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**The Lisbon Treaty’s “Europe 2020”
Economic Growth Strategy
and the Bologna Process**

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The Lisbon Treaty's "Europe 2020" Economic Growth Strategy and the Bologna Process

European regional economic integration, political economy, and socio-cultural cohesion are impacted through the implementation of the higher education initiative of the Bologna Process. The Lisbon Treaty's economic growth strategy Europe 2020 is linked to the Bologna Process, a higher education reform initiative of 49 countries in the European region. Given the governance leadership of the European Union, which has historically led the world in regional integration, the educational and cultural dimension is a new frontier becoming regionally integrated. Being a voluntary initiative, and there are not penalties imposed for noncompliance to the higher education standards. However, countries may seek to implement policies to gain favor with the European Union, and may use this as one of the several issue areas to demonstrate conditions that are on par with the standards of membership in the European Union. This research reveals the policy dynamics among the three levels of governance: supranational, national, and sub-regional.

Regional economic integration began with the economic and political cooperation, and has expanded into the space of educational and cultural policy with the formulation of the Bologna Process. The Lisbon Treaty's economic reform strategy of Europe 2020 was announced by the European Commission in early 2010 as an economic growth initiative. It is focused on the five key areas of employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy. Advancing the Lisbon strategy with the new Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Lisbon Treaty) effective December 1, 2009, these five areas are interdependent and are supported by the central component of achievement in education. The Bologna Process is complementary to the Europe 2020 strategy within its key area of education. Reciprocity of academic degrees, mobility of students, enhanced educational quality, and student achievement correspond to strengthened economic performance of the participant countries and of the European region. Europe 2020 is an example of how strategy in education is connected to outcomes in the economy, and it indicates the aspirations of the EU to compete successfully in the rapidly changing global economy.

This paper follows with an overview of regional integration theory, the Lisbon Treaty, the European 2020 strategy, and the Bologna Process. Finally there are two member state examples from within the European Union of Spain and Finland. Spain has undertaken significant education policy reforms in the past two decades, and Finland has had leading indicators in education and economic competitiveness and innovation.

Regional Integration Theory

The European Union is the most advanced area of regional integration in the world. This phenomenon was set in motion with the Declaration of Robert Schuman on May 9, 1950 that led to the European Community of Coal and Steel. "The pooling of coal and steel production should immediately provide for the setting up of common foundations for economic development as a first step in the federation of Europe," (Schuman 1950). Stemming from an economic integration

agreement, the momentum continued to build institutions and to establish juridical issues in what became the European Union.

Theories order our observations of the supranational and intergovernmental nature of European Union. The first decade after the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s brought the significant enlargement in 1995 of formerly nonaligned countries: Austria, Finland, and Sweden. The second decade brought even greater enlargements in 2004 and 2007 with formerly communist countries joining the European Union. This transpired in the global context recognizing the need for a new call for international cooperation following the international threats demonstrated during September 11, 2001. During this time social constructivist explanations added to the theoretical perspectives that had structured thinking about the European project in the decades preceding.

In the post-World War II era of the mid-20th century David Mitrany (1888-1975) advanced functionalist theory. He interpreted that the League of Nations had failed in the inter-war years because it did not have federalist cooperation required to synthesize the interests of sovereign member states. While recognizing functionalism to be a “spiritless solution” it is a cooperative solution that serves the interests of the engaged member states. “Cooperation for the common good is the task, both for the sake of peace and of a better life, and for that it is essential that certain interests and activities should be taken out of the mood of competition and worked together,” (Mitrany 1966 in Nelson, Stubbs 2003:188).

Building upon Mitrany’s concept of functionalism, Ernest Haas (1925-2003) provided the theoretical perspective of neofunctionalism embodied in his book *The Uniting Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces 1950-1957*. Writing about the critical years between the Shuman Declaration and the Treaty of Rome, he explained how cooperation in single function and economic issue areas will spill over into other areas for broader political cooperation. This was evident in the Treaty of Rome which established the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Agency (EURATOM) and prepared the way for future treaties to enhance the cooperation among member states. This system level logic demonstrated political, social, and economic effects. Continuing today regional integration has spilled into domains beyond the economic and political. The Bologna Process, initiated in 1999, is evidence of intergovernmental cooperation in the domain of educational and cultural affairs.

