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ACADEMIC AUTONOMY AND THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

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ACADEMIC AUTONOMY AND THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

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Introduction

The first decade of the 21st century in Europe, as it will be shown in this paper, is witnessing a transnational policy process aimed at the instrumental control of the university and the elimination of academic autonomy. Although this policy process was initiated earlier in selected countries (e.g. UK – see Shore and Wright, 2000), followed eagerly by others (e.g. Denmark in collaboration with OECD – see Wright and Ørberg 2012; Krejsler and Carney 2009), its driving force across the continent is now the European Union (EU). The process is the ‘Bologna Process’ to which almost all European states have subscribed, yet with the EU having a leading role, as it will be made evident below.

Launched with the Bologna Declaration of 1999, today the Bologna Process is implemented in 47 countries (the 27 EU members and 20 non-EU countries located in Europe and Central Asia),¹ which constitute the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), effective since 2010. Moreover, there are another 23 countries from all over the world which are taking part in the Bologna Process with observer status;² there are many countries which are participating in selected actions (e.g. 19 Latin American countries have joined Tuning); there are *ad hoc* policy fora (e.g. the ‘Rectors’ Conference of Asia-Europe Meeting’ - ASEM); initiatives of the ‘external dimension’ (e.g. ‘Euro-Africa’ for the continent’s Francophone countries, the ‘Euro-Mediterranean Partnership’ for Middle East states and the Maghreb region and the Lusophone Higher Education Area); and related EU programmes such as ‘Tempus’ and ‘Erasmus Mundus’ (see Robertson 2008; 2010).

¹ The non-EU members of the Bologna Process are: Turkey, Ukraine, Switzerland, Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Holy See, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, FYR Macedonia, and the Russian Federation.

² The countries with observer status in the Bologna Process are: Japan, Mexico, Israel, Ghana, Egypt, China, Colombia, Canada, Jordan, New Zealand, Malaysia, Mali, Morocco, Brazil, Australia, Argentina, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Thailand, Tunisia, and USA.

This is a major transnational process of university reform begun in Europe but being extended far beyond its borders. Historically, it is a new round of European influence in higher education worldwide, but this time, the ‘export’ does not have academic autonomy as its integral element, as in the 19th and 20 centuries. The Bologna Process is undoing academic autonomy in all its three dimensions: the political (i.e. policy formulation and governance), the cognitive (knowledge creation and organisation) and the pedagogic (the imparting of knowledge) (see Moutsios 2012). This is happening, as will be shown here, on the basis of official policy documents, through the imposition of two norms on the operation of the university in Europe: the bureaucratic and the market.

The dissolution of politics and self-governance

Education politics, as an activity of the academic community to define the purpose, the contents and the pedagogic mode of higher education and to govern accordingly their institution, is being eliminated in Europe. With regard to reform, politics about the university is displaced by transnational policy-making networks and steering mechanisms of objective setting and performance measurement. With regard to governance, politics in the university is abolished by its (intended or actual) transformation into a business organisation.

The transnationalisation of education policy has been an explicit reality in Europe, at least since the 1990s (Moutsios, 2007); education policy is today no longer an exclusive affair of the nation-state, but it is being made within, through and by the EU. The nation-state in Europe, conventionally born out of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, has given its place to a transnational structure of policy making which surpasses national sovereignty and territoriality. Certainly, this is what globalisation means for

most countries in the world. However, in Europe, because of the EU, this reality has gone much further. Drawing on relevant literature in political science and sociology (Robinson 2001; Castells 2009; Beck 2005) the EU can be called a transnational network state. Its emergence does not entail that the nation-state in Europe ‘withers’ or is ‘weaker’; it is certainly in debt,³ and cutting welfare, but it remains as strong as ever in ruling its citizens. The transnational network state transforms and integrates nation-states together with supranational economic and political actors in a space in which policies and discourses cross borders and flow in and out of the nation-states’ arenas of power. This space is comprised of nation-states, institutions and agencies with different degrees of economic and political power in the European and global arena and, therefore, with different degrees of influence in policy-making within the EU mechanism.

