

Marina Stock McIsaac
ICEM President
mmcisaac@asu.edu

GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BOLOGNA ACCORD: THE INTEGRATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE

1. Honored Agriamedia Hosts, Members of Eszterházy Károly College, ICEM Members, Friends and Guests! As President of ICEM it is a great pleasure for me to address you at this opening plenary session. We in ICEM are closely involved with educational initiatives around the world.

2. As an affiliate of UNESCO, our members are on working committees to support EFA (Education for all), to promote high levels of literacy, and to promote the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) for curriculum development and teacher training around the world.

This year, we are fortunate to have our Hungarian members of ICEM as our Congress hosts. Hungary joins other European countries in facing issues of integration that affect not only the political, economic and social climate of the country, but also impacts its educational system.

3. Together we face many educational challenges, not only new members like Hungary, but other European members as well. How do we provide educational opportunities that prepare all citizens for employment? How do we offer equal educational opportunities throughout Europe, that is how do we harmonize our educational efforts? Can we collaborate to make this effort work? Can we work together to prepare our students for the challenges of the 21st century?

This topic, the implications of the Bologna Accord, is a particularly significant one to this ICEM Congress held here in Hungary, a recent addition to the European Community.

4. We are meeting here in this venerable educational institution, Eszterházy Károly College, hosted by a college that has a long and distinguished history of preparing students and teachers. The college serves over 10,000 national and international students through 25 programs in humanities and sciences. In this rapidly shrinking world, how can we join together to prepare students for the future?

5. Globalization is causing a great upheaval in social, political and economic sectors. We are witnessing a growth in population migration, an explosion of communication technologies and rapidly changing job markets. What does that mean for us as educators?

6. It means that we must anticipate and prepare for the future. We must find ways to increase employability of citizens, allow for mobility across borders, and prepare for a shortage of skills in key areas while recognizing the reduction in jobs in other areas. In short, we must be flexible and make changes to our educational systems. The Bologna Process challenges us to do just that. What is the Bologna Process, and how does it affect us as ICEM members?

The Bologna Process

In 1999 a group of representatives from 29 European countries met to address common problems. Their goals were to create a European system of higher education that would enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European Higher Education.

7. The ideology behind this initiative was to provide the four objectives of mobility, employability, competitiveness, and attractiveness to anyone who wants a higher education in Europe, regardless of where they want to study.

8. To accomplish this certain actions were decided upon.

1. university grades and **qualifications that are comparable** and transparent
2. A **three cycle system**; Bachelors degree, Master's Degree and Doctorate.
3. A system of accumulation and transfer **of credits similar to ECTS**
4. **Mobility** of teachers, students and researchers;
5. **Quality assurance** of programs;
6. Common **European dimension** to higher education

A year later, in 2000, the Lisbon Council addressed the increasing impact being felt by globalization, the challenges posed by new economic demands and the rise in knowledge-based economies.

9. They set a new objective for the coming 10 years to make Europe, by the year 2010, 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”. With the current 45 national signatories all with different languages, cultures and educational traditions, this is a tall order, indeed.

What are the promises of the Bologna Accord? Where are the problems? And what is the potential for success, to harmonize the higher educational systems of the 45 member signatories of the Bologna Accord so that Europe can indeed be the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world?

10. PROMISES

These are exciting times for educators. We are seeing the winds of change ripple through our institutions with words like knowledge-based economies, education for all, lifelong learning opportunities, transferable programs, options for mobility, and new job opportunities.

The Bologna Declaration recognizes these new directions and developments. In spite of their differences, European higher education systems are facing common internal and external challenges related to the growth and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, the shortage of skills in key areas, and the expansion of private and transnational education.

11. The formation of a high quality EHEA will offer compatible systems and common action. Social, economic and cultural benefits will result from a unified, transparent, and high quality European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It will provide students with degrees that will be worth something on the international market from schools accredited by a major international agency. This increased competition for students will create more high-quality schools whose strength will shine forth and attract students from throughout Europe and the world. Universities will prepare students for knowledge-based economies, offer them programs that are transferable, give them options for mobility, and give them opportunities for lifelong learning to retrain for new jobs as the market changes.

12. These are lofty goals, indeed. At the Bergen meeting in May 2005, European Ministers met to review the progress of Bologna, and to set new goals for 2010. At that meeting they called on all members to intensify their efforts to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and encouraged the inclusion of innovative teaching and new learning processes. They noted that substantial progress had been made and they recognized the need for sustainable funding of institutions to meet the objectives of Bologna by 2010. Despite the substantial progress thus far, there remain some significant problems. What are those problems?

13. PROBLEMS

There are many problems in implementing such an ambitious program across 45 different educational models, languages, cultures and traditions. In some countries the implementation of the process is relatively painless. In others, it faces huge transitions and economic turmoil. I will highlight just a few of the problems that seem of common concern.

These problems can be grouped into 4 areas; Student concerns, teacher concerns, Institutional concerns, and Government concerns.

14. **Student concerns.** Student demonstrations in many countries have highlighted student concerns. Many will lose a year of schooling in the transition. Others will only have 3 years of supported education when the new law calls for five. Government grants will not support all going on for a Masters Degree. Another concern deals with those who have been denied access to higher education. How will previously underserved minority groups get access to the system? Will affirmative action and other assistance programs be targeted to previously underrepresented groups, to encourage the diversification of the faculties and student bodies of universities? How will people who have been out of the educational system and want to return to retrain be accommodated in their quest for lifelong learning and retraining for jobs?

