International Qualification Recognition and Teacher Education: the Negotiation of Different Educational Cultures

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Abstract. Australian teacher education is now part of changed and changing global community. In March 2008 one Australian university launched its “education passport” in the interests of promoting more portable degrees. It is a symbol and also an invitation for the international qualification recognition, just like the Diploma Supplement and the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS). As a supplementary policy to the Australian higher education policies, the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement is expected to increase the teacher and student mobility in Australian and the Asian-Pacific region. This paper explores what the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement means for teacher education by locating Australian teacher education in relation to a review of the literature on international policy developments emanating from the Europe, and Australia’s responses to these policies.

Introduction

This paper focuses on Australia’s responses to, and engagement with, the Bologna Process for harmonising credit transfer arrangements, quality assurance mechanisms and degree structures throughout Europe. It seeks to better understand the internationalisation of Australian higher education policy and in particular its relevance for policy making and innovation in Australian teacher education. The Bologna Process involves at least 45 European countries in creating a European Higher Education Area by 2010 through greater consistency in degree structures, credit transfer and quality assurance across 4,000 higher education institutions [1]. This paper has generated and collected primary evidence of the experiences (i.e. descriptions and explanations); conceptions (i.e. documented representations) and perceptions (i.e. views and judgements) of key higher education policy actors in Government agencies and universities in Australia. This paper seeks to contribute to a better knowledge of the internationalisation and contextualisation of teacher education by addressing three related research questions. First, what tensions, if any arise in national efforts, (specifically those initiated by the Australian Government) to respond to and engage international policy developments (in particular the Bologna Process)? Second, how have the processes of translation and re-contextualisation affected the realisation of the Bologna Process in Australian higher education? Third, in the policy actions undertaken to engage with and respond to the Bologna Process, what slippages occurs as national interests make use of international policy drivers to progress change?

Literature Review

Through the conceptual work of the globalisation, it is necessary make a review about the issues which relevant to this paper, which including the European Diploma Supplement, the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement, the teacher education.
The European Diploma supplement and the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement

Here it is necessary to briefly explain the key features of a Diploma Supplement. The Diploma Supplement is an addition to the degree or diploma document which is issued to graduates. The purpose of the Diploma Supplement is to make qualifications more transportable and transparent by supplying information about the education system in which the qualification was gained [2]. This information is expected to be useful to the graduates and potential employers.

The Diploma Supplement as a European initiative is a document that is attached to a higher education diploma and aims to improve international ‘transparency and at facilitating the academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates)’. Importantly, the idea for the Diploma Supplement was jointly developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [3].

The Diploma Supplement has its roots in the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, also known as the Lisbon Convention. The Berlin Communiqué calls ‘for every student graduating as from 2005 to receive it automatically and free of charge’. The aim of the Diploma Supplement is to describe the qualification in an easily understandable way and relate it to the higher education system within which it was issued. The Diploma Supplement is included in the European Commission’s plans to create a single framework for the recognition of qualifications and competences across Europe. Thus, the Diploma Supplement provides details of individual qualifications which have been successfully passed. It is not intended as a replacement for the actual credential. Its overall aim is to provide information to employers to facilitate recognition and mobility across Europe. It is against this backdrop that the next section explores further Australia’s engagement with the Bologna Process.

In 2006, the Australian Government created the concept of the Australian Diploma Supplement which has the similar content with the European Diploma Supplement. But the European term “Diploma Supplement” is problematic in the Australian context. With the first word, the problem is that, while “diploma” in the European context means an academic award, in Australia it refers to a particular type of award. The word “supplement” also contains problems in that it conveys the idea that the documentation is an “add-on” or of lesser importance that the testamur. On 10 January 2007, the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, announced that a consortium of universities had been commissioned to develop a single agreed template for an Australian Diploma Supplement. The successful consortium represented 14 universities led by the University of New England, the University of Melbourne, and the Australian National University. They also decided to change the name Australian Diploma Supplement into the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS). The AHEGS is providing enhanced documentation to graduates to improve the transparency and portability of qualifications, and to facilitate international mobility. It will be a distinctively Australian document that promotes the quality of the Australian higher education system and the academic achievements of graduates from Australian higher education institutions.

Teacher Education and Bologna Process

The Bologna Process is not meant as an argument in favour of the standardisation and implementation of “one European model” of teacher education or of university education more generally [4]. The Bologna Process can provides the structuring dimensions to teacher education around mobility, in quality assurance and internationalisation.

