

## BOOK REVIEW

**CRISTINA SIN, AMÉLIA VEIGA, ALBERTO AMARAL.  
EUROPEAN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND HIGHER  
EDUCATION. ANALYSING THE BOLOGNA PROCESS.  
London, Palgrave Macmillan, Series: Issues in Higher  
Education, 2016, 236 pages, ISBN print: 978-1-137-50461-6**

CRISTINA SIN, AMÉLIA VEIGA, ALBERTO AMARAL. EUROPEAN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION. ANALYSING THE BOLOGNA PROCESS (Implementarea politicii europene și învățământul superior. Analiza Procesului Bologna). Londra, Palgrave Macmillan, Colecția: Provocări în învățământul superior, 2016, 236 pagini, ISBN print: 978-1-137-50461-6

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The continuous update on breaking developments has shown us we should be able to have the strength and ability to deal in a timely fashion with emerging issues. And education is no exception. To this discussion, Cristina Sin, Amélia Veiga and Alberto Amaral provide, through the book “European Policy Implementation and Higher Education Analysing the Bologna Process”, a critical analysis of the implementation of the Bologna Process, as well as its relationship with the broader policy context. They argue compellingly that the implementation of the Bologna Process can be seen either as a “heaven-inspired opportunity to bolster the standing of the ministers of education” or as “the European Commission’s golden opportunity to increase its creeping competence in this area of national sensitivity”, depending on the perspective from which the project is analysed. They also bring valuable credentials, as their familiarity with the subject radiates through their vast work experience in the field of accreditation and research in the higher education area.

The introductory chapter provides a clear overview of the field that draws together the main issues and concerns explored throughout the book, and explains the logic of the approach to these issues. The first part of the book contains four chapters and seeks to offer a clear image of the higher education policy context in which the Bologna Process had succeeded in becoming one of the fundamental reforms in the history of European higher education. Across the higher education landscape, which can be considered an area of

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national sensitivity, the implementation process has had its fair share of challenges. While implementing European policies, the national states have struggled with the issue of policy appropriation, as well as concept of policy implementation. There can, therefore, be no doubt as to the importance of and the need for the continuation and revitalisation of this paramount European project.

In chapter 2, the authors begin by introducing the delegation theories, and the concepts of “community method”, “agency loss” and “open method of coordination”, and then explore the multifaceted process of policy making in the European Union. This allows understanding of what the European coordination really means. Chapter 3, entitled “European Higher Education Policies”, is concerned with how the Bologna Process, once a flagship enterprise of European higher education, has unfolded within the higher education policy context.

Furthermore, the authors explain that it would be unwise to view the Process in isolation, disconnected from the global policy arena. Therefore, in an intricate attempt at finding the correct answers, Sin, Veiga and Amaral consider, in the next chapter, the implementation problems that have given them the opportunity to launch the discussion on the meanings of policy implementation. This chapter is a clear display of the authors’ view that it would be advisable to direct the research objectives towards the implementation at the institutional level, and start considering the Bologna Process after the year 2010. Chapter 5 looks at the broad issues posed by the European policy. The three key strategic objective in the construction of the EHEA (mobility, employability and international attractiveness) are thoroughly explained.

The second part is dedicated to the enactment of policy in Portugal. The case study is meant to explore the achievement of the three key objectives of the Bologna Process, while being enriched by thought-provoking data on practices and perceptions collected between 2013 and 2015. In order to be able to address the country’s implementation problems from an objective standpoint, this chapter proves itself to be very valuable in exploring the unique characteristics and components of the Portuguese higher education legislation.

Chapter 6 outlines the factors that have shaped the Bologna Process adaptation in Portugal, leading to a customized implementation which did not, paradoxically, identify with the European Project's goals of promoting employability and mobility. The next section explores employability in the Portuguese context, having as a basis the definition proposed in the context of the Bologna Process. Perhaps the most valuable part of the chapter, the authors reveal the perceptions of Portuguese academics, students and employers in an attempt to accentuate the importance that employability seems to hold for these stakeholders.

Featured as an overarching objective of the Bologna Process, the mobility issue in Portugal is regarded as a good intention which has partially materialised due to financial constraints and curricular inflexibility, among others. Moreover, chapter 8 puts emphasis on students' and academics' perceptions on the impact of the Bologna Process on mobility, as well as the aspects which have influenced the achievement of this objective in Portugal. Furthermore, chapter 9 tackles the issue of the higher education sector's attractiveness, which is one of the European political objectives, as well as the Portuguese government' and higher institutions' approach towards internationalisation.

The last part of the book discusses general issues of European policy making and implementation. In order to understand the nature of the Bologna Process as it unfolds at national level policy, the authors stated the reason of their decision to use the case of Portugal and drew conclusions on how the European project has generated changes in the Portuguese higher education context.

As the reader is carried throughout the book, it becomes more apparent that at the core of their argument, Sin, Veiga and Amaral underscore the necessity of approaching the Bologna Process implementation as a multifaceted project that has encountered highly complex difficulties due to political instability, legislative difficulties, etc., which can seriously limit the spectrum of policy implementation instruments that can be utilized by the various national institutions.

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