* likely stems from the German view that "students receive a broad liberal education in high school and do not need more of it in college" (Ash, 2006).

Germany's traditional higher education system differed markedly from those of many of its neighbors. Although the higher educational systems in both France and the Netherlands offered what could be called a Master's level degree comparable to the *Magister*, *Staatsexamen*, or *Diplom*, the length of degree programs varied by up to two years, and the French system was considerably more fragmented than the systems in the other two countries (Witte, Van der Wende, & Huisman, 2008). In addition, although all three countries' educational systems had two distinct tracks (similar to the German *Universitäten* and *Fachhochschulen*), the division between the two tracks varied greatly: in Germany, they were either "theory-" or "application-oriented;" in the Netherlands, either "academic" or "higher professional," and in France, "general" or "professionalized" (Witte, Van der Wende, & Huisman, 2008). The different educational paradigms behind these classifications coupled with the varying types of degrees offered at each type of institution further complicated a students' academic record if he or she

chose to study just a few kilometers outside of Germany. Even within the framework of the ERASMUS program, such complicated degree comparisons were practically impossible to evaluate uniformly.

Partially due to these administrative difficulties, the ERASMUS program ended up serving more as a way for students to have a short-term “study abroad” experience than as an opportunity to truly integrate international educational experiences into their course of study. Because of this, it did not truly satisfy the desires of the European ministers of education or politicians concerned with economic growth and European unification. Rather than foster a sense of “educational tourism” through ERASMUS and similar mobility schemes, these policy-makers wanted to encourage the medieval idea of “*peregrinatio academici* (pilgrimage of the scholar),” an unbridled journeying across European nations in pursuit of knowledge (Neave, 2003). They believed that only when such a possibility became a reality could the educational and economic appeal of a united Europe truly be demonstrated. This pursuit would not be possible without a drastic administrative change in order to allow for more fluidity across European national and state boundaries, both inside and outside the borders of the EU.

Magna Charta Universitatum

The experiences with the ERASMUS program led to a much-welcomed discussion about further developing and streamlining the European system of higher education. This discussion formally began in 1988, when a group of university rectors met in Bologna to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the Università di Bologna, the oldest university in Europe. In a document entitled “Magna Charta Universitatum,” 388 rectors began to set forth goals for pan-European higher education that would be developed for decades to come. Magna Charta Universitatum, issued before the 1993 Maastricht Treaty, which formally dissolved boundaries between nations in the

European Union, reflected upon the truly universal concept of the European university (Neave, 2003). It stated that the university is the “trustee of the European humanist tradition” and must “transcend geographical and political frontiers” (Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988). With these concepts at the forefront, the authors of Magna Charta Universitatum clearly desired to emphasize the importance of increased fluidity in the educational borders of European nations, especially in light of the experiences with the ERASMUS program and similar mobility schemes.

In addition, Magna Charta Universitatum promoted the exchange of research and ideas and encouraged intercultural dialogue. These values clearly support the growth of European human and social capital, thus further supporting the development of a European knowledge society. The text of Magna Charta Universitatum made this focus on developing the economic prosperity of the European region through social capital even more concrete when it stated, “...the cultural, social, and economic future of a society requires, in particular, a considerable investment in continuing education” (Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988). Through Magna Charta Universitatum, the educational ministers emphasized the important relationship between the international education of European citizens and the economic success and cultural future of the continent.

Though Magna Charta Universitatum was important in jump-starting the dialogue about European higher education development, it did not offer many concrete steps towards achieving its goals. Rather, it was more of a theoretical expression of desires for a Europe that was becoming increasingly unified. Though it *does* offer a list of four means to achieve its goals, they are rather vague, phrased more as proposals, and, like the original EAP put in place by the EU, leave much to the discretion of individual universities. These suggestions emphasize the need for the preservation of freedom in teaching and research, the importance of the relationship between

research and teaching, the value of students' freedoms, and the need for increased student mobility. The proposition to foster student mobility is the most concretely worded of the four means. The text reads:

Universities – particularly in Europe – regard the mutual exchange of information and documentation, and frequent joint projects for the advancement of learning, as essential to the steady progress of knowledge. Therefore, as in the earliest years of their history, they [should] encourage mobility among teachers and students; furthermore, they [should] consider a general policy of equivalent status, titles, examinations (without prejudice to national diplomas) and award of scholarships essential to the fulfillment of their mission in the conditions prevailing today. (Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988)

Clearly, Magna Charta Universitatum outlines some distinct suggestions as to how European nations can increase student and faculty mobility, albeit without creating any concrete policies. The task of creating such concrete procedures was still left to the individual European nations and universities.

European Confederation of Upper Rhine Universities (EUCOR)

In a notable example of one such independent effort towards increasing student and faculty mobility, the universities in the Upper Rhine region of Germany, France, and Switzerland banded together in 1989 to create their own educational subgroup, which they called the European Confederation of Upper Rhine Universities (EUCOR). EUCOR's goal ("*die grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit und Vernetzung in Lehre und Forschung auf allen Ebenen zu fördern*") clearly states the actions the member universities chose to take towards achieving more student and faculty mobility:

Dazu gehören der Austausch von Studierenden und Wissenschaftlern, die Einrichtung gemeinsamer Studiengänge, die gegenseitige Anerkennung von Studienleistungen, die Durchführung gemeinsamer wissenschaftlicher Vorhaben sowie die Vernetzung der Universitätsbibliotheken. (EUCOR, n.d.a)

Scholarly mobility is to be fostered and encouraged through a tri-national university system in which students could attend classes and participate in research at *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* (Freiburg, Germany), *Universität Karlsruhe* (Karlsruhe, Germany), *Universität Basel* (Basel, Switzerland), *Université de Haute-Alsace* (Mulhouse/Colmar, France), and *Université Louis Pasteur*, *Université Marc Bloch*, and *Université Robert Schuman* (Strasbourg, France).

Instructors and researchers could also participate in EUCOR programs and networks. EUCOR offers seven tri-national professional and academic networks for library sciences, ancient studies, English, Scandinavian studies, environmental studies, neurological science, and geology, which host seminars and conferences with members from each EUCOR university in attendance (EUCOR, n.d.c). They not only offered opportunities for collaboration of ideas, but also for the collaboration of resources, as faculty and students alike gain access to six more library collections with enrollment at a EUCOR university.

In fact, as the EUCOR website states, every student at one of the seven EUCOR universities has access to the educational programming offered at every other partner university without incurring additional fees. Classes taken and credit points earned at one of the seven EUCOR universities are accepted at any partner university, as long as the students' transcript bears the stamp of the university which awarded the credits. In fact, through some degree programs, students are not only allowed but *required* to earn credits at another EUCOR university (EUCOR, n.d.b).

The progress made through EUCOR was substantial for the participating universities and successfully mitigated many of the problems seen in the ERASMUS program. However, students would still potentially face problems if they were to leave the interlinked structure of the EUCOR program's region. The common university space created by EUCOR was a promising,

albeit small-scale, forerunner of what European educational ministers' eventual vision for the European Higher Education Area would be. Large steps still needed to be taken to ensure that the degrees and qualifications students earned through EUCOR universities would be recognized by both employers in the European labor market and other institutes of higher education.

Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education

In 1997, members of the Council of Europe, an international organization committed to European integration and cultural development, came together to discuss the issue of degree acknowledgement; or, in their words, “the need to find common solutions to practical recognition problems in the European region” (Convention on the Recognition, 1997). They concentrated on issues concerning access to European higher education: discrimination, transfer of qualifications from one institution to another, and recognition of qualifications and academic titles, which would in turn foster successful access to the labor market. Their wish for the recognition of diplomas and qualifications between *all* universities in Europe was the most emphasized of all issues concerning higher education.

As progressive as this declaration was, many safeguards remained in place to protect the autonomy of individual universities. For instance, it proposed that universities could choose not to acknowledge a degree from another institution if “a substantial difference [could] be shown between the general requirements for access in the Party in which the qualification was obtained and in the Party in which qualification is sought” (Convention on the Recognition, 1997). The usage of the term “substantial difference” is decidedly vague, and the loose wording used in the declaration allows universities to retain much sway over degree recognition. The Lisbon Convention took the discourse on European higher education to a new, more specific level than

Magna Charta Universitatum, but with its emphasis on degree recognition, still did not speak of any streamlining or unification of European universities.

The Sorbonne Joint Declaration

About a year later, educational ministers gathered in Paris to celebrate the anniversary of the University of Paris in the Sorbonne on May 25, 1998. The educational ministers from France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom also took advantage of the opportunity to further discuss the progress that had been made in European higher education since the signing of Magna Charta Universitatum and the Lisbon Convention. The result of this further dialogue was the Sorbonne Joint Declaration, which, like Magna Charta Universitatum, emphasized the need to “strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social, and technical dimensions” of Europe (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998).