To challenge the theories of neofunctionalism, Andrew Moravcsik presented the liberal intergovernmentalist perspective. This emphasized the centrality of the member state government, and it challenged the deference of state in pooling sovereignty explained by the supranational concept of the European Union. The direction of the European Union has been confronted with grand bargains in economics and political affairs, and member states make critical decisions. Given that the European Union serves the member states, the role of the states in driving the agenda is emphasized in this theoretical approach. “A tripartite explanation of integration – economic interest, relative power, credible commitments – accounts for the form, substance, and timing of major steps toward European integration” (Moravcsik 1998 in Nelson, Stubbs 2003:243).

Lisbon Treaty

The Lisbon Treaty became effective on December 1, 2009. The major treaties preceding the Lisbon Treaty have been the Treaty of Nice (2001), the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), the Single European Act (1986), and the Treaty of Rome (1957). Since the immediately foregoing Treaty of Nice, the European Union had increased its membership to include twelve new member states. The enlargements in 2004 (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Poland) and in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) brought the membership count to twenty-seven sovereign nations.

The international regime of the European Union has guiding purposes of regional integration and global cooperation, and the Lisbon Treaty is significant for giving a single legal personality to the European Union as an actor in world affairs. The new High Representative for Foreign Affairs serves as the Vice President of the European Commission who oversees the new newly established External Action Service. Representative of the value place on democratic participation, the Treaty accounts for a greater role for the European Parliament and national parliaments in decision making. The continued enforcement of the Charter of Fundamental Rights is upheld, and this supports the concept of the European Union as a community of law in the six designated areas: dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, citizenship and justice.

The Preamble to the Lisbon Treaty affirms the centrality of education to the purpose of the European Union: “DETERMINED to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge for their peoples through a wide access to education and through its continuous updating,” (2008:3). Under Title 1: Categories and Areas of Union Competence (Article 2E) there is designation of education as a competency supported by the European Union. “The Union shall have competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States. The areas of such action shall [be], at European level,” (2008:48). This reestablishes the same designation to education policy as established in the Treaty of Rome (1957).

A decade prior to the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, the Lisbon Process began in 2000. The vision was to make the European Union the most competitive in the world economically. This looked beyond the university focus on the Bologna Process that had been launched the year prior, and during that decade members’ pursued economic objectives to be reached 2010. While the Bologna Process was part of the overall economic strategy, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) involved many policies beyond the scope of education. The aim was to maintain the balance between the domains of national policies and supranational level governance of the European Union (Gornitzka 2007:155). This OMC provided a new dimension and organization for political space within the European Union based on the premises of intergovernmentalism.

The European values of democratic politics and capitalist economic markets are governance characteristics that appeal to the broader region. Regional development is desirable for economic reasons, given the importance of having neighboring countries with the means to purchase exports. The continuing importance of regional policy is evident in the Lisbon Treaty. The emphasis on economic development of the twenty-seven member states and the European region is a bridge to the economic development strategy of Europe 2020.

Europe 2020

An economic growth initiative in the five key areas of employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy, Europe 2020 was launched during early 2010 by EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso. Supporting the Lisbon strategy, these five areas are interdependent and are advanced by achievement in education, which is a central component. Indicative of the aspirations of the European Union to compete successfully in the ever-changing global economy, education is inextricably connected to these economic outcomes. The multilevel governance of the European Union provides multiple levels on which policy is implemented: the supranational level of the European Union, the national level of the member state, and the sub-regional level within the member states. Beyond the supranational level, there is the European regional level, where policies such as the European Neighborhood Policy and Bologna Process have been delivered.

The five key areas are pursued under the umbrella of three mutually reinforcing priorities for the European Union to become an economy that are 1. smart, 2. sustainable, and 3. inclusive. The strategy to address the priorities and key areas has thus far pivoted around the concept of education and training. Regional policy continues to be important under the Lisbon Treaty, as it provides investment and services in the sub-regional areas that have had weaker economic performance. Particularly in education and training there have been numerous regional policy initiatives. These provide individuals with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to contribute to professional fields. “Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’)” read as follows:

RECALLING

the endorsement by the March 2002 Barcelona European Council of the ‘Education and Training 2010’ work programme which — in the context of the Lisbon Strategy — established for the first time a solid framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training, based on common objectives and aimed primarily at supporting the improvement of national education and training systems through the development of complementary EU-level tools, mutual learning and the exchange of good practice via the open method of coordination,

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that cooperation under the aforementioned work programme, including the Copenhagen process and initiatives in the context of the Bologna process, have led to significant progress being made — notably in support of national reforms of lifelong learning, the modernisation of higher education and the development of common European instruments promoting quality, transparency and mobility — but that substantial challenges still remain, if Europe is to achieve its ambition to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world (European Council 2009)

To attain these goals the European Union has established five targets for 2020. These are 1. Employment, 2. Research and Development Innovation, 3. Climate Change and Energy, 4. Education, and 5. Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion. The education target specifies reducing school drop-out rates to less than ten percent, and having at least 40 percent of those 30 to 34 years of age completing tertiary education (European Union 2011a).

