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Higher education systems all over the world have been going through substantial changes since World War II. The massive expansion of higher education and the changes it brought to higher education systems; the increasing role of higher education in knowledge economies and societies; changes in governance and funding structures; internationalisation and globalisation; and increasing competition can be listed as the main trends influencing higher education systems. Higher education institutions, countries and regions react to these trends in a variety of ways. The Bologna Process, which started as an inter-ministerial initiative of 29 countries in 1999, can be considered a major reaction of the European higher education systems to these trends. The Process calls for coordinated action and policies around the themes of internationalisation, learning and quality among the 47 member countries, and has suggested various action areas to deal with these themes. Despite the changing number and content of the action areas over time, they can be grouped into degree structures, mobility, lifelong learning, the social dimension and quality assurance. The initial reform suggestions concern degree structures, mobility and quality assurance, and are mostly structural in nature. Since 2001, reform areas with a ‘softer’ nature have also been included in the Bologna Process, for instance lifelong learning and the social dimension. The social dimension entered the Bologna Process agenda in 2001 as an ambiguous item. It was only loosely related to the action areas of the Process, and was not clarified beyond the reaffirmation of its existence until 2005. Its goals and the means of achieving these goals have changed and expanded, which has made the social dimension more comprehensive but less clearly defined. When the Bologna Process declared the creation of the European Higher Education Area in the benchmark year of 2010, it was still difficult to
discuss major reforms in the social dimension, unlike other action areas of the Process. Yet, at the same time, the social dimension is still part of the Bologna Process, and, as such, has to be addressed.

Since 1999 the Bologna Process has been one of the major drivers of higher education policies in its signatory countries. Improving the understanding of this Process is needed for better comprehension of the changes occurring in higher education policies. Despite the attention paid to the Bologna Process reforms in general by policy makers, researchers, the media and other social actors, the social dimension issue has not received this level of attention. It continues to be an ambiguous item with respect to its definition, its goals and the means of achieving these goals. In addition to this, the social dimension is a paradoxical policy issue in the Bologna Process. As will be discussed, the mainstream trends in higher education policy are opting to reduce public funding as much as possible, on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness. On the one hand, the Bologna Process promotes increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area and suggests measures with respect to the economic benefits of higher education. On the other hand, through the social dimension, it promotes participative equality in higher education. This book will also shed light on this paradox.

Although there is copious literature on the various aspects of the Bologna Process, focusing on 1999–2010, the social dimension, in contrast, has remained an under-researched area. It has only recently been possible to observe increasing attention being paid to the issue, mostly in the form of empirical studies with only limited or partial consideration of the social dimension, for example the Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process Report prepared by the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), ECOTEC and International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER) (2010a); “Evolving Diversity. An Overview of Equitable Access to Higher Education” (2010) by the EQUNET Consortium (Bohonnek et al. 2010: 2); “Future of Higher Education – Bologna Process Researchers’ Conference” (Brennan and Elias 2012) and “Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Funding and the Social Dimension” (Eurydice 2011). There are also studies on the access or participation (in)equalities in higher education (for example OECD 1974, Shavit 2007, Koucky et al. 2009, Brennan et al. 2009, Eggins (ed.) 2010, Goastellec (ed.) 2010). These studies discuss possible indicators to measure access inequalities and focus on their effect on the life chances of the graduates in general, without necessarily relating them to the social dimension of the Bologna Process. Current literature is investigating the social dimension mostly with regard to the social
repercussions of participation in higher education by statistically measuring and comparing participative (in)equality in higher education. This book, instead, explores the definition of the social dimension of the Bologna Process as a phenomenon with respect to its goals and means, and interrogates its reflections at national level. It looks at the development of the social dimension as a policy issue at system level.

