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## **BOLOGNA BACHELOR BUSINESS**

### **The Bologna Bachelor Construction as a Means to Create the University of Business**

#### **1. General Background**

The transition of the Twentieth century to the Twenty-first was not only a turn of the years but also that of the traditional paradigm of higher education, developed from the Middle Ages until the Modern Society. Two alternative perspectives are competing – a humanistic idea of a *university of the mind* and a utilitarian concept of a *university of business*. This shift is to be explained in the following by quotations from some relevant documents.

At the occasion of the anniversary celebration of the University of Bologna, founded nine hundred years ago, a confirmation of the idea of the European university was given at Bologna, September 18, 1988:

#### ***The Magna Charta Universitatum (Magna Charta)***

“Fundamental Principles:

1. The university is an autonomous institution ... it ... must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority ... and economic power.
2. Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable ...
3. Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life ...
4. A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge ...” (Magna Charta 1988: 1f.)

Several hundred rectors and presidents from universities around the world signed that document. “The aims (sic) of this document is to celebrate the deepest values of University traditions and to encourage strong bonds among European Universities.” (Observatory: 1)

About a decade later, a group twenty leaders of universities and international organizations mainly from the USA and European countries convened in a small Swiss community, called Glion, from May 13 to 17, 1998. They worked out a document with their understanding of the state of the University at the end of the Twentieth century:

### ***The University at the turn of the Millennium (Glion Declaration)***

„Now knowledge is not a free-good; it is not a naturally-occurring resource. It is a personal discovery, an individual creation. It comes only to the prepared mind, coaxed into existence by personal reflection and inquiry, individual discovery, sophisticated research and costly exploration. And it can be received, understood, and applied only by the educated and informed individual ... Knowledge is the core-business of the university. In every aspect of its discovery, testing, dissemination and application, the universities of the world play a crucial role ... They are the chief agents of discovery, the major providers of basic research that underlies new technology and improved health care, they are the engines of economic growth, the custodians and transmitters of cultural heritage, the mentors of each new generation of entrants into every profession, the accreditors of competency (sic) and skills, the agents of personal understanding and societal transformation ... Their affirmation that teaching is a moral vocation, involving not just the transfer of technical information, however sophisticated, but also the balanced development of the whole person. That will mean an emphasis on the development of a creative learning environment – rather than relying solely on the traditional pattern of formal lecturing and ‘one-way’ teaching – the cultivation of a student-centred and student-friendly atmosphere and the goal of producing not only highly skilled, but also broadly educated, self-motivated graduates, with a thirst for life-long learning, aware of their heritage, conscious of their civic obligations and ethically responsible in their professional careers.” (Glion Declaration 1999: 1)

Four ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, in charge of science and higher education, convened in Paris at the Sorbonne, May 25, 1998. They prepared a declaration in order to emphasize the crucial role of the universities for the process of the re-integration of Europe:

### ***Joint Declaration on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System (Sorbonne Declaration)***

„The European process has very recently moved some extremely important steps ahead. Relevant as they are, they should not make one forget that 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. To a large extent, these have been shaped by its universities, which continue to play a pivotal role for their development.” (Sorbonne Declaration 1998: 1).

The Sorbonne Declaration gave the impulse for a larger interest of the European countries to make efforts in order to create an open European area for higher learning. About 30 ministers of education and science, of higher education and science or state secretaries for science and research met each other in Bologna, June 19, 1999, to discuss and to sign the Bologna Declaration.

### **Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education (Bologna Declaration)**

“We must in particular look at the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of Higher Education ... in order to promote European citizens (sic) employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system ... The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification.” (Bologna Declaration 1999: 1, 3)

### **Shift of paradigms: Sorbonne 1998 vs. Bologna 1999**

A paper “Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education”, explicitly entitled “Project Report prepared for the Bologna Conference on 18-19 June 1999”, gives a one-sided interpretation of the Sorbonne Declaration. The paper’s intent was to inform the ministers and representatives of no less than 31 European countries: “Hence the Sorbonne Declaration is not only about academic recognition or comparability per se: The raison d’être of the debate is intimately linked to the emergence of an ever more European and indeed international labour market.” (Haug/Kristein/Knudsen 1999: 29) Introducing the market dimension, the paper asserts that the Sorbonne Declaration “is a plea for Europe to take up its full role in the world markets of knowledge and education” (ibid.). Here the interpretation has clearly shifted from “strengthening the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of Europe, its students and more generally of its citizens” to “markets” of labour, knowledge and education. As a priority lever is defined: “Giving ‘education & training 2010’ its rightful place in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.” (Haug/Tauch: 26) The Lisbon Strategy means the intention “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy of the world” (Presidency Conclusions, 2000: 1). – The idea to support the interested citizen of an emerging learning society thus becoming a mere tool for the implementation of a new economic-political strategy.

### **Three levels of downscaling of the comprehensive university (lat. universitas) concept**

- Glion: Research, teaching and studying for knowledge
- Sorbonne: Higher Education for Europe’s citizens

- Bologna: Higher Education for the world markets

The focus of the Bologna Process is on teaching and education, neglecting, first, self organized and self responsible studying, secondly, neglecting scientific research. Students are seen as potential human capital for business. Many studies were reorganized for application rather than for science.

