

# **The Bologna Effect: Addressing Employability**

Daniel Stoker, 12010146, ES4E-4H

Dissertation / Mrs. R. Scheltinga

May 23, 2016

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

Faculty of Management & Organization

European Studies

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Obtaining a European advanced degree awards a measure of skill for bachelor graduates due to the Bologna Process standardization system, allowing open access to the European workforce. Yet since even with a degree the process of entering the marketplace requires a certain extent of employability to secure employment, this report examines the effectiveness of the Bologna Process system in addressing the concept of employability. Through the critical assessment of intergovernmental documents, higher education trends reports, and a case study on the Bologna initiatives, this report addresses components of the Bologna Process that relate to the employability concept. The key findings of this research revealed that employability has been an agenda point component in the development of the European Higher Education Area yet as a concept lacks a common definition, which subsequently has slowed its development, and Bologna Initiatives while useful warrant more exposure to students as a useful utility set. As such the resulting effectiveness of the Bologna Process in addressing employability shows room for improvement, where recommendations of in-depth Educational Career Supervision of students throughout their study experience would disseminate the knowledge of Bologna Initiatives to enhance student employability.

## Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Education & the Bologna Process .....	1
Employability .....	1
The Bologna Effect .....	2
Research Questions.....	2
Rationale.....	2
Methodology .....	3
Contents .....	3
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
Introduction.....	4
Higher Education: Its Role, Function & Purpose.....	4
Higher Education Role: The Facilitator .....	4
Higher Education Function: To Educate. ....	5
Higher Education Purpose: For Many.....	5
Employability: Human Capital, Definition, & Link to Academics .....	5
Employability: Human Capital.....	6
Employability: Working Definition. ....	6
Employability: Link to Academics.....	7
Skills: Signaling, Hard vs. Soft, & Transferable.....	7
Skills: Signaling Theory. ....	8
Skills: Hard vs. Soft. ....	8
Skills: Transferable. ....	9
Conclusion .....	9
METHODOLOGY .....	10
Problem .....	10
Philosophies.....	10
Approaches.....	11
Strategies.....	12
Method Adoption .....	12
Data Collection Techniques .....	13

Reliability & Validity .....	13
BOLOGNA RESULTS .....	15
Background.....	15
The Current Bologna Process.....	15
Employability in Past Objectives.....	15
Past Objectives: Data Strength & Weakness. ....	16
Employability in Trends Reports.....	16
Trends: Regular Employability Patterns. ....	17
Trends: Irregular Statistical Patterns.....	17
Trends Reports: Data Strength & Weakness. ....	18
CASE STUDY RESULTS.....	19
Background.....	19
Problem .....	19
Objective .....	19
The Bologna Process Initiatives. ....	19
Solution .....	21
Implementation .....	21
Results .....	21
Learning.....	21
DISCUSSION .....	23
The Employability Agenda.....	23
The Communiqués .....	23
The Employability Role .....	24
Evolving Attitudes Towards Employability .....	24
Varying Effects .....	24
Continual Debates.....	25
Student Patterns .....	25
The Employability Development.....	26
The Bologna Initiatives.....	26
The Employability Promotion .....	27
Conclusion .....	27
CONCLUSIONS .....	28
Summary .....	28

Conclusions Drawn.....	29
Research Importance .....	29
Limitations .....	30
Recommendations .....	30
In Conclusion .....	31
REFERENCES .....	32
APPENDICES.....	40
Email correspondance: Ministry of Education.....	40
Email correspondence: Volkskrant .....	42

## INTRODUCTION

European integration has progressed steadily over the past decades to become the model framework for long-lasting international peace and economic cooperation. Prior to the treaties many countries were at odds with one another with their different cultures, often having individual language and currency and policy. In the European Union each Member State still retains their autonomous characteristics yet agree and benefit from regional policies supporting the freedom of goods, services and persons – such as the introduction of a single Euro currency.

### Education & the Bologna Process

One area of importance in the EU that has been continually developing is education, particularly at the higher education level. Countries across the continent have unique education systems with characteristics that vary greatly, a feature that becomes more pronounced when traveling to another country. With an increased mobility between the Member States a singular understanding of qualifications relating to any European bachelor degree has become necessary. The Bologna Process addresses this: an ongoing intergovernmental project that standardizes different education systems in the region through the three cycle system of study levels (bachelor, master, doctorate), enhanced quality assurance for degrees, and more recognizable qualifications and study periods. A primary component in one Bologna Process objective is in the readable and comparable system of degrees, part of which was originally meant for the promotion of employability for European citizens. These objectives were set out in the original text of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, the catalyst document that spearheaded Bologna Process; the formation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010 established a success for the Bologna Process in form of agreements, but the implementation of those agreements are still ongoing and hence the Process still continues.

### Employability

Over time the context of employability has now become more important than ever. Technology has advanced globalization rapidly in ways that have altered the way education operates and public perception of higher education value in an internet-fueled global culture that offers educational alternatives. The Great Recession of 2008 has renewed an interest in getting the most value from higher education, a prerequisite for professional employment but not necessarily a guarantee of securing a position. Higher education in its role of educating students has become utilitarian towards finding good work. Though as career lengths trend toward shorter stays at organizations, the concept of being employable is now paramount to students upon graduating their studies. Working for several

years at a single place is no longer a guarantee and neither is being able to find a job. From a qualifications standpoint, the open accessibility of higher education has led to a mass influx of students who will also be competing for finding work. *Differentiating, being attractively employable has become the goal.*

### The Bologna Effect

Due to the Bologna Process the European system of higher education has become standardized, but to what effect does it have on students graduating with their now standardized bachelor degrees? Do academic institutions in Europe foster employability among its graduates? The system should make graduates competent to find work, recognizably qualified across the European Union. Some graduates continue studies even further to the master level on the assumption that a bachelor degree is no longer competitive enough on its own merits. Other graduates actively look for work but are unable to find employment that matches their higher education qualifications, taking entry-level jobs that do not require a bachelor degree, or worse off they are unable to find any employment whatsoever. The problem under investigation is looking at the Bologna Effect, to ascertain the effectiveness of having an ongoing standardization system of bachelor degrees that should support employability aspects.

### Research Questions

Reasons for studying may vary but if the intention was to improve the chances of finding professional level employment and the results differ than expectations, then:

How effective is the Bologna Process system in addressing employability?

- What role has employability played in the development of the EHEA?
- How do Bologna Process employability outcomes compare with their original objectives?
- How can the Bologna Process better promote employability in the EHEA?

### Rationale

In answering these main research questions it is the aim of this study to address stakeholders of the European Higher Education Area so that they may reassess the value proposition that higher education should provide. The principle argument of this dissertation is that the Bologna Process needs to update their definition usage of “employability” to stay relevant. The rationale for this research is to challenge the established higher education authority on quality, in the hopes that bachelor graduates can find more than a bachelor diploma at the end of their studies but also the means of finding employment.

### Methodology

The methodology for this research works with pragmatist philosophy, using the deductive approach with secondary data from Bologna Process publications and European University Association Trends reports. A case study strategy is conducted upon initiatives set for by the Bologna Process as a means of integrating them into higher education institution usage across Europe. A mixed method adoption was chosen and data collection techniques used secondary data.

