



The OBSERVATORY  
on borderless higher education

Report

## Realising the Global University: Part Six

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## Realising the Global University: Part Six

### Abstract:

This is the sixth in a series of reports linked to the “Realising the Global University” conference, which the Observatory co-sponsored with the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN) on 15 November 2007. Each report consists of two position pieces exploring the idea of the ‘global university’. In this instalment, **Kjersti Fløttum** and **Asuncion St. Clair** describe a University of Bergen initiative that recognises young researchers as a key facet of a global outlook, and **Pavel Zgaga** addresses globalisation issues arising from the Bologna Process.

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# 1 Facing the globalisation of universities by fostering globally committed young researchers

By Kjersti Fløttum and Asuncion St. Clair

There seems to be a clear consensus that universities are not yet global, even if they are increasingly internationalised. The reason may be that we do not fully agree on the criteria which may characterise a global university. A lot of emphasis has been put on questions related to quantitative parameters (size, budgets, international student population and staff, infrastructure facilities, etc.). However, recently, the discussion seems to have turned towards questions of education and curriculum content and research orientations. In our opinion this is central: a global university must collaborate with other universities worldwide (from both the global North and the global South, from advanced and less advanced economies) in addressing new and interdisciplinary research questions which may contribute to identifying and solving major global challenges relating to poverty, the environment and climate, health, democracy and peace. The interaction and extension of these major challenges are such that we have to revise and renew our traditional ways of fostering new talents and develop new research question.

At the University of Bergen, a small institution according to international standards, we are aiming at being a research university with a high international profile. Both our general strategic plan and our action plan for international activities are ambitious, stating that the overriding goal for increased internationalisation is to promote quality in the implementation of the university's main tasks in research, education and dissemination, and to be a university of high repute and an attractive collaborative partner. However, do these (to some extent clichéd) expressions bring us any closer to the notion of a global university? They may do, if we somehow rethink what global means in the context of higher education. Too often 'global' means the expansion to the whole world of concerns and interests of those actors that have global positions of privilege and power. At our university, we think we can approach becoming a global university because we have a long tradition of commitment to capacity-building and research development in disadvantaged and poor countries in the South. Most importantly, crucial questions of development that have traditionally been linked to challenges in the South (such as poverty, environment and health) are now similarly important to the entire world. They have in fact become global and challenge us to rethink our forms and contents of knowledge production as well as our actions. Historical abuses from the North to the South have included the demise of poor countries' higher education institutions. Lack of capacity in the global South today may be related to unfair histories, to unfair global regulations and norms. We see it as crucial that we utilise our qualifications in order to contribute to identifying and solving such major global challenges. In this commitment we put a particular emphasis on research-based education and on fostering high quality young researchers.

In order to progress in this commitment, we need to make sure that we have some efficient tools, based on high quality international research collaboration and committed young talents. One such tool might be the *Bergen Summer Research School on Global Development Challenges* (BSRS) on which we are working now and which is planned for the years 2008–2011, with the following sub-themes:

- 2008: Global Poverty;
- 2009: Global Environmental and Climate Change;
- 2010: Global Health; and
- 2011: Norms, Values, Language and Culture.

We view these four key areas of research as intrinsically interrelated, but also require their clear identification as dominant themes for the yearly edition of the BSRS.

The BSRS arises from the commitment among the academic milieu of Bergen to produce and disseminate research-based education which aims to address some key challenges posed by an increasingly knowledge-based, complex, multicultural, religiously diverse, and unequal global society. It is a joint venture under the leadership of the University of Bergen with the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration (NHH), the Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI), the Bergen University College (HiB) and UNIFOB (research organisation affiliated to the University of Bergen). These five institutions are all home to research relevant for the rethinking of the challenges ahead for advanced, developing and less developed economies. In addition, the Bergen Summer Research School reaches out to other social, political and economic organisations located in the Bergen area, such as the Chamber of Commerce, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Rafto Foundation, and the city of Bergen.

