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The Bologna Process: implications for citizenship teacher education community-service learning projects

Maria Luísa Freitas
Institute of Child Studies, University of Minho (Portugal)

The Bologna Process's main features are well known by all in higher education institutions: easily readable and comparable degrees, a system based on two main cycles, a system of credits such as the ECTS system, the promotion of mobility, European co-operation in quality assurance and a European dimension in higher education. This paper tries to make clear one of the diverse means to reach these goals.

The Bologna Process, and specifically the Bologna Declaration, had its roots in *The Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988 signed by European University Rectors. Each one of its four principle points to something important for citizenship as, for example: autonomy, societal demands, freedom, tolerance, dialogue, European humanism, and communication among different cultures.

Search for support in the most important documents of the Bologna Process

From the *Sorbonne Declaration* of 25th of May 1998, we stress the suggestion that 'undergraduates should have access to a diversity of programmes, including opportunities for multidisciplinary studies, development of proficiency in languages and the ability to use new information technologies' (p 1). The main point to stress from the Bologna Declaration of 19th June 1999 is related to the promotion of 'European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.' (p 3). The universities meeting at Salamanca, before the Prague meeting of Ministers responsible for higher education, produced a document with more specific educational orientations. Thesis 3 explains the meaning of employability in a university context:

- a well developed imagination;

- the ability to approach and to solve a problem systematically and methodically applying substantial knowledge;

- to lead social processes (p 3).

At the Prague meeting the six objectives of the Bologna Declaration were stressed and the Ministers also emphasised three more points, two of them related to this paper's purposes. In relation to lifelong learning strategies they declared the necessity to 'improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life' (p 2). The other point concerns students 'as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and of European Higher Education Area' (*Prague Declaration*, 2001, p 2-3). What caught our attention in the *Berlin Communiqué* of the Conference on 19th September 2003 was the way 'the necessity of ensuring a substantial period of study abroad in joint degree programmes as well as proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning' is justified, to achieve students' 'full potential for European identity , citizenship and employability' (p 6). Other documents refer to citizenship, but this one refers also to European identity. European identity is not something that someone has a right to have; it is a construction that universities can help to build up.

Understandably the documents we have referred approach the subject in a generalist way. Documents from the European Union relating to the Bologna Process are more explicit to areas of interest to this study: these include *On the concrete future objectives of education and training Systems* (2001) from the European Council (a report from the Education Council to European Council following the Lisbon meeting) and *Investing efficiently in education and training: an imperative for Europe* (2002) and *The role of universities in the Europe of knowledge* (2003) from the Commission of the European Communities.

The first document suggests that not only economic aspects should be considered. An important role of education, the promotion of the humanistic values shared by European societies, should also be emphasised, specifically 'the development of society, in particular by fostering democracy, reducing the disparities and inequities among individuals and groups and promoting cultural diversity' (p 4). The important role education plays in promoting equal opportunities and cohesion is also referred to. This is one of the documents that approach citizenship in depth.

> Part of the learning process is promotion of citizenship. The focus of active citizenship is on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life, the chances and risks they face in trying to do so, and the extent to which they therefore feel that they belong to and have a fair to say in the society in which they live. The promotion of citizenship and employability are to be seen as complementary. (p 13)

Both need adequate knowledge and skills that would also be learned in non-formal learning contexts. Education would contribute to a desired society where racism, intolerance and discrimination are not accepted. The participation of the various stakeholders is also encouraged.

The central role of citizenship in the Bologna Process is stressed in a PowerPoint document produced by the Portuguese Ministry of Science and Higher Education in 2004. Most of the conclusions were presented under the heading 'A vision of citizenship' and include statements such as: 'To promote the importance of the connection of citizens' formation and citizenship and democracy reinforcement, valuing principles such as multiculturalism, diversity, liberty and peace' (p 41).

Also important is what is said about curricular reform in *Investing efficiently in education and training: an imperative for Europe*:

> The most fundamental need for reform in education and training with respect to the emergence of the knowledge society concerns curricular renovation in general education, vocational education and training, higher education and adult education – in other words throughout the whole spectrum of lifelong learning. Such renovation needs to reflect the priority given to basic skills; the diversification of learning pathways and methods to suit various types of learners; the effective use of ICT in teaching and learning …
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> (European Commission, 2003, p 21-22).