As the Bologna Process is a multi-actor and multi-level policy platform, we may expect to encounter various interpretations of the social dimension by different actors. In this regard, the study first examines the differing understandings of the social dimension. This is done by analysing the interpretations of various actors of the Bologna Process. The formulation of the policy goals and guiding principles at Bologna level with the involvement of various actors is only one stage in the whole process. The Bologna Process provides policy goals and generic means, and the details of implementation are defined at the national, and possibly institutional, level. It is thus necessary to look at the national interpretations of the social dimension in order to better understand its meaning. Therefore the study looks, secondly, at the degree to which national implementation reflects international-level policies in relation to the social dimension. Finland, Germany and Turkey are included as the case study countries to elaborate the effect of the social dimension on the relevant national policies. Finally, the current position of the social dimension in the Bologna Process is discussed, based on the findings of the previous sections. The study examines the social dimension from a policy process perspective as an item of the Bologna Process that managed to enter the agenda, but was unable to develop into a proper policy to be implemented. It should be highlighted, however, that the study does not and cannot attempt an implementation analysis. One explanation of the current status of the social dimension of the Bologna Process is given through agenda-setting theories.

1.1 Methodology

Higher education research, as an interdisciplinary field, mostly has a case-oriented approach. Most of the research topics concern problems, for example the employability of graduates, the internationalisation of higher education and research, and implementation analyses of reforms such as those of the Bologna Process. In this sense, it is mostly carried out as applied research, which aims at improving understanding of the nature of a problem in order to intervene, and hence control it, more effectively (Patton 2002: 217). This book contributes to the body
of knowledge on the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The study analyses the social dimension in the whole of the Process, looks at different explanatory features, none of which alone can explain the phenomenon sufficiently, and provides “thick descriptions” of the social dimension. By analysing different realities of the social dimension, rather than claiming to present the truth about it, the study constructs an interpretation of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. Instead of stating how the social dimension should be, the study analyses different policy actors’ perceptions of the social dimension. Empirical knowledge is accepted as relative and mutually created by the actors through their perceptions of and interactions with the social dimension, as well as by the researcher through her interpretation of the actors’ perspectives and her interaction with the research topic (Miles & Huberman 1994: 8).

The data, collection methods and analysis are qualitative in nature. The grounded theory approach and case studies comprise the main elements of the design. The grounded theory approach, developed by Glaser and Strauss, is meant to build a theory rather than to test a theory. The concepts and categories appearing as a result of systematic analysis create the building blocks of a theoretical framework, which will finally explain the collected data. The central steps in the grounded theory approach are systematic and cyclical coding, categorising, comparing and explaining the relations between these categories to build an explanatory conceptual framework. This study takes these steps as its guidelines. In the initial phase of coding, the paragraphs or larger segments of texts are coded in order to discover the items that are related to the social dimension of the Bologna Process. This phase is followed by a line-by-line analysis in order to define the properties of each concept. In coding, the nature and meaning of the entire document are taken into consideration. Different types of documents are treated differently in coding and analysis. During the coding process, a myriad of codes appeared and changed over time; some of them disappeared, some appeared and some divided or merged. These codes are linked to each other through cyclical recoding and the systematic comparison of data from different actors and from the same actor over time. This process continues until a level of saturation is reached. The codes are gathered into categories and the relations among them are elaborated. These systematic comparisons are also fed by the knowledge originating from the literature. By this means, the risk of overlooking certain properties or dimensions in the data is reduced. As a result of cyclical coding, a coding scheme is developed to analyse the social dimension in terms of its development, goals and means and the surrounding issues. The underlying idea of
the coding scheme originates from the nature of the ministerial documents, which are considered to have weight due to having been signed by ministers. These documents define certain policy goals and means to be transferred to the national level. In the search for a definition of the social dimension, a compatible format is adopted which looks at the goal and the means of achieving these goals. Strategic goals are understood as the ultimate aims of the social dimension in the Bologna Process, operational goals as the intermediary objectives to reach the strategic goals, and the means as the concrete measures to achieve these goals. The coding process also brought out further categories that cannot be analysed as core elements of the social dimension, but cannot be neglected. These are the categories explaining the development of the social dimension by looking at its status, role and follow-up and its surrounding issues, which had a discontinuous relationship with the social dimension. These categories have secondary importance for the analysis; nevertheless, they are necessary for a wider and more complete understanding of the social dimension. In the comparative development of categories, the secondary categories especially help to show that the social dimension is a moving target.