One of the important challenges for universities and academic institutions today is their continuance in being the backbone of society, providing the knowledge for addressing complex challenges related to the increasingly knowledge-based organisation of social life; dependent on global shocks and forces as much as on national factors. This includes the need to address the negative consequences of fast-changing socio-economic structures and increased populations with high levels of consumption in a natural environment with limited capacity to adapt. Changes in social structures, political organisation, economic activities, new skills, new technologies, and new attitudes will all be necessary for citizens in all types of societies to adapt and move forward. These new skills are needed in order to cope with an increasingly degraded environment, new and fast-spreading diseases, increased migration, economic setbacks due to global shocks beyond the control of national welfare measures, and pressures from increasingly cross-cultural and interfaith societies. Value clashes, and many other types of conflicts, are likely to coexist with the increasing emergence of global norms and institutions. Vulnerability to socio-economic shocks, loss of employment, or increased debt, is no longer a problem only for poor countries. Poverty in its various aspects, and at different levels of intensity, is already a serious challenge for many citizens in the United States and Europe. Emerging markets like India and China are racing to the top in many business-related issues and challenging the US-EU dominated trade regimes, but they also pose serious pressures on the global environment and much development is happening without accompanying growth fairly distributed. Development is no longer a question for national economies, but a historical, complex, holistic process affecting and challenging us all.

As inequalities continue to grow at an increasing pace, it is a responsibility of advanced economies and their academic institutions to take leadership, and to invest and share their resources for the benefit of all. Norway is a committed donor country and a wealthy economy endowed with important natural resources. With the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bergen academic milieu has committed to the rethinking of the implications of Norway's position in the world today, emphasising key themes and research that our institutions are already hosting. The need for new and critical interdisciplinary research is obvious. As an example, two of our Bergen climate researchers, professors Eystein Jansen and Helge Drange, who play an important role in the IPCC (one of this year's Nobel Peace Prizes), are involved in bringing climate research into connection with cutting-edge research within medicine, the social sciences and the humanities.

The Bergen Summer Research School is not only a strategy for "internationalisation at home", but a commitment to reach out to young researchers all over the world to share and to learn together.

We consider a total of 200 PhD students as a feasible number of participants. Our courses and activities are led by Bergen scholars, but always in equal partnership with our networks in both the South as well as the North. In this collaboration the membership in Worldwide Universities Network (WUN) is essential. We can draw on already-established research collaboration (for example in Critical Global Poverty Studies and in Climate Research Studies) for developing courses and for helping with the recruitment of PhDs from WUN's member institutions, through the Research Mobility Programme.

We aim to build opportunities and lessons based on high quality disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research. In each BSRS edition we will offer a portfolio of doctoral courses that will advance this vision, each organised in small groups with full scientific independence led by teams of Bergen researchers in collaboration with international figures. A set of plenary events, roundtables, and social and cultural activities will offer students and guest researchers the opportunity to interact with other participants, learn from other disciplines, and explore the socio-economic and cultural life of the city of Bergen.

The first edition of the BSRS (August 7–17 2008) is dedicated to the theme of Global Poverty. The courses and activities reflect an effort to address it as a truly global challenge affecting advanced, developing and less developed economies, requiring the joint effort of the international community as well as considering the particularities on the ground with their sharp differences as well as their similarities. Addressing poverty as a global challenge requires disciplinary, interdisciplinary and problem-oriented research-based education. We aim to produce an inclusive yet well defined concept of 'global poverty' that incorporates Norwegian and Scandinavian research traditions and internationally recognised research produced by all disciplines while keeping in focus problems defined by our partners in the global South.

We offer courses and activities based on socio-economic, legal, political, psychological, humanistic and philosophical, environmental, and sector issues (health and education) that deal with, relate to, or have consequences for global poverty. Global poverty will be a recurring theme in all the other editions; interacting with, and cross-fertilising, the thinking on the other identified global challenges: global climate change, global health, and norms, values, language and culture.

The BSRS has a well-established governance structure, including top-down as well as bottom-up relations within and between the cooperating institutions, and there will be a thorough evaluation process for each of its editions. We will have to wait and see if the Bergen Summer Research School will bring the University of Bergen closer to what may be called a "global university", but we think we have established a promising starting point.

## **2 Capacity-building in higher education and the Bologna Process** **By Pavel Zgaga**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Higher education institutions encounter many challenges in a globalising world. They know that they need to strengthen their capabilities to meet these challenges successfully, and capacity-building is therefore firmly on their agendas. Very often, this issue is linked to another important point on these agendas: the internationalisation and globalisation of higher education. In Europe, capacity-building and internationalisation in higher education can't be exempted from the context of the Bologna Process.

