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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS IN REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

PRIMJENA BOLONJSKOG PROCESA U REPUBLICI HRVATSKOJ

ABSTRACT

Reform of higher education system in Croatia is almost a permanent state in the past thirty years. Whole time, there wasn't longer period in which higher education system could stabilize and develop on the basis of some generally accepted principles, with occasional corrections, adjustments and necessary modernization. Based on the fundamental principles and objectives of the Bologna Declaration, the Republic of Croatia went through restructuring and adaptation of high education system in the last decade. The implementation of Bologna process has resulted in a number of positive and negative consequences. The aim is to show the importance of the education system and the relationship between the economy and education through an analysis of the introduction of the Bologna Process in Republic of Croatia.

Key words: Bologna process, higher education, educational institutions, development

SAŽETAK

Reforma sustava visokog obrazovanja u Republici Hrvatskoj gotovo da je trajno stanje u posljednjih tridesetak godina. Za cijelo to vrijeme nije bilo dužega razdoblja u kojem bi se sustav visokog obrazovanja mogao stabilizirati i razvijati na temelju nekih općeprihvaćenih načela, uz povremene korekcije, prilagodbe i modernizacije nužne svakom, pa i najstabilnijem sustavu visokog obrazovanja. Temeljeći se na osnovnim načelima i ciljevima Bolonjske deklaracije, Republika Hrvatska je u posljednjem desetljeću krenula putem restrukturiranja i prilagođavanja sustava visokog obrazovanja. Primjena Bolonjskog procesa rezultirala je kako pozitivnim tako i negativnim posljedicama. Cilj rada je ukazati na važnost obrazovnog sustava i međusobnu povezanost gospodarstva i obrazovanja kroz analizu uvođenja Bolonjskog procesa u Republici Hrvatskoj.

Ključne riječi: Bolonjski proces, visoko obrazovanje, obrazovne institucije, razvoj

1. Introduction

Foundations of European Union rest on common constitution, various community policies, budget, etc. If we want to have all the common parts harmonized and balanced, it is necessary that the accomplishment of previous goals is based on the unique and common education

system that will be in function of common goal. Precisely the last facts became the foundation for creating a European Higher Education Area - EHEA.

To achieve the goals which are equal and harmonized for all EU members should be based on the reform of the educational system. Reform of the educational system is a demanding and complex project. This project is popularly called the Bologna process. The beginning of the Bologna process does not reach far back into the past. First time the idea of creating a European area of higher education is mentioned in the Charter of European universities (called Magna charta universitatum), which was signed in 1888th in Bologna. Although creating a unified the educational environment is not so old it is extremely dynamic and is constantly adjusted and updated. The European Union is the engine that launches the Bologna process. The main goal of the Bologna process is raising quality of national educational system through mutually comparable and measurable system.

As challenges to realization of the Bologna process there is a need which aims to protect the wealth and diversity of European cultures. Besides the cultural dimension attention should be paid also to the social dimension of Bologna Process.

Exactly the social dimension states and emphasizes the importance of the presence of social aspects in the entire reform, and also adjustments of certain national education systems (Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003rd and Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005).

The importance of the social dimension, which is defined in the most important documents of the Bologna Process, lies primarily in pointing to the problems with financial burdening of students (Puzic Doolan, Dolenc, 2006., 243). We may say that the challenges of the Bologna process are to ensure:

1. Clearly readable and comparable degrees of knowledge system (Diploma Supplement)
2. System of higher education based on two cycles, undergraduate and graduate
3. European Credit Transfer System ECTS
4. Mobility
5. EU cooperation and quality assurance,
6. EU dimension of higher education
7. Lifelong learning,
8. High education and students
9. Promoting the benefits of the European higher education area.

2. Chronology of the Bologna Process in brief

The fundamental document which has started the renovation of the higher education system was Sorbonne declaration (1998.). Signatories of the Sorbonne declaration were France, Italy, United Kingdom and Germany. The next declaration was signed in Bologna officially titled EHEA (European Higher Education Area) and popularly is called Bologna Declaration. The fundamental principles the Bologna Declaration are:

1. The university is an autonomous institution in the heart of society differently organized due to geographical and historical heritage; it produces, examines, evaluates and transmits culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authorities and intellectually independent of all political authorities and economic powers.
2. Teaching and research in universities has to be inseparable in order to follow changing needs and demands of society, and scientific progress.

3. Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities-as much as in their powers- must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement. Rejecting intolerance and being always open to dialogue, the university is an ideal meeting-ground for teachers capable of imparting their knowledge and develop it further by research and innovations, and students entitled,able and willing to enrich their minds with that knowledge.
4. A university is guardian of European humanistic tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; and to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need of different cultures to explore and to influence each other (Magna Charta Universitatum).