15. Here are some comments:

“The new Bologna process will cost me more money because the government is not subsidizing Master’s Degrees. At the same time, the 3 year degree program seems useless as only 3 years will not prepare me to get a job in the same way that the previous 5 year degree did. Tuition is currently subsidized for undergraduate degrees. New criteria will be a Master’s Degree to teach. There will be no jobs available with the Bachelor’s. How will I afford the Master’s Program required to get a job?”

16. Teacher concerns, Many teachers in the workforce are already facing massive layoffs in countries of low population growth. The social ramifications of teachers with experience and 5 years of undergraduate training being replaced by recent graduates with no experience, 3 years of license and 2 years of Masters Degree is destabilizing the profession.. How will graduates of the old programs without a Master Degree compete with the new graduates with a Master’s? How will they retain their jobs? What type of inservice training will be available for these teachers?

17. Educational institution concerns. How can the previous 5 years of teacher training, which included intensive on the spot training under experienced teachers in school settings be replaced by only 3 years of such training with an additional 2 years of Master Degree courses and thesis? What kind of retooling is needed in Departments of Education to handle the inservice training needs of existing teachers in reaching the Master’s Level? What reorganization of university teaching departments needs to take place to accommodate the change from 5 year teaching diploma to 3 plus 2 for the Master’s degree? Less teaching means that faculty positions will be threatened.

18. Government concerns. When economies are troubled, social programmes are being cut, teachers are being laid off, how will the government finance these changes? How will it find jobs for its graduates? Within countries where the higher education system is not uniform, how will uniform standards be adopted without causing social and economic upheaval?

Despite these problems and challenges, Bologna offers a potential solution to make the European educational system attractive globally and provide the opportunity for members to establish themselves as leaders in education by attracting the best students and teachers from around the world. What is the potential of Bologna to develop high quality and competitive programs to educate today’s and tomorrow’s workforce?

19. TOWARD RESOURCE SHARING

The effects that globalization are having on education are dramatic. Developments in technology and communication are influencing educators and learning systems around the world. The success of the Bologna Process depends on the willingness of each country to join in the effort. We, as members of ICEM, are closely involved in these changes. As the roles of teachers and students change, as students

increasingly become independent and lifelong learners, educators and media producers will also shift from an industrialized model to an information based model of networked resource sharing. The most significant development in resource sharing in e-learning today is the movement toward freely available, shared resources. This, too, will influence the outcomes of the Bologna Process.

The initiative to provide free and universally available digital information for education came about as a solution to the problem of inaccessibility of educational materials for much of the world's population.

20. Accessible Educational Materials

This revolutionary concept was pioneered in 2001 by MIT through its Open Courseware (OCW) Initiative an effort to make all the materials used in their courses freely available via the internet for any non-commercial research use. In effect, it put digital books on the library shelves, available for free.

In 2002, UNESCO recognized the importance of the Open Courseware Movement and, with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, coined the term Open Education Resources (OER).

And two weeks ago, The British Open University launched its new program, Open Learn, aimed at broadening access to education by making educational resources freely available on the internet.

21 Open CourseWare

was developed by MIT and is "...a free and open educational resource (OER) for educators, students, and self-learners around the world. It is true to MIT's values of excellence, innovation, and leadership"

22. Open Educational Resources

refers to "digitized materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and re-use for teaching, learning and research."

The hope of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation that funds this initiative, is that this concept of open resource will mobilize the entire worldwide community of educators. The Open Educational Resources Initiative seeks to use information technology to help equalize access to knowledge and educational opportunities. The initiative targets educators, students and self-learners worldwide.

At the heart of the movement toward Open Educational Resources is the simple and powerful idea that the world's knowledge is a public good and that technology in general and the Worldwide Web in particular provide an extraordinary opportunity for everyone to share, use, and reuse knowledge.

23 Open Learn

is the initiative launched just two weeks ago by the Open University of the UK.

"The OpenLearn website will make educational resources freely available on the internet, with state of the art learning support and collaboration tools to connect learners and educators." (The Open University, 25 October 2006)

24. Open Source, Open Course Ware and Open Education Resources are growing movements that can have a positive effect on the lifelong learning initiative of the Bologna Process. The opportunity for everyone to have access to knowledge through free or inexpensive means will help the independent learner. This is, indeed, what is needed to promote the European Union's commitment to develop a knowledge-based economy and provide opportunities for all members of the European Union to achieve the goals of mobility, employability, competitiveness, and attractiveness to employers. Education is constantly changing because of the increase of globalization. Our young people are global citizens and they need the skills and knowledge to be able to compete in an information-based society.

25. Conclusion

The internationalization of education brought about by the Bologna process can provide wider knowledge-base, and skilled workers with a greater understanding of the cultures around them. It can provide them with a better chance for employment, better mobility, and better lifestyle for themselves and their children. But to accomplish this we need to look at the promises, address the problems, and set priorities. This is the challenge for us as educators. This is the challenge for us in ICEM.