### **2.2 What is the Bologna Process?**

The Bologna Process is a process to reform higher education in a broad Europe, not only in countries of the European Union (EU). Reform has been needed because the plethora of educational policies and degree programmes among European countries has made transnational education difficult. The objective of reform is to make the many educational systems more compatible and comparable so that students, faculty, and administrations can more easily move and transfer knowledge skills from one country to another. The process aims to create convergence to an intra-European model of higher education while retaining each country's autonomy as well as cultural and educational diversity.

The process was articulated in the Bologna Declaration that was signed initially by 29 countries in 1999, the goal being to establish a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. At the last meeting, in London in May 2007, 46 countries participated. There has been a lot of interest in closer co-operation with "Bologna countries" also in other world regions. Converging educational systems, besides making higher education more attractive for Europeans, increases Europe's international competitiveness as well.

### **2.3 "Dimensions" of the Bologna Process**

The Bologna Process was initiated in 1998–99 and has evolved into a powerful reform agenda which influences developments on national as well as institutional levels. It is still widely understood predominantly as a change in degree structures and qualifications, but it is much more than that. Quality issues, and mutual trust among systems and institutions, have always been the core; these issues recently culminated in the idea of a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA, 2007). Active involvement of universities (EUA – European University Association) and other higher education institutions (EURASHE - European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) in the Process resulted in a concept of European higher education reforms performed in partnership (governments, institutions, students, other stakeholders). Students' unions (ESIB - National Unions of Students in Europe) succeeded in placing the social dimension firmly on the agenda of the Bologna Process and raised a discussion which is also very important for future of higher education in Europe<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> All key documents relating to the Bologna Process, along with further information, are available on the official websites: the Bologna UK Secretariat website (2005-2007) at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/> and the new Bologna Benelux Secretariat website (2007-2009) at <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/>. Both last accessed 1 October 2007.

Alongside the structural and social dimensions, the external dimension of the Process has also been pronounced almost from the beginning. However, at the beginning the Process was overloaded with a vast number of urgent “intra-European” issues. After 2005, it began to look outwards in a more systemic way, to assess whether the attractiveness of European higher education has changed (ACA, 2005), to identify new opportunities for co-operation and/or competition in higher education in a global context and to ascertain to what degree and in which horizons the Process has influenced discussions on higher education in other parts of the world (Zgaga, 2006). In May 2007, at the London Conference of Ministers, a Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process (External Dimension Working Group, 2007) was adopted which will certainly influence further activities related to European higher education in a global setting.

Within the five core policy areas which form the backbone of the strategy, there is ample room for activities aimed at strengthening capacity-building in higher education, within Europe as well as between European higher education institutions and their partners worldwide. The third and fourth policy areas—strengthening co-operation based in partnership and intensifying policy dialogue—are particularly important for capacity-building programmes in future.

## **2.4 Capacity-building in higher education as an aspect of internationalisation**

It is a common characteristic of global discourses that they force us to reconsider our terminology. As in many other cases, the term ‘capacity-building’ can be interpreted and also performed in a variety of ways. UNESCO as an international institution with a high reputation and strong capacity-building function in its Member States can provide a good insight in these ways. In one of its recent working documents<sup>2</sup>, the organisation stresses that “[d]epending on the context, capacity-building programmes are delivered through various mechanisms, which may include one or more of the following:

- Starting with a rigorous context / needs assessment (revisited if a long-term process);
- Ownership of programme by stakeholders and involvement of important partners [...];
- Building on existing capacities;
- Multi-level approach (individual, institutional, societal);
- Critical mass approach”.

It is important to keep the understanding of ‘capacity-building’ multidimensional. Quite often, ‘capacity-building in higher education’ is associated today with measures applicable to developing countries, while ‘capacity-building in research’ is more often on the agenda in post-industrial countries. For many countries, not only in the global South but also in Europe, the challenges of managing and protecting national education policies and ensuring sustained quality in education are beyond their current capacity. They need capacity-building but they also risk an influx of commercial providers of education programmes, policies, or both. Unfortunately, quite often these providers are not familiar with local contexts and traditions and can be reluctant to accept a responsibility for the education environment they work within. To make capacity-building in these cases really sustainable, it should be based on mutual co-operation and partnership, not on commercial interests and competition.