The OECD has made a broad international study of policies for attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers in schools. The report Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers aims to provide a comprehensive international analysis of teacher education [5]. The report focuses on issues affecting school teacher in twenty five (25) countries in terms of their
preparation, recruitment, work and careers. In this report, there are several key issues for teacher education policy; teachers’ knowledge and skills; the recruitment, selection and employment of teachers, retaining effective teachers in schools, and developing and implementing teacher policy. Teachers are the most significant and central resource in improving the efficiency and equity of teaching. If competent people encouraged to work as teachers, it is easier to achieve high quality teaching and to ensure students can access to high quality learning.

The main concerns of the report include: the attractiveness of teaching as a career, developing teachers’ knowledge and skills, recruitment, and the limited connections between teacher education, professional development and teacher needs. Some countries experience high rates of teacher attrition, especially among new teachers. Other countries have a large over-supply of qualified teachers. Both issues raise their own policy challenges.

The trend appears to that all teacher education is gradually being provided in university-level institutions. For example, in Austria the teacher training colleges are being replaced by new pedagogical universities. Likewise, more countries are introducing consecutive models of teacher education with a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree structure, and with the Master’s component providing teachers’ professional education. Concurrent models of teacher education are currently the most common in Europe, particularly at the primary and lower secondary education levels [6].

There are indications that the mobility of teachers between countries is growing. A number of countries are involved in joint teacher exchange and networking arrangements. There are also indications of countries actively recruiting teachers from abroad to help meet teacher shortages, including the provision of language teaching to children from immigrant groups. The limited mobility of teachers between schools, and between teaching and other occupations, is seen as restricting the spread of new ideas and approaches, and resulting in teachers having few opportunities for diverse career experiences. Further, this lack of mobility is said to mean that teacher shortages in some regions can exist in parallel with an oversupply of teachers in others. Providing incentives for greater mobility of teacher removing barriers are seen as important policy responses [5].

**Teacher Registration, Accreditation and Mobility**

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Policy Analysis on the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement

The final report to the Department of education, employment and workplace relations, Proposal for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement provides a detailed introduction to the European Diploma Supplement and the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement. The interviews through the university officials assist the ideas from the report and supply the details which related to teacher education.

An Introduction of European Diploma Supplement (DS)

Through the Proposal for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement, the concept of the DS can be traced back as far as 1979 when UNESCO launched the idea as part of its broader program on the recognition of degrees and qualifications. As such, the DS has its roots in the realm of international agencies and international education, and is not a European invention. However, history to date has shown that it only really has taken off in Europe. This can be traced to the early 1990s process coordinated jointly by UNESCO, the European Commission and the Council of Europe, formalized in 1997, wherein the DS was not only seen as a tool for recognition, but, more importantly from an European perspective, also as a tool to enhance mobility.

It should be noted that during that period, from a policy perspective, mobility was very high on the agenda so anything that could facilitate and stimulate mobility received a positive reception in Brussels. The Diploma Supplement (DS) in Europe is seeking where Europe stands in the implementation of the DS, whether it has changed with respect to the objectives, structure and content of the DS, and what the experiences of industry, students and recognition agencies, are with the DS. To answer these questions, we have used document analysis and have undertaken a short survey amongst the stakeholders identified. For a long time anything to do with education was closely guarded by the member countries as belonging ‘to them’ and not to ‘Brussels’ (also known as the subsidiarily principle). The focus is not only on qualifications, but also on competencies, a much broader field than what UNESCO envisaged in 1979. The much emphasis is placed on competencies. There is little evidence yet of the extent to which it is achieved, but Europe clearly is on a move towards competencies as an essential component of both its higher and vocational education systems.

The following table 1 are the samples for the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement. This table is the sample which the Australian institutions will adept as the supplement for their graduates. The award, awarding institutions and the graduate’s academic achievement would be found in this tale.

The reason for this situation is complicated, it contains the historical, political and educational reasons. In Australia, the Federal Government provides the fund to the universities, the State Government manage the universities which located in the State, but the universities also need the “autonomy” of academic, it leading the contradiction with the requirements of the three. The other reason is caused by the special nature of the teacher education profession. In Australia, every primary or secondary teacher should hold the teacher qualification which provide by the different State. After obtaining the Bachelor of Teaching and Master of Teaching degrees, most of the students could get
the qualification of teacher education. For this purpose, the academic achievement requirements for students should meet the requirements of the State that the university located in. The other major such as nursing facing the similar situation, it is the reason the policy maker only take the Bachelor of Arts or Master of Arts as the sample.