Created by government officials rather than university rectors, the language of the Sorbonne Declaration features an increased focus on the economic benefits to be gained from unifying European higher education. Though the text explicitly states, “one [should not] forget that Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge,” the measures discussed in the rest of the text link back to the improvement of the European workforce through lifelong and borderless education (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998). This is especially clear in the emphasis on recognizing higher education degrees for “professional purposes;” clearly, the targeted end result of European higher education is a more developed workforce capable of boosting the global competitiveness of the European market and “Europe’s standing in the world” (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998).

Through the signing of the Sorbonne Declaration, *Kultusminister* Jürgen Rüttgers committed Germany to participating in the overall harmonization of European higher education. Concrete steps were suggested to begin the process of streamlining higher education in Europe within the text of the Sorbonne Declaration, all of which would later be cemented by the Bologna Declaration. This call to action and harmonization reflects a distinct paradigm shift for European higher education from that in the 1970s, where a stipulation of forming an EU-wide educational policy was that no harmonization would occur. Signed by only four nations (France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom), the Sorbonne Joint Declaration ended by calling on other European countries to join in the attempt to “improve and update” European higher education for the benefit of its citizens (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998).

Proposing concrete solutions through the Bologna Declaration

Finally, on June 19, 1999, a group of 29 European ministers of education gathered a second time in Bologna, Italy. There, they signed the Bologna Declaration, symbolizing their commitment to the growth of a “Europe of Knowledge” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). It is interesting to note that the efforts towards this progress came not from an EU governing body in Brussels, but rather from leaders within both member- and non-member states and has been conducted largely through universities themselves (Neave, 2003). The bottom-up structure of the Bologna Declaration and the subsequent Bologna Process reveal the European universities’ commitment to change for more than just economic reasons; fostering a sense of European cultural identity was also an important motivation.

Goals of the Bologna Declaration

Two main goals are implied in the text of the Bologna Declaration. The first goal is based upon the assumption stated in the Bologna Declaration (1999) itself: “the vitality and efficiency of any civilization can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries.” The signatories of the Bologna Declaration committed themselves to “increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Through this goal, European nations aimed to attract more international students and faculty to their universities, thus further developing the knowledge capital of the universities themselves. Ideally, this knowledge capital at the university level could, in turn, greatly increase Europe’s presence in the global knowledge economy.

In fact, the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education (2003) stated that through the Bologna Process, they intend to make the EU “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (as cited in Liesner, 2007). This desire to help Europe compete more successfully in the global market reflects a continued desire that was first acknowledged with the Commission’s original mobility schemes: the need to compete, especially with countries like the United States and Japan (Neave, 2003).

Perhaps more importantly, though, the Bologna Declaration laid bare an important issue that surfaces in many areas of European public discourse since the formation of the European Union: the strengthening of a “complete and far-reaching Europe” and the development of a unique European identity that crosses national borders (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Specifically, the text of the Bologna Declaration emphasizes the importance of providing its citizens “the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium,” as well as “an awareness

of shared values and [of] belonging to a common social and cultural space” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). In this way, the Bologna Declaration furthers the goals and objectives set forth in Magna Charta Universitatum, the Sorbonne Joint Declaration, and the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

This goal to create a more unified, distinctly European presence is a comprehensive reform that aims to “[redesign] Europe as a territory by creating areas no longer limited by the geographical borders of the present European Union” (Liesner, 2007). Though the word “harmonization” is never explicitly used in the text of the Bologna Declaration, the aims at producing a cohesive European “architecture” of higher education clearly demonstrates that the statements made in the Bologna Declaration are a far cry from the original hesitations seen towards the Educational Action Program of the early EU as well as a progression of the ideas outlined by the four signatories of the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (Bologna Declaration, 1999). The emphasis on creating an overall European identity that reaches beyond political borders is even more obvious when one considers that the signatories of the Bologna Declaration include ministers from both EU member states and non-member states.

Means of achieving the Bologna Process’ goals

Though European universities had taken important steps since their 1988 meeting in Bologna, the 1999 meeting outlined more “concrete measures to achieve tangible forward steps” towards developing a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Six main steps towards implementation are listed in the text of the Bologna Declaration. The first three steps are practical matters. First, in hopes that a person with a degree from one European country could easily demonstrate their level of education when applying for a job or graduate study in a different country, “easily readable and comparable degrees” are to be established

(Bologna Declaration, 1999). The suggested method is the Diploma Supplement, which would accompany a graduate's degree and explain the qualifications it implies.

In addition, the degree cycle structure in all participating countries is to be unified to a system of two main cycles: undergraduate and graduate. This is to occur through a three-year Bachelors degree at the undergraduate level, which should qualify the degree holder for entry into the European workforce. After this qualification is reached, a Masters and a Doctorate degree may be subsequently earned at the graduate level of study. The length of these graduate degrees is not specified in the text of the Bologna Declaration.

Finally, a system of credits is to be established that could easily be understood by all institutions. For this objective, as described earlier, the model of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) points is suggested. Through the ECTS system, credits earned at all European universities would be assessed on the same scale, allowing for maximal student mobility.

The final three means towards the objectives of the Bologna Declaration are more theoretical. First, the signatories of the Bologna Declaration make the promotion of student and faculty mobility a priority. It is hoped that students may be able to have free movement to train and study, and that faculty may have free movement to research, teach, and train without "prejudicing their statutory rights" at their respective universities (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

In addition, European cooperation in quality assurance is to be promoted, both between and within universities. To achieve this goal, countries must collaborate on curricula and teaching methodologies, as well as criteria for degree qualification. It is of the utmost importance that all countries work together to ensure that students studying anywhere in Bologna member countries are provided the best possible education and do not have their degrees jeopardized by

faulty programs. This section of the Bologna Process has been the topic of much discussion in the years following its conception.

Finally, the Bologna Declaration emphasizes the necessity of the promotion of “necessary European dimensions of higher education” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). This harkens back to one of the central goals of the Bologna Process: the development of a uniquely European identity. As the birthplace of the western university, Europe prides itself in its cultural and scientific traditions, and hopes that the European university will once again come to the forefront of the world’s attention through the Bologna Process.

Timeline

Signed close to the eve of the third millennium, the Bologna Declaration set a ten-year deadline for its aforementioned six short-term goals. By the year 2010, the signatories of the Bologna Declaration intend to have the EHEA fully established. “Convinced that the establishment of the European area of higher education requires constant support, supervision, and adaptation to the continuously evolving needs,” the signatories of the Bologna Declaration decided that progress is to be assessed in two-year increments (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Since 1999, member nations have attended biannual conferences, which have been held in Prague, Berlin, Bergen, and London. These meetings have helped the member nations break their objectives into even more concrete and tangible steps. For example, quality assurance frameworks have been considerably fine-tuned in the meetings in Berlin and Bergen. The next meeting is to be hosted by the Benelux countries on the 28th and 29th of April, 2009 (London Communiqué, 2007).

Since the signing of the Bologna Declaration, 17 additional countries have joined the original 29 signatories in their attempt to revitalize Europe’s economy, cultural identity, and

system of higher education. These include both EU members and non-EU members. Though progress has certainly been made since the foundation of the ERASMUS program and the signing of Magna Charta Universitatum, there is still much to be done before 2010, when the allotted timeframe for the Bologna Process expires. As Roland Thierfelder, a member of the German education minister's office, questioned, "*Was geschieht im Jahre 2010? Schlägt man auf einen Gong und stellt damit fest, dass der Europäische Hochschulraum entstanden ist?*" (Stephan, 2007). Reflecting this concern, the 2007 report from the London conference states that the member nations "anticipate that the need for collaboration will continue beyond 2010" (London Communiqué, 2007). This need for further collaboration and effort is particularly evident in Germany, where the implementation of the Bologna Process and the creation of the EHEA have met considerable resistance and difficulty. Germany's specific implementation of the Bologna Process and the difficulties that have accompanied it will be investigated more closely in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: Germany's Compliance and Complications

Germany's National Progress Report

Since German universities and state governments decided to implement the Bologna Process in 1999, slow changes have been made to the German system of higher education. Biannual conferences hosted by the *Kultusministerkonferenz* (KMK) and *Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* (BMBF) serve as the main outlets for discussion of future directions for these changes. At these conferences, representatives of each *Bundesland*, the federal government, higher education institutions, the *Deutscher Akademiker Austausch Dienst* (DAAD), the German Accreditation Council, *Freier Zusammenschluss von StudentInnenschaften* (*fzs*), representatives from the business community, and other social partners come together and develop progress reports to update the international community of Germany's progress.

