

**Tamás Kozma, Magdolna Rébay, Andrea Óhidy & Éva Szolár (Eds.):
The Bologna Process in Central and Eastern Europe. Studies in
International Comparative Educational Science. Wiesbaden:
Springer. 2014. pp. 377.**

Reviewed by Adrienn Fekete and Eszter Varga

The book entitled *The Bologna Process in Central and Eastern Europe* is the second volume of *Studies in International Comparative Educational Science* edited by Kozma Tamás, Magolda Rébay, Óhidy Andrea and Éva Szolár. The topic of the book that Central European countries with similar historical background responded differently to changes caused by the Bologna process is relevant, current and significant in the higher educational research field.

This book aims to present the similarities and differences in the development of the Bologna Process in the context of national higher education systems in Central and Eastern Europe. The authors address the educational policy measures, some of which have taken place in the framework of the Bologna process, including institutional changes, accreditation processes and qualification systems. Moreover, they also shed light on the economic dimensions of these measures. Thus, we can receive a very broad overview of the changes that have taken place in the region. Similar objectives – such as the internationalization of higher-education; teacher and student mobility; and European academic cooperation – were formulated in each country to create the European Higher Education Area, but due to the different socio-economic systems, they have developed differently and have been facing several challenges, which attract considerable scholarly attention.

The book is structured to contain an introduction, eleven studies and a collection of the abstracts of the studies. The introduction written by Wolfgang Hörner sets an overall context for the questions and challenges of introducing the Bologna system in Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, Hörner succinctly compares the Western European situation to the Central and Eastern European situation.

In the first two studies, the authors outline a theoretical framework of the Bologna process. It is fascinating how these theoretical frameworks are reflected (or not reflected) in the national Bologna processes across Central and Eastern Europe. Kozma Tamas, in his paper, takes an approach towards the topic, which has been scarcely investigated by others. Namely, he provides a lucid discussion of the geographical situations related to political changes (rather challenges) in Eastern Europe in a comparative perspective. Besides, he calls attention to the fact that the

Bologna process has to be analyzed in a broader context since the “Bologna process in Central and Eastern Europe is not only a higher education reform”, but also part of a “long and painful political process” (p. 13). The other theoretical section of this book written by Tomusk elaborates on the philosophy of Gellner, Malinowski and Wittgeinstein on the European states and their role in the Bologna process. More specifically, Tomusk emphasizes that the political and cultural roots and potential of the European states should not be undermined since they are key to create a working European higher education system. This theory-based chapter serves as great foundation for the later sections of the book. It highlights that this part of Europe shows a very complex and varied picture because each country tries to preserve their national characteristics of higher education, at the same time, they attempt to catch up with the international conditions, thereby establishing the European Higher Education Area. The author draws attention to such organizations and institutions which have an important role in policy making in relation to the Bologna process mentioning all actors of the higher education (e.g. students) and their power in policy making.

All the other studies introduce a national higher education system of a specific Eastern European country (Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine) and the details about how the Bologna system was established in each cases. In addition, it is revealed as well that the European countries have a lot in common regarding the structure of the states and the different problems higher education has been facing since the introduction of the Bologna process.

Croatia is a special case because this country became a member and an integral part of the European Union only in July 2013. Complications caused by the EU harmonization at the institutional level. The writer concludes that perhaps, this intensified the relationship between the economic circumstances and the Bologna process in Croatia even more.

The chapter on the Czech Republic presents a wider prospective. The authors attempt to set a context by drawing a parallel between changes in educational policy and the Bologna process. The very detailed introduction of these changes – such as increasing student enrollment, institutional diversification) before Bologna supports the understanding of the Czech situation. The changes in Czech Republic, for example, educational expansion due to the Bologna process, which challenges the quality of higher education are very similar to the changes in other countries.

Corresponding to the complexity of the problems and difficulties mentioned in the previous chapters, the Polish Bologna process was also more than just a higher educational issue, according to Kweik, it is rather a means of European political integration. In his study, the degree structure in Poland is thoroughly explained in a comparative perspective focusing mostly on the bachelor degree. One of the most outstanding parts of this paper is the discussion of the labor market aspect, more specifically the social perception of the bachelor degree.

The study on Romanian higher education also addresses the changes caused by the Bologna process. The author presents debates on both the macro and micro level of the reform process. Moreover, she argues that “the Romanian government attempts to use the Bologna-umbrella for initiating and implementing national comprehensive reforms” (p. 358).

Similarly to the Romanian study, the chapter on Serbian higher education also deals with debates about Bologna using in-depth interviews. The study introduces all the participant of higher education. Since the Bologna process was a part of the democratic transition of Serbia, it brings about more significant changes in this country. The adaptation of the changes in higher education was more difficult than in the case of countries that started earlier the higher education reforms. In addition, in 2005, the corporative higher educational model had been established in the country. The strength of the study on Serbian Bologna process is the lucid discussion of the problems caused by the reforms.

Slovakia was one of the first countries in which the new higher education system was introduced in 2002. In his study, László discusses the process of harmonizing national legislation and the European standards focusing mainly on the unsolved problems related to the implementation of the new system. For example, he states that although the Bachelor program is aimed to prepare students for both further studies and the labor market, “the bachelor’s level is simply regarded as a precondition for further studies” (p. 267). Moreover, he underscores that more attention should be paid to the content evaluation of the study programs.

Setting a context for the higher education situation in Slovenia, Orosz starts her study with presenting the crucial political, economic and social changes happened in South Eastern Europe in the 1990s. She puts the emphasis on the formation of Slovenia and its integration to the European Union. Besides, she also indicates the significant role higher education plays in the increasing competitiveness between the European Community and the USA and Japan. In addition, she dedicates a whole chapter on the role of students in the implementation

process observing that students have the chance to share their views and represent their interests. More specifically, they participate actively in the quality evaluation process.

The study on Ukraine written by Kovács also starts with demonstrating the social, economic and political situation in the country with a special focus on the remnants of socialism. Kovács continues with outlining the structure of the Ukrainian education system. The figure (p. 329) presenting the Ukrainian educational system supports the reader in the thorough understanding of the specificities of the national system. Furthermore, she highlights that the difficulties related to the new higher education system is partly caused by the lack of constant monitoring of the implementation of the reform objectives.

In conclusion, the book is a good summary of the problems, dilemmas and controversies related to the introduction and implementation of the Bologna process in Central and Easter European higher education. One of the greatest values of the book lies in the fact that because sufficient time has passed since the Bologna system was introduced –in case of most of the countries –, the reader has the chance to view and interpret the policy reforms discussed in the book from an appropriate distance.