### Contents

A summary of contents in the research are as follows: Chapter 2 will reviews relevant literature relating to the Bologna Process, employability, and skills. Chapter 3 outlines the chosen methodological approach for this study. Chapter 4 gives resulting background, objectives, and trends in the Bologna Process in relation to employability; a case study on Bologna Process initiatives follows. Chapter 5 discusses the theoretical implications of the findings. Chapter 6 concludes the research with an answer to the main research question.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

How effective is the Bologna Process system in addressing employability? For the purposes of this study a selection of research on higher education, employability and skills has been researched to answer this main research question. The selected literature reviewed here draws upon sources in areas of academic institutions, marketplace organizations and governing bodies, for a broad selection of concepts and theories that can be applied to the research on employability in the Bologna Process context.

### Introduction

Literature has much to say on higher education, employability, and skills. In an effort to concentrate the research into a usable format certain aspects of these areas have been considered. For the section on higher education its role, function and purpose are elaborated upon for further consideration of whether European higher education institutions (henceforth referred to as 'HEI') have fulfilled these qualities (i.e. looking to the past). For the employability section the theory of human capital, the definition of employability and its link to academics are covered for further elaboration in relation to the Bologna Process objectives of employability (i.e. the current situation). For the skills section the signaling theory, hard versus soft skills, and transferable skills are highlighted as an area for further consideration in future developments of the Bologna Process with regards to employability.

### Higher Education: Its Role, Function & Purpose

Higher education references to education at the college and university level, post-adolescent studies that educate young adults generally for the preparation for the work force. Schooling at this level has become the standard means of obtaining professional level work with a high rate of return, and with noticeable differences in salaries given those with professional degrees compared to those without, HEIs are growing substantially in attendance around the globe. As the public utility for educating European citizens, higher education is the central means of the Bologna Process standard to create an employable population. Yet since the majority of HEIs predate the recently established EHEA of 2010 with individual institutions developing in a variety of unique ways, it is of noteworthy importance in establishing a common role, function, and purpose for each HEI that can be adopted for the purposes of this study.

### Higher Education Role: The Facilitator

Higher education has a role to play, comparable to the part of an actor in a theater, responsible for certain attributes. One liberal education review from Yale University states that academic institutions work with the "broader goal of creating a highly educated populace (Dewsbury, 2014, par.3). In the

Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, the role of higher education is seen in a evolutionary shift, now functioning as the “bridge between the academic community and the world at large... to address the complex problems of today's world (Ramaley, 2014, par.1).” From these academic authorities the given role of higher education for the context of the Bologna Process addressing employability is that of a facilitator, working between the general populace and the academic community – locally, regionally, and globally.

#### Higher Education Function: To Educate.

As facilitators HEIs are responsible to facilitate, to take action in particular ways. The function of higher education according to the European Union agenda is lifelong learning to support the Lisbon goals, correlating “economic and social capital, and providing for strategic goals in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion (Panitsidou, 2009, par.1).” In an address to the Royal Irish Academy at Trinity College, Harvard University President Drew Gilpin Faust emphasized that higher education functions to “look to the past to help to create the future” since universities best provide innovation from the sciences and interpretation from the arts (Faust, 2010, par.33). Between an intergovernmental body and a renowned university, the action that HEIs take share a common purpose of educating but for distinctly different reasons.

#### Higher Education Purpose: For Many.

In the Bologna Process addressing employability, the purpose to higher education should be to educate individuals so they can obtain employment, but again according to which party addresses its purpose, the reasons may vary. Roger Williams University President Donald J. Farish outlines numerous purposes referencing to higher education such as rewards in a job, for humanity, cognitive, and intrinsic since, “higher education is a big tent: there is room for many purposes (Farish, 2015, par.12).” In the British daily, The Guardian emphasizes that in a society which publicly funds higher education through the finances of taxpayers that the “debate should be had (Observer Editorial, 2014, par. 7).” From popular consensus to HEI bias in attracting more students, be it free or exorbitantly priced, whether paid for or indebted – all these components and more fuel the debate on higher education in its purpose. For this study, the reason of employability shall be chosen.

#### Employability: Human Capital, Definition, & Link to Academics

A major theme birthed from the Bologna Process intergovernmental meetings since the Bologna Declaration was released has been the subject of employability. Yet as stakeholders still debate even the defining characteristics of the term then the effectiveness of implementing policy addressing employability can be considered questionable. The effectiveness of the Bologna Process in addressing

employability depends on a clear understanding of the present components that make up the higher education graduate experience. As such the human capital theory, a working definition of employability, and the link between employability and academics is presented as a means of critiquing the Bologna Process in its current objectives towards employability.

#### Employability: Human Capital.

Human capital is a concept that commodifies individuals for the purpose of assessing the cost or value of an organization or country's population. According to the original text on human capital theory, the investment of human capital includes "activities that influence future real income through the imbedding of resources in people (Becker, 1962, p.9)." In workplace considerations that means the more an individual studies, then the more useful job skills they learn, and they are rewarded for being able to do more things (Caplan, 2014, 24:02). Although this may appear to be an underlying assumption, human capital theory relates a higher education experience as an indicator of greater human capital. In a joint academic report on employability, the investment of human capital is "seen as vital to the performance of knowledge based economies in a globalised society (Yorke, 2006, p.3)." Hence, knowledge based economies around the globe have growing populations of highly educated individuals as an increasing segment of citizens attend HEIs globally.

#### Employability: Working Definition.

As there are numerous definitions to employability a working definition for the purpose of this research is necessary to consider the Bologna Process system method of working with employability. In the independent education charity Edge Foundation's publication on the Employers' Perceptions of the Employability Skills of New Graduates, the research outlines a very specific definition for employability:

It is arguable that specific definitions are less important than an agreed focus on approaches to promote such transferable skills and fostering attributes that will enable graduates to find appropriate employment, progress in their work and thus facilitate the success of their organisations and contribute to society and the economy (Lowden et al., 2011, p.vi).

An Erasmus project report from the Development of Higher Education Management Systems offers a more clearly defined explanation to the employability concept:

The concept of employability should in the context of higher education always be defined as a multidimensional concept explained on the individual level as one's capabilities of retaining a self-rewarding job, in employers' organisations as human resource requirements for fulfilling

operational tasks and on the societal level as a system facilitator between (higher) education, the labour market and civil lives (Melink & Pavlin, 2009, p.29).

While the Erasmus definition simplifies a complex topic, the Edge Foundation's definition has merit in that it works out a line of cause and effect between different components. For the purposes of this research the Erasmus definition will be the chosen understanding of the employability concept.

[Employability: Link to Academics.](#)

The Higher Education Academy suggests that students engage with employability for progressing their achievements and needs in an attitude of life-long learning, where "HEIs are in a position to set them on the right path to begin this journey (Cole & Tibby, 2013, p.5)." The European Students' Union states that

Higher education has multiple purposes, and when focusing on employability as one of them, higher education should always be defined in a broad sense, and never used in a way that instrumentalises education to suit narrow or short-term needs of the labour market (ESU, 2015, p.4).

In consideration of these points pertaining to assessing the Bologna Process method of addressing employability it should be remembered that higher education is not responsible for employability outcomes. Rather as contributors towards a collective experience that makes up the employability of an individual, higher education should be a utilitarian component benefiting those it educates.

[Skills: Signaling, Hard vs. Soft, & Transferable](#)

Skills at their most basic explanation are the abilities to do things well. While HEIs offer theoretical training in their curriculum, the marketplace demands that new hires have certain skills and often depend on the offering of bachelor graduates that HEIs provide. A common problem with organizations hiring these graduates is knowing what they are truly capable of. The interviewing process and all its components are only an indication of likely skills with interview candidates, and HEIs continually update their curricula to prepare their students for the marketplace, making the process a constantly evolving game of guesswork for both interviewer and interviewee. An exchange of signaling cues can simplify interviewing, although organizations generally look for a basic set of hard and soft skills, and transferable skills are more in demand as workers are becoming more flexible in changing occupations within their career span. Addressing signaling, hard versus soft skills, and transferable skills all will offer a point of reference for the Bologna Process to consider in regards to employability.