The documents are coded with the help of the MAXQDA program. The practical help of the program in organising a large amount of data and its flexibility in managing the codes and categories are acknowledged. In the coding and recoding process, the memo function of the software made it easier to keep a clear track of conceptual information and the development of explanations of relations among different codes.

Since the grounded theory approach requires constant comparison and analytical development of the coding scheme, it is possible to observe a flow in the analysis from inductive approaches (exploring codes and constructing categories) to deductive approaches (applying the goals-means scheme in the analyses). This coding scheme is applied to analyse each actor's understanding of the social dimension, as well as interrogating the reflection of the social dimension at the national level with the help of country case studies. In this study, cases "are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps theorising, about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake 2000: 437). This study conducted case studies in order to better understand the social dimension of the Bologna Process at the national level. Initially, each case is analysed separately in order to gain a full understanding. The units of analysis are the higher education systems in Finland, Germany and Turkey. Next, the cases are examined in search of a pattern. The goals-means scheme is used as the framework of analysis.
The empirical basis of the study is comprised of the data collected from 1999 (the beginning of the Bologna Process) to 2010 (the benchmark year for the establishment of the European Higher Education Area). Even though it is not possible to limit social dimension-related issues, for example equality of opportunities, access to higher education, and student services, to a short period of time, the study examines only the properties and the reflections with regard to the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The data from the selected countries also focus on this period and issues relevant to the social dimension. Data are gathered purposefully to provide in-depth information on the social dimension of the Bologna Process, at two levels: the Bologna level and the national level. At the Bologna level, initial data are gathered in a comprehensive way from all members and consultative members: international stakeholder organisations\(^1\) and ministerial-level representatives responsible for higher education in 46 countries. In further analysis, the number of actors is reduced based on the attention they paid to the social dimension. To this end, all reported activities of the actors in the Bologna Process context during the last decade, such as the organisation of workshops, research and publications (policy and statement papers, reports and so on), are looked at, and the actors that have carried out activities in relation to the social dimension are included in the analysis. Annex IV and Annex V list the activities of the actors. It needs to be noted that this list is based on the European stakeholders and not the individual countries. This decision is based on the same relevance criterion. While stakeholders have rather stable interests in the Bologna Process issues, it was not possible to observe the same continuity in the individual countries. The country case studies show the diversity of the policies relevant to the social dimension, and hence deepen understanding of it as a policy element. Three countries (Finland, Germany and Turkey) are selected out of 46 Bologna Process countries at the time. The case study countries are different from each other in size, geographical location, state structure, societal compositions, the structure of their higher education systems and participation policies for higher education. This choice uses the great heterogeneity of the cases as an advantage “in capturing the core experiences and central, shared” patterns of the social dimension (Patton 2002: 235). Furthermore, I lived and studied in the selected countries, which provided me with the advantages of direct observation and enhanced my understanding of the context. In addition to this, I have had the opportunity to participate in some events of the Bologna Follow-Up Group. This information strengthened my
analysis by providing a wider and fuller understanding of the selected higher education systems, as well as the Bologna Process as the main context.

Interviews and written documents comprise the main sources of data. The major part of the data is drawn from written documents collected at both Bologna and national levels. These documents are comprised of reports (for instance reports from workshops or other international meetings, progress reports), policy papers, ministerial communiqués, national legislations, formal evaluations or studies, as well as survey data. At the Bologna level, the documents which are produced by the main policy actors of the Process are gathered from institutional websites and publications. Notably, not all documents were produced by the same individuals or within the same (funding) context, and this resulted in nuances in some cases. In order to reduce this effect, the study focuses on the regular reports of the actors, when available, and the documents produced directly in relation to the Bologna Process. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the written documents.

