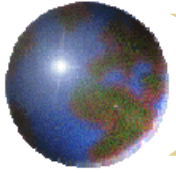


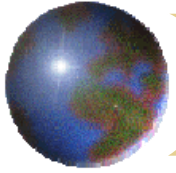
The Core of Bologna: It's a Process not a Processed Meat

**Clifford Adelman, Institute for Higher Education
Policy; March 6, 2009 for the American Federation of
Teachers**



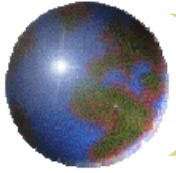
So what is the Bologna Process, and why do we need to pay attention?

- **It is the largest restructuring of higher education ever undertaken.**
- **It involves 16 million students in 46 countries, with over 4000 institutions of higher education, some of which have been doing business the same way for 800 years.**
- **They have all agreed to adopt common rules for degrees, credits, and certification and communication of student outcomes.**
- **That means they will at least sing in the same key, though not necessarily the same tune.**
- **It's going to be the global paradigm for higher education within 15 years. Pieces have already been imitated on 3 continents.**
- **They've been at it for a decade—and it's still a work in progress.**



They call it “convergence.” What does that mean?

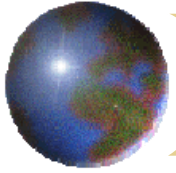
- A form of technology transfer that brings nations from different platforms of development to the point of embracing the same paradigm.
- **Economists tell us: nations that learn from other nations grow; those that don't, won't.**
- It's their turn to teach and our turn to learn, but up to now they haven't taken on the role of teaching North America, and we haven't even registered for the course.
- **That's all starting to change.**



Let's start with "accountability."

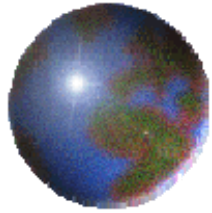
We know what it means, right?

- **Post your graduation rates, demographic mix, time-to-degree, job placement rates.**
- **Post some NSSE or CCSSE data on how much your students said they did X or liked Y.**
- **Throw in a test or two to show how much a random sample of student volunteers improved in "critical thinking" between entrance and exit.**
- **You've done it! Everybody goes home assured that this is what higher education is about.**
- **You resolved the issue---and did it in 18 months!**



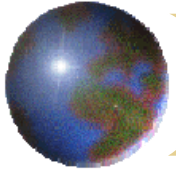
All of that is nothing more than documentation and information

- **There's nothing wrong with it, but it's not accountability.**
- **To say you passed out 2357 degrees for which students earned 120 credits (40 in the major) and a 2.75 GPA or better says absolutely nothing about the meaning of the degree.**
- **Nor does a 1.22 S.D. value-added metric for 100 of your students on a test.**
- **And none of this documentation and information has any effect on the lives of students.**
- **There are no reference points in any of this.**



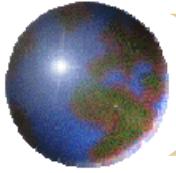
**Neither the Spellings'
Commission nor the higher
education community's
response. . .**

**evidence any idea whatsoever of
what accountability means.**



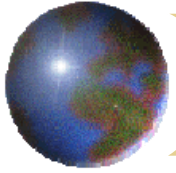
The Bologna Accountability Loop: a more meaningful approach and direction

- Qualification frameworks: Pan-European and national (the nationals are slow in arriving).
- Tuning, the disciplinary qualification frameworks, which is what we're about to start exploring in 4 state systems in the U.S.
- A student-centered credit currency: its relationship to qualifications and curriculum reform.
- Diploma Supplements: documentation of student attainment, closing the loop.
- Result? a "zone of mutual trust" hence enhancing recognition of degrees and mobility for students.



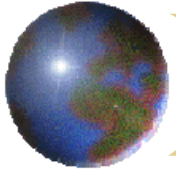
What's a Qualification Framework?

- What does each level of degree we award mean? What does it represent in terms of student learning? How does it differ from the levels immediately below and immediately above it? Common sense questions.
- U.S. arguments on this field stagnate on process issues and in a generalized diction that George Orwell called "blah"; under Bologna, everything is about content.
- And at all levels of the qualifications frameworks of Bologna, the criteria of content are ratcheted up from previous levels.
- They do it for the "short cycle" (our Associate), Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral.



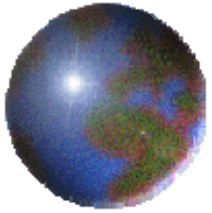
5 learning outcome constructs in qualification frameworks

- **Knowledge and understanding**
- **Application of knowledge and understanding**
- **Fluency in use of increasingly complex data and information**
- **Breadth and depth of topics communicated; range of audiences for communication**
- **Degree of autonomy gained for subsequent learning.**



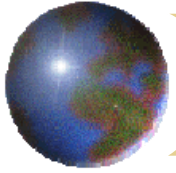
Whether pan-European or national

- the statement for each degree level is not a goal---it's a warrantee. By inverse logic it says that the student who did **not** "demonstrate" the specified levels of knowledge, application, competence, etc. did **not** earn a degree.
- In terms of quality assurance, each institution must thus be able to "demonstrate" that it's students have "demonstrated."



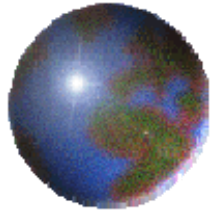
Still, the degrees are not international

But the disciplines are, so. . . .