#### Skills: Signaling Theory.

Signaling occurs when one party credibly communicates information of itself to another. As an education theory signaling posits that advanced education signals to employers desirable qualities such as intelligence, working ethic, or conformity. Signaling theory emphasizes that, "Individual workers' innate productivity levels are identified by their years of schooling (Page, 2010, par.1)." These desirable qualities normally take long periods of time for organizations to observe and test; with the length of study at university lasting 3 or 4 years the signal sent to employers is a diligent, critically thinking candidate who successfully invested in extensive training. In contrast to human capital theory of explaining higher wages, EconLog blogger Bryan Caplan explains that contrary to learning actual skills in school, "The whole educational process filters out the people who wouldn't have been very good workers (Caplan, 2014, 24:02)." In an organizational context an education signals the existence of skills, the necessary skills being sought after in the hiring process, but also the personal character of the candidate that can fit the working culture of the organization. "The signaling model of education... argues that education is beneficial to students in large part due to the signals that education sends to employers (Liao, 2014, par.4)." While contrary to human capital theory and not without its critics, the signaling theory is a substantial point of consideration for higher education in relation to the focus that HEIs should attend to in addressing employability.

#### Skills: Hard vs. Soft.

The marketplace search for skills in hiring new candidates generally come in the form of either hard skills or soft skills. Hard skills are the specific abilities, that are likely easily quantifiable. That means a law student who graduates, bar exam pending, is skilled to a certain extent in the law. Soft skills are indicative of personal attributes enabling individuals to work well with others, a certain likability in character traits. One marketplace consulting firm highlights the difference between hard and soft skills as "technical or administrative procedures related to an organization's core business" versus skills in "how people relate to each other: communicating, listening, engaging in dialogue, giving feedback, cooperating as a team member, solving problems, contributing in meetings and resolving conflict (Coates, 2006, p.2)." Both hard and soft skills are sought after in the workplace. Although hard skills are generally given more emphasis as they dictate more of what projects can be done to a certain extent, soft skills are also in demand as they constitute a good working environment between a group of people. Times Higher Education makes the distinction as soft skills being in areas of creativity and citizenship, which they notably mention as insufficiently attended to in universities, whereas hard skills are more developed - the "hallmark of university study (Havergal, 2015, par.3)." Interestingly

enough the HEI that fails to attend to a more substantial amount of soft skill training then fails to fill the skilled marketplace position that could have been filled by a candidate from their institution.

#### Skills: Transferable.

Transferable skills transfer over from one context to the next, allowing flexibility for workers to change occupations that may have differing qualities than present working conditions. Hard and soft skills if applicable in the new working context can be considered transferable, emphasizing the changing trends of professional work no longer being about a lifelong career in a single organization. In an academic publication for doctoral and early career research, the importance of 'generic and transferable skills' are highlighted in combination: "generic in that they are not restricted to a particular task or work environment and transferable in that, having been learnt/practised in one situation, they are flexible and can be applied to another task in another situation (Denicolo & Reeves, 2013, p.6)." The change in needing more flexibility in the workplace may likely stem from a workforce still insecure of the felt from economic instability leftover from the Global Recession. This makes skills that can be used in any context a necessity on the premise that even if the occupation is good the organization could easily go bankrupt, where those who failed to diversify their skill set will have less chances of finding a replacement job. According to the European Commission a transferable skill set serves the benefit of individuals and the workforce, as they, "Equip companies with a more flexible, adaptable and mobile workforce, while at the same time facilitating worker mobility occupationally and geographically and making it easier for workers to develop their occupational pathways (Karasek, 2011, p.7)." This again alludes to the changing trend of workers being more open to changing career paths.

#### Conclusion

The above discussion highlights the components of higher education, employability and skills as a research tool for investigating the effectiveness of the Bologna Process system in addressing employability. It reviews a range of literature on the identifiable qualities that make up higher education, the link between academics to employability, and the emphasis of skills in the marketplace. Including the contrasting education theories of human capital and signaling offers differing views on the makeup that contributes to a higher salary with bachelor degree recipients, either from obtaining new skills as an individual or the bad lot of workers are filtered out in the system.

## METHODOLOGY

The following methodology examines the methodology of this study in its problem, philosophies, approaches, strategies, method adoption, data collection technique, reliability and validity.

### Problem

In the European Union integration project the implementation of the Bologna Process has standardized higher education across the continent. Despite this development, little has been addressed on the extent of employability that is realized with a bachelor degree awarded through the newly standardized system. As such this research will attempt to fill the research gap by conducting empirical research into the concept of employability and its application in the European higher education context. The results will be used to provide recommendations to stakeholders in relation to the Bologna Process.

This aim will be accomplished by fulfilling the following research objectives.

- Review literature concerning employability in relation to higher education.
- Trace the evolving attitude towards employability in past Bologna Process objectives.
- Examine the current Bologna Process objectives in relation to employability.
- Address the ambiguity of higher education's role in culturing employability.
- Conduct a case study critiquing the Bologna Process method in addressing employability.
- Outline the future points of consideration for stakeholders in the Bologna Process.

To fulfilling these research objectives the study will address these main research questions:

How effective is the Bologna Process system in addressing employability?

- What role has employability played in the development of the EHEA?
- How do Bologna Process employability outcomes compare with their original objectives?
- How can the Bologna Process better promote employability in the EHEA?

### Philosophies

The pragmatist research philosophy was adopted for this research as "mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative, are possible, and possibly highly appropriate, within one study (Saunders et al., 2009, p.109)." The rationale in choosing pragmatism was that it makes use of multiple views (ontology), observable and subjective meaning (epistemology), with objective and subjective points of view (axiology) for the broad application to best enable answering the main research question. The advantage to this research philosophy is by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data the

interpretation of results will give a more cohesive profile to employability in the European higher education context. A possible disadvantage to this research philosophy is that another method such as interpretivism may produce varying results. It is the opinion of this author that pragmatism suits the nature of the main research question, that drawing from quantitative and qualitative data will be of value to explore (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.41).

### Approaches

The deductive approach was adopted for this research with the development of a major premise that was subsequently tested using researched data (Cohen et al., 2000, p.4). Justification for this approach is that the premise of the Bologna Process relationship to employability could be critiqued. The advantage of the deductive approach is that it allows you test a theory in a way that is certain and objective based on observation and experience. The disadvantage to the approach is that if when linking premises to conclusions if the reasoning is lacking then the argument is unsound, a logical fallacy; hence in pursuing the deductive approach a good amount of rigor must be applied when performing research.

Secondary data was exclusively used for this research as large amounts of data were available through a variety of reliable sources. Government reports, higher education journals, and popular new publishing services were but a few of the type of sources utilized. The advantage to relying only on secondary data in the European higher education context was the wealth of information that was available to draw information from (Boslaugh, 2007, p.3). This disadvantage to utilizing only secondary sources is the missed opportunity of adding further depth to the research.

It should be noted that earlier in the research process attempts were made to collect primary data, as collecting primary data works well when needed data is unavailable through secondary sources (Currie, 2005, p.90). A previously constructed research plan involving a case study element of higher education value in the Netherlands prompted contact to various news publications and the Ministry of Education for structured interviews, in which two parties responded but declined to participate. Since the previous version of the research plan needed revisions and no additional responses came in, the option for collecting primary data was postponed. Unforeseen research delays led to the option becoming indefinitely set aside.