It is this novel transnational entity which stands now, to use Nietzsche’s illustration, with an overseer’s mien behind professors and students, nodding to them that it is itself which defines the purpose of higher education. In fact, the EU goes so far as to scold them, through the European Commission, for having kept, until recently, some measure of autonomy:

After remaining a comparatively isolated universe for a very long period, both in relation to society and to the rest of the world, with funding guaranteed and a status protected by respect for their autonomy, European universities have gone through the second half of the 20th century without really calling into question the role or the nature of what they should be contributing to society (EC 2003, 22).

The question is set by the Commission which also gives the answer: universities are part of the EU’s ‘knowledge industry’ and their role is to make the EU the most ‘competitive knowledge-based economy’ or, now, according to the ‘Europe 2020’ agenda, an ‘Innovation Union’ (EC 2003, 22; 2005, 10; 2011a). The EU promotes this

³ Indeed, amongst the top 30 countries with the highest public debt in the world (as a percentage of their GDP), 15 are EU member-states. See website of CIA World Factbook.

agenda across Europe, but also beyond it, through the Bologna Process – a wider policy-making network. In Messner's (1997) theorisation, a network ensures participants' commitment to common goals, while it allows for the pursuit of these goals according to the differential conditions and pace of implementation characteristic of the individual participants; namely, a network combines the bureaucratic function (e.g. long-term strategies, hierarchical relations, and homogeneity) with the market function (e.g. decentralisation, competition, and short-term action). The participants or nodes of a network may differ in size and significance with respect to their role in its function and goals, expressing unequal, hierarchical relations. As Castells (2009, 44) points out, this is because some actors have the relational capacity to impose their will on the rest, drawing on their structural capacity for domination which is embedded in the institutions of society. These actors are the main power-holders, as their own goals become the goals of the whole network. Network theorising fails to see the consensual basis of power, namely that no authority can be exercised without legitimation and at least some degree of consent to its decisions (see Moutsios 2010). However, the analytical device is useful here because it can highlight the main actors of the Bologna network, their rationales for promoting the reforms and the goals that they demand European universities should serve.

Who these actors are, can be seen in the membership of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), the body which oversees the Bologna Process between the ministerial summits and is co-chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency and a non-EU country. The BFUG is composed of the representatives of all countries participating in the Bologna Process and the European Commission as well as some 'consultative members': the EUA (European University Association) representing the Rectors; EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) representing the Heads of Polytechnics and University Colleges; ESU (the European Students' Union) an umbrella organisation of 44 National Students' Unions; EI (Education International) representing 100 national organisations of academics worldwide;

UNESCO-CEPES (European Centre for Higher Education); ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – see below); and BUSINESSEUROPE, the Confederation of European Business, whose members are 40 central industrial and employers’ federations. From all these members, it is being argued here, the European Commission and the business association are the powerful nodes in the policy making network of the Bologna Process.

The European Commission plays a crucial role in realising the Bologna Process, in terms of diffusing the discourse, setting mechanisms and promoting measures. The Commission sponsors, financially and organisationally, the ministerial meetings, and a variety of initiatives such as ‘quality assurance’, qualifications frameworks, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), Diploma Supplement and Tuning (see details below). In fact, many of these initiatives were already developed by the EU (e.g. ECTS in the Erasmus programme) before they were adopted by the Bologna Process. The European Commission is very interested in driving the whole Bologna Process in order to serve its knowledge-economy strategy. As Keeling (2006) points out, through a documented inquiry: ‘... The Commission has co-opted the BP as a necessary mechanism for maximising the socio-economic returns on EU investment in research’ (p. 211). This is, after all, recognised by the Commission itself: ‘For many years, the European Commission has been supporting the Bologna Process. Its objectives are fully in line with the EU’s modernisation agenda for universities’ (EC 2010b, 3).