The European Union is a normative power that embodies liberal institutionalism. This soft power concept is appealing to other nations, particularly nearby neighbors. Soft power, the power of attraction, rather than hard power, the power of coercion, is an advantage of the European Union. As the Europe 2020 economic growth and reform strategy are underway the collaboration of efforts across functional fields will ensure fruition in the five key areas.

Bologna Process

Situated within both the functional areas of education and external relations, the Bologna Process has become a leading regional initiative. While 29 countries signed onto the Bologna Process in 1999 when there were 15 member states, today there are 49 countries participating in the process including the 27 member states. Geographically, participating countries span from as westward as Iceland, as eastward as Russia, and to as southward as the Caucasus countries of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Engaged in the second decade, the higher education initiative of the Bologna Process complements the advances in the regional economic integration of Europe. This educational initiative is evidence of the accelerated interconnections among countries in the region that have expanded, beyond traditional economic and political functional areas of cooperation, into the educational and cultural sphere. This cooperation is also complementary to an economic strategy to enhance competitiveness in the European region with education being one of the five key areas of Europe 2020. Named for the Italian city of Bologna with the oldest university in the western world dating to the 11th century, the historical heritage attributed to the initiative invokes a storied legacy to provide momentum for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to carry forward into the future with enduring longevity.

The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area are initiatives of the European Union to advance social cohesion and to harness human capital. By standardizing higher education degrees across Europe and neighboring countries, the EHEA provides assimilation of learning as well as opportunities for greater mobility in the labor market as a result of shared knowledge. The objectives of the EHEA, delineated by the Bologna Process, are to ensure that education prepares individuals for success working in the knowledge economy. The emphasis on competitiveness as an objective to pursue is made policy by the countries' respective Ministries of Education, which have followed the direction of the European Union initiative. Assessing a country's national education policies in relation to the objectives of Bologna Process reveals the driving forces in the contention and coordination between national policy and European Union policy.

As the education sector was designated a supporting competency of the European Union by the Treaty of Rome half a century ago, still today in the most recent Treaty of Lisbon

education and cultural policy remain the primary responsibilities of national policy. While the core competency for education is situated within the member state, rather than the European Union, the European Union has taken measures to advance education achievement and its applicability to both European identity and the growth of the economy. The European Union can be viewed as an international regime managing interdependence. The European Higher Education Area aims to provide standardization of learning by equalizing university degrees. This in turn facilitates greater mobility in the labor market and greater competitiveness for the European region through reciprocity and mobility of higher education degrees and designation of degree structures.

The Bologna process works towards mobility in higher education through the following (Jayasuriya 2010):

1. Shared three-tier degree structure:
bachelor 3-4 years + master 1-2 years + doctorate 3 years
2. Creation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and promotion of common learning standards
3. Supporting student transfer within system through diploma supplement (DS)
4. Advancement of quality assurance and benchmarking systems for monitoring governance of higher education

As there is governance of the supranational entity of the European Union, of the state, and of the sub-region, there is also governance at the institutional level of the university. Three models of higher-education governance are described as follows (Dobbins and Knill 2009):

1. The “Humboldt” model of academic self-rule: “self-governing”
2. The market oriented model: “market-oriented”
3. The state-control model: “state authority”

Education serves the purpose as preparation for the individual’s participation in the economy, and therefore it cultivates human capital. As well as this economic purpose, education has the socio-cultural purposes to cultivate social inclusion, citizenship, and civil society. These two purposes can meet the demand for a more flexible and adaptable workforce. Each state may experience unique policy transitions as it adheres to the Bologna Process. Considering the education networks throughout the EHEA, “Education policy is said to be in need of re-orientation, in terms of its relation to macro-economic aims and to existing market needs. Educational policy is gradually transformed in an active education policy” (Lavdas 2006:124). Among the participant countries, there are various stages of progress to compliance with Bologna Process standards and to the targets for Europe 2020.

National examples from Spain and Finland: a Mediterranean and a Nordic Member State

Of primary consideration are a country’s new education policies in the response to the Bologna Process, which reveals the interplay between multiple levels of governance. This is situated under the broader auspices of understanding the supranational influence of the European Union on national policy of education, which remains the primary competency of the state rather than

the supranational entity. These countries have created new institutions to support newly adopted policies, and these transformations on the system level have consequences throughout the polity and the economy.