Since signing the Bologna Declaration 1999th by 29 countries, the number of members has grown day by day. Today, the total number of signatories and users of Bologna declaration is 48 countries. As shown in table 1; since the signing of the Bologna Declaration, members are in continuous increasing. By joining Russia as member of the club, the European higher education area expands from Atlantic to Pacific Ocean. Processes of creating boundaries have two aspects; «geographical» and «membership aspect».

Geographical boundaries are generally fixed until the issue of European borders was and still is an open question for discussion. Membership in the European area of higher education – EHEA, means acceptance of collectively defined regulations, principles or standards, even if members of EHEA were not involved in their creation. Since signing the Bologna Declaration, Ministerial Conferences are continuously being held. At the conferences the main subject is continually development monitoring of particular national legislations, adjustments and progress in reforms, governing reporting and upgrades done so far, accessing new members in the process, make joint decisions, and regulate matters of common goals.

Table 1 Chronology of the Bologna Process

Coference	Number	Growth	States
1998 Sorbona	04		Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy
1999 Bologna	29	+ 25	Belgium (Flemish Community and, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Litva, Latvia, Luxemborg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Slovenia, Spain, Czech Republic, Hungary
2001 Prag	33	+ 04	Croatia, Liechtenstein, Turkey, Cyprus
2003 Berlin	42	+ 09	Albania, Andorra, BiH, Vatikan, Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Montenegro, Council of Europe (counseling member)
2005 Bergen	47	+ 05	Armenia, Azerbaikan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine
Budapest/Vienna, March 2010	48	+ 1	Kazakhstan

Source: Author's view

Criteria for membership and non-membership are the essential element of the entire project organization and processes were changed several times. For Sorbonne declaration and preparation for Bologna conference there were the two groups of countries: EU member and EU candidate countries, and Members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The overall number of signatories Bologna Declaration, based on these criteria, was 29.

The following conferences have been held so far:

1. Prag, May 2001
2. Berlin, September 2003
3. Bergen, May 2005
4. London, May 2007
5. Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, April 2009
6. Budapest-Vienna, March 2010
7. Bucharest, April 2012

Based on these criteria, the number of signatories of the Bologna Declaration was 29. The Prague conference has been expanded the criteria for membership. Full memberships have countries that have met the criteria for programs: Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, TEMPUS-CARDS. Next stage refers to the reception of the Council of Europe as an advisory member of the follow-up group in Berlin 2003. In Bergen, the country accepted successor States of Soviet Union, members of the TEMPUS-TACIS program: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Today, the total number of members who participate and apply Bologna is forty eight. Bologna project is associated with membership of European countries. It spreads to the east and the tendency is spreading all over the world. In 2003, The Council of Europe's suggested accession to the southern coast of the Mediterranean and North African countries.

3. The Republic of Croatia and the Bologna Process

The Republic of Croatia has signed the Bologna Declaration at the Ministerial Conference in Prague, in year 2001. All university studies are harmonized in accordance to the rules of the Bologna Declaration in the academic year 2005/2006. The signing of the Bologna Declaration and upcoming accession Croatian accession to European Union, have set great challenges to the Croatian higher education system. Based on the fundamental principles and objectives of the Bologna Declaration, the Republic of Croatia went through restructuring and adaptation of high education system in the last decade. The reform process resulted in new European educational framework suitable for achieving European educational standards through the acceptance of cycles based study at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels, with introduction of the ECTS scoring system and supplementary Study Documents, the introduction of a new system of internationally recognized diplomas, the application of quality assurance, development of national qualifications frameworks compatible with the adopted qualification framework for the European higher Education Area, improvement and program innovations, and also promoting the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff as well as the promotion of lifelong learning system.

Table 2 Graduates from professional and university study (ISCED 5)

	Total			
	2008.	2009.	2010.	2011.
Higher education institutions	25573	30156	32378	36448
University of Applied Sciences	3447	3226	3310	4558
Schools of professional higher education	1371	1937	1768	2146
Universities	20389	24527	26662	29089

	Total			
	2008.	2009.	2010.	2011.
Professional study	5429	4742	4621	4449
University study	14960	19785	22041	24640
Art academies	366	466	638	695

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Republic of Croatia 2012, p.479*

Table 2. represents data about students who graduated at the professional and university studies in the period 2008 -2011 year. It's evident that the number of students who have graduated is constantly increasing in all studies except professional degree study. In comparison to year 2008 year and 2011 the number of graduates has increased by 42.53% at universities, number of graduates on University of Applied Sciences has increased by 32.23%, 56.53% on Universities, in colleges has increased by 42.67% and 64.71% on university studies. The largest percentage increase is recorded at graduates of art academies for 89.99%, while the decrease in numbers of those who graduated at the professional programs comparing the year 2008 and 2011 amounts 18.05%. We could say that the average increase for all studies was 51.75% total, therefore the number of students who graduated in observed period increased by more than 50%. Reasons for increasing number of graduates should seek in increasing enrollment of students, increased number of academic programs, opening of of new universities (colleges), as well as requirement of the Bologna process in general. In the Republic of of Croatia there 10 universities, 3 of them are private and 7 are public universities (Osijek, Zagreb, Pula, Rijeka, Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik).

