The Bologna Process: An International Focus on Quality

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Objectives

- Realities facing U.S. higher education
- Overview of the Bologna Process
- Implications and opportunities for U.S.
Realities

• Economy

• Demographics

• Technology

• Need to increase % Americans with high quality degrees

• Definition of quality

• Workforce relevant – 21st Century Competencies
Percent of adults with a postsecondary degree

25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64
Source: OECD Condition of Education 2009
The Big Goal

To increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by 2025.
Why is quality in the Big Goal?

• Increasing the number of degrees requires attention to quality and transparency.

• Workforce trends indicate employers value the learning degrees and credentials represent.

• High-quality postsecondary credentials are an essential element in meeting the educational needs of a knowledge economy.
How does Lumina define quality?

Lumina defines high-quality credentials as degrees and certificates that have well-defined and transparent learning outcomes which provide clear pathways to further education and employment.
Quality is defined by outcomes, not inputs.

- Quality is measured by student outcomes, not by institutional characteristics.
- This approach leads to a student-centered higher education system.
- It’s about the learning.
The Bologna Process is “the most far-reaching and ambitious reform of higher education ever undertaken.”

Bologna is creating the European Higher Education Area, involving 4,000 institutions and 16 million students.
Bologna Declaration (1999): Key Motivations

• Insufficient ability to adapt to demands of massified higher education

• Different degree structures and lengths, not readable ⇒ Lack of attractiveness

• Mobility

• European citizenship with sufficient intercultural competence and European identification?

• Build common market for European graduates and researchers
The European Higher Education Area: A Vision and Agenda

- Comparability of the degree structures - mutual recognition and mobility
- Credits
- Increase the flexibility of learning paths
- Move from teacher-centered to student-centered
- Enhance quality development and assurance
- Create a common market of European graduates
The Bologna pan-European Reform Process

• Voluntary process

• 47 countries

• Reforms at national and institutional level, linked with other national and European reform agendas

• Shared responsibility

• Every 2 years: Joint Ministerial Meeting & Communiqué
The Substantive Agenda of the Bologna Process

• Promotion of mobility, quality assurance, widening participation ("the social dimension"), lifelong learning, and the "European dimension."

• The common approach to these objective is student-centered higher education based on flexible learning paths.

• Learning outcomes (defining them and building programs and structures around them) are central to the entire process.
Defining and aligning learning outcomes

European level
The Dublin Descriptors

National level
Qualifications frameworks

Institutional level
Program outcomes and assessment criteria (Tuning)
The Tuning Methodology

• Faculty driven in a discipline across institutions

• Discipline teams define learning outcomes - knowledge, skills, and application - to receive degrees at different levels in the discipline

• Learning outcomes - general and discipline-specific knowledge, skills, and application – how to demonstrate

• Surveys and field testing
We began with Tuning

- Tuning - defines learning outcomes by program, discipline, and subject area.

- Outcomes linked to national and international Qualifications Framework.

- Scope - at least 145 universities in 33 countries in Europe and 182 universities in 18 Latin American countries had followed suit.

- Tuning is “bottom-up” and based on faculty engagement. It’s tangible and real.
Tuning USA

- 6 disciplines (biology, chemistry, education, graphic design, history and physics) in 3 states (Indiana, Minnesota, Utah).

- State teams include representation from three or more institutions (e.g., research universities, regional four-year institutions, community colleges, independent institutions).

- At least two faculty members from each discipline in each institution, with additional representation by state, system and institutional academic administrators. Student participation in each disciplinary group is critical; at least one student serves on each subject-area team.
What we learned from Tuning

• Learning can and must be defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and application.

• Knowledge, skills, and application are both general and discipline-specific.

• These outcomes should define degrees at each level in each discipline.

• This process is different.

• Positive for economic times.
National Approaches to Quality and Learning

• Qualifications (degree) frameworks describe the levels and types of learning outcomes required to achieve a degree at a particular level ("ratchet up").

• They provide a common framework, language, and methodology for defining learning outcomes.

• Most countries and regions use qualification frameworks to define degree levels and learning outcomes – it is found to be a useful tool (that then needs attention, up-dating etc).
Bologna is leading to …

- Reform of curricula and teaching methodologies
- Innovation in courses, degrees, learning, student assessment
- Expansion of student services
- Improved student transitions between institutions and more opportunities to combine degrees of different orientations
- Greater institutional attention to employability at all levels (more external engagement)
- Expansion of recognition of prior learning and experience
- Greater institutional autonomy
- Quality assurance
Is any of this relevant to the US? Yes.

- Increasing the number of degrees we award *necessitates* attention to quality and transparency

- Higher education quality must be based on student outcomes rather than institutional characteristics

- **All** students need clear indications of their pathways through higher education based on what they will learn and be able to do at each stage

- Stakeholders will benefit from making the implicit, explicit

- For innovation to be successful – grounded in quality

- It is all about learning
How could we develop a national degree framework.

- Current framework – credit based
- Focus on learning
- Engage higher education, accreditors and employers
- Catalyze beyond individual pockets of excellent
- Time is now