Even more decisive is the role of the industrial confederation, BUSINESSEUROPE, which is now part of a much bigger business interest group, The Alliance for a Competitive European Industry, with members from 12 major European Industry sector associations, which account for 6,000 large companies and 1.7 million SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises). The ‘Alliance’ (2010, 3) was founded with the ‘common objective to promote the competitiveness of European industry on a global scale’ by ‘urging EU leaders to act’ on 6 priorities: partnership, balance, markets,

growth, innovation and skills. In the framework of these priorities, the ‘Alliance’ is pursuing the establishment of an ‘all-encompassing R&D and innovation strategy for Europe’ (p. 11). It urges the EU to promote effectively ‘the European Research Area governance model and the management of EU public-private research partnerships’; to protect and enforce intellectual property rights; and enhance the mobility of researchers (p. 11). In the domain of skills, the ‘Alliance’ requests that the EU ‘foster and attract new generations of highly skilled and creative workers’ (p. 15). They underline that ‘human skills are at the foundation of value creation and innovation’ and they ask the EU to ‘develop an EU skills policy involving the European Commission, national and regional authorities, schools and universities, social partners, companies and workers’ (p. 15).

BUSINESSEUROPE, whose members are industrial confederations from 34 countries, is the main agent of the business interest group and a committed participant in the Bologna Process and its various functions. As they state officially: ‘The Bologna Process is an extremely important catalyst for change. It has brought about more change in higher education than any other international instrument or policy has done before BUSINESSEUROPE is fully committed to the Bologna Process and will continue so’ (BUSINESSEUROPE 2009a, 1 and 2). Indeed they are, and this is testified by their direct involvement in the Bologna Process and by the detailed proposals they make for university reform – for example, that universities should establish closer links to the business sector; they should involve entrepreneurs more closely in the design of university curricula; curricula should be made more compatible through the three-cycle structure so that student mobility is facilitated; they should increase courses in science and technology; make ‘quality assurance’ systems similar across Europe; integrate lifelong learning in universities as ‘individuals need to increasingly take greater responsibility for their own employability’ (ibid, 1); ensure ‘that the evaluation of universities reflects the interests of employers’ by establishing a performance ranking which looks at the ‘knowledge triangle: research, education and innovation’ (BUSINESSEUROPE 2009b, 3);

introduce entrepreneurial education in universities; and promote in the latter a business culture through the reciprocal flow of personnel between universities and business (ibid, 4; see also *BUSINESSEUROPE* 2010).

As the official documents and policies of the Commission show (see below), these proposals are adopted to a remarkable extent by the EU and the Bologna Process. They are forwarded in the formal meetings of the Bologna Process, in the various committees in which business representatives take part (e.g. ‘quality assurance’ register and university ranking advisory group) as well as through traditional networking, namely lobbying: *BUSINESSEUROPE* is a registered ‘professional association’ along with hundreds of other associations and companies, naming, as its fields of interest, ‘education’ and ‘research and technology’ in the lobbying list of the European Commission (see EC, Register of Interest Representatives).

Thus, the European Commission and the business associations have a pivotal role in defining the agenda of the Bologna Process, and consequently the kind of university reforms taking place in its member-states, whereas the other participant organisations largely consent. EI, for example, reports, based on a survey conducted by the organisation, that although academics across the Bologna member-countries witness deterioration in teaching and research conditions, they ‘have a positive outlook on the future of the Bologna Process, perceiving it to be a sign of quality as well as an opportunity for the creation of an academic labour market’ (EI 2010, 5). Similarly, the ESU, the students’ union, in its review of ten years of the Bologna Process, considers that the three-cycle structure, the ECTS and the establishment of ‘quality assurance’ systems are prime examples of success. The problem, according to ESU, is that there are ‘different paces of the implementation of the Bologna Process, which can fundamentally endanger the vision of a common EHEA’ (ESU 2010, 9).