The justification for chosen methods of this research can be found throughout the subsections of this methodology report section. In an effort to provide a report that is established based upon on a



thoroughly sound methodology, the chosen justifications for the research makes use of a selection of research methodologies from previous research sources – both academic and marketplace based.

### Strategies

The main research strategy employed in this study was the case study method. According to social scientist R.K. Yin, “The case study method is best applied when research addresses descriptive or explanatory questions and aims to produce a first-hand understanding of people and events (Yin, 2004, p.3).” In a later publication Yin goes on to describe types of case studies that either explore, describe, or explain subject matter (Yin, 2009, p.8).” As a developmental report over a period of time, the chosen case study strategy was considered an appropriate method for ascertaining a better understanding of employability that could be applied to the Bologna Process. In exploring the development of different explanations of employability over time a working definition was formulated from the combination of relevant themes found in the research definitions.

To address the lack of properly structured case studies from a marketing perspective, one digital marketing professional offers a critique of what type of structure to implement when conducting a case study: offer background to the situation and organization, articulate the problem you are trying to solve, showcase a vision and objective, articulate a proposed solution, provide an overview to implementation, give generated results, and what can be learned from the case study (Chorev, 2014). This structure was adopted within the case study to utilize the proposed business marketing strategy as a means of “selling” the resulting employability definition.

### Method Adoption

The positivist quantitative view of research features empiricism, where all acquired knowledge is based off sensual experience: “the Positivism approach requires the objectivity rather than subjectivity in its methods of inquiry (Buddharaksa, 2010, p.2).” The benefit of the positivist approach comes from its structured specificity, which is highly reliable and less subjective. The flaw of this approach is in its rigid structure, limiting outcomes in closed methodologies and fails to add context to what is under study. The interpretivist qualitative view conversely works with social world subjective meanings that already exist, “to acknowledge their existence, to reconstruct them, to understand them, to avoid distorting them, to use them as building blocks in theorizing (Goldkuhl, 2012, p.5).” The advantage to the interpretivist approach is that its flexibility allows for a holistic, realistic view that cannot be realized otherwise – although the approach can be more inconsistent and unreliable than positivism. The primary difference between the different approaches to research is that hypotheses are tested through

positivist standpoints, whereas interpretivism prompts research questions for investigation (de Villiers, 2005, p.112).

The chosen approach for method adoption in this research was the mixed approach: “An approach to evaluation that systematically integrates QUANT and QUAL methodologies and methods at all stages of an evaluation (Bamberger, 2013, p.2).” The choice for a mixed approach to research was based on the scope of the main research question. One aspect of the research question examines noticeable effects of the Bologna Process which is represented by quantitative data such as in market employment rates. Another aspect of the research question makes use of the evolving definition of employability that is featured in the case study through qualitative terms. A mixed approach was the best approach to make use of both types of data in the research conducted.

#### Data Collection Techniques

A varied usage of data collection techniques was considered early on in the research as an appropriate means of obtaining data in an attempt to gather a broad amount of research to work with. Interview requests were sent out when the research was formulated on a more specific focus, specifically in bachelor degree value between the United States and the Netherlands as the basis for the entire research (refer to Appendix). The Volkskrant newspaper and the Dutch Ministry of Education replied with rejection notices, which was likely due to a poorly planned research at the time. A sample questionnaire was also being considered and constructed at the time to distribute among different groups of students at The Hague University, though after a time also became a discarded option. After careful reassessment of the project, with numerous delays, the mixed approach in searching for both primary and secondary data was foregone in favor of drawing information on higher education literature as the basis for the research. The rationale for this approach, as mentioned before, lies in the strength of the available data through secondary sources in academic, governmental, and marketplace resources. As such the components of sampling and time scale will not be addressed.

#### Reliability & Validity

The main factor affecting the reliability and validity of this research is likely the chosen approach of working solely with secondary sources, which is a notable limitation in research. Without the added depth of primary source work it is possible that the resulting findings, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations could be construed as a more narrowly constructed research. Nevertheless it is the firm belief of this author that the research is a viable source of information.

Its reliability comes from the rigor in pursuing the research objectives of reviewing employability literature, tracing Bologna Process attitudes, examining their objectives, addressing ambiguity, conducting a case study, and outlining consideration points. Establishing the accuracy and precision of this research comes from working through the chosen methodologies referenced throughout the study, the already proven academic research methodologies on which the basis of this study works with. In making use of a broad range of sources in professional, academic, and governmental contexts referenced from recent history this study makes every attempt to present findings in an objective light that is free from any bias.

One shortfall that may contribute to the validity of this study is in the length of time the ongoing research has been worked upon, which contributed to delays and revisions in the scope of this research in the several months it was conducted. Limitations in the research may be found in changing the design from working with mixed data sources to secondary data sources. Sources of error may stem from a singular data collection method, leaving no room to check consistency in findings between different methods, although that consistency can be seen in the one method of employability literature.

## BOLOGNA RESULTS

This section on the Bologna Process highlights its background, then its developing objectives and concurrent trends in regards to employability. Background includes developments leading up to the release of the Bologna Declaration, and the characteristics of the Bologna Process as it now operates. Employability in past objectives looks at employability mentioned in specific contexts of intergovernmental European declarations and ministerial conferences on higher education. Employability in trends reports makes note in European University Association (henceforth referred to as 'EUA') Trends reports of specific instances in higher education trends that relate to employability.

### Background

The Magna Charta Universitatum drafted the initial phases of inter-European cooperation on a university level in the midst of fractured communist Europe, with representatives agreeing to the societal importance of all States cooperating to spread knowledge through higher education (University Rectors, 1988, par.1).” As the European Union formalized with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the Sorbonne Declaration soon after attempted to introduce a European higher education framework between education ministers from France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany (Allegre et al., 1998, p.3). The first EUA Trends report the following year about higher education learning structures declared the initiative still open, considered well intentioned though structurally incomplete, and potentially successful only with more participants in agreement (Haug & Kirstein, 1999, p.30). Coinciding with the report the Bologna Declaration was released, with higher education initiatives in more feasible detail and 30 countries committing to take part (1999, p.5).

### The Current Bologna Process.

The Bologna Process is now an ongoing transnational agreement between European stakeholders for the purpose of standardizing higher education, with expanding objectives since its original inception. It focuses on the “three cycle system” of bachelor, master and doctorate; it improves quality assurance through utilizing ICT tools and open educational resources; it makes qualifications and study periods more recognizable through initiatives such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. Reasons for implementing the Bologna Process include an increased mobility in qualifications, competitiveness in the European market, and a modernization of education/training systems. Thus far reforms have been implemented as outlined in regularly occurring EUA Trends reports.

### Employability in Past Objectives

The current objectives in the Bologna Process in relation to employability have developed from two main intergovernmental declarations, then with ministerial conferences and policy forums thereafter.

The Sorbonne Declaration proposed a common higher education reference frame to facilitate employability (Allegre et al., 1998, p.3) and the Bologna Declaration adopted a readable and comparable degree system of two main cycles in part to promote employability of citizens (1999, p.2). Subsequent ministerial conferences addressed employability through a marked importance on developing curriculum with European content in the Prague Communiqué (2001, p.2), stressing students to study abroad in Berlin (2003, p.6), calling for increased institutional dialogue in Bergen (2005, p.2), reemphasizing dialogue with stakeholders on reform in London (2007, p.6), promoting marketplace cooperation in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009, p.3), reaffirming employability importance with the newly established European Higher Education Area in the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference (2010, p.2), and listing it as a goal to enhance in Bucharest's Ministerial Conference (2012, p.1).