These reports offer a closer look at German progress than the Communiqués published by all participating bodies of the Bologna Process, which only offer short descriptions of individual nations' progress. The most recent national progress report was compiled in 2007, offering an overview of Germany's implementation over an eight-year span. The report first gives a brief history and explanation of Germany's approach to the Bologna Process, which is followed by a stocktaking section. Finally, current topics and problems are presented. In this chapter, information from the 2007 national report will be presented, supplemented by information from *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* in Freiburg im Breisgau, one of the oldest universities in Germany. The university is in the process of putting elements of the Bologna Process into action for its 20,000 students; Bachelor and Master degrees are offered, international study is an option, and preparation for the workforce is emphasized in many degree tracks.

Germany's educational situation

As previously mentioned, the German system of higher education depends heavily on funding from the State. A small amount of third-party funds are used towards research projects, but for staff, equipment, and investments, universities' budgets are largely made up of State funds. In the past, all German universities were regarded as relatively equal, and thus received equal funding. However, since the Bologna Process' conception, "to a growing extent, budget funds are assigned according to agreements on objectives and performance-based parameters" (KMK, 2007).

Because of their heavy involvement in the financing of higher education institutions, the *Länder* are in charge of setting the basic requirements for implementing the Bologna Process in Germany (KMK, 2007). As such, they are largely responsible for setting standards, structural requirements, and legal framework. Individual higher education institutions also offer input and advice based upon their self-administering governing bodies, and business partners help to develop Germany's Bologna programs, particularly the accreditation models. Together, these bodies determine Germany's strategy for adopting the two-cycle degree system, promoting mobility and quality assurance, and establishing easily comparable degrees and credit systems.

Two-cycle degrees

According to the 2007 report, it was not until June 2003 that KMK and BMBF decided that they would change from the traditional degrees like the *Diplom* or *Magister* to Bachelor and Master degree tracks in Germany. They set a timeframe for this process that was in accordance with the Bologna Declaration; by 2010, they want this two-cycle degree track to be implemented on a nation-wide level. The *Länder* and individual universities agreed to work together towards these goals, since much of the change would need to happen on an institutional level, but still

keep within the larger framework of the German state-based system of higher education.

Progress towards this change has been slow. By the winter of 2006, approximately 45 percent of degree options were formatted in the two-cycle model of Bachelor and Master (KMK, 2007).

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität provides a solid example of the intricacies of a German switch from old to new degree types, as it seems to be phasing out the old degree types in most subjects. If a prospective student for the upcoming school year wanted to earn a “traditional” German degree, he or she would have limited options, only being able to select from a postgraduate *Diplom* study in Interdisciplinary French Studies, a regular *Diplom* in Biotechnology or Molecular Medicine, a *Staatsexamen* in Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Law, and 19 combinations of fields for teaching at a high school level (*Lehramt Gymnasium*). Otherwise, there are dozens of combinations of subjects one can create to earn a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Sciences (B.Sc.). In addition, students can further study towards a Master of Laws (LL.M.), Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.), Master of Science (M.Sc.), or Master of Theology (*Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, n.d.d.).

The curriculum for these degrees is quite strictly structured, largely because of time constraints. For example, to earn one of the 59 possible Bachelor of Arts degrees, students must complete requirements towards a *Hauptfach*, a *Nebenfach*, and “*Berufsfeldorientierte Kompetenzen*” (BOK) within a six-semester period of study. Normally, 180 ECTS points must be earned over the six-semester timeframe to qualify a student for graduation. Of these 180 ECTS points, 120 should be in the *Hauptfach*, 30 to 40 in the *Nebenfach*, and 20 to 30 in the BOK category. Students are evaluated twice during the course of their study; once between the second and third semester in the *Orientierungsprüfung* and once between the fourth and fifth semester in the *Zwischenprüfung* (Ehinger, 2007).

A student's grade at the end of their study for a Bachelor degree is broken into two parts: 80% of the grade reflects the student's performance in their *Hauptfach*, and 20% of the grade reflects their performance in their *Nebenfach*. In the *Hauptfach*, *studienbegleitende Prüfungen* attest for the majority of the grade (80%), and the *B.A.-Arbeit* makes up the remaining 20%. In the *Nebenfach*, no independent essay or work needs to be written; the grade depends solely on *studienbegleitende Prüfungen* (Ehinger, 2007).

The BOK, or professional/soft skills, as they are known in English, reflect the strong influence of the Bologna Process on the new degree tracks at German universities. In addition to courses focusing on the academic material of their major or minor, students are required to develop practical skills that will prepare them for successful entry into the workplace after attaining a Bachelor degree (*Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, n.d.c.). These courses are offered through the *Zentrum für Schlüsselqualifikation (ZfS)*, a service that opened only recently, in order to accommodate these new requirements. Subjects include management, communication, media, data processing, and foreign languages. Through these course offerings, *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* is acting in accordance with the wishes of the KMK and BMBF, who state that emphasis should be placed on social skills, presentation abilities, and foreign language skills (KMK, 2007).

The percentage of degree programs offered are not the only statistics that offer insight into the relative popularity of these new degree programs. One must also look at the number of students who actually enroll in these programs. The 2007 National Report states that in 2006, 12.5 percent of all German students were registered for Bachelor and Master degree programs. This was an increase of 4.6 percent since the previous year's data, but the numbers are clearly still low (KMK, 2007). These overall numbers may be smaller than the percentage of students in incoming classes who choose to take the Bachelor track, who are likely more familiar with the

Bachelor and Master model and perhaps more confident in choosing such a course or are required to by their universities.

Accreditation

Clear communication needed to occur between *Länder* governments to establish standards that could be counted upon when working together at a nationwide level. In order to provide an avenue for this communication, accreditation programs were created for the new Bachelor and Master's degree programs. These were based upon *Ländergemeinsame Strukturvorgaben*, which set standards for courses of study and ascertain that a degree earned in one *Land* will be recognized and honored in another (KMK, 2007). The accreditation process was developed in 2005, and was developed to adhere to the qualifications developed at the Bergen international conference in the same year. A certain Qualifications Framework must be met in order for a higher education institution to receive accreditation in Germany.

Although these accreditation processes were put into action, the state's right to accredit those who would become employees of the State, such as teachers or lawyers, further complicated the situation. Attempting to figure out a way to balance state rights and inter-state cooperation in the field of higher education was the topic of much debate. In 2005, decisions were finally made concerning teacher training programs and accreditation programs were established (KMK, 2007). This process was (and still is) frustratingly slow, largely because of the closely entwined relationship of the German state governments and the educational systems.

Germany has been careful to take international quality assurance standards into account when building its model of accreditation. The accreditation system in Germany was drafted around the same time the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) was being drafted and discussed, and now that the ESG has passed in the EU, Germany's Working Group on Continuing the Bologna Process has been working to ensure compliance with this pan-European standard (KMK, 2007). In addition, in an important step towards the Bologna Process' goal of degree harmonization and the promotion of

mobility, a network of institutions in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria have also banded together to establish criteria for mutual recognition of accreditation (KMK, 2007). Germany also participates in the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education, in an effort to further harmonize its accreditation practices with other European countries’.

Life after the Bachelor degree

Of all the current Bachelor and Master’s degree programs in Germany, only 33 percent were accredited as of 2007 (KMK, 2007). This raises questions for students interested in pursuing these tracks or universities interested in conforming to the standards of the Bologna Process. If accreditation is to be as important as the European emphasis on quality assurance lets on, becoming accredited will be an important part in the process of becoming more competitive and successful in the European market of higher education. In addition, if a student is uncertain what the relatively unfamiliar Bachelor or Master degree will do for them in the job market, they will likely want to pursue a degree from an institution that is accredited, to hedge their bets as much as possible.

According to the 2007 National Report, statistics from 2003 show that most German graduates of Bachelor programs continued on to further studies.² Though this data is older than the other data available in the report, the low percentage of Bachelor graduates entering the job market may accurately represent a lack of confidence in the ability of the Bachelor to prepare them for the job market, even though *Berufsqualifizierung* is a fundamental part of the Bachelor degree. Even if graduates themselves feel prepared for the workplace, those hiring for entry level positions may be unfamiliar with the Bachelor degree and therefore skeptical. The National Report acknowledges this relative low degree of recognition of the Bachelor degree in the job market. Though it states, “company surveys...show that Bachelor graduates receive positions in

² “slightly less than 80 percent of Bachelor grads” pg. 11

which their range of responsibilities and payment correspond to their qualification” (KMK, 2007), description of job opportunities for Bachelor holding graduates is rather vague.³

Past the level of Bachelor or Master’s qualifications, higher education administrators are also interested in the way the path towards a doctorate is affected by the Bologna Process’ changes. Since the Bologna Process was implemented in Germany, more structure has been given to the doctoral degree programs. However, the requirements for advancing to higher levels of study still hinge largely on the individual universities which offer the degree programs. Though the Bachelor degree is designed to be a preparatory degree for the Masters degree, evaluation of the applicant’s qualifications is left up to the higher education institution. State or national standards are not declared. In addition, the new degree structure offers interesting possibilities for advancement to the doctoral level. For example, the 2007 German National Report reads, “Holders of Bachelors degrees may qualify to study at doctoral level by means of aptitude testing rather than attaining a further degree” (KMK, 2007). The decision in this area is left up to the individual university. Though Bologna promises standardization and harmonization, Germany frequently leaves policy decisions up to the individual institutions, which opens the door to much variation.