The inclusion of a European dimension in every course is also a feature of that reform. The curricular reform is considered crucial: if this reform were postponed, funding to education and training would become unproductive.

Something similar is stressed in a report from the Portuguese National Council of Education *The Bologna Declaration and the Higher Education System of Degrees*:

> The pedagogical dimension is absolutely central to the Bologna Process. Of course, both the formations relevance and the adoption of ECTS, imply a previous clear definition of knowing (knowledge, competencies and attitudes) the individuals would acquire and favour active, cooperative and participative learning methodologies, putting away the magisterial teaching and the direct knowledge transmission. Therefore this implicates a pedagogical reorientation more than a pedagogical reorganization. Summing up, the ECTS system presupposes another curriculum concept, which is not just an ordered collection of subject matters to be learnt but something that instigates a new look towards learning and, consequently, the role of teaching and learning methodologies (2002, p 4).

The last document analysed, *The role of universities in the Europe of knowledge*, emphasises some issues already mentioned, but we stress one of the three 'needs' or conditions for consolidating excellence in European universities – the need to develop interdisciplinary capability. The strategy suggested to do that is through the use of ICT. Individuals from different university departments should work together, exchanging knowledge and producing "'cross-border' work as contributing to faculty wide-objectives" (2003, p 16). This topic concludes by questioning the steps needed to promote interdisciplinary work and who should take them.

Community-service learning: an adequate methodology to the Bologna Process implementation

Rhoads (1998) distinguishes community service from service learning which 'includes student participation in community service but with additional learning objectives associated with a student's program of study' (p 279). Service leaning would be integrated in a specific course or in an interdisciplinary area. It is also suitable for develop multidisciplinary work connecting several courses. We follow Wade and Saxe (1996) who use the expression 'community-service learning'. The definition they selected, the definition proposed by the *Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform* (1993) is a very clear and complete one, and is as follows:

> Service learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully-organized service experiences: that meet actual community needs, that are coordinates in collaboration with the school and the community, that are integrated into ach young person's academic curriculum , that provide structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity, that provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities, that enhance what is taught in the school by extending students learning beyond the classroom, and that help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others (p 333).

The roots of community-service learning go back to William James and John Dewey, but in higher education public universities adopted community-service learning only during the last two or three decades. In the discussion of universities' roles, it was evident that preparing for a career was not enough in our society; today is not possible to prepare for

a career without developing citizenship. Sax and Astin (1997) concluded that colleges and universities 'increasingly promote service learning and volunteerism as vehicles for citizenship development' (p222). We will follow closely Austin and Sax (1998) to show that the characteristics of service learning presented in the definition selected are more than good intentions. Austin and Sax's report is a substantial evaluation of the Corporation for National Service's 'Learn and Serve America Higher Education' (LSAHE) program, carried out by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the RAND Corporation. It included 42 institutions with federally funded community service programs, and more then 100 programmes developed at universities spread through the USA. The research, a very well designed and developed one, measured change in three domains of student's development: civic responsibility, academic development, and life skills. All student outcomes measured were favourably influenced by the four types of service: in education, human needs, public safety, and the environment.

All twelve Civic Responsibility outcomes were positively influenced by service participation but seven of them, which were pre-tested when the students entered college, would be the strongest evidence for positive effects. Promoting racial understanding, participating in community action programmes and influencing social values were those which registered the greatest change in participants pre-test and post-test. The last item is very significant because no participants in community-service learning diminished their commitment to it after entering college. Service learning participation also contributed to less of a predisposition to feel that individuals have little power to change society.

Academic development would be considered less important than the other two domains of students' development, but is very significant because the opponents of service learning and volunteerism in undergraduate courses usually argue that students consume energy and time that is necessary for academic activities. All the ten academic outcomes showed positive effects for service learning, as for example in general knowledge and the knowledge of a field or discipline. Some types of service enhance student's grade point average. However these positive effects were generally smaller than in civic and life skills outcomes. Significant effects were also noted in two other academic outcomes, interaction with faculty, and time spent in study at home.

The thirteen life skills measures were significant in all four types of service participation. This was coherent with the rationale presented by advocates of volunteerism, which believes that volunteerism enhances students' awareness and understanding of the world, not only the world around them but also the nation's social problems. The most significant effects were on understanding community problems, knowledge and acceptance of different races and cultures, and interpersonal skills. Equally significant were the ability to work cooperatively, resolve conflicts, think critically, show leadership abilities and social self-confidence. It is also important to stress that service learning contributes to students' satisfaction in relation to the relevance of their course work to everyday life and preparation for future career.