#### Past Objectives: Data Strength & Weakness.

The strength of such data relative to the main research question on how effective is the Bologna Process system in addressing employability is the clear intergovernmental agenda for HEIs to adopt. Participatory governing bodies in the EHEA are autonomous in their chosen methodology of how to adopt these agenda points, with varying degrees of compliance as institutional structures in higher education vary between member countries. The weakness of such data, drawn from published EHEA reports, is the lack of longitudinal study in the effectiveness of addressing employability as summary agenda points. While the implementation of the Bologna Process is the responsibility of the independent stakeholders agreeing to the conditions set forth, the subject matter on employability could use more detail in the manner that it is to be addressed by HEIs.

#### Employability in Trends Reports

Regular EUA reports have subsequently given trends on European higher education in the Bologna Process implementation. The European University Association is a representative organization for hundreds of European higher education institutions, a cooperative forum in exchanging information regarding higher education and research policies, with association members being various higher education stakeholders active in the field (About EUA, n.d.). Trends have published regularly in the development decade leading up to the formation of the EHEA in 2010, with the first Trends report following in a critique of the Sorbonne Declaration in 1999.

#### Trends: Regular Employability Patterns.

Trends I: In a survey conducted by the European Students Union with its student union members, the first Trends report then highlighted that students expressed doubts that their studies prepared them in terms of European labor market employability. (Haug & Kirstein, 1999, p.23)

Trends II: In the initial follow-up to the Bologna Declaration there were employability debates after a bachelor degree, linking to another debate on defining the bachelor degree – especially in countries that had only recently introduced these degrees a decade prior (Haug & Tauch, 2001, p.25).

Trends III: The Bologna Declaration stressed that an extent of employability should be felt upon receiving a bachelor level degree, yet university representatives debate the fear of narrow interpretations of employability being too short-sighted (Reichert & Tauch, 2003, p.28).

Trends IV: Continued fears in the employability of first-cycle graduates (i.e. the bachelor level) prompted academics to advise students to continue higher education to the second-cycle (the masters level), especially with students in three year long bachelor programs (Reichert & Tauch, 2005, p.8).

Trends V: In the “paradox” of employability being an important agenda item but in need of more institutional practice, the Trends V report suggests that higher education should be responsive to changing societal and labor market needs (Crosier et al., 2007, p.33).

Trends 2010: Employability is an important aspect in implementing the three cycle system yet the term’s meaning, priority, and aspects all vary – whether communicating to different actors or working in national/cultural contexts (Susock & Smidt, 2010, p.38).

Trends 2015: With high youth unemployment recently across Europe, universities are now working together with the labor market through an increased and widened participation, interacting and engaging with the local-regional communities (Susock, 2015, p.34).

#### Trends: Irregular Statistical Patterns.

The Trends reports data also offers statistical figures in some of the findings about employability, although at sporadic intervals and about varied content matter.

For example Trends III mentions 91% HEI heads consider employability important for graduates when designing/restructuring curricula (Reichert & Tauch, 2003, p.9), though only 30% of HEIs track graduate employment, and 25% not at all (p.27).

67% of sample respondents to a questionnaire in Trends V consider employability concern for graduates as very important, a further 32% considering it important, and below 1% as not important – all improving upon Trends III reports figures four years prior (Crosier et al., 2007, p.32).

Trends 2010 highlight a +17% growth [or 25% improvement] in career guidance growing from 66% to 83%, and +11% growth [or 20% improvement] in psychological counseling services growing from 55% to 66%, both from 2007 to 2009 (Susock & Smidt, 2010, p.83).

Respondents to a questionnaire in Trends 2015 found their National Qualifications Framework [if they had one] as being 16% very useful, 26% somewhat useful, 16% not useful, and 4% not useful at all in enhancing employability (Susock, 2015, p.38).

#### Trends Reports: Data Strength & Weakness.

The strengths in the EUA Trends reports come from their initial regularity, the extensive scope of their content, and the participation of HEIs in the process. In the development of the EHEA the initial 5 reports were released every 2 years, offering a wealth of comprehensive information on higher education trends throughout the EHEA, with extensive response in questionnaire forms in 2 of the reports from several hundred HEIs.

The weakness of their reports is the inconsistency of their content matter, likely due to the irregular change in authorship for drafting the reports. Though the first 2 reports are poorly drafted, the large amounts of data collectively presented in each of the reports makes up for this oversight. Although the information presented is consistently substantial, the inconsistency leads to some problems in gathering data. The regular change in authorship for example (both in ownership and in number) also gives pause in considering the content of the reports, not only to the consistency of what is reported but also the usefulness of employability data that is reported upon. A consistent set of statistical data on employability would have been particularly useful since, while interesting to note, the irregular statistical patterns offer data that is not connected with one another and do not build a cohesive narrative pattern between these points in time. The changeover from releasing publications every 2 years in the first 5 reports to 3 years ('07) or 5 years ('10, '15) could be attributed to the formation of the EHEA, in essence the completed goal of the initial Bologna Process, but as the process still continues the change is nevertheless inconsistent.

## CASE STUDY RESULTS

*An overview of initiatives launched through the Bologna Process.*

### Background

The Bologna Process is an ongoing intergovernmental standardization system for higher education supporting mobility within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), articulating intergovernmental higher education standards for a stronger quality assurance and better recognition of qualifications. The Process applies to the three cycle system of bachelor, master and doctorate level of advanced education for increased mobility of students and workers throughout Europe. The Bologna Process improves higher education quality by making European higher education attractively competitive to countries outside the EHEA, modernizing education training to adequately prepare students for the marketplace.

### Problem

The wealth of information available for the European bachelor graduate on the Bologna Process initiatives for higher education go largely unnoticed. Graduates are blissfully unaware of the tools available to them, preoccupied with studying course content and postponing employment opportunities until absolutely necessary. The Bologna Process may perhaps be working towards strengthening the employability of its study graduates, but without the knowledge of those tools at their disposal then the Bologna Process has failed to adequately communicate what it has achieved for the benefit of its students across the EHEA.

### Objective

This case study is an investigative overview on the methods the Bologna Process has taken in addressing employability, and how to better integrate it into Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Europe. The following initiatives are measures taken by the Bologna Process in areas of the recognition of qualifications, the development of skills, and developments for the future.

### The Bologna Process Initiatives.

Opening Up Education: proposing actions using technologies to make learning environments open, such as online resources for more adequate distance learning ('Opening Up Education', 2013, par.2).

Open Education Europa: the online portal actualizing components of the Opening Up Education proposal, serving as an information hub between higher education parties ('Open Education Europa', n.d.).



Rethinking Education: an overview of skills to relate better to marketplace adaptability, such 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and vocationally-related skills ('Rethinking Education', 2012).

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: "Communication in the mother tongue; Communication in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence; Learning to learn; Social and civic competences; Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and Cultural awareness and expression (European Parliament, 2006, Annex)."

Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs: multi-stakeholder European collaboration between organizations and HEIs, implementing youth ICT training, and retraining the unemployed ('Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs', 2016, par.3).

Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan: works to develop more entrepreneurs in Europe through the pillars of: "developing entrepreneurial education and training; creating the right business environment; role models and reaching out to specific groups ('Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan', 2012, par.5)."

European Skills, Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations: an classification system to identify and categorize "skills, competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training" for systematic relational concepts in an open IT format ('ESCO Portal', 2014, ESCOpedia).

European Skills Panorama: a data forecast hub of skills at the national and European level, launched by the European Commission as a means of addressing the skills mismatches dilemma since many occupations have a high numbers in unfilled vacancies ('Our Mission', 2015).