The German Excellence Initiative

As a part of the push towards quality assurance and competitiveness amongst European universities, Germany’s higher education institutions began participating in a program called the Excellence Initiative in 2005. The Excellence Initiative is a funding program sponsored by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG), though most of the money comes from state and federal government bodies, as well as the *Stiftverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft*. This initiative is largely based on science and research, although some programs are integrated with departments in the humanities. The goal of the Excellence Initiative is to “organize a

³ “Bachelor graduates primarily assume positions in traditional first-job fields of graduates from higher education institutions as academically-qualified employees without managerial functions.” Pg. 11, National Report

competition to sustainably strengthen research at Germany's universities and to raise the visibility of German science and research vis-à-vis our international competitors" (Brochure, 10).

It would seem that participation or success in the Excellence Initiative competition would be of great help to German universities trying to comply with the constraints of the Bologna Process. In fact, Matthias Kleiner, the president of the DFG, states that the program marks a deliberate departure from the "long-cherished and fatally wrong" view that all universities were equal and thus should be treated (and funded) equally (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, 2008). The result of this worldview, writes Ash (2008), "is that many German...universities rank at a pretty good middle level internationally, but none is anywhere near the top." The Excellence Initiative is one attempt to base the German university off of a more competitive and less egalitarian model.

The first round of competition began in 2005; universities submitted draft proposals detailing their vision for the future of their establishment. Specific plans for graduate schools, research-oriented projects, or long-term development strategies were eligible for submission. During the first submission period, 74 of Germany's 100 universities (Ash, 2008; *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, 2008) submitted a total of 319 draft proposals. After cuts were made, 90 projects' final drafts were submitted for final review. Of these, 38 projects belonging to 22 universities received the designation of excellence.

The second year of competition had comparable numbers, and *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* was among the universities that earned distinction. The university itself has won many accolades, and ranked in the top three universities in Germany in a FOCUS Uniranking student survey (FOCUS, 2007). Its programs foster the goals of the Bologna reforms and scored high in the Excellence Initiative competition; one graduate school, one "cluster of excellence,"

and one institutional strategy were recognized as “excellent” by the committee of the DFG in the second year of competition.

For example, the Spemann Graduate School of Biology and Medicine won a distinction as an excellent graduate school. At Spemann, students receive interdisciplinary training in medicine (including molecular medicine), chemistry, and biology. The money that Spemann receives will go towards establishing a campus on which teaching and living are united, and also expanding career opportunities for women. This focus on *Berufsqualifizierung* for all students highlights Spemann’s cooperation with the Bologna reforms, as does their development of a MOBILity international exchange program, which has 30 international partners at universities and industrial companies.

In addition, plans for the Center for Biological Signaling Studies (bioss) achieved an “excellent” designation in the Clusters of Excellence category. The staff at bioss works closely with many institutions all over the world, including English, Canadian, American, French, Swiss, Dutch, and Singapore universities and industrial partners. The international focus of this new center likely drove them to the forefront of the competition in the Clusters of Excellence category.

Finally, Freiburg developed an institutional strategy which achieved the designation of “excellent” in 2007. Called “Windows for Research,” this strategy has three goals: first, to expand research opportunities for scientists, second, to promote exchange between disciplines and subjects, and finally, to enhance the university’s internationalization. This institutional strategy is noteworthy because it includes disciplines outside the hard sciences; departments of Language and Literature as well as Historical Studies are included in the development plan. In keeping with the goals of the Bologna Process, this institutional strategy is also setting standards,

qualification measures, and adding structure to research and degree programs at the university. Most exciting, perhaps, is the Science Support Center that they intend to create. At this center, students and faculty would be able to receive assistance with applications to graduate schools and grants, as well as help pursuing and managing funding by external grants. Through this strategy, students and researchers alike will be aided in exchanging ideas as well as bettering their own research.

Clearly, this is a highly selective competition, and one that provides not only distinction, confidence, and an enhanced reputation, but also a monetary award. In all, 1.9 billion Euro is to be distributed to these excellent universities over the course of five years. The DFG states that the Excellence Initiative program is “driving the country as a whole forward,” creating jobs, promoting research, and leading to more innovation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, 2008).

However impressive the story of the Excellence Initiative sounds when told by the DFG, it also has other sides that show that this may be yet another empty *Begriff* used in the world of German higher education. For instance, Ash (2008) claims that the total amount set to be spent rewarding “excellent” universities (1.9 billion Euro over five years) is less money than a single top American research university would spend in one year alone. Though the new focus on competition may make universities within Germany more competitive amongst each other, the amount of funding at work clearly undercuts the promise of competitiveness in the global playing field of higher education. While the idea and the motivations behind it are good, the Excellence Initiative falls slightly short in execution and practice in comparison with similar efforts in other countries.

Mobility

One of the major goals of the Bologna Process is to increase the mobility of students and faculty during their educational careers. In theory, the developments of the Bologna Process should make it easier for students to spend time studying outside of their home country during their normal course of study. However, according to the National Report, the course offerings in Germany fall short of this goal. It states, “29 percent of higher education institutions *do not* include study abroad periods as part of the standard period of study which increases student willingness for mobility” (KMK, 2007, emphasis mine). In addition, most degree programs, particularly Bachelor and Master’s tracks, offer studying abroad as an option, not as a requirement or a particularly encouraged opportunity.

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität has academic partnerships with universities in 57 countries and is a participating member of EUCOR as well as the ERASMUS program (*Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, n.d.b.). There is no specified ideal time for a student to study at a foreign university; study abroad is encouraged, but not particularly structured or sanctioned by varying degree tracks. The International Office’s website notes that it is particularly important for students to pursue studies in another country only when they can be directly bound into the studies a student is pursuing at their home university, though it does also note, “*Grundsätzlich sollten Sie das Auslandsstudium als Ergänzung Ihres Studiums sehen. Sie sollten nicht von vornherein mit einer vollen Anrechnung der im Ausland erbrachten Studienleistungen in Deutschland rechnen.*” (*Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, n.d.a.) This can be especially prohibitive for some students, particularly those pursuing degrees in law or medicine, who may come across foreign universities so differently structured that it is impossible to reconcile the two systems (*Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, n.d.a.).

Financial concerns are a large part of the problem surrounding student mobility, and many agencies in Germany are attempting to make it easier for students to afford time abroad. The DAAD is largely responsible for providing these services, supporting thousands of students from Bologna states to come study in Germany, as well as supporting German students through grants for time spent studying abroad. ERASMUS also provides a significant amount of money to those students who choose to go abroad through its programs. *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* provides its students with some tips concerning meeting the financial demands: students can keep their BAföG (German study grants) if they choose to go abroad after their second semester of study, and many stipends are available to those who take advantage of an opportunity for “vertical mobility;” that is, earning a Bachelor degree in one country and a Master degree abroad (KMK, 2007, pg. 24, *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, n.d.a.).

Altogether, just over 22,000 German students studied abroad, and about 17,000 foreign students entered Germany for study through the ERASMUS program in the 2004/2005 school year (KMK, 2007). The KMK and BMBF wish to increase these numbers in the future, and are particularly hopeful for an increase in “vertical mobility” (KMK, 2007). As a whole, mobility did not receive much emphasis in the 2007 National Report, though it is one of the main goals of the Bologna Process.

Conclusion

The 2007 National Report and the example of *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* paint a relatively favorable picture of Germany’s reform in conjunction with the Bologna Process. Although some statistics are significantly lower than desired, possible solutions and suggestions for further directions are highlighted at the end of the report. However, these are not the only progress reports available to judge Germany’s progress towards a reformed system of higher

education. For example, faculty and student surveys have been conducted by various polling agencies, gathering a more accurate “on the ground” reading than the National Reports, which are written from a rather high bureaucratic level. Considering the attitudes and observations of faculty and students who are experiencing these reforms is also an important part of understanding the true impact of the Bologna Process on Germany’s system of higher education.

Progress Reports from other sources

Students

Overall, German university students display mixed feelings about the progress made since the beginning of the Bologna Process. The BMBF sponsors a study called “*Studiensituation und studentische Orientierungen*,” in which students are surveyed about their higher education experiences in many realms, not just those directly applicable to the goals of the Bologna Process. In 2008, the tenth of these surveys was conducted, and offers illuminating information about the state of higher education in Germany, particularly as it relates to the new degree structures and the EHEA. The opinions communicated through the survey’s results are affirmed in other surveys, news articles, and interviews with current students. Overwhelmingly, though they agree that the goals and objectives of the Bologna Process are worthy of pursuit, they believe that they are being implemented poorly in German universities.