The national-level documents include the national reports for the Bologna Process (2002–2009), which were prepared for the stocktaking exercise, the reports and policy papers produced by the national-level Bologna actors, laws and regulations related to higher education, and existing statistics from international institutions, for instance Organisation for European Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO Statistics, EUROSTUDENT, national statistics offices and statistics units of the relevant institutions.

Semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with the representatives of the above-mentioned international stakeholders and with national Bologna actors in Finland, Germany and Turkey. The interviews were conducted within the context of the Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process Project, which was carried out by the international consortium of CHEPS, INCHER-Kassel and ECOTEC in 2009–2010. Two types of interview guidelines were prepared: one for the European-level stakeholders and another for the national Bologna Process actors. Interviewees were selected according to their expertise area and their involvement in the Bologna Process in order to maximise the richness of the gathered information. At the Bologna level all relevant stakeholder representatives (the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European University Association, the European Students’ Union and the Education International Pan-European Structure) and at the national level the relevant Bologna Process actors (representatives of
### Table 1.1 List of documents (1999–2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Type of document</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BFUG-Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries</td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All other declarations and reports available in the institutional website</td>
<td>1999–2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Students’ Union</td>
<td>Bologna With Students Eyes</td>
<td>2003, 2005, 2007, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Black Book of the Bologna Process</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Bologna at the Finish Line”</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy papers, declarations and reports available in the institutional website</td>
<td>1999–2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Council of Europe</td>
<td>Policy papers, declarations and reports available in the institutional website</td>
<td>1999–2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, the Education International Pan-European Structure, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and BUSINESSEUROPE</td>
<td>Policy papers, declarations and reports available in the institutional websites</td>
<td>1999–2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).
Introduction

The ministries, student unions and the Bologna Experts’ team members were interviewed. Please see Annex I for the list of interviewees and Annex II for the interview guidelines. The interviews were conducted to explore the specific knowledge and perception of the relevant policy actors, which was not possible to gather from written documents. The interview questions were designed to learn about the experts’ opinions (to gather information on policy making and implementation), knowledge (to gather the unwritten factual knowledge of the experts) and background (positions and years of experience) (Patton 2002: 243). In exploring different definitions of the social dimension, the interpretations of the stakeholders comprise an important source of information. While written documents provide information on the actions taken or suggested by these actors, interviews are expected to provide information on the rationales for these actions and the opinions and awareness of these actors on the social dimension issues. This is expected to provide a better understanding of the status of the social dimension in the Bologna Process.

The book explores the social dimension of the Bologna Process as an ambiguous and complex issue. The social dimension is ambiguous because there is no clear definition or common understanding of it. It is complex because various policy areas beyond higher education policies, such as education policies in general, taxation, welfare and social care policies, and various actors are involved. This study initially and primarily explores the social dimension as a phenomenon and elaborates different understandings of it according to different actors. Theoretical analysis is carried out secondarily and in order to discuss the empirical findings further.

1.2 Theoretical approach

In this study, the theoretical framework comes at a later stage and serves to explain the empirical findings. Since the social dimension is explored as a policy element, a theoretical framework from policy process studies – the Multiple Streams Framework – is utilised. Studies on policy process started in the late 1950s. Lasswell defined seven stages of policy making as “intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination and appraisal” in order to analyse policy processes (Jann & Wegrich 2007: 43). With the growing interest in the field in the 1960s and 1970s, these stages were redefined by different scholars (Anderson 1975, Jenkins 1978, May & Wildavsky 1978, Brewer & de Leon 1983). Today, policy process is conventionally divided into the agenda-setting,
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policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation stages (Jann & Wegrich 2007: 43). These stages are defined clearly for analytical purposes and are not assumed to be neat and sequential. The growing interest in policy studies also led to the development of many theoretical frameworks based on the stages of a heuristic model explaining policy processes.