Overall, education politics in/for the university is superseded by the transnational policy making of the Bologna Process in which there is largely consensus on the

reform agenda promoted by business actors and the EU; the latter formally confirms ‘the role of universities through education, research and innovation, in the transfer of knowledge to the economy and society as a main contribution to Europe’s competitiveness and the need for closer cooperation between academia and the world of enterprise’ (European Council 2007, 3).

This policy, as well as the overall agenda of the Bologna Process, is promoted in two main ways. First, it is promoted through legislation by the member states. As the Commission underlines: ‘at national level, changes are sought in legislation, funding arrangements and incentive structures which were seen as either not supportive of or sometimes hostile to university-business cooperation’ (EC 2009a, 8). As it was noted above, the nation-state is not weakened by transnational policy making, but, on the contrary, its role is indispensable for the realisation of policies. The nation-state can justify ideologically to its citizens the decisions taken in the transnational space and it can introduce and enforce the legislation necessary for the implementation of these decisions. Apparently, aware of this, the Commission suggests that ‘... the state should retain or even strengthen its responsibility for higher education’ (EC 2005, 7).

The second way is through transnational mechanisms of benchmarking and performance monitoring. The main mechanism, as mentioned above, is the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG). The BFUG runs separate working groups dealing with a number of ‘priority areas’ (e.g. ‘education, research and innovation’, employability, mobility, quality assurance, etc.) which promote the whole Bologna Process. The BFUG’s methodology resembles that of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC, which operates in all areas of EU policy, including the university reform – see EC 2009b): it engages state members in the mutual pursuit of policy goals by means of indicators, targets, benchmarks, timetables, ‘mutual learning’ through the diffusion of ‘best practices’ (i.e. initiatives at national level which are compatible to the Bologna Process agenda) and performance comparison with a faming/shaming intent (see

BFUG 2009). Similar functions are performed by the EU Directorates and associated ‘advisory committees’ and ‘expert groups’.

To these functions, and to the realisation of the entire transnational policy at all levels, evaluation plays a central part. Evaluation of/in universities is introduced through the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), whose activities are financed partly by the European Commission. ENQA members are ‘quality assurance agencies’ from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and associated countries, which are required to be certified by the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), which was founded in 2008 by the E4 Group (ENQA, EURASHE, and ESU, EUA), including BUSINESSEUROPE, EI and 26 governmental representatives. All quality assurance processes and agencies must abide by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) which prescribe the rules for ‘internal’ and ‘external’ evaluation of universities (see ENQA 2009).

Evaluation mechanisms and procedures are of major importance for controlling institutions, academics and their practices, and they are closely linked with the EU’s policy to turn universities into competing business units. The European universities are no longer to be corporations in the sense of communities of learners, but corporations according to the later meaning of the term: business organisations led by appointed managers and operating with cost-benefit and profit-seeking criteria. This fundamental organisational transformation is being accomplished by the member states which are being asked by the Commission to ‘build up and reward management and leadership capacity within universities’ (EC 2006, 6). Member states are made aware that ‘the development of an entrepreneurial culture at universities requires profound changes in university governance and leadership’ (EC 2009a, 5). Established divisions in faculties, departments, laboratories and administrative units – where academics traditionally had a say – constitute, according to the Commission, ‘fragmentation’ which must be ‘overcome’ and all efforts must be focused on

‘institutional priorities for research, teaching and services’ (EC 2006, 6). This should be done by putting in place ‘new internal governance systems based on strategic priorities and on professional management of human resources, investment and administrative procedures’ (EC 2005, 5).