First, the *Studierendensurvey* presents data about the percentage of students pursuing the new degree types. According to their data from the 2006/2007 school year, 19.5% of students are currently studying in Bachelor and Master’s degree programs. Though this number seems very low, the percentage of *beginning* students pursuing these new degree types is much higher: 44.4% of all students are in a Bachelor or Master’s degree track (BMBF, 2008). However,

concerns are raised about the reporting of statistics and percentages concerning the number of Bachelor and Master's degree programs offered at higher education institutions in Germany. It is complicated to look at numbers of percentages because of all the small subsets of student populations. For example, some data does not differentiate between students at *Fachhochschulen* and at universities, or between current and beginning students, or between students in different subjects. Reporting of these statistics should really be more stringent in order to give a better picture of the Bologna Process' status. In the words of the survey, "*Eine Überarbeitung der Statistiken und ihrer Publizierung wäre dringlich zu empfehlen*" (BMBF, 2008).

Most students, whether or not they have chosen a Bachelor or Master's degree, do support the goals and ideals of the Bologna Process; more than two thirds of students surveyed found them important. Of all the university students surveyed, 71% strongly support setting comparable international standards, 68% strongly support internationalization, increased mobility, and an emphasis on study abroad, and 67% strongly support moves towards accreditation by German universities (BMBF, 2008). While they do support these goals, they often do not support the way Germany is going about trying to reach them. In an interview with *Spiegel*, Imke Buß, a board member of the *fzs*, echoed this sentiment. When asked, "*Also ist der Bologna-Prozess eine gute Sache und wird nur schlecht umgesetzt?*", she stated, "*In Deutschland ganz bestimmt*" (Buß, 2008). In the same interview, she states that the position of the *fzs* is not to oppose the measures of the Bologna Process, but rather to put more control into the hands of students, who are directly affected by changes in the makeup of higher education. Students in the *Studierendensurvey* agree with this position; 55% of students surveyed wished for more opportunities for participation in the creation of the EHEA (BMBF, 2008).

One of the largest areas of contention within the Bologna Process is the two-cycle degree system, which has arguably held most of Germany's focus to date. Only 36% of current university students agree that a six-semester Bachelor degree is important to them. This number is down from 51% in 2001 (BMBF, 2008). Overall, positive expectations about the Bachelor degree have declined. Students' expectations for good chances in the job market, a shorter course towards job qualification, better work opportunities abroad, once selling points of the Bachelor degree, have steadily declined since 2001. In addition, less students than ever expect German universities to be made more attractive internationally through the opportunity for a Bachelor degree, and less students believe the Bachelor provides a way for students without research interests to earn a more applicable degree (BMBF, 2008).

At the same time, negative expectations of the Bachelor degree are on the rise. Half of students surveyed believed that the Bachelor degree offered an education based too little on research and science, up from a third of students in 2001. Students also dislike the emphasis placed upon basic soft skills, as well as the strict path to a degree set by course requirements. Christina Huber, a psychologist at the *Studentenwerk* of *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, sees the negative consequences of these strict six-semester plans in her practice on a regular basis. She observes that students in Bachelor degree courses tend to have less time during the week for extracurricular activities and appointments than students in traditional degree tracks, and are generally more stressed (Hartleb, 2008a). Imke Buß, too, notes this stress taking a toll on many students she speaks to in her *fzs* duties; she states, "*der Stress und die Belastung für die Studierenden [sind] enorm angewachsen*" (Buß, 2008). Perhaps as a result of fears and stressors like these, the percentage of students beginning their studies who intend to pursue a Bachelor

degree has slightly declined since the last survey. Now, 48% of incoming university students want to pursue a Bachelor degree, down from 53% in 2003 (BMBF, 2008).

As doubtful as many may be about the changes to the German system of higher education, many students are understanding about the new requirements. For example, Lena, a student from Freiburg who is earning a Bachelor degree in *Waldwirtschaft* and *Umwelt*, states that she sees the new degree structure as simply more pragmatic than in the past. Although it might not always allow her to study exactly what she wants, she knows that what she learns in her strict six-year education will definitely be applicable to her future career (Griesser, 2008). However, though she acknowledges that the BOK courses she may take allow her to take a glimpse into unrelated but interesting fields, she still thinks that the lack of choice on the part of Bachelor students puts them at a disadvantage in comparison to students of traditional degree tracks (Griesser, 2008).

International mobility is another goal of the Bologna Process that is currently being poorly implemented, according to the students surveyed. According to the *Studierendensurvey*, only 9% of university students spend time abroad during their studies (BMBF, 2008). Of these students, hardly any go abroad during the first six semesters of their study; time spent abroad is typically reserved for some time between students' ninth and twelfth semesters. This clearly poses a problem for students on a six-semester Bachelor plan, who are unfortunately more likely to *want* to spend time abroad. Strict modular schedules tend to prohibit Bachelor students from planning to spend time abroad. Only 8% of Bachelor students plan time abroad into their education in comparison with 14% of students on the *Diplom* track (BMBF, 2008).

This is a trend that has been observed by Michael Borchardt, director of the Career Center at *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, who sees many students who are interested in

incorporating internships abroad into their education but are unable to do so because of the short amount of time they have in which to complete everything. He states that students need to start planning much earlier, and will need much more advising than in the past in order to fit everything into their studies (Iwischütz, 2008). The findings of the *Studierendensurvey* take a similar approach when suggesting solutions to the problem of available time abroad, though the agent of the change is different. Instead of directing students to seek more advising, the results of the survey indicate that a semester abroad should be built into the infrastructure of the new degree types and supported financially and through ECTS points.

Overall, it seems that most students would agree with another Bachelor student, Jenny Kurtz, who was interviewed by *SWR Mainz*. She stated, “*Die Idee [des Bologna Prozess] war nicht schlecht. Die Idee war wirklich auch eine gute. Die Umsetzung ist übers Ziel ungefähr 600 Kilometer hinausgeschossen*” (Anthes, 2008). Students appreciate the ideas and dialogue that the reforms of the Bologna Process bring to the table, but wish that they were being implemented differently. This is a sentiment that is echoed among professors and other faculty members at German universities.

Faculty

The faculty members of German universities also see problems with the way the Bologna Process is being implemented in their schools. In fact, employees of German universities were among some of the least satisfied participants in the Bologna Process in a 2007 survey of 31 participating nations. Of those surveyed, 53% of German respondents agreed that it would have been better to keep the old one-tier degree structure, and 62% do not believe that the introduction of the two-cycle system will improve (or has improved) the quality of education, which is the highest percentage of negative responses of any country surveyed (Flash Eurobarometer, 2007).

In the past year, the *Deutscher Hochschulverband* (DHV), a union of about 23,000 university professors and teachers, has been particularly vocal about their opposition to the Bologna reforms (Kain, 2008). Like students, the members of the DHV are not so concerned with the goals of the Bologna process; they see them as worthy of pursuit. However, the way the goals are being pursued in Germany is worrisome to the faculty. Much of the concern is actually based upon the *10. Studierendensurvey* and the decreasing student support of Germany's Bologna reforms, particularly the two-cycle degree system. The DHV states simply and clearly the disconnect between the German National Report and the data from the students surveyed: “*Die Wunschvorstellungen der Bologna-Befürworter decken sich nicht mit der Lebenswirklichkeit der Studierenden*” (*Deutscher Hochschulverband*, 2008, August 18). Because of this disconnect, the DHV states that a “reform of the reforms” needs to occur (*Deutscher Hochschulverband*, 2008, September 4).

The DHV is especially concerned about is the lack of opportunity for student mobility abroad during the course of the new degree programs. They state that the new degree programs are so specialized that there is simply no opportune time to change the place of study, whether that be within the same country or internationally. This directly contradicts the goals of the Bologna Process. In addition, ECTS points, though perhaps a promising tool for comparing courses, are often ascribed completely differently depending on the individual university, let alone country of study.⁴ This confusing use of a supposedly standardized system creates problems for students attempting to keep track of their studies. Finally, the DHV notes that the percentage of drop-outs is higher among the new degree programs: one fourth of Bachelor students end their studies early, as opposed to one fifth of all university students (*Deutscher Hochschulverband*, 2008, September 4).

⁴ See the example of Frau Henze's class in the introduction.

The main reform the DHV wishes to implement is the designation of the Master, not the Bachelor, as the *Regelabschluss* for students in Germany. This would mean that the Bachelor degree would no longer be held as the degree that first qualifies students for the job market. The results of the Eurobarometer survey show support for this idea; 45% of German educators surveyed agreed with the statement, “First cycle graduates (Bachelor) should follow a master programme [sic] in the same field of study before entering the labor market” (Flash Eurobarometer, 2007).