Public policy has been defined differently by different scholars. Thomas Dye (1972) defines public policy as “anything a government chooses to do or not to do” (cited in Howlett and Ramesh 1995: 4). According to this definition, the government is perceived as the main agent of policy making, and non-governmental actors are assumed to influence but not to constitute public policies. Birkland explains this by the government’s authority to “act on behalf of the public” (Birkland 2001: 20). Another very essential feature Dye highlights is non-decision making. Governments can also decide to keep the status quo by not making any decision on an issue. Non-decision also constitutes public policy (Howlett & Ramesh 1995: 4). Jenkins (1978) defines public policy as “a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve” (cited in Howlett & Ramesh 1995: 5). This definition highlights the multiplicity of actors (governmental and non-governmental) and decisions, and defines public policy as a goal-oriented action bearing certain limitations. Lowi and Ginsburg (1996) emphasise the nature of action rather than actors. They define public policy as “an officially expressed intention backed by a sanction, which can be a reward or a punishment” (cited in Fischer et al. 2007: xix). Cochran et al. (1999) define public policy as “the outcome of the struggle in government over who gets what” (cited in Birkland 2001: 21). This definition highlights that decisions are reflections of power struggles over the distribution of costs and benefits. When the common points of these definitions are put together, public policy can be defined as government’s decisions to do something or nothing as a result of a struggle between various governmental and non-governmental actors. (Non-)decisions have a justification concern and involve sanctions. A policy can be in the form of “texts, practices, symbols, and discourses that define and deliver values including goods and services as well as regulations, income, status and other positively or negatively valued attributes” (Schneider & Ingram 1997, cited in Birkland 2001: 20).

As mentioned, the policy processes are analysed in terms of stages, starting with agenda setting. Kingdon (2003: 3) defines an agenda as “the
list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time”. Scholars tend to categorise agendas based on the closeness of the included issues to enactment and implementation (Cobb & Elder 1972, Kingdon 2003, Birkland 2007). Kingdon categorises them as the governmental and the decision agenda. The governmental agenda includes issues that are receiving attention from people in and around government, and the decision agenda is a smaller set of issues that are seriously being considered for authoritative decisions, yet without the promise of enactment (Kingdon 2003: 166). The governmental agenda is affected by the institutional, political, social and economic structures of the society, as well as the other way round (Kingdon 2003: 229). The agenda-setting stage of a policy process includes defining the problem, its alternative solutions, and the way and the time to push the issue into the governmental agenda, and explaining why this issue, and not others, should be included in the agenda (Jann & Wegrich 2007: 45). It is the process of selecting a subset out of various issues, problems and ideas which are defended by different policy actors. In this process, a multitude of political, social and ideological factors influence the agenda setting. The impact of different actors’ interests, institutions’ capacities to act, and the coupling of problem recognition and solutions are defined as equally valuable factors (Jann & Wegrich 2007: 47).

