Implications of the Bologna Process for Planning Education in Europe

Simin Davoudi

Paul Ellison

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Context

AESOP Action Programme:

- Planning Education
- Planning Research
- European planning policy
- Organisation and communication

Planning Education Working Group

- Commissioned a ‘Bologna survey’

About the Bologna Process

- Aims to create a compatible ***European Higher Education and Research Area*** across Europe by 2010

- The most significant and far reaching reform to the European HE in recent decades
- Consists of 10 action progs.
- 40 countries have signed up but,
  - Would the process lead to heterogeneous outcome, given the variety of national educational traditions?

Why a Bologna survey?

- Within planning, there are a number of concerns about:
  - The impact of Bologna on the quality of planning education
  - The impact over the employability of graduates
  - The imposition of the Anglo-American system across Europe
- Earlier AESOP Bologna survey in 1999 yielded limited results

Aims and scope of the survey

Aims

- To take stock of progress made towards the Bologna Process in different planning schools
- To examine key challenges faced by the planning schools in responding to Bologna reform
- To examine implications of the Bologna Process on the quality of planning education, qualification, quality assurance and accreditation

Scope

- The two-cycle degree system
- Degree qualification structure
- Professional qualification (certification and accreditation)
- Potential role for AESOP

Responses to the survey

- Questionnaire was sent to all AESOP member schools
- 36 planning schools from15 countries responded
- Countries responded include:
  - Belgium, Czech Rep., Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Serbia & Montenegro, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK

Adoption of the 2-cycle system

- 71% have adopted 2-cycle system
- 21% on track for adoption by 2006/07
- Uncertainties in Sweden and Norway

Composition of 2-cycle system

- **3+2** offered by majority of schools
- 4+2 provided by some schools (Czech Republic, Serbia and Turkey) 3+1 offered in others (UK and Netherlands)

Key Changes

- Masters level now taught in English (Denmark, Neth.)
- Growth of planning as independent discipline
  - Creation of a new planning school (Italy)
  - New, independent UG planning degrees (Italy, Netherlands)
- Loss of PG Diploma in planning (France)
- National reform of the prof. body and creation of a planning sub-division within PB for architects (Italy)
- Reduction of teaching hours (Italy, Czech Rep., France)
- Internationalisation of curriculum (Neth., Germany, Italy)
- Modularisation (Switzerland) and Semesterisation (France)

Main challenges of 2-cycle system

- Condensing curriculum into shorter time (Italy, UK)
- Effects of shorter study period:
  - Masters students with less academic experience (France)
  - Employability after 3 years
- Creation of independent planning degrees and curricula (Netherlands, Sweden)
- Teaching/studying in English and internationalisation of curriculum (Denmark, Netherlands, Italy)
- Managing transition of students from varied disciplines to Masters in Planning (Belgium, Czech Republic)
  - Determining admission requirements for 2nd cycle degree (Norway, Sweden)

Are challenges specific to planning degrees?

- Of the responses, 41% say ‘no’, 59% say ‘yes’

Examples of specific challenges:

- Planning PG has intake of students from diverse disciplines, with varied experience (Belgium)
- Local case study and reference needed, made difficult by teaching in English (Denmark)
- Regulatory links with professional bodies affected (France)
- Planning is thought to require a longer period of study (Germany)
- Wide-ranging subjects taught in planning accentuate challenges (Italy)
- Requirements of planning professional bodies (UK)

Advantages of the 2-cycle system (1)

Quality of planning education

- Development of planning teaching at UG level (Belgium, France, Italy, Turkey)
- Teaching basic skills and knowledge at UG level improves continuity and opportunity for specialisation at PG level (France, Turkey)
- Better quality PG students due to opportunity for employment after 1st cycle (Germany)
- More emphasis on practical application of knowledge (Italy, Spain, Sweden)
- More clearly defined skills, aims and outcomes (Italy, Netherlands)
- Improved skills and quality assurance procedures (Italy, Neth.)
- Clear consideration of academic difference in UG and PG levels (Netherlands)
- More opportunity for interdisciplinary study (France)
- Increased ability to compare courses across Europe will improve quality (Sweden)

Advantages of the 2-cycle system (2)

Acceptance of first-cycle qualification

- Increased international acceptance of German planning degrees (Germany)
- Acceptance ‘okay’ (Norway)
- Most UG students progress to PG level anyway (Netherlands)

Employability of first-cycle graduates

- More practical application may improve employment opportunities (France)
- Students unable to progress to 2nd cycle will have better employment opportunities (Germany)
- Scientific status of studies will improve employability (Portugal)
- Employment as trainees possible after 1st cycle (Sweden)
- 4 yr 1st cycle gives skills for employment (but competition for jobs leads to further study) (Turkey)