As well as by means of corporate management, the reduction of scholars to human resources is also being pursued through the enforced cooperation of the institutions with the private sector: ‘The Commission [...] invites Member States to ensure that fiscal rules enable and encourage partnerships between business and universities...’ (EC 2005, 10). This ‘partnership’ is not meant to be between two independent kinds of institutions, since there must be incorporation of ‘representatives of the non-academic world within universities’ management and governance structures’ (2003, 9). The ‘non-academic world’ is primarily the business world which, as the Commission suggests, should be involved in all main functions of the university: ...’the stronger involvement of enterprises in university boards, research agendas, admission panels, curriculum design, course delivery and QA systems can significantly improve universities’ teaching, research and innovation’ (2009a, 7). Universities are being turned into business primarily by means of legislation, but also, as the Commission proposes, by being committed ‘through multi-annual agreements’ and ‘strategic objectives’ (EC 2005, 9). The main tool, as indicated above, that states should be using to make sure that universities pursue these goals is funding’: ‘Each country should therefore strike the right balance between core, competitive and outcome-based funding (underpinned by robust quality assurance)....’ (EC 2006, 8). The evaluation mechanisms thus, promoted through ENQA, are crucial for this purpose: ‘Competitive funding should be based on institutional evaluation systems and on diversified performance indicators with clearly defined targets and indicators supported by international benchmarking for both inputs and economic and societal outputs ...’ (ibid).

Education politics in European universities, as deliberation and decision making on behalf of the academic community and as governance of their institution, is thus being eliminated by transnational policy making and corporate management. The Bologna Process, led in reality by the EU and with the full commitment of its member states, renders university reform a matter of policy networks, dominated by major business actors and transnational bureaucracies (e.g. BFUG, OMC, ENQA, and EC Directorates), which define the agenda and monitor and evaluate its implementation across Europe through massive data collection. Within the university, management-based governance is dissolving the academic community by turning scholars into ‘human resources’ with no say for the affairs of their institution and by turning students into temporary consumers (but also ‘human resources’ under formation). The management system promoted by the EU is changing the relation between the body of academics and the administration within the university. Traditionally, the administration processed the decisions of the academic body (in which, of course, there were strong internal hierarchies); now, academics are being fully subjected to an increasingly voluminous administration, thoroughly surveilling (and surveilled) by means of ICT-powered data-bases. Moreover, management is exposing academic staff to market relations: it involves business agents in governance, it removes employment security from academics, and it forces them to make their interests and knowledge available for purchase by any potential buyer (see also below). The business representatives in the Bologna Process call, with impertinence, this exposition a ‘greater degree of autonomy’ (BUSINESSEUROPE 2009, 2). In fact, ‘autonomy’ is among the concepts (e.g. ‘independence’, ‘quality’, ‘creativity’, ‘empowerment’, ‘accountability,’ ‘lifelong learning’, ‘learner-centeredness’, etc.) which are systematically appropriated, distorted or corrupted in the various official documents of the Bologna Process, thus infusing in the education policy language across Europe the ‘Orwellian newspeak of new managerialism’ (Shore and Wright 2000, 80).

The control of knowledge creation and impartation

Notwithstanding language manipulation, universities in the EU and the EHEA are being stripped of their autonomy and academics are being disabled from deciding, not only about the governance of their institution, but also about their research and even their teaching.

Universities are becoming part of the EU's 'knowledge industry' which understands academics not as scholars or independent personalities but as human resources or 'brainpower'. The EU aims at 'mobilising all Europe's brain power and applying it in the economy and society...' (EC 2005, 5). Universities and academics are now counted by the Commission and addressed, indeed, as an industrial workforce subject to exploitation: 'With 4.000 institutions, over 17 million students and some 1.5 million staff – of whom 435.000 are researchers – European universities have enormous potential...' (EC 2006, 3). This army of researchers is being conscripted in order to build a 'knowledge economy and society' which will stem, according to the Commission from: 'the production of knowledge, mainly through scientific research; its transmission through education and training; its dissemination through ICT; its use in technological innovation' (EC 2003, 4). This is the purpose after all of the 'European Research Area' (ERA), and its call for 'knowledge sharing'. As the ERA pronounces: 'to ensure exploitation, effective knowledge transfer between those who do research, particularly universities and public research organisations (PROs), and those who transform it into products and services, namely the industry/SMEs is essential (see ERA's website).