Table 3 Ratio of university and professional study programmes

Professional programmes by type/level	Number
Professional programme shorter than 3 years	11
Three-year or longer professional programme	164
Specialist graduate professional programme	44
University courses by type/level	Number
Undergraduate university programme	351
Integrated graduate and undergraduate university programme	45
Graduate university programme	368
Postgraduate specialist programme	174
Postgraduate university (doctoral) study programme	102

Source: <http://www.azvo.hr/index.php/hr/statistike/odnos-sveucilisnih-i-strucnih-studija> (26-03-2013)

Croatian high education, as well as its continued adjustments and improvements, has to become a priority for long-term development strategies and whole process for finding

educational excellence. It is worth to note that adjustment to requirements of the Bologna process is basic requirement of international competitiveness and successful participation in European Higher Education Area. From the academic year 2005/2006, all university studies are aligned with requirements of the Bologna Declaration.

4. The debate on Bologna Process in Croatia

Reform of higher education system in Croatia is almost a permanent state in the past thirty years. Whole time, there wasn't longer period in which higher education system could stabilize and develop on the basis of some generally accepted principles, with occasional corrections, adjustments and necessary modernization. Instead, the system of higher education in Croatia has been changed with radical moves, often strongly influenced by politics, and these changes were never preceded by any systematic analysis or and precise study or proposed models on smaller parts of the system, or any projections of possible long-term effects of certain reform actions (Havelka, 2003., 31). Also, we should point out the importance of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports as an umbrella institution which basically manages, defines and manages the application of the Bologna requirements. It takes a continuous cooperation of educational institutions (universities, colleges) with the Ministry. This cooperation is necessary to promote and expand through the use of existing consensus in achieving the defined vision and education strategy. Furthermore, it's essential to continue working on the harmonization of existing programs, and to develop new joint study programs in order to create a new common vision and strategy. The existing education system that is supply driven, should be modify in the demand driven system, i.e. educational programs should be harmonized with the current requirements that determines on the market. Therefore, redesigned educational plans and programs should be more associated with needs of the economy. Current state of centralization of financial resources must be seriously considered and through the new curriculum development at the Universities should bring certain measures of decentralization towards decision making on the lower levels. Of great importance would be improvement of dialogue and cooperation between universities and the private sector. General awareness of some participants involved in the education system is not at desirable level. Awareness about university council's work and activities is poor: 52% are familiar with their work and conclusions, and 44% isn't. It is apparent that information system at universities is not good when half of employees are not familiar with the work. Being informed is quite important for a sense of community involvement at the level of each employee (Kristof, Pisk, Radek, 2011., 30). Programs that relate to the acquisition of competencies for teachers of preschool and school age should significantly contribute to raise of awareness about importance of education in early childhood. Also, the general awareness of the importance of previously mentioned should be more significant. Although it have passed nearly ten years since the introduction of Bologna process, it has to be stated that there are no significant studies that would provide exact indications of quality and effect of Bologna implementation on lifelong education as well as the labor market in general. Accordingly, it's necessary to continue working on pointing out the importance of educational comprehensive system through the application of Bologna ideas. The current research results indicate a great potential of Croatian universities, but also throw light on the structural problems that Croatian universities are facing with. Among most significant problems are absence of a clear and identifiable mission and policies, poor high school preparation, disintegration of four major universities (thus inhibiting of their quality work), lack of funding and work equipment, lack of concern for hiring assistants and non-teaching staff, lack of interest and motivation of students, unequal presence of all stakeholders in university authorities, insufficient information on the work of key university bodies, undeveloped international collaboration and neglected science (Kristof, Pisk, Radek, 2011., 34). Also, the available data on the mobility of students, teaching and non-teaching staff at Croatian

universities shows that it did not even occurred. In this way the potential of synergy effect on the level of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) wasn't realized.

5. Conclusion

In modern society, the knowledge society, education is the key factor of development and positive change. Bologna project is in its structure complex "hybrid" that is made up of various elements. This further confirms previous requirement for need to align reforms implemented at the national levels. The implementation has resulted in a number of positive and negative consequences. On the positive side are equal opportunities for all participants in Bologna reform, openness to the outside, a larger percentage of higher education. As negative consequences of Bologna process occur: increase in administrative obligations, incompatibility of curricula, and generally insufficient use of opportunities that are provided as goals of Bologna process. Republic of Croatia is a full member and a signatory of Bologna Declaration since year 2001. As 28th member of European Union, Croatia has an opportunity to build up and gain better position in the European higher education area.

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