European Qualifications Framework: offering cycle descriptors for different levels of higher education with corresponding knowledge, skills and competences that can be achieved at the various levels (EQF, 2016).

European Inventory on Validation: European Inventory validating non-formal and informal learning: publishes inventory on the validation of education obtained outside traditional learning institutions to measure knowledge, skills, and competences (CEDEFOP, 2014).

Europass : an online resource especially for Curriculum Vitae (CV) building to communicate qualifications effectively, that employers understand them, and a definite authority on curricula content (Europass, 2016, par.7).

Credit Systems: the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is “a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer” that recognizes study content and enhances the mobility of students (ECTS Glossary, 2015).

The ENIC-NARIC joint initiative combines the European Network of Information Centres and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres for the promotion of qualifications and academic mobility in the EHEA with the support of intergovernmental bodies (ENIC-NARIC, 2014, par.7).

European Tertiary Education Register: a register of HEIs in Europe with data on students graduated and current, faculty, descriptive aspects and other content (ETER, n.d.).

### Solution

Educational Career Supervision (ECS) is a higher education component that could be utilized in disseminating knowledge about the aforementioned initiatives. Although some undergraduate study programs may already make use of the supervisory system, a more in-depth approach would leave students well informed and better prepared to enter the marketplace once finishing their studies.

### Implementation

Some initiatives for example with the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning are better left as required literature reading among students, yet other initiatives warrant more attention. The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan provides a framework base for desirable occupational skills that would benefit students even if they were to not pursue a career as an entrepreneurship, leadership qualities that can be applied to working in an organizational context such as taking initiative or working in organized extracurricular activities.

### Results

The ECS system would do well to be an end-study program for students, where introducing supervision in the first year does well to orient students to their studies but they would benefit more of such supervision at the end of their studies when looking for employment.

### Learning

This method works on the premise that students will be looking for work at the end of the first cycle bachelor study program, which as higher education stakeholders have debated would not be the recommended course of action to take. If implemented properly the results will adequately prepare even first cycle graduates to enter the marketplace using the tools that are already available for them. When participating in study programs that contain theoretical knowledge, applied skills, student exchange, and work placement, then there is little reason to hold students back on the premise of

needing more academic skill or preparation. Under supervised guidance and equipped with the knowledge and tools found in the Bologna Process, bachelor graduates can confidently take on the challenge of attempting to enter the professional marketplace.

## DISCUSSION

This study looks through secondary source work at how effective the Bologna Process system is in addressing employability – seeing what role the employability concept has played, how intergovernmental policy has treated it, how it has developed, and how it can be better promoted. Published documents on developments in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), European University Association (EUA) Trends reports, and resulting initiatives of the Bologna Process were the primary sources under consideration in critiquing effectiveness of the ongoing standardization system. Collectively through these sources and referencing back to previous literature this chapter will discuss the employability agenda, evolving attitudes towards employability, and The Bologna initiatives.

### The Employability Agenda

Intergovernmental bodies collectively standardizing higher education through the Bologna Process have the agenda of promoting the European Higher Education Area, developing a continental education system that supports millions of young adults attending higher education institutions (HEI). Part of this agenda from the very outset of the Sorbonne attempting the EHEA was creating a framework which would facilitate employability (Allegre et al., 1998, p.3), where the Bologna Declaration just one year later was assured that the creation of a EHEA would lead to the promotion of employability (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p.2). Years later now the transitioning role for higher education has evolved into the goal of educating the populace (Dewsbury, 2014, par.3), and even more with becoming a global bridge in addressing complex problems (Ramaley, 2014, par.1). Now the facilitation of employability goes beyond Europe and those problems beyond European borders are very prevalent, such as in refugees landing upon Europe southern beaches.

### The Communiqués

Subsequent Communiqués pointed out that there was plenty of untapped potential in store if only adding in some European context (2001, p.2) or taking the chance studying abroad (2003, p.6), The Communiqués also addressed employability's importance (2010, p.1) as a worthwhile goal in pursuing (2012, p.1), feasible only with more stakeholder dialogue (2005, p.2; 2007, p.6; 2009, p.3). Higher education nevertheless serves the primary function of educating citizens, promoting lifelong learning for their benefit (Panitsidou, 2009, par.1). While employability is an agenda point under discussion in the Bologna Process, the effectiveness of Bologna's consideration on employability comes from more than agendas but also action. The Bologna Process system supports the standardization of higher education which affects the continental population, of which many are being educated by facilitating institutions giving them an education opportunity but for vastly different reasoning (Farish, 2015,

par.12). If the expectations of Europeans obtaining advanced educations are supported by announcements, then those agenda points in of themselves are lacking and deserve more adequate elaboration.

#### The Employability Role

As an abstract concept the idea of 'employability' is an ideal worth attempting, which can be seen with the Bologna Process in their continual attempts in keeping the employability as a central theme to higher education in the EHEA. In practice however there needs to be more identifiable substance to these agenda points with specified objectives, clearly outlined definitions, a framework of employability to work with in the context of higher education. Then the concept would become less abstract and more actionable in which the Bologna Process could take part in, as employability in essence starts from an individual's standpoint with many factors adding or taking away from the concept.

#### Evolving Attitudes Towards Employability

EUA Trends reports give a gradual timeline of evolving attitudes towards employability that have developed, especially in the release of its first 5 reports released every 2 years. While not primarily focused on attitudes towards employability, but rather comprehensive higher education trends across Europe in the development of the EHEA, the reports were more than adequate in addressing points on trending attitudes towards employability. While the trending attitudes were not linear per se from one report to the next, some patterns emerged in certain aspects about employability.

#### Varying Effects

Throughout the duration of the Bologna Process its implementation has been autonomous, ad hoc installations of the original blueprint with varying affects. From early on students were already feeling unprepared for the workforce in the Bologna system (Haug & Kirstein, 1999, p.23). This contrasts with the defining principle of employability that should "promote such transferable skills and fostering attributes that will enable graduates" (Lowden et al., 2011, p.vi). Implementing a single system to varied HEIs across Europe would understandably bring about such feelings, but that may be due to its early implementatino stages. In a later iteration the Trends report suggested that higher education should be responsive to changing societal and labor market needs (Crosier et al., 2007, p.33). This idea is even more disabling than the last. An alternative solution to constantly responding to changing labor market needs is to transcend marketplace labor force pattern changes with transferable skills than can apply in a multitude of contexts, or prepare graduates to become independent critical thinkers who can adapt to the future marketplace jobs that aren't in existence yet. Fortunately an even later Trends

release reported an increased participation and engagement between HEIs with the labor market (Susock, 2015, p.34). These are the effective kinds of conditions that make higher education valuable, adding merit to a system that is not without its flaws.

#### Continual Debates

Another pattern in the Trends report has been the continual debates running throughout the program, since perhaps employability is a debatable term. In the early stages some countries had just implemented the bachelor degrees to their education systems, and such were debating over the definition to a bachelor degree (Haug & Tauch, 2001, p.25). Later there was continued debate over the same definition of bachelor degrees, since the Bologna Declaration promoted the employability of the bachelor degree there were university representatives who thought the definition was too narrow as bachelor graduates were apparently not ready for the workforce (Reichert & Tauch, 2003, p.28). The debate continued towards the next Trends report to the extent that academics had begun to advise their students to continue studies, after graduation advancing to the second cycle level masters level of higher education (Reichert & Tauch, 2005, p.8). This line of logic relates directly to the theory of human capital in that the more years spent studying then the more skills are available to make you a more likely candidate in getting hired to the marketplace (Becker, 1962, p.9). Though neither correct or incorrect as a basis of logic, the advisal of students to study more after graduation generally works on the assumption that they need it – which, while common, isn't necessarily true. The most common debate however was the debate on employability, with the meaning/priority/aspects all varying according to actors or national-cultural contexts (Susock & Smidt, 2010, p.38).