Advantages of the 2-cycle system (3)

Other issues

- Improvement to national and international mobility of students (France, Netherlands, Sweden)
- 1st cycle qualification improves graduation rates (Italy)
- More flexible study programmes – students can change after 1st cycle (Italy, Sweden)
- More coherence between professional profiles and studies across Europe (France, Spain, Switzerland)
- More institutions may consider introducing 1st cycle urban studies (Portugal)

Disadvantages of 2-cycle system (1)

Quality of planning education

- Varied academic experiences and planning expertise create problems in accepting masters level entrants (Belgium, Denmark)
- 3 year 1st. cycle not long enough for comprehensive planning education (Germany, Italy, Sweden)
- 1 year Masters not long enough to sufficiently educate students (Netherlands, UK)
- 2 year Masters not long enough to cover all subjects (Norway)

Disadvantages of 2-cycle system (2)

Acceptance of first cycle qualification

- Generally considered little acceptance of UG qualification (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy)
- In UK, 2-cycle system is traditional, no disadvantages related to UG acceptance are identified

Employability of first cycle graduates

- Immaturity of graduates considered an obstacle (Germany, Italy)
- 3 yrs too short to prepare students for employment (Czech Republic)
- Public bodies not recognising first cycle qualification in job adverts (Italy)

Disadvantages of 2-cycle system (3)

Other issues

- Delivery of course in English creates problems for lecturers and students (*Denmark*)
- Loss of autonomy for planning schools (*France*)
- Weakened links with professional bodies (*France*)
- Loss of a well known and accepted degree (*Germany*)
- Continuing cultural prejudice towards “non architect” planners (*Italy*)
- New system is less flexible, particularly for 1 year Masters (*Netherlands*)
- New system requires more administration, management and staff, putting strain on university resources (*Netherlands, Sweden*)

Adoption of DS and ECTS

- 55% of respondents confirm ECTS adopted, with further 15% soon to adopt
- 24% confirmed DS adopted, with further 15% soon to adopt

Key issues:

- Adoption caused initial practical problems but triggered innovation in curriculum (Netherlands)

Level and degree classification methods (1)

- **Time-based (number of years) approaches**
  - Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK
- **International credit framework**
  - Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland
- **Integrated national credit frameworks**
  - Germany, Italy, Sweden, UK
- **Learning outcomes & competencies generic and specific**
  - Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, UK

Level and degree classification methods (2)

- **Bachelor-Master generic descriptors**
  - France, Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, UK
- **Bachelor-Master Subject specific benchmarks**
  - France, Germany, Netherlands, Serbia, UK
- **Levels descriptors / indicators including sub-divisions within the Bologna cycles**
  - France, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, UK
- **Qualification descriptors / indicators including sub-divisions within the Bologna cycles**
  - France, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Turkey, UK

Implications of change

- Few responses to this question, reflecting lack of change
- **Positive implications**
  - Wider international recognition and transparency (Germany)
  - More structure and balance in studies through introduction of credit framework (Italy)
  - Removal of subjective elements of assessment through careful use of competencies system (Netherlands)
  - Improved acceptability of planning education by recognition of planning as scientific discipline (Portugal)
- **Negative implications**
  - More formalisation, less content discussions (Germany)
  - Lack of understanding amongst staff and students of change from a goals oriented to competency oriented system (Netherlands)
  - Increased stress for students (Sweden)
  - Chaos during transitional period (Serbia)

Bachelors degree - key learning outcomes/competencies

- **Evidence of a wide variety of approaches to specifying the learning outcomes**
  - Ranging from detailed specifications (as in the UK, Switzerland, Turkey, France,…) to broad generalisation (as in Serbia)

- **Large variations in the specified learning outcomes/ competencies between countries and schools**
  - Ranging from building construction (Czech Rep.) and engineering (Germany) to planning theory (Switzerland)

Masters degree - key learning outcomes/competencies (1)

Responses range from detailed specification of learning outcomes, e.g.