The EU reforms, directly or via the Bologna Process, are bringing about a hierarchy between 'non-useful' (non-profitable) knowledge and 'useful' (profitable) research, and they are forcing academics to submit themselves to business interests. 'Co-operation between universities and industry needs to be intensified at national and

regional level....' (EC 2003, 7); 'European universities need to attract a much higher share of funding from industry' (EC 2005, 10); they 'should develop structured partnerships with the world of enterprise' and they should be 'able to respond better and faster to the demand of the market and to develop partnerships which harness scientific and technological knowledge' (EC 2009a, 2) the EU requests repeatedly throughout its official documents. One of the ways to accomplish this is that 'the universities can also generate *income by selling services* (including research services and flexible lifelong learning possibilities), particularly to the business sector, and from *using research results*' (EC 2003, 13 – original emphasis).

The consequences of having academics obliged to sell off their research, which the EU is persistently requesting, are obvious in the domains of science and technology (e.g. pharmaceuticals, medicine, ICT, biotechnology, nanotechnology, nuclear engineering, etc.) and they have often been reported. Stephanie Pain, for example, associate editor of 'New Scientist' in the 1990s, commenting on the dependence of biological and pharmaceutical research on funding by private companies, testified to these consequences: '[...]where research was once mostly neutral, it now has an array of paymasters to please. In place of impartiality, research results are being discreetly managed and massaged, or even locked away if they don't serve the right interests. Patronage rarely comes without strings attached' (Pain 1997). In other disciplinary areas, if they survive the cost-benefit analysis of appointed managers, the imposed quest for external funding causes a similar situation. In humanities and social sciences, scholars must conform to the agendas and pursuits of private or public agencies and research funds, operating in and out of their country, at the expense of their personal intellectual interests. Academics are required to succumb, not only to the aims of external agencies, but also to their bureaucratic rules and processes of decision making (e.g., applications, budgeting, anticipation of outcomes, deadlines, procedures of approval or rejection, reporting to sponsors etc.). Thus, scholars are being institutionally obstructed from creating knowledge following their own intellectual

interests and judgement and they are obliged to produce knowledge which is being, in an unprecedented manner, both marketised and bureaucratised.

In fact, through the management rules promoted by/in the EU, academics are not merely having predefined research agendas imposed upon them, but they are being required to compete (often as a condition to retain their employment) in order to get the chance to serve these agendas – namely, to pursue actively their conformity. The EU itself, through its numerous competitive schemes, is one of the main research sponsors in Europe. The most well-known schemes are those operating under the ‘Framework Programme’, the last version of which allocates most of its budget to fostering ‘collaborative research by transnational consortia of industry and academia’ (see FP7 website). Participation of academics in consortia, networks and research teams, set up in order to achieve the external funding increasingly required by their institutions, is a crucial condition for cognitive conformity. The *ad hoc* organisation of these groups, their predefined goals and procedures, their internal hierarchies, and the prescribed discourse which they must speak to get their research sponsored, further reduce any possibility for individual scholarship. The Commission shows a notable interest in having academics working in teams, by presenting them as an undeniable reality to which academic staff must adjust: ‘Universities also have to accept that research is no longer an isolated activity and that the emphasis is shifting from individual researchers to teams and global researcher networks’ (EC 2006, 3). This preference is accompanied by the much celebrated interdisciplinarity. However, the EU does not refer by this to a scholar’s own personal efforts to synthesise knowledge from various disciplines and acquire a holistic perception of the research object. In the context of the EU’s research policy, interdisciplinarity means bringing together academics, who practice established specialisations, in international groupings, aimed at meeting the demands of their sponsors (see, for example, EC 2006, 8).