How should service learning be implemented? Bringle and Hatcher (1996) developed a model, entitled *Action Plan for Service Learning*, for implementing and institutionalising service learning in higher education. It was a result of their examination of varied service learning programs and discussions with specialists. The model considers service learning as a cycle including awareness, planning, prototype, support, expansion and evaluation.

They also considered that from the beginning four constituencies would be involved: institution, faculty, students and community. They presented several examples of activities for each one of the entries summarised in two entries tables, which include the four constituencies, the cycle features listed above plus some others: resources, expansion, recognition, monitoring, research and institutionalisation. This model with the required adaptations acts as a guide for those introducing service learning in specific courses or in non-disciplinary areas. It is used as a guideline to the following experience that we are planning in the Institute of Child Studies in Braga.

The Community-service learning project – a brief description

The project is called: 'European Dimension in Higher Education – Community-Service Learning and Interdisciplinary Learning'.

The project was presented by the Early and Primary Education Degrees Council to the University of Minho Rector within a strategic funding program for 'Quality in Teaching, News Methodologies Regarding the Implementation of the Bologna Process'. We had already planned to develop a community-service learning project in the Institute of Child Studies, and we had made initial contacts with the faculty, department and services coordinators. It was running slowly when the opportunity to develop a partnership with a museum during a study visit arose. Therefore one of the Museum directors was at the birth of the project, and now two other museums are involved, and eventually a further one will join us.

The four constituencies are: community institutions (museums), the institution (Institute of Child Studies through the Students and Teaching Council, Course Directors and Commissions and Department coordinators and the President of the Institute); faculty (Disciplinary Areas coordinators) and students (delegates from each year of the two courses).

The general planning was developed by institutional elements with suggestions from the museums' directors, faculty and students. Everyone had a copy of the project and at the end of May 2005 a meeting will define the final version. The coordinator of the project for each course will meet museum staff in June and July. Some meetings will also include students' delegates. The project will be implemented, but it may have to have some adaptations according to the funding provided. At the beginning of October there will be a Conference on generic ideas on the Bologna Process for everyone at the Institute of Child Studies, and a panel about the challenges on methodologies presented by the Bologna Process to faculty and students.

The main idea is to have students from the early education degree (mainly from the 'Knowing the Social World' course) and from the primary education degree (largely from the 'Workshop on Social Environment' course, the last social science course of the curricular study plan), developing work at the three museums. Museum staff and faculty staff will support students, working in small groups to develop proposals to explore the museums, including their gardens as an archaeological campus for students from kindergartens and primary schools. To explore the museums we will need more than social sciences faculty support and museum staff. It will be helpful to have advice from varied areas of faculty such as music, mathematics, natural sciences, Portuguese language, community education, ICT, etc. Several professors have already declared their interest and availability to participate. The interdisciplinary support is a point stressed by

the museums directors. This approach converges and complements other interdisciplinary projects.

Some students' proposals will be implemented with kindergarten and primary children, the most creative and well-developed of which will be published in a booklet in the Portuguese, English, French and Spanish languages. We hope that the proposals will have the minimum quality to be translated in English, and posted on the Internet, at the Museums sites and at the Institute of Child Studies. Faculty and staff from several European universities and museums will receive e-mails introducing these Internet pages. Our former Erasmus students will receive similar e-mails, and the brochure will be sent to some European museums and universities.

As part of the course requirements, students will organise exhibitions or other activities in the museums where they worked and a seminar in the Institute of Child Studies. Course Directors will monitor the project and be part of the internal evaluation team together the practicum coordinator of each degree and an element from each museum. The external team will be small, one or two elements from university and museum contexts. How the project will continue depends on University of Minho funding, other new funding we are seeking, and the results of the evaluation of this prototype project. The first reformulation will be in February 2006.

A final remark

In spite of the brief project description it seems to us that the routes followed to arrive at the project plan are evident. It was developed having in mind the ideas presented in the first point about the renewal of methodologies implied by the Bologna process and not simple reorganisation. Without forgetting the most widespread suggestions, as for example learning diverse languages and the use of ICT, we are trying to put in practice something more considering the development of citizenship. For that we adapted the service learning methodology. We hope for very good news next year.

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