This is particularly applicable in the field of engineering, in which students already regard the new degree tracks with much skepticism (BMBF, 2008). In fact, the DHV wishes to allow the terms “Master” and “*Diplom*” to be interchangeable in the field of engineering (*Deutscher Hochschulverband*, 2008, September 4). They argue that engineering, along with theology, medicine, and law, is a field in which a student cannot be adequately prepared for the workforce with a six-semester Bachelor degree. This is a view that Rudolf Steinberg, the President of the University of Frankfurt, shares. He is skeptical of practice-oriented degree tracks, especially for scientific or state-run professions. He states, “...*in diesem Land wird es niemals einen Bachelor-Richter, -Arzt oder -Pfarrer geben, um nur einige Professionen zu nennen, in denen diesen Vorstellung weit von der Realität entfernt ist*” (Steinberg, 2007). His strong words display the fervor with which educators in Germany disagree with some of the reforms put forth by the Bologna Process.

Another interesting suggestion of the DHV is the allotment of stipends to students who wish to pursue an entry-level position related to their field of study after graduation. The DHV imagines that this stipend would be a responsibility of both the federal and state governments. This idea may work well with the trend that Michael Borchardt observes through his work in

Freiburg's career center: more and more companies are choosing to hire interns who have already graduated from Bachelor programs, rather than those who are currently in the midst of their studies (Iwischütz, 2008).

Of course, it is interesting that the DHV chose to come out swinging against the Bologna reforms in 2008 – nine years after the entire process began. Of all the complaints by German faculty about the Bologna Process, one item repeatedly comes to the forefront: the confusing or misunderstood allotment of responsibility for the implementation of the reforms (Titz & Jeffers, 2008). In the Eurobarometer survey, German faculty members displayed the greatest confidence in their own faculty for reform implementation and a lack of confidence in large, abstract governing bodies. For example, 47% of German respondents stated that they have no confidence at all in the European Commission as a supranational governing body of the reforms, and tend to wish for less guidance and governance from public authorities⁵ (Flash Eurobarometer, 2007). Germany is also home to the greatest amount of resistance to the creation of pan-European quality standards. 26% of German respondents believe that there is no need for European standards of higher education, which is the second highest proportion next to the United Kingdom, which, though a signatory of the Bologna Declaration, has been rather uninvolved in many Bologna Process reforms (Flash Eurobarometer, 2007). In addition, Germans show the most resistance of the 31 nations to European quality labels that would certify the quality of institutions and programs; 44% of Germans see no need for such accreditation measures (Flash Eurobarometer, 2007).

⁵ 92% of Germans surveyed disagreed with the statement, "Universities need stronger guidance from public authorities"

Conclusion

However mistrusting or concerned faculty are with larger governing bodies intervening in their educational systems, Christoph Titz and Jochen Leffers, authors of the *Spiegel* article “*Professoren-Lobby springt auf die Bremse*,” write that professors and faculty members need to take more responsibility. They state that universities themselves are responsible for recognizing degrees gained abroad, caring for students in danger of ending their studies early, and helping frustrated students navigate the new degree structures (Titz & Leffers, 2008). Though their points are legitimate, these actions cannot be taken outside of the context of the pan-European reforms and measures, with which Germany is struggling. In order someday to achieve the worthy goals of the Bologna Process, Germany, as well as all of Europe, will need to deal with and rethink important paradoxes presented by the reforms, which will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: The Purpose of Higher Education

In order to properly address the complications brought up by the Bologna reforms, Germany and other EHEA states need to choose a focused direction for future action. In order to do so, one broad question must be deliberated: is education a “good” for the overall cultural climate of Europe or one for its economic progress? In Germany, this issue connects with the “tension between *Bildung* (personal development of the individual through scholarly activity) and *Ausbildung* (training for a profession),” which has frequently been discussed in the context of other educational reforms (Welsh, 2004). An answer to this basic question would allow educational reforms to cut straight to the heart of the matter and provide a centering goal from which to operate. One might think that discussion of the Bologna Process in the public sphere would invite consideration of this basic issue. However, it seems that the many practical difficulties with the Bologna Process have overshadowed any discussion of the underlying paradigms.

The actions taken as part of the Bologna Process and the goals and desires stated in its text seem to address very different purposes. Many of the written statements regarding the changing face of European higher education make culture or *Bildung* the driving force behind the reforms, while the actions taken and policies put in place seem to laud *Ausbildung* and employability as the most important aims of the process. Many people are confused as to the point of the reform, likely, in part, because of the disconnect between these two ideas. They see drastic changes occurring in their schools’ structure but are perplexed by the actual motivations behind them. Imke Buß, acknowledged this confusion in her interview with *Spiegel*. She stated, “[in Deutschland] weiß doch kaum jemand, wofür Bologna eigentlich steht” (Buß, 2008).

This is not entirely surprising, given that terms like “knowledge economy” are used without explanation and the lines between economic gain, education, and cultural vibrancy are blurred by the ideas and actions behind the Bologna Process. In order to foster progress in European higher education after the 2010 deadline, members of the EHEA will have to decide upon their unified purpose and narrow their focus. This, in turn, will allow them to better engage citizens, creating a sizable base of support for the changes, which could help them be implemented more quickly. This is especially important given that the changes and struggles they produce directly impact citizens who are students and faculty members at universities.

The cultural purpose of reform

Even before the Bologna Process’ formal beginning, discussion of European higher education emphasized cultural vibrancy as an important goal of post-secondary education. Once again, in the text of the Sorbonne Declaration, a distinction is made between economic and cultural process. It states, “Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge as well. We must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social, and technical dimensions of our continent” (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998). Though the declaration does go on to discuss the importance of student mobility, employability, and external recognition of European higher education, the cultural issue comes first, and thus stands out as the greater purpose towards which all other efforts seem to be working.

The Bologna Declaration followed the lead of the Sorbonne Declaration, which “stressed the universities’ central role in developing European cultural dimensions” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). The text of the Bologna Process, too, emphasizes the importance of higher education and learning in building a more culturally vibrant Europe. It states,

A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognized as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

Even the goal of increasing Europe's international competitiveness focuses on the cultural, not economic, issues and higher education's ability to facilitate these. The success of European civilization is to be measured by "the appeal that its culture has for other civilizations," rather than economic prosperity (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Like the points of action outlined in the Sorbonne Declaration, those listed in the Bologna Declaration are concrete steps that focus on increasing employability, mobility, and the attractiveness of Europe as a place for post-secondary studies, which could be seen as economically oriented goals. However, these concrete steps all serve the purpose of increasing Europe's international competitiveness, which, as "a leitmotif in the declaration," was not an end in and of itself so much as another push towards crafting a more culturally viable continent (Neave, 2003).

Even after its ratification, further official discussion of the Bologna Process still references culture as the most important end goals of the reforms. The London Communiqué (2007), particularly, highlights the "key role [of universities] in defining and transmitting the values on which our societies are built." From these official documents, it would seem that the purpose of the recent educational reform movement in Europe is to renew the cultural vibrancy of the continent and personal development of individual students based upon their scholarly pursuits.

The conundrum of "European culture"

Of course, if making Europe more culturally vibrant is the main goal of the Bologna

Process' reforms, a large question remains: what exactly is this culture that is so frequently referenced, and to whom does it belong? The signatories of the Bologna Process stated their support for the “promotion of the **necessary European dimensions in higher education**, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes, and integrated programs of study, training, and research” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). The idea of a particularly European strain of higher education is not only held by those in policy and government. In an article in *Spiegel* magazine, Hans-Christoph Stephan (2007) wrote, “*was ein echter Europäischer Hochschulraum braucht: Hochschulen mit einem stärkeren europäischen Bewusstsein.*” Though it has been clear from its start that the vision of the Bologna Process would extend to a wide range of European countries, it is not entirely clear what the meaning of the term *European dimensions of higher education* really means.⁶

The educational systems of European nations were and continue to be radically different from one another. Finding a common thread that could be declared wholly *European* proves difficult. Especially when examining the elements of educational policy stated in the Bologna Declaration (curricular development, cooperation between institutions, mobility schemes, and programs integrating study, training, and research), it is hard to determine what could be called overarchingly *European*, given the great variation among member nations. The idea of a European higher education system is still an abstraction, a “metaphysical entity” that is “more, one suspects...a strange object of desire than...an achieved state of fact” (Neave, 2003).

Scholars tend to have varying ideas about what parts of their educational identity should be counted among these *European dimensions*. For most, “the common denominator seems to be the defense of European achievements...against a perceived threat from without;” these achievements are seen as “grand intellectual and elite traditions if the speaker is conservative

⁶ Of the Bologna Declaration's original signatories, only 15 out of 29 nations were then members of the EU.