Spain joined the European Union in 1986, and during the past two decades the number of Spanish universities has doubled (OCED 2008:12). The national authority for education is the Ministry of Education and Science, which oversees the legal framework and student financial aid throughout Spain. The decades of the 1980s and 1990s experienced a decentralization of administrative power, as university authority shifted from the national level to the regional level. Among the seventeen regions of Spain, there are 50 public and 23 private universities. Government spending on tertiary education was augmented by 47 percent from 1995 to 2001. Given that the average increase was 26 percent, Spain's was the highest growth rate for government spending in education in the European Union (OCED 2008:15). Concerning the Bologna Process, Spain's updated Universities Act of 2007 conformed the higher education curriculum into the requisite three-tier degree structure. Even though it has met resistance of citizens and policy-makers, by 2012 Spain will become completely integrated into the Bologna Process (Brown 2008:27). The Spanish Ministry of Education and Science created the National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (ANECA) as part of the initial Spanish Universities Act of 2001. The European Credit and Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) became applicable in 2007.

Finland joined the European Union in 1995, and its population of five million is a fraction of Spain's 45 million people. Despite one of the smallest populations in the European Union, Finland boasts 20 universities and 29 polytechnic institutes. As component of the national policy, Finland situates education as part of its overarching economic strategy while it recognizes the importance for citizenship as well:

Education and research are pivotal to Finland's strategy for the future, which is directed at the well-being of its citizens, cultural diversity, sustainable development and prosperity. As a civilisation, Finland is built on knowledge and creativity and values such as equity, tolerance, internationalisation, gender equality and responsibility for the environment. Education is used to promote cultural rights as well as to develop knowledge and skills for active citizenship (OECD 2005:211).

While considerable autonomy for education administration has been given to the six regions of Finland, education policy retains greater central control than in Spain. During the years in between Spain's two Universities Acts of 2001 and 2007, the August 2004 Act in Finland reformed the higher education system. The three-tier degree structure is overseen by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). *The World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011* ranks Finland as the second highest level of tertiary education enrollment in the world, following South Korea, and Spain accordingly ranks seventeen.

Both Finland and Spain are member state countries of the European Union. Twenty-two of the 49 countries participating in the Bologna Process are not members, for them the European Union carries out this initiative under the auspices of external relations. Even though the education reform initiatives are driven by the appeal to soft power among participating countries in the Bologna Process, the results are concrete for the economy given the effects of human capital on employment and productivity. The

countries are good examples given that Spain has undertaken significant education policy reforms in advance of and in response to the Bologna Process and that Finland has had exemplary ranking in education, social services, and economic competitiveness.

Conclusions

The creation of institutions supports the maintenance of credible commitments, and within the past decades institutions have been created to provide educational quality assurance in response to the Bologna Process. The self-reinforcing nature of integration, as explained by neofunctionalism, provides a momentum for regional cooperation. The European Union as an international regime that governs economic and political affairs has in recent years initiated a network of interdependence into educational and cultural affairs. This venture into that domain is among the newest frontiers for regional integration. The Lisbon Process has institutionalized the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) for education policy.

The Bologna Process is complementary to the Europe 2020 strategy within its key area of education. Through reciprocity of academic degrees and mobility of students, enhanced educational quality, and student achievement there can be strengthened economic performance of the participant countries and of the region. The multiple levels of governance for the economy, politics, and society: supranational, national, sub-regional, and individual level offer measurement indicators to monitor advances across each realm of governance. Given the emphasis on reciprocity of higher education degrees and mobility of labor, there is greater understanding of concerns related to human capital and migration within the European region.

Indicative of the advances in regional integration theory, the Lisbon Treaty is guiding the European Union into the 21st century. The Europe 2020 economic growth strategy emphasizes education, employment, innovation, social inclusion and climate/energy. The Bologna Process impacts national policies in each of the 49 participating countries. Particularly, as explained above, Spain and Finland have made reforms and have established new institutions to monitor education quality and to ensure higher education degree reciprocity. This enables the objective for the mobility of students among the Bologna Process countries and provides the opportunity for their education to become competitive for employment in any of the participating countries. Originating from the proposal of Robert Schuman to share the productivity of commodities coal and steel between two countries, France and Germany, a half century later, the self-reinforcing momentum of regional integration has expanded among the growing membership of the economic and political union. This has moved into new frontiers encompassing educational and cultural dimensions. All of the realms of cooperation and integration are complementary and lead to a strengthened regional area of Europe that is unlike any other in the world.

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