Taking this variety on board, Kingdon explains the agenda-setting process with the Multiple Streams Framework. The framework was developed based on Kingdon’s research results on agenda setting in the health and transportation policy domains in the federal government of the USA, and is published in *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (1984). Kingdon developed the Multiple Streams Framework as a revision of Cohen et al.’s (1972) “garbage can model of decision making in organised anarchies”. Both models assume that organised anarchies have problematic preferences, unclear technology and fluid participation. First, actors characteristically do not define their preferences precisely. The fuzziness due to inconsistent and ill-defined preferences can facilitate the achievement of goals, since precise preferences would increase the possibility of conflicts among the actors (Kingdon 2003: 84). An organisation “discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences” (Cohen et al. 1972: 1). Second, even though it is somehow able to function, the organisation’s members do not necessarily understand its processes (Cohen et al. 1972: 1). A member may know what his/her job is per se but in a fragmented way, without comprehending the functioning and aims of the organisation.
as a whole. The organisation “operates on the basis of simple trial-and-error procedures” (Cohen et al. 1972: 1). Third, participants and their investment of time and effort on an issue are not stable. The participation, or invitation for participation, in a critical meeting and the engagement of each participant vary tremendously between times and places (Kingdon 2003: 84). The garbage can model also defines four separate streams – problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities – and assumes that each stream has a life of its own, largely unrelated to the others. The process can be seen as “a garbage can into which various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants” (Cohen et al. 1972: 2). What comes out of the garbage can is a function of the mix of problems, solutions, participants and participants’ resources, as well as time and place. Consequently, the problems might be solved, disappear or be totally ignored. The model emphasises that the policy process depends heavily on the coupling of the four normally separate streams (Kingdon 2003: 86). While accepting these main features of the garbage can model, the Multiple Streams Framework differs in its emphasis on “organised” rather than “anarchy” in finding the patterns and structures of the agenda-setting process (McLendon 2003: 102).

The Multiple Streams Framework interrogates why and how some issues get onto the governmental agenda and others do not. This framework analyses the processes of issue definition and entrance onto the agenda, rather than analysing the mechanisms of decision making and implementation (McLendon 2003: 101). The framework takes into consideration a variety of actors and the impact of their various material interests and values on their perceptions and actions in setting the agenda. These actors’ actions influence the problems, policy and political streams, which are independent of each other. Each actor and the dynamics and characteristics of each stream can have stimulating or constraining effects on the agenda status of an issue. When two or all of these streams come together and “couple” at critical times and a “window of opportunity” is open, policy entrepreneurs have a chance to push their problems or pet solutions onto the agenda. Fully coupled issues have a better chance of getting onto the decision agenda and being seriously considered for an authoritative decision. Chapter 6 discusses the main premises of the Multiple Streams Framework and its relevance to this study, and interprets the social dimension of the Bologna Process through the lens of this framework.

The use of the grounded theory approach together with the case studies is the defining feature of this research design, as well as its most complex element. The grounded theory approach suggests simultaneous
data collection, sorting, refining, reducing, interlinking and, finally, transformation to construct a conceptual framework. These processes continue throughout the research in a cyclical way. As a result, the research moved from almost “knowing nothing” to certain categories and explanations on the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The country case studies illustrate the reflection of this Bologna-level phenomenon in the selected higher education systems. As mentioned above, the grounded theory approach starts with the perspective of developing a mid-range theory or improving a mid-range theory. The latter situation is more frequent than the former, and is also the case in this research. The findings based on the coding scheme are linked to the Multiple Streams Framework. The Multiple Streams Framework explains the entrance of certain issues and not others onto the governmental and decision agendas. In this study, the Multiple Streams Framework provides a lens for an explanation of the research findings, and not the only one. In this sense, it offers an interpretation of the social dimension of the Bologna Process, rather than the truth about it.

1.3 Structure of the book

The book has three main parts: the exploration of the social dimension phenomena at the Bologna level, interrogations of the possible reflections at the national level, and the explanations of the empirical findings through a mid-range theoretical framework. The research questions follow this line of approach by asking:

1. What does the social dimension of the Bologna Process mean according to the Bologna Process actors? Are there different understandings and, if so, how do they differ?

These questions are answered through the following sub-questions:

1.1 What are the role, status and monitoring of the social dimension in the Bologna Process?
1.2 What are the strategic goals of the social dimension?
1.3 What are the operational goals of the social dimension?
1.4 What are the means of the social dimension?

Research question 1.1 examines the overall development of the social dimension as an action area, questions 1.2 and 1.3 examine the goals of the social dimension as a policy item, and question 1.4 examines the
policy measures in order to achieve the goals of the social dimension. The sub-questions are answered separately for each Bologna Process actor. The answers are compared in order to conclude the development and the definition of the social dimension.