## 2. The Austrian Case

### **BA-studies and unemployed graduates**

- 321 BA- (Bachelor), 529 MA- (Master), 97 PhD- (Doctor of Philosophy) and 64 traditional diploma-studies were offered at WS 2010 (only Scientific Universities /SU; BMWF 2011, 54).
- 158.176 BA-, 25.883MA-, 126.426 diploma-, 29.897 doctoral-students (almost all traditional) were enrolled on 28.02.2011 (BMWF 2011, 47).
- The average BA-studies of the year 2008/09 lasted 8,0 semester, MA-studies 4,6, PhD-studies 7,1 and diploma-studies 13,0 (BMWF 2011, 69) .
- 83,4% of BA-graduates (2007/08) started with a MA-study in the following year (BMWF 2011, 50).
- 8.390/6.148 (SU and Universities of Applied Science /AU/) BA-, 3.333/1.990 MA-, 2.419 PhD- and 13.784/1956 traditional diploma-degrees were awarded in the study year 2009/10 (BMWF 2011, 65/72).
- It was the purpose of a study “Arbeitssituation von Universitäts- und FachhochschulabsolventInnen” (“Job Situation of Graduates of Universities and Universities of Applied Science”, Schomburg et al. 2010) to empirically investigate all of the approx. 130.000 graduates of the academic years 2003/04 – 2006/7. Nearly 80% of them did not answer. Nevertheless, many Austrian newspapers came up with headlines like “Uni-Absolventen zufrieden, der Minister auch” (“Graduates of the Universities are Satisfied, as is the Minister”, Kurier, Wien, 17.5.2011). As the most important finding of this empirical study was reported: “Nach drei Monaten finden Jungakademiker fixe Arbeit.” (“Young Graduates are Getting Permanent Jobs Within Three Months”, Die Presse, Wien, 17.5.2011).
- The general increase of unemployed graduates from Oct. 2010 to Oct. 2011 was 5.5%, of SU-graduates 5,2%, AU 4,4%, BA/SU 18,0%, BA/AU 42,2% . In Oct. 2007 exactly 7.735 graduates were registered as looking for work; the number increased to 11.620 in Oct. 2011,

an increase of no less than 50,2% (AMS Ktn., 2011). (The moral is: Always ask for the response rate of empirical studies and think about what it signifies.)

### **Comparison of BA in the US system vs. BA in Austria**

One difference is the formal duration of BA-studies lasting four years in the USA (first year “freshman”, second “sophomore”, third “junior”, fourth “senior”), but three years in Austria. The contents of a US-BA-curriculum are to about two thirds general education, of an Austrian almost no general education at all. The employers in the US – quite contrary to the Austrian employers –do not expect a lot of field specific knowledge but an involvement in a certain domain. The rate of transition to MA is about 30% in the USA, but in Austria it is more than 80%. Also the grading systems, the functions of libraries, athletics, music, theatre etc. are very different.

### **The Austrian law**

“The mission of the universities is to serve academic research and teaching, and the advancement, appreciation and teaching of the arts, and thereby to contribute to the personal development of the individual, and of the welfare of society and the environment. Universities are public education institutions which, in their research and research based teaching, are directed towards the advancement of knowledge and new approaches to the arts. Through the common efforts of teachers and students, working in enlightened scholarly communities, they assist individuals in their striving for the education and autonomy conferred by scholarship.” (National Council of the Republic of Austria 2002: 7) This paragraph of the law is more or less in line with the former ideal of the university, but the following paragraphs opened the door for an understanding of the societal function of the university for a new interpretation.

### **Underlying ideology of the contemporary restructuring of higher education (“Zeitgeist”)**

Over many centuries, the universities offered independent professional studies for lawyers, physicians and some additional dependent professions like priests, teachers. As the industrial society emerged, the dependent employee became the typical worker of the paid labour system. A fast division of labour started in the industrial societies after some decades and more sophisticated qualification was required: the universities offered more and more “higher education” for subsequently employed graduates than for independent professions. Simultaneously, the idea of studies as an end in themselves decreased in importance, but soon the dominance of studies as an economic investment was publicly accepted. The classical ideal of a free scientific study for intrinsically motivated students disappeared almost completely with the implementation of the Bologna Process and its emphasis on

employability: “With the Bachelor starts a new epoch of tailored higher education studies – the real demands of the economy are the central starting point.” (Dr. Christoph Leitl, president, Chamber of Commerce, Austria). The program for the development of the universities, conceived by three so called experts of higher education, proclaimed on the basis of a governmental mandate: “It became evident that investment in education shows the highest Return on Investment (ROI), followed by investments in research and development as well as by the presence of science intensive companies. The crucial meaning of highly qualified human capital for innovation once more is shown.” (Loprieno et al., 2011, p. 5). It seems that, at least currently, the humanistic idea of a University of the Mind is becoming a University of Business. “Universities are communities of inquiry, discovery, and learning ... with the conviction that the growth and diffusion of knowledge should not only enrich personal experience but also serve the public good and advance human well-being” (Glion Declaration II: 1) – and not only economic interests. Since they overcame several centuries, there is a hope that the University of the Mind will finally come back: life is more than business.

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