Table 1. Samples of AHEGS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Sample 1</th>
<th>Sample 2</th>
<th>Sample 3</th>
<th>Sample 4</th>
<th>Sample 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The graduate</td>
<td>Henry Allen</td>
<td>Elizabeth Simpson</td>
<td>Janice Brown</td>
<td>Richard Smith</td>
<td>Brain Roberts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The award</td>
<td>Bachelor of Business, with specialisation in accounting Course</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts, with specialisation in sociology and political science</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts with Honours, with specialisation in Gender Studies and Sociology</td>
<td>Master of Arts by Research, Archaeology and Anthropology</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy, with specialisation in Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awarding institution</td>
<td>University of Eastern Australia</td>
<td>University of Eastern Australia</td>
<td>University of Eastern Australian</td>
<td>University of Eastern Australia</td>
<td>University of Eastern Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate’s academic achievements</td>
<td>Status: Awarded</td>
<td>Status: Awarded</td>
<td>Status: Awarded</td>
<td>Status: Awarded</td>
<td>Status: Awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: 03 March 2013</td>
<td>Date: 03 March 2013</td>
<td>Date: 29 July 2014</td>
<td>Date: 05 July 2014</td>
<td>Date: 14 December 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared with the more practical majors such as teacher education or nursing, the Arts degree seems easier to compare with each other. It is a hard task that applying the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement to the practical majors, it need the efforts both, Federal Government, State Government and universities.

**The Diploma Supplement (DS) and the Bologna Process (BP)**

The Bologna Process (BP) was incorporated into the overarching Lisbon Strategy, the EU attempt to turn Europe into the world’s most competitive and dynamic market by 2010. Through this, higher education became firmly locked into a European socio-economic and development policy that took it out of its nation-based focus that had been the consequence of the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. Whilst the focus of the original Bologna Declaration very much was on structure of systems and alignment of systems, what currently are the focal points are ‘the introduction and implementation of the principles of student-centered learning and problem-based learning across all the signature countries’ higher education systems.
The European ministers of education in the London Communiqué: “We firm our commitment to increasing the compatibility and comparability of our higher education systems, whilst at the same time respecting their diversity” [8]. Yet the respect for diversity also highlights some of the weaknesses of the process. As ESIB already commented in 2005 with respect to local variations and diversity: “These procedures are jeopardising the main aim of the Diploma Supplement: the readability, which is endangered by the use of different formats. In this way also employers will have a harder time getting used to it” [9]. The 2007 report reinforces this point: “Although the Diploma Supplement is widely in place throughout Europe, there seems to be an enormous lack of awareness about this instrument, in particular amongst employers and even more amongst the wider public” [9].

The Diploma Supplement is being introduced in a growing number of countries, the employers are still insufficiently aware of it. The national employers’ associations in the various European countries on their assessment of the DS resulted in a meagre response. Their members in general were very much unaware of its existence, employers generally are not familiar with the DS and where they are, it seems not likely to be of obvious utility to them. The DS is mostly used for international mobility purposes, and is important to small countries with systems that are not widely known. For Australia, the DS to be an effective instrument, a clear information and dissemination strategy focusing on the business community would seem essential. The policies which mentioned the report is not separated, it connects with the teacher education closely.

**Conclusion**

It is important to study European policy influences on Australian higher education as these are likely to affect the international recognition of its academic qualifications. As the consensus building process for creating an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement gets underway, there are some important issues to be considered. First, it will be important to understand the role of the state in developing the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement. Second, it will be useful to consider the range of university work embraced by the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement. Third, the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement is being driven by international circumstances, so we need a better appreciation of these. Fourth, given possibilities for convergence and divergence in universities’ uses of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement, these will require close investigation. Fifth, it will be valuable to establish whether there is any resistance to the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement. Sixth, given the anticipated effects of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement, and the Bologna Process more generally, there is a need to inquire into expectations regarding international competition in higher education market. Overall the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement provides a key policy setting for addressing changes borne of European influences on Australian higher education policy.

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