#### Student Patterns

Student patterns in the Trends reports were of particular interest as they had statistical attachments to them, ranging across the years in relation to employability. For example 67% of sample respondents to a questionnaire felt employability was very important for graduates, and 32% as important (Crosier et al., 2007, p.32), leaving less than 1% considering it not important. This indicates a distinct interest in obtaining employment upon graduating an advanced study. From 2007 to 2009 career guidance grew from 66% to 83%, while psychological counseling services also grew from 55% to 66% in the same time period (Susock & Smidt, 2010, p.83). This can be seen in different ways, but the likely possibility indicated here is a growing desire to be adequately prepared and guidance/counseling avenues are a way of achieving that to some degree. It may be an indirect connection to employability, though career guidance indicates concern for future employment prospects. This also falls in line with the idea that

higher education takes part in setting students on their employability path to reach their goals in life (Cole & Tibby, 2013, p.5).

#### The Employability Development

The Trends reports give a unique perspective of employability in the context of higher education developments through varying effects, debates, and students patterns. The developments of implementing the Bologna Process works well pertaining to promoting mobility, yet conversely the employability of bachelor degree postpones to the next cycle. Debates continue to run in relation to employability, from what constitutes a bachelor degree to what employability even means, even though the Bologna Process has promoted employability since its inception. The student numbers seem to indicate that at least they find the concept to be an important aspect, so while employability may not have been properly addressed according to surveyed opinion it is starting to get more attention.

#### The Bologna Initiatives

The discovery of the Bologna initiatives was a remarkable discovery as there was an abundance of activities found to be working components of the Bologna Process. Of the several initiatives in relation to employability the available resources were largely in the form of published proposals, websites and information sources. The intriguing part about them came from how much they applied to education beyond a traditional institutional setting, much in line with signaling theory in its idea that instead of learning new skills at university the whole experience works as filtering system for holding on to the individuals with certifiably desirable attributes (Caplan, 2014, 24:02). The signaling theory is a controversial, much debated one, yet much like these out-of-classroom resources are rather useful if applied in context. Note that the Case Study chapter in this study that makes mention of these initiatives has the basis for recommending that these initiatives are better advertised in HEIs for dissemination.

The *proposal* that stood out the most was the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan that outlined action points to take for the advancement of entrepreneurial business culture to spread across Europe, especially since almost all the businesses across Europe operate in this sector ('Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan', 2012, par.5). The kinds of skills that come from being involved in this kind of sector cannot be understated, as employers are consistently looking for the skill set found in the entrepreneurial sector. One *website* of note was the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs, a multi-stakeholder European collaboration which connects organizations to HEIs, implements youth ICT training, retrain the

unemployed ('Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs', 2016, par.3). While some of these aspects do not relate to education, they advance the employability of individuals in every regard and make them a very positive addition to make a candidate more employable. A useful *information source* among the lot was the 'Key competences for lifelong learning' list as it outlines a reference point to develop ideas upon to engage in learning activities that continue even after studies are over. (European Parliament, 2006, Annex). As the theme relates to personal development, it is a component that relates quite closely to addressing employability.

#### The Employability Promotion

The Bologna Process would benefit greatly in marketing these initiatives in HEIs across the continent, which of course begs the question how to do it. As stated in the Case Study, a more in-depth approach to Educational Career Supervision would be an ideal avenue of pushing forward these proposals, websites and information sources. An in-depth approach would require careful consideration and thorough planning, yet nevertheless is entirely feasible with working objectives in mind. These initiatives are beneficial working tools, just as much as theoretical concepts and marketplace skills taught in the classroom. A more balanced collection of all three would enhance the employability offering given.

#### Conclusion

How effective is the Bologna Process system in addressing employability? The Bologna Process has made substantial efforts in addressing employability, yet as a still abstract concept that is only starting to gain the recognition it deserves those efforts could be improved upon such as with the model of in-depth supervision. The limitations of these conclusions are drawn from a concentrated research from secondary source work, yet does not negate their value. The implications of these conclusions leave the Bologna Process with much to do, although with an open choice in the chosen methodology. Considering the growing importance of employability, the attention to which employability is addressed should consequently also grow with it – as is the recommendation of this research.



## CONCLUSIONS

### Summary

When investigating the effectiveness of the Bologna Process in addressing employability what was once thought to be an abstract search of value then developed towards an inquiry of intergovernmental policy implementation. The research grew from the role, function, & purpose of higher education as the past points that developed the interest in researching the main question. The main topic settled upon employability, with its relation to human capital theory and also to academics as subject worth exploring. The research finalized in the area of skills, as it relates to signaling theory, and the types of skills for the consideration of future developments. With these foundational points an investigation into the Bologna Process was conducted through the mediums of documents, reports, and initiatives.

In these Bologna Process documents it was established that employability was in fact a principle component of the European Higher Education Area. Through the standardization of qualifications the employability of bachelor graduate was a highlighted benefit that the Bologna Process pressed forward to address. Yet in those documents, despite their well conceived efforts, were lacking in substantial evidence of any actionable quality to addressing employability. It was still an agenda point, as it always had been since the very beginning, yet perhaps the autonomy of participatory members or the lack of importance attributed to the concept led to the seemingly lacking implementation in the Communiqués.

The Trends Reports proved to be more revealing as they were considerably more comprehensive, allowing for more elaboration on the employability concept. As the European University Association author operates as an international higher education forum, the sort of attention to detail found in the reports was likely attributed to their authorship. The information on employability was somewhat scattered and irregular, but the data in trends was nonetheless revealing in the varying effects in employability application, the continual debates over definitions, and the student perceptions on the concept. Key highlights were a recent increased participation between academics and the marketplace, the employability of a bachelor degree is lessening to the extent that academics recommend further study, and students are placing a more importance on the concept of employability.

The Case Study looking into Bologna Process Initiatives revealed a wealth of resources available in the form of published proposals, websites, and information resources that all address employability in positive regards. The expansive reach of the 14 initiatives highlighted contribute towards the

empowering of students in utilitarian comprehensiveness. Outstanding initiatives among the rest include the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan that proposes investing in the advancement of the European entrepreneurial sector, the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs which operates as a digitally oriented employment center, and the Key competences for lifelong learning that contribute a comprehensive list of competences that allow for personal development.

#### Conclusions Drawn

The conclusions drawn from this research made clear that while the Bologna Process has done much to address employability there can be more done still, since employability needs further clarification, development upon the concept is slow, and despite having a plethora of useful initiatives in action a key target audience of such information is off elsewhere with student obligations.

Despite being a intergovernmental point of consideration for several years, the lack of an agreed definition of employability posits numerous ideas against one another. Establishing a clear, yet simple definition would not only spare the need for debate but also allow for the building of more effective institutional policy. Contextualizing a definition specifically in terms of higher education would even further advantage the position of effective policy making.

Development of the concept of employability has been subsequently slow, where other pressing concerns such as unemployment and underemployment are also plaguing the marketplace of individuals working in occupations that do not match their skill set or unable to work at all. Simply having any kind of job is of serious concern for the majority, which is likely leading students to respond to questionnaires that employability is of notable importance for them.