2  What is the relationship of the social dimension with the rest of the Bologna Process?

2.1  Is there a relationship at all?
2.2  Are there common or conflicting elements between the social dimension and the other action areas of the Bologna Process?

The second research question interrogates the (un)embeddedness of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. It shows its relations with the rest of the Bologna Process.

3  Does the social dimension of the Bologna Process reflect on the national Bologna Process policies in Finland, Germany and Turkey? How?

3.1  Are the main Bologna Process actors of these countries aware of the social dimension? How?
3.2  Are the above-mentioned goals and means of the social dimension of the Bologna Process observable in the relevant national policies?
3.3  Have these policies changed since 2001? If yes, have these changes happened due to the social dimension of the Bologna Process?

This question interrogates the national reflections based on the answers to the previous questions.

4  What is the explanation of the social dimension’s existence in the Bologna Process agenda?

4.1  How did the social dimension enter onto the Bologna Process agenda?
4.2  Did a “window of opportunity” open for the social dimension? When yes, which changes did it make for the social dimension?

The fourth research question was developed during the course of the research to address the curiosity that arose after answering the first
three questions. That is, after the first three questions were mainly answered in a negative way, it was considered necessary to interrogate the existence of the social dimension in the Bologna Process agenda.

Before discussing the answers, Chapter 2 provides an overview of scholarly discussions on the central themes of the social dimension, such as equality, equality of opportunity, the determinants of equal access and so on. In addition to this, the chapter discusses the expansion of higher education and the impact of access policies on achieving equity in access. These concepts are discussed in order to provide a basis for empirical analysis and hence enhance understanding. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Bologna Process as a major policy driver in order to contextualise the social dimension as the focus of the book. To this end, it sketches the main themes, action areas, means, actors and decision-making processes of the Bologna Process. It does not conduct an exhaustive discussion of the Process.

Chapter 4 introduces the social dimension and includes the major part of the research findings. It initially explores the main features of the social dimension according to different Bologna Process-level policy actors, such as the Bologna Follow-Up Group and the ministers, and compares them systematically. Moreover, the (un)embeddedness of the social dimension in the Bologna Process is interrogated by looking at its relationships with the other Bologna Process action areas that are introduced in the previous chapter. As a result, the chapter discusses the different understandings of the social dimension with respect to its strategic goals, operational goals and means.

In Chapter 5, the book explains the reflection of the social dimension on the national level with the help of country case studies. After briefly introducing the higher education systems in Finland, Germany and Turkey, these countries’ involvement in the Bologna Process and their participation policies, the chapter looks at the development of the social dimension in the selected countries through the level of awareness of the social dimension at the national level. Next, the implementations of the social dimension means during the last decade (2001–2010) are interrogated to see whether social dimension policy has had any direct impact on them. The chapter concludes with a comparison of the developments in the selected countries. This comparison shows whether or not there are patterns concerning the situation of the social dimension in the countries.

Chapter 6 is composed of three major parts. The first section summarises the main findings and explains the need for further analysis. The empirical findings identify the social dimension of the Bologna Process
as a policy item which got stuck on its way to becoming a proper policy. This section paves the way for the theoretical reflections on the empirical findings. In the second section, the study turns to the Multiple Streams Framework to shed light on this situation. The third section provides one interpretation of the research findings through the lens of the Multiple Streams Framework. By this means, it explains the existence of the social dimension as an item which managed to get onto the Bologna Process agenda and remained there without becoming a proper, implementable policy.

With its extensive empirical basis, the book contributes to the body of knowledge on the Bologna Process by advancing understanding of its social dimension and hence the knowledge base for the development of the European Higher Education Area. Furthermore, the study contributes to the development of agenda-setting theories by providing an application of them in an international setting and on higher education policies, which has not been done before. The study is novel because it is the only study to analyse the entry of the issues onto the Bologna agenda, unlike various empirical and theoretical studies analysing the policy tools and evaluating the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms.
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