European scholars are being forced to relinquish their autonomy in knowledge creation through a variety of means employed by the EU and the Bologna Process;

state legislation, regulations, funding-based leverage, evaluation and ‘shaming/faming’ comparisons which all function to instigate competition amongst countries, institutions and academic staff. The EU proclaims ‘fierce global competition’ (EC 2011a) for which all universities must be mobilised by producing not only research but also ‘innovation’, which is now a ‘flagship’ for the EU’s agenda ‘Europe 2020’ (EC 2010a). To this purpose, the EU is introducing ‘innovation scoreboards’ which compare countries in and out of Europe on the basis of numerous indicators and benchmarks aimed at increasing selected quantities and prompting compliance to its agenda (e.g. public-private co-publications per million population, commercialisation of technological knowledge, private investment in R&D etc.) (EC 2011b). To make such indicators reach the everyday life of academics, the Commission, through a recent Feasibility Study (see U-multirank) (with BUSINESSEUROPE amongst the participants) and the report of an ‘Expert Group on Assessment of University-Based Research’ (with a World Bank representative) is promoting the so-called ‘Multidimensional Research Assessment Matrix’ (EC 2010c). The Expert Group’s proposals includes ‘input indicators’, ‘process indicators’ and ‘output indicators’, the choice of which, as they clarify, ‘reflects the value judgment and priorities of the promoter’ (p.36). Taking this into account, their ‘Assessment Matrix’ proposes indicators, such as: ‘research outputs per academic staff’, ‘external research income’, ‘number and percentage of competitive grants won’, ‘commissioned reports’, ‘consultancy contracts’, ‘number of collaborations and partnerships’, etc. If one adds to this the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ assessments promoted through ENQA in all member states of the Bologna Process, it becomes obvious that academic staff across Europe are being captured in a matrix, indeed, which aims to shape their knowledge and research according to the desires of all kinds of sponsors.

Given that universities transmit to a large extent knowledge that their staff creates, the control of their research also has self-evident repercussions as to what they teach, that is, their curricula. However, the EU and the Bologna Process are intervening in the design of university curricula too. For the EU, the purpose of this is clear: ‘University

programmes should be structured to enhance directly the employability of graduates...’ (EC 2006, 6). The way to achieve this is clear too and consistent with the EU’s policy depicted above: ‘The Commission will support business-academia collaborations through the creation of *‘knowledge alliances’* between education and business to develop *new curricula addressing innovation skills gaps’* (EC 2010a, 10 – original emphasis). In fact, the EU proposes that this curriculum policy ‘should extend beyond the needs of the labour market to the stimulation of an *entrepreneurial mindset* amongst students and researchers’ (EC 2006, 6-7 – original emphasis). Following the request of BUSINESSEUROPE here too, the EU suggests that entrepreneurial education permeates university curricula up to the doctoral level, at which candidates should acquire skills in ‘IPR management, communication, networking, entrepreneurship and team-working, in addition to training in research techniques’ (ibid, 7).

In the Bologna Process this and similar suggestions are promoted through the so-called Qualifications Framework which encompasses all higher education qualifications in the EHEA. There is the ‘Overarching Framework,’ (QF) drawn for the whole EHEA, and the ‘National Qualifications Frameworks’ which are drawn at state level following the QF’s requirements. Academics in all member states from now on should be designing their courses at all levels by defining expected outcomes in accordance with the categories and the language (e.g. ‘knowledge’, ‘skills’ and ‘competences’) prescribed by the Qualifications Frameworks. As it is stated officially: ‘Qualifications frameworks play an important role in developing degree systems...’ (QF webpage a); they ‘help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits’ (QF webpage b). The Frameworks correspond to the well-known three study cycles of the EHEA (3+2+3) which are specified by three respective sets of descriptors (the ‘Dublin-descriptors’ – see JQI 2004). Frameworks, cycles, descriptors, ENQA guidelines, the Diploma Supplement, and ECTS are elaborated by ‘Tuning Educational Structures in Europe’, a remarkable process of curricular and pedagogic standardisation operating across European universities (and

exported, as mentioned above, to Latin America). Tuning, since its start in 2000, has aimed, as stated officially: ‘to link the political objectives of the Bologna Process and at a later stage the Lisbon Strategy to the higher educational sector’ (Tuning webpage a). In particular, Tuning outlines its mandates as follows:

As a result of the Bologna Process the educational systems in all European countries are in the process of reforming. This is the direct effect of the political decision to converge the different national systems in Europe. For Higher Education institutions these reforms mean the actual starting point for another discussion: the comparability of curricula in terms of structures, programmes and actual teaching. This is what Tuning offers. (ibid)