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO (2005) *UNESCO’s Capacity-building Activities in Qualifications Recognition, Quality Assurance And Accreditation: Towards A Coherent Framework*; UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on “Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education”, Drafting Meeting 3, 17-18 January 2005, OECD, Paris. URL: [http://www.unesco.org/education/higher\\_education/global\\_forum/second\\_meeting](http://www.unesco.org/education/higher_education/global_forum/second_meeting). Last accessed 1 October 2007.

## 2.5 Guiding Principles of the ‘EHEA in a Global Setting’

A discussion on the Bologna “External Dimension” Strategy resulted in a standpoint that concrete actions should be based on agreed guiding principles. In this sense, it was stressed that innovation and renewal can only be successful if they build on an awareness of traditions and values: “academic values should prevail”. The idea that “the Internal and External Dimensions are interlinked” should be understood also in this context. Besides traditional values, the Bologna principle of partnership has been confirmed as a new “success factor”: “one of the greatest strengths of the Bologna Process” is that governments have joined forces with universities, students and staff, and international organisations and institutions. Since Bologna has started looking outwards, no region or country of the world is excluded from possible co-operation, despite the fact that individual European countries have sometimes strong co-operation with quite specific countries outside Europe<sup>3</sup>.

International co-operation in higher education is a two-way street, as are capacity-building programmes: we don’t only teach *or* only learn in them, but we all teach *and* learn, depending on our strengths and our weaknesses. Capacity-building programmes should not be observed in terms of aid-giving and aid-receiving partners. Everyone stands to benefit from this process.

## 2.6 New ways of co-operation

Traditionally, international co-operation in higher education, aiming at capacity-building or at a broader agenda, has been based on governmental support schemes and/or individual academic initiatives. In both cases, it has been a bilateral interaction based on national actors. The Bologna Process brought something new: European ‘nation states’ entered a new type of multilateral co-operation. The new agenda aims at constructing a common EHEA; this aim demands institutional co-operation across national borders and joint capacity-building. In fact, there are now two internationalisation agendas: internal or intra-European and external or global. There are also tools which support these agendas. Some of these tools are still nationally based (national co-operation programmes), but the real strength comes today from common European programmes launched and organised by the EU.

It is important to note that the Bologna Process and the related Lisbon Process (i.e., its ‘chapter’ on higher education and research) of the EU are not identical. All EU Member States (EU-27 of today) are members of the Bologna Process; membership in the Process is much larger (EU-46). Two decades ago, the (then much smaller) EU had already launched its action plans to support intra-EU university co-operation, Erasmus,<sup>2</sup> now open to 31 eligible countries: 27 EU member states and 4 other countries. With deep political changes in Europe at the beginning of the 1990s, a similar programme was launched for some countries outside the EU, Tempus, which has been extended until today to Central Asian and Arabic countries. Parallel to Bologna developments and to an increasing concern about recruitment at European institutions, co-operation programmes with

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<sup>3</sup> External Dimension Working Group (2007) *European Higher Education in a Global Setting: A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process*, Bologna Fifth Ministerial Conference, London, 17-18 May 2007. URL: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/londonbologna/index.cfm?fuseaction=content.view&CategoryID=23>. Last accessed 1 October 2007.

other regions of the world have been also set up, such as Erasmus-Mundus and other co-operation schemes<sup>4</sup>.

There is an ample room for capacity-building projects within these programmes. Mainly, projects currently consist of co-operation between three to five institutions. The Bologna Process has encouraged a wider scope: not only these small consortia but also larger academic communities are working together. It is time to analyse these opportunities and to plan further co-operation.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The Bologna Process has brought a new perspective in the increasingly internationalised higher education sector in Europe, and an incentive to look beyond Europe. European universities have experienced the added value of a broad intra-European co-operation and its effect to their capacity-building. At the same time, this experience can be, and should be, applied to a global orientation. Time is needed to assess effects of the Bologna external strategy, approved only half a year ago; however, it is here and it already influences in one or another way our discussions and our practices with international partners.

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<sup>4</sup> For ERASMUS (Socrates – Erasmus/Lifelong Learning Programme – Erasmus) see [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/erasmus/erasmus\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/erasmus/erasmus_en.html). Last accessed 1 October 2007.