[and] social state structures and open access to higher education if one is more to the left” (Stucke, 2001; Jarausch, 2003; in Ash, 2006). No matter which side of the social or political spectrum one falls, it remains to be seen if the actions taken through the Bologna Process actually end up celebrating European cultural achievements or brushing them over in the name of economic efficiency and harmonization. As one higher education scholar writes,

Institutional characteristics that once expressed national identity, genius, and preservation were now recast as obstacles to student mobility. Because student mobility was an essential part in a strategy for socializing the younger generation and preparing it for mobility of employment within the European Community...differences in matters [of variation] were now viewed less as monuments to diversity than as examples of opacity, absence of transparency, and general agents of hindrance and obscurantism (Neave, 2003).

The suggested and attempted homogenization of the diverse elements of European higher education suggests that the educational reforms connected to the Bologna Process have less to do with enhancing cultural vitality and more to do with supporting economic growth. Perhaps the abstract, metaphysical notion of a European Higher Education Area is truly too difficult to fully grasp and discuss, but perhaps it is used as a conveniently attractive idea with which to encourage people to support the reforms’ aims. With the increasing commodification of European higher education and the focus on economic success in the Bologna Process’ tangible steps, it seems that culture is a secondary goal of the process.

Seeing culture through an economic lens

This focus on culture is seen as a departure from previous attitudes towards European education. The reforms connected to the Bologna Process are said to challenge the “single-minded subordination of higher education to the vocational imperative” that was heavily protested in the early 1990s (Neave, 2003). However, the terminology currently used to discuss

cultural advancements hints at what is perhaps the underlying goal of the Bologna Process: stimulating the image of the European economy.

German news coverage of the Bologna Process rarely points to the supposed cultural goals of the educational reforms. Instead, they focus squarely on the economic ramifications of the changes. For example, when explaining the Bologna Process, one exemplary source writes, “*Sie wollen das Studium praxisnäher, effizienter, und schneller machen, ein einheitliches Hochschulraum schaffen und damit die internationale Möbilität fördern*” (Titz & Leffers, 2008). No mention is made of increasing the cultural vibrancy of the countries in the EHEA or helping students become more prepared to live in an intercultural Europe, and employability and efficiency are highlighted. This could be indicative of the difference between the discussion at a theoretical level (which focuses on culture) and the actual effects of ground-level implementation.

This goes even further when European higher education is discussed within the higher education institutions themselves. When discussing the reforms, university personnel are taught to use “business-oriented supply and demand structures” (Liesner, 2007). From this cut-and-dry perspective, students are seen as consumers of a product provided by professors and university administration, rather than being seen as potential collaborative agents on research and scholarly pursuits. This is vastly different than Humboldt’s idea that “neither teachers nor students should be there for themselves, but rather for *Wissenschaft*” (Ash, 2006). Identifying this underlying paradigm is important, as it influences the way in which one thinks about teaching and learning. As Weiskopf (2005, in Liesner, 2007) wrote, “if universities are described in the language of economic efficiency, these categories become part of one’s self-evaluation and...influence one’s perspective.” By embracing the terminology typically used in the economic sector, the creators

of educational reforms suggest that these reforms should be seen in a frame of reference that is itself economic. The departure from a vocational-minded imperative (for which the Bologna Process is praised) becomes more difficult to recognize.

Admittedly, looking at education through an economic lens is convenient because it is so clear-cut, especially when compared to the abstract attempts to define “European culture” and “European dimensions of higher education.” Seeing higher education in neat, measurable increments makes it easy for government bodies that oversee education to take stock of the efficiency of their higher education institutions. This is especially true when it comes to quality assurance measures and plans of study, which, in Germany, typically come at the level of the *Länder*. More structured curricula mean that checklists can be made as to what students have learned and what competencies they have gained. Many critics believe that the post-Bologna emphasis on quality assurance as a central measurement of higher education inches education itself further away from the designation of a cultural good and into an economic frame of reference. As one scholar states, “In this discursive framework, ‘autonomy’ appears to have become a code word for the delivery of higher education into the tender hands – or rather the gaping maw – of the market“ (Ash, 2006).

This may mean that the Bologna Process goes further than simply changing the *structure* of degrees in Europe. As Liesner (2007) states, “Government strategies...show more and more clearly that the Bologna Process not only comprises new structures for studies, but also an architectural plan directed at the content matter of studies and at [their] self-concept.” There is a deeper issue hidden amongst harmonizing the degree structures between universities; the very question of education’s purpose is up for debate. “By associating competition, efficiency, and education with the cultural image of Europe, Bologna sent out other signals, destined for...those

interests gathering around the issue of the commodification of education” (Neave, 2003).

Through the strong emphasis placed on quality assurance, efficiency, and other business-like aspects of higher education, the Bologna Process creates a different context in which one can think of higher education than was previously present.

The strong movement towards quality assurance and comparable learning outcomes that is currently supported by the *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* marks a substantial shift away from the traditional German model of the university. While the old German model was typically self-directed and defined by the individual institutions, the reforms demand measurable quality standards that can be held up against other institutions, both within Germany and in the entire EHEA. A large question remains: who will determine these minimum curricular standards? Is there a way that the needs and desires of all parties involved (universities, faculty, students, government, and businesses in the workforce) can be reconciled and harmonized? This is a large question that could be better answered if the larger question of higher education’s overall function is answered.

The *Bildung/Ausbildung* debate in practice

It will be important for Germany and Europe to try to either reconcile the two goals or purposes of higher education, or to choose one to pursue first. The trouble with the two simultaneous paradigms of European education in the Bologna Process has been mirrored out at a more concrete level with many micro-level conflicts that have arisen throughout its implementation. Unfortunately, the actions taken to fulfill the multiple goals of educational reform seem to have been put into place without much discussion as to how they would interact with each other. Many of the degree requirements at universities trying to comply with the

Bologna Process until this point have been somewhat self-defeating. Often, in attempting to fulfill one requirement, a student will not be able to fill another. Essentially, differing attempts to enact the Bologna Process have pitted its very goals against one another. In order to enhance the EHEA after 2010, these requirements will need to be looked at more closely, and on an individual basis. Clearly, putting change into place with broad strokes has uncovered many challenges. A few of these challenges, including the tension between *Wissenschaft* and *Wirtschaft*, time taken to complete a degree versus learning outcomes, and student mobility versus stringent degree requirements, will be examined in-depth in the following sub-chapter.

Will less focus on Wissenschaft help or hurt Wirtschaft?

Faculty at German universities, where research and *Wissenschaft* are typically stressed as essential elements of higher education, see a large problem with the way *Wissenschaft* and *Praxis* are handled under the new curricula dictated by the Bologna Process (Ash, 2006). In an interview with *Spiegel*, Rudolf Steinberg, former president of *Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main*, expressed his hesitance to accept these changes. He struggles with the idea that all *Studiengänge* should be centered on employability and skills needed for the workforce, reserving rigorous experience in research and science for those studying towards a graduate degree. He stated,

Wissenschaft ist etwas noch nicht Gefundenes, ständig zu Suchendes – damit kann man gar nicht früh genug beginnen. Die Vorstellung, erst nach drei Jahren Praxis-Bachelor mit dem wissenschaftlichen Denken anzufangen, ist absolut lebensfremd, wissenschaftsfeindlich und töricht (Steinberg, 2007).

Compartmentalizing scientific thinking from a general education is an odd idea to many in the world of German academia. Professor Thorsten Friedrich, Dean of Chemistry at *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, is unsure if this separation makes sense within the context of Bologna's aim at

Bachelor employability: “mit Sicherheit [biete der Bachelor] eine solide **Grundausbildung**, die aber nur eine Basis ist, auf die eine spezialisierte Ausbildung aufgesetzt werden sollte” (Hartleb, 2008b).

It is not just technical and scientific subjects that seem nonsensical when seen in this context; other subjects that do not lead to a specific job do not quite fit into this mold, either. An art history course, for example, seems odd when sorted into arbitrary categories like “Fachkompetenz 30 Prozent, Methodenkompetenz 30 Prozent, Systemkompetenz 30 Prozent, Sozialkompetenz 10 Prozent” (Darnstädt, 2007). Though forgoing an emphasis on *Wissenschaft* in order to focus on employability at the Bachelor’s level might seem logical at first glance, it may not be the best idea for all subjects available at German and other European universities.

Will less time and more requirements lead to less learning?

In addition, the tight time constraint placed on students in a three-year Bachelor’s degree track does not allow much room for error (or, for that matter, anything the slightest bit unnecessary). It seems that German students are already finding it difficult to finish in the prescribed time; by some reports, only half the 2008 German Bachelor candidates completed their studies in the targeted amount of time (Titz, 2008). This is not entirely surprising, given that the time towards a Bachelor’s degree in the United States has been steadily drawing nearer to five years than the targeted four (Ash, 2006). Indeed, “a major gap yawns here between the dream of reaching social change by administrative fiat and the realities of student life” (Ash, 2006).