Tuning: disciplinary frameworks from the ground up

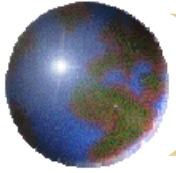
- **Created by faculty, not ministers;**
- **1st round (2001) with 9 disciplines, 137 universities, 16 countries;**
- **2nd round (2005) added 16 disciplines; another 13 countries.**
- **And parallel undertakings in what are called “Thematic Networks,” e.g. in Engineering and Music, that added hundreds of other institutions.**



Tuning offers the most noted case of Bologna adaptation outside Europe:

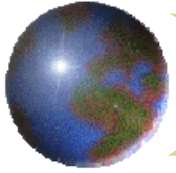
**Tuning Latin America (ALFA) with 12
disciplines, 182 universities, 18 countries.**

Something resonates here!



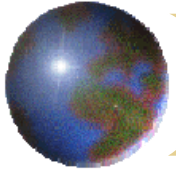
What does “Tuning” in a discipline mean and do?

- After a consultation survey with employers, former students, & faculty, sets up a “common language” for expressing what a curriculum in the discipline aims to do,
- But does not prescribe the means of doing it.
- You get “reference points” for knowledge, understanding, and application of knowledge, not standardization of content and delivery.
- You get a template for criterion-referenced learning outcome statements, but not carbon copy learning outcomes for each institution.
- There is no straightjacket, but there is “convergence.”



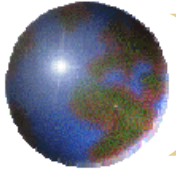
What will each state in our Tuning project do?

- Put together a “study group” in 2 disciplines of its choice: faculty, current students, administrators, with 2-3 institutions for each discipline.
- They will study Tuning as a process, the way it has unfolded in Europe, where it has succeeded, where it has fallen short.
- They may try out some of its mechanisms, such as the consultation survey.
- They may try to write a template of learning outcomes for the discipline as delivered across their state.



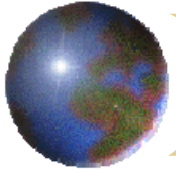
After an intense 6-8 months of study and reflection, the groups will recommend to their state higher education authorities whether . . .

- **The exercise should be expanded within the same disciplines; or**
- **The exercise should be repeated with other disciplines; or**
- **Tuning should be adopted as a state strategy, modified to fit state traditions, with a timetable for implementation in all (or high volume) major fields; or**
- **We learned something else we'd like to try; or**
- **Thanks, but no thanks.**



At least these folks are now registered for the course!

- **And because discrete learning outcomes and competencies are constitutive to Tuning, we're on the way toward Qualification Frameworks, true statements of the meaning of degrees.**
- **We might even fix the outrages of our credit system along the way, by attaching "levels of challenge" to each course, no matter how we number it.**

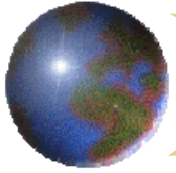


A lot more to learn from Bologna---and the chance for epiphanies along the way, e.g.

- **Targeting access populations by geocoding;**
- **Alliance strategies to make the Associate's degree part of the Bachelor's;**
- **Degree contracts for part-time students; etc.**
- **And where they have fallen short and we can do it better (e.g., Diploma Supplements, operational learning outcome statements).**

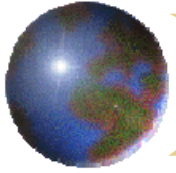
Registering for the course and joining this conversation is not such a bad idea.

It is, after all, our turn to learn.



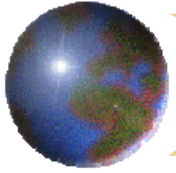
Objections and Response, I

- Why should we adopt the Euros' very generalized QFs? And the differences from one degree to the next are minor.
- The suggestion is not to adopt, but to study and perhaps come up with your own version, e.g. try stronger distinctions between degree levels.



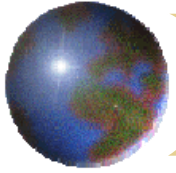
Objections and Response II

- **Don't the national learned societies and professional organizations put statements on their Web sites about the expected knowledge and skills of graduates? Why do we need Tuning—and within state systems?**
- **The Web site statements have no legal standing, and carry no guarantee they will be observed by faculty or have any effect on students. When Tuning templates developed by all stakeholders are adopted in state systems, they set official criteria for earning a degree in X.**



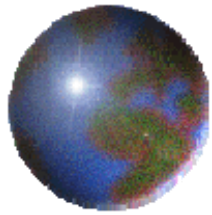
Objections and Response, III

- **We already have degree qualification statements at my school that read like Bologna statements.**
- **One certainly can point to points of exemplary practice. But we do not engage in such practices systematically---and to scale.**



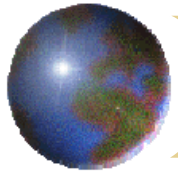
Objections and Response, IV

- **Why don't we all just adopt the LEAP learning outcome statements? Won't that accomplish the same end?**
- **The LEAP list is a nice beginning, but none of those statements is operational. They would allow each institution to define "information literacy," for example, any way it wants, and with any weight it wants. Even if done well, that still leaves us without a common understanding of what a degree means.**



**Isn't this all a lot of work?
Aren't the Euros tired?**

**It sure is; they sure are---and have
another decade to go; but ask them if
it's worth the effort!**



References---and they ain't easy reads:

- *The Bologna Club: What U.S. Higher Education Can Learn from a Decade of European Reconstruction* (May, 2008)
- *Learning Accountability from Bologna: a Higher Education Policy-Primer* (July, 2008)
- *The Bologna Process for U.S. Eyes* (coming soon)

All at the IHEP Web site: www.ihep.org/research/GlobalPerformance.cfm