- RTPI's 17 indicative learning outcomes, such as:
  - Ability to articulate integrated strategies and plans with means of implementation
  - Understanding of market processes, built form relationships and community gain through development
  - Development of management skills: negotiation, mediation, advocacy and inter-professional working

Masters degree - key learning outcomes/competencies (2)

…to broad statements, such as:

- "More theoretical knowledge, specialisation" (Dortmund)
- "Reflection, know why" (Aalborg)
- "Students must complete a qualified thesis" (Stockholm)

- Illustrating the continuing diversity of approaches which are masqueraded by the Bologna's appearance of harmonisation

Direct admission without Planning Bachelor's degree (1)

73% accept direct admission to masters

- For a few, relevance of UG degree and/or professional experience in planning is key requirement (Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, UK)
- Approximately half require student to 'catch up' with planning studies by attending UG classes. Mostly this programme is tailored to student, rather than a standard conversion course
- Where **conversion courses** are used (Italy, Netherlands ,Serbia), content includes:
  - Introduction to logic, process and dynamics of spatial development
  - Key issues in spatial analysis, planning and urban design techniques, policy analysis, urban and regional economics
  - Acquiring basic knowledge in theory and methodology of spatial, regional, urban and rural planning, and basic mapping methods

Direct admission without Planning Bachelor's degree (2)

27% do not accept direct admission to Masters

- Some require UG degree in planning or specific degrees Arch. (Czech Rep), Planning (Dortmund), related degrees (Berlin), civil engineering (Spain), Human Geog or Envt. (Netherlands)
- Others require completion of elements of UG planning course prior to admission (Turkey, Portugal, UWE)
- UK requires good quality honours degree

Key professional bodies for planning

- National body, specific to planning
  - France, Netherlands, Republic of Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK
- National body, linked to architecture / engineering
  - Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain
- Others
  - Public authorities (Belgium)
  - Institute based (Portugal)

Course regulation / accreditation by a professional body

- 59% of respondents have **no** course accreditation / regulation

- 24% run courses that are **formally** regulated / accredited by a professional body (planning or architecture)
  - 75% of these are in the UK, the remaining in Venice and Prague

- 17% report **informal** arrangements (France, Netherlands)

Changes to criteria / accreditation procedures due to Bologna process

- 58% of respondents report **no change**

- Of those experiencing change, most (75%) say it is **positive**, benefits including:
  - Increased transparency regarding teaching responsibilities, administration and programming (Italy)
  - Creation of new planning-specific arm of professional body (Italy)

- From reports of **negative** change, problems include:
  - Lack of awareness of accreditation bodies and their accountability (Dortmund)
  - Risk of reducing teaching to administrative process (Venice)
  - Further burden on overstretched departments (Groningen)

Support from professional bodies to adopt Bologna Process

- Majority (80%) report **little or no support** from professional bodies. Reasons include:
  - "Wait and see" attitude before support is given (France)
  - Communication/organisation difficulties due to intricacy of system and multi-stage process (France)
  - Opinion that 2-cycle system will not be accepted by the profession (Germany)
  - Professional practice and academia traditionally distant (Netherlands)
  - Focused on own problems linked to transition (Serbia)
  - Reluctance to engage with Bologna based on fear of losing competences (Spain)

- Where respondents report **some support**, in most cases it is from an academic rather than professional body (Italy, Turkey).

- The UK is an exception, where the RTPI is seen as **supportive**

Support from Univ. / Govt.

University support

- Many consider University as playing an active role, but with varying levels and types of support:
  - Providing extra resources (Germany, Italy, Sweden)
  - Providing assistance with procedures (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy)
  - Support limited to ‘activity on paper’ or issuing directives (Neth.)
- Exceptions are UK (little support because system largely conforms to Bologna) and Netherlands (need for, and absence of extra resources)

Government support

- Government support receives little mention.
- Seen as passive (France, Norway)
- Except in Italy, where Govt. approved 2-cycle system with national law, as in Spain.

Other changes as a result of Bologna Process

Positive changes

- Rationalisation of fragmented planning education through cooperation between universities (Belgium)
- Facilitated profound change to curriculum and renewal of old, inappropriate content (Denmark)
- Introduction of more systematic technical education – GIS, CAD etc. (Germany)
- Catalyst for discussion on curricula relating to new social and political demands (Italy)
- Improved internationalisation of studies (Netherlands)

Negative changes

- Undermining of planning education in the faculty (Czech Rep.)
- Planning education reduced to an ‘option’ in masters in more established disciplines (Grenoble)
- Less planning content in architecture degree, but graduates can still register as planners with professional body (Turin)

Future role of AESOP

- AESOP as **coordinator** of planning curricula
  - Grenoble, Turin, Turkey, Venice
- AESOP as **supporter, promoter, exchange facilitator**
  - Sweden, Lisbon, Czech Rep., Lille, Wageningen
- AESOP involved in **quality assurance / setting standards**
  - Berlin, Belgium, Norway UMB, Grenoble, Serbia
- AESOP involved in accreditation process as **external evaluator**
  - Palermo, Reims, Berlin, Hamburg
- AESOP setting **admission criteria** for international students
  - Groningen
- AESOP working with **ECTP**
  - to revisit its Charter of Competencies (Grenoble)
  - to attract attention to professional standards (Nijmegen)
- No specific role mentioned
  - UK, Spain