In Germany, the “reality of students’ lives” is that accelerated courses of study might actually lead to less learning. Reporting done for a news story called *Hölle Hochschule: Bachelor-Abschluss führt zu Studienabbruch* uncovered a new term coined to describe the

cramming that often occurs in the context of accelerated courses: *Bulimie-Learning*. It is defined as “*lernen nur um riesige Mengen von Lehrstoff in Prüfungssituationen wieder auskotzen zu können*” (Anthes, 2008). Students find that they learn only for tests and do not remember the material for very long afterwards. “*Nachhaltiger Lerneffekt – gleich Null*” (Anthes, 2008).

This emphasis on high-stakes testing and high-volume learning is not what Jenny Kurtz, a Bachelor student at *Humboldt-Universität Berlin*, imagined when she thought of her time at the university. “*Das ist wie in der Schule,*” she complains (Anthes, 2008). Members of other universities echo these complaints; at *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität*, the Bachelor track is “*ohne Zweifel stark verschult,*” according to Professor Thorsten Friedrich (Hartleb, 2008b). This overloaded schedule may be due to an unfortunate tendency at some universities that are trying to implement Bachelor’s degrees: to simply take the requirements for a four- or five-year *Magister* degree and pack them into the three years of a Bachelor’s degree. The curricula of individual programs will need to be carefully examined in order to assess how to make a logical and reasonable six-semester course of study out of the usual course requirements.

Perhaps the greatest fear of observers of the *Bulimie-Learning* trend is that the stress it puts on students will lead them to drop out of their studies early. Clearly, this is not a positive outcome for the individual student, but it is also not a positive outcome from the vantage point of the Bologna Process and the economy as a whole. If a student does not finish school, they will likely not be able to enter the workforce at the level they intended. This means that the employability of younger generations in Germany (and all Europe) will not be improved, but rather put at risk. In addition, the goal of increasing competitiveness of those in the EHEA is bound not to be met if dropout rates continue to grow. Without an employable young generation entering the workforce, Europe will fall behind internationally. This is a very real problem in

Germany, where the percentage of higher education drop-outs hovers around 20% overall, but is about 25% among students working towards a Bachelor (Anthes, 2008; Kain, 2008, Titz & Leffers, 2008).

Will strict requirements lead to student immobility?

The Bachelor *Studiengang*, which should be faster, more efficient, and *praxisnah*, seems to be antithetical to another goal of the Bologna Process: student mobility. According to some reports, students studying towards a *Diplom* tend to go abroad more than students in Bachelor or Master tracks, “*weil Auslandssemester nicht recht in die engen Studienpläne passen wollen*” (Titz & Leffers, 2008). Not only is the progress towards a degree conceptualized to be faster than German students are used to, but there are more specific requirements that they must fulfill in order to do so. Students no longer have much time to play around; their plan of action at the university must be meticulous in order to afford time for experience abroad, whether through a period of study or an internship (Iwischütz, 2008). This may be one reason that German officials are hopeful for an increase in vertical mobility; if students can depend on time abroad at the graduate level (especially if the Masters becomes the *Regelabschluss*), they might be able to have both the new degree structure and a significant amount of time spent abroad (KMK, 2007).

Conclusion

Using education for economic gain is not an absurd idea; after all, most people study at universities in order to learn more about the subject they would like to use in their eventual profession. However, complications have arisen within the Bologna Process because of the sheer number of changes that it requires and their magnitude. These troubles are seen, at a smaller

level, in the irreconcilable conditions many students in the Bachelor/Master tracks have for their degrees. They want to spend time abroad to learn more about other cultures, but there is no time in their *berufsfeldorientiert* six-semester course of study in which to do so. They want to gain skills that will help them be employable, but students in some subjects need a solid scientific and research-based background in order to be employable or advance to further study. Students are confused and frustrated by this situation, and faculty are tired of the headaches that come with it.

A reevaluation of the goals of the Bologna Process is needed. Is enhancing the cultural vibrancy of Europe the true goal, or is that a façade used to make its aims more palatable to those opposed to a vocation-based educational system? Either way, discussion needs to occur. It would be better to establish several smaller, more concrete goals for the development of higher education in Europe than to deal with wide-sweeping reforms that skim the surface of problems and create new complications at the level of the university. Taking steps to do one thing at a time *well* rather than trying to change everything in one fell swoop would be much more effective and more fair to the faculty and students of European higher education institutions, who bear the brunt of the work behind the reforms.

Conclusion

“*Das schöne an einem Prozess ist, dass es...vorangeht. Das unschöne ist, dass man nicht genau weiß, wohin,*” stated a news article about the Bologna Process’ implementation in Germany (Darnstädt, 2007). There is a great deal of truth about this statement; the most disconcerting part of beginning an overwhelmingly large reform like the Bologna Process is its uncertainty. The problems presented by the current implementation of the Bologna Process might simply be growing pains of what will be a lengthier process than originally conceptualized. However, they might also allude to greater problems lurking underneath the surface. Either way, it would not hurt to take a step back and reevaluate the direction in which European higher education is heading. 2010, the final year of the Bologna Process, must be seen as a starting point for a rethinking of the aims and means of the reform. Rather than finding a panacea for all European higher education, perhaps each individual country and its individual educational situation need to be carefully considered before further progress is agreed upon.

In fact, ignoring many individual differences up until now may have partially been to blame for the problems with student mobility and degree compatibility. Empirical findings from studies of German universities’ implementation show that in addition to the pre-existing discrepancies that existed between different schools and different *Länder*, there are “new and growing differences to be observed” (Lohmann, 2004, in Liesner, 2007). Greater gaps between types of education offered within and between countries are clearly in direct opposition to the end goal of the reforms. Unless reviewed and acknowledged this could continue to undercut the work being put in to changing the state of Germany’s (and Europe’s) higher education system.

The issues that could be addressed in connection with the Bologna Process reach far beyond those discussed in this thesis. These issues will also be important to address when

assessing the future of European educational reforms. For example, reconciling the goal of harmonization with individual, state-based forms of accreditation, like the German *Staatsexamen* is a huge issue that has only recently received attention from those in power. In addition, the practical economic implications of the reform (i.e. the source of funding for higher education) have created a great deal of controversy because of the drastic way they might change the financial structure of higher education in member nations.

German citizens have been particularly vocal about this budgetary change. Going from a system in which higher education was paid for almost completely by government funding to one in which students pay tuition and universities compete for outside funding is a huge change that uproots centuries of *Länder*-based financing. Supporters of a more autonomous financial model point to America as an example; here, public university budgets have increased as a result of mixed financing and universities have gained more freedom of action, since no single funding source dictates the universities' choices (Ash, 2006). Those against a structural change believe that the roughly three-quarters of university budgets that come from the State allow all German universities a level playing field (Ash, 2008). Obviously, with its emphasis on competitiveness, the Bologna Process threatens this tradition.

Finally, larger theoretical issues could be discussed in connection to the goals of the Bologna Process. Chapter Three touched upon the difficulty of pinpointing a particularly "European" culture, and issues of nationalism versus pan-Europeanism could be pondered in connection with this dilemma. Particularly important in relation to this debate is the usage of English terms to define European education (i.e. Bachelor, Master, credits). Language is an important part of a nation's identity, and many fear that this anglicization of European higher education may lead it to become a cheap imitation of an American or English university system.

Despite the common terminology, vast structural differences exist between American and European Bachelor degrees. This leads some to fear that these dissimilarities will never allow European degrees to actually be competitive with those from North America or other global competitors. However, "...as economists well know, 'competitiveness' can also be achieved by offering different – and better – programmes [sic] instead of duplicating those offered by competitors" (Ash, 2006). The 2009 meeting of the Bologna Ministerial Conference will present a great opportunity for further discussion of crafting a uniquely European identity, as representatives from outside Europe will be present at a Bologna Policy Forum, encouraging global dialogue and helping those leading Europe think about and craft a unique identity (Ministerial Conference, n.d.).

Though these and other issues are pertinent to any discussion of higher education in Europe, it would be extremely helpful if the 46 European educational ministers meeting in Leuven on April 28th and 29th, 2009 would first discuss the most over-arching question of all: the purpose of higher education and thus the purpose of the reforms themselves. This would set them up well for the transition past 2010 into the next decade of European educational reforms. Students and faculty alike will appreciate careful progression past the current point. Perhaps, once the European Higher Education Area becomes a tangible entity, instructors like Frau Henze at *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität* will not have to deal with the headache of juggling students' varying needs and half-instituted public policies, and be able to focus squarely on teaching and research. Until that time, the responsibility rests on policymakers to ensure that they are not shortchanging students in an attempt to help them.

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