Indeed, the designing of ‘comparable curricula’, which Tuning has been engaged with, is now reaching the actual teaching in the universities of the Bologna signatory countries and those implementing Tuning. Its main aim is ‘to contribute significantly to the elaboration of a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications... which should be described in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile’ (Tuning webpage b). Tuning is based on the three-cycle system of the Bologna Process which ‘makes it necessary to revise all existing study programmes which are not based on the concept of cycles’ (Tuning webpage c, 2). Following this system, Tuning’s curriculum design is centered on modules, learning outcomes, and competences. ‘Study programmes which have been set up according to the Tuning methodology are output-oriented and, preferably, modularised’ (Tuning webpage d, 2). Accordingly, ‘learning outcomes are formulated both at programme level and on the level of individual course units or modules’ (Tuning webpage c, 5). In addition, learning outcomes are formed in terms of competences, which Tuning classifies as ‘instrumental’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘systemic competencies’ (ibid, 3 and 5). Finally, through this detailed technical arrangement, Tuning links ‘learning outcomes, competencies and ECTS workload based credits’ since, according to ECTS, ‘the award of credits depends on full achievement of the desired learning outcome for a unit or module’ (ibid 2). So far, following this standard procedure, Tuning has

produced curricula in the subject areas of Business, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Education Sciences, European Studies, History, Mathematics, Nursing and Physics.

An increasing number of scholars working in these areas, but also those whose countries apply the Qualifications Framework, are required to plan their courses according to the competence-driven and outcome-based curriculum design of Tuning. As the European Commission observes contentedly: ‘The new language of learning outcomes is gradually being introduced across the entire life cycle of learning, from curriculum development to teaching, learning, assessment, recognition and quality assurance’ (EC 2010b, 6).

Conclusion

The beginning of the 21st century is marked by a concerted pan-European political process to eliminate the European legacy of academic autonomy. It is the Bologna Process, led actively by the EU, which is undoing academic autonomy in all its dimensions: politics and governance, knowledge as research and curriculum, and pedagogy as the imparting of knowledge. Politics about the university is displaced by transnational policy-making networks dominated by business interest groups and mechanisms of objective-based steering and performance monitoring; corporate management is disintegrating the academic community, subduing the staff as a workforce under surveillance and positioning students as consumers; universities are being regarded as part of the EU’s ‘knowledge industry’ and academics not as independent scholars but as ‘brainpower’, subject to the competition strategies of the business world; scholars are being institutionally obstructed from creating the knowledge they wish and they are obliged instead to sell off their intellectual interests to all kinds of sponsors, succumbing to competition and bureaucratic rules; and, in

addition, scholars are being required to teach knowledge demanded by the labour-markets and standardise the language and the organisation of their teaching.

To have these reforms passed, the EU and the Bologna Process are employing a variety of means: a perennial official discourse about the competitive position of 'Europe' in the world, legally binding decisions, state legislation, funding-based leverage, evaluation mechanisms and recurrent 'shaming/faming' comparisons. What is noteworthy in this transnational policy making process is the widespread consensus with which it is carried through. It is not merely the European Commission or the business actors which drive the Bologna Process; it is fully endorsed by the European Council, the European Parliament, the participant governments in the Bologna Process and also the representatives of the university authorities, of the academics and of the students. There is hardly any questioning of the goals of the policy network by those taking part in it; the concern is instead about the irregular or slow pace of implementation.

The extensive acceptance of the Bologna Process as well as of the EU education agenda is not only due to the strategies, decisions and arrangements of policy-making actors; it lies in the widespread idea, living on since the establishment of state education systems, that progress entails economic competitiveness and that this is the main aim that education, and most of all universities, should serve (see Moutsios, 2010). Today this idea underpins the education policy of the EU and the strategy of its major enterprises for a 'competitive knowledge economy', under which academic autonomy is being dismantled across Europe.

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