What should also be of notable importance for students are the Bologna Initiatives, components of the Bologna Process that actualize the standardization system that it boasts. The European Skills Panorama for example forecasts up-to-date marketplace skills at a national and European level, which can be utilized for effectively constructing a promising Curriculum Vitae. The prevalence of tools such as this need more exposure to be truly effective in an employability context.

#### Research Importance

The Bologna Process has successfully implemented the European Higher Education Area with more recognizable qualifications, strengthened quality assurance, and the standardization of the three cycle system of degree levels. Yet as one of the principle elements the Bologna Process, the employability component has yet to become fully realized within the newly implemented education area. Quality assurance of degrees across the continent has allowed for a great mobility of professional workers, yet

unfilled professional vacancies still linger and job seekers are more educated than ever. The skills mismatch of being unable to find employment that matches a particular skill level prompts the need of being employable, desirable, marketable in the sense that could be attained with the right training. The changing nature of working a career is no longer limited to a single organization for a lifetime, which makes the employable trait desirable for even working class citizens who have already obtained a degree. The economic woes of the Global Recession make the market, the organization, even the individual susceptible to unemployment, making employability a rather pressing point to consider.

### Limitations

Limitations in this research stem from the longitudinal effects of the study and cultural bias. The extent of this project although not excessive has carried on for approximately 8 months. The length of time taken to undertake this project has taken far longer than initially planned, originating with problems in the initial planning phases, then delays due to obligations outside the project. The background culture greatly contributed to the writing of this research, though as this author identifies with the primarily with American culture, the European value of higher education has been a learning experience which at times has conflicted between relying on the multiple value systems of higher education.

The longitudinal aspects of the research are rather simple to explain in that there was much too much time dwelling on the research from indecision points instead of actually conducting research. This led to a shortage of time in obtaining primary sourced data, though due to the indecision points those primary sourced candidates were a poor change for this research. By the time a more feasible plan was implemented into the study the search for new sources to interview, while desirable was out of the question. Nevertheless there was a large amount of available data to work with on higher education policy and reports, which made for a substantially adequate report to draft. The cultural aspect of limitations may have added bias in the selection of methodological research choices, for example in the expressed want of interview candidates for what was thought to be “better” information, even without a clear plan. Even so, the resulting report has allowed for a comprehensive look at the employability in the context of the Bologna Process, in which can be considered an adequate review of the process.

### Recommendations

As a point of consideration for future research it is recommended for the Bologna Process to consider what the European undergraduate student is astutely aware of. The components that make up the Bologna Initiatives go largely unnoticed by students during their time of study, which makes the

likelihood of them recognizing the importance of these Initiatives diminish. Even if an undergraduate is made of aware of such tools, as the author of this research indubitably was made aware of in brief during the first year of study, the amount of attention given these tools warrants more attention. An in-depth Educational Career Supervision component that disseminates this knowledge to students more thoroughly throughout their studies would be a reasonable start in getting the message across to a student preoccupied with theory, exams, homework, activities, projects, and the many other components that make up the life of the undergraduate. Perhaps suggesting a well thought out reexamination of higher education curriculum that implements new modules dividing student course work equally between the normal course material and a substantial supervisory component is an excessive recommendation, but given the weighted importance on the matter the idea is hardly unreasonable.

#### In Conclusion

This dissertation stems from discussions with collegiate over the value of the European Studies program on the concerns of obtaining employment after finishing the study. As conversations crossed over to classmates from other studies, the striking similarities birthed the idea that these concerns crossed study genres as an important component to obtaining any given bachelor degree. The Bologna Process framework has been progressively standardizing higher education across the continent since 1999 into a uniform system of academic programs. The program has been successfully implemented through intergovernmental policies, where the effects of standardizations have been measured on the basis of labor market trends in graduate employment levels.

Yet workers enter and exit the labor market at any given moment, and advanced degree graduates are no different at any level. A bachelor graduate can obtain job offer for a packaged benefits corporate position from sheer luck while a postgraduate obtains nothing and after 6 months gets stuck working as a bartender to fill the experience gap. With the prevalence of skills mismatching, an enhanced focus on employability would better market graduates to find a position matching the substantial investment in time and cost just spent. That would indicate a rather effective Bologna Process system.

## REFERENCES

- 'About the tool' (2015). Skills Panorama: Inspiring your choices on skills and jobs in Europe:  
<http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/content/about-tool>
- About EUA (n.d.). European University Association: <http://www.eua.be/about.aspx>
- Allegre, C., Berlinguer, L., Blackstone, T., & Ruttgers, J. (1998, May 25). Sorbonne Joint Declaration. Bologna Process – European Higher Education Area. European Higher Education Area:  
[http://www.ehea.info/uploads/declarations/sorbonne\\_declaration1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/uploads/declarations/sorbonne_declaration1.pdf)
- Bamberger, M. (2013). The Mixed Methods Approach to Evaluation. Social Impact:  
<http://www.socialimpact.com/press-releases/MME613.pdf>
- Becker, G.S. (1962). Investment in Human Capital: A Theoretical Analysis. The Journal of Political Economy, Volume 70, Issue 5, Part 2: Investment in Human Beings (Oct., 1962), 9-49. Sonoma State University: <http://marbles.sonoma.edu/users/c/cuellar/econ421/humancapital.pdf>
- Bhattacharjee, A. (2012). Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices. Textbooks Collection. Book 3. University of South Florida:  
[http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa\\_textbooks/3](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbooks/3)
- Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999: Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education (1999). European Higher Education Area:  
[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BOLOGNA\\_DECLARATION1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf)
- Bologna Policy Forum: Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009). Statement by the Bologna Policy Forum 2009. European Higher Education Area:  
[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bologna\\_Policy\\_Forum\\_Statement\\_29April2009.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bologna_Policy_Forum_Statement_29April2009.pdf)
- Bologna Policy Forum: Vienna (2010). Bologna Policy Forum Statement. Vienna, March 12, 2010. European Higher Education Area:  
[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Vienna\\_BPF\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Vienna_BPF_Statement.pdf)

- Boslaugh, S. (2007). *Secondary Data Sources for Public Health: A Practical Guide*. Cambridge University Press:  
[http://assets.cambridge.org/97805218/70016/excerpt/9780521870016\\_excerpt.pdf](http://assets.cambridge.org/97805218/70016/excerpt/9780521870016_excerpt.pdf)
- Buddharaksa, B. (2010). *Positivism, Anti-Positivism and Neo-Gramscianism*. Ritsumeikan Center for Asia Pacific Studies (RCAPS), Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University:  
[http://www.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/uploads/fckeditor/publications/workingPapers/RCAPS\\_WP10-4.pdf](http://www.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/uploads/fckeditor/publications/workingPapers/RCAPS_WP10-4.pdf)
- Caplan, B. (2014). *Bryan Caplan on College, Signaling and Human Capital* [Audio podcast]. Library of Economics and Liberty: [http://www.econtalk.org/archives/2014/04/bryan\\_caplan\\_on.html](http://www.econtalk.org/archives/2014/04/bryan_caplan_on.html)
- CEDEFOP (2014). *Validation of non-formal and informal learning. European Inventory on Validation: 2014 Update*. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training:  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>
- Chorev, R. (2014). *Effective Case Studies - 7 steps to get you there...* LinkedIn:  
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140602093538-20256543-effective-case-studies-7-steps-to-get-you-there>
- Coates, D.E. (2006). *Hard skills vs soft skills. People Skills Training: Are you Getting A Return on Your Investment?* Praxis Consulting, Inc.: <http://www.praxisconsulting.org/PeopleSkills.pdf>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education*, 5th edition. Wikispaces:  
[https://research-srttu.wikispaces.com/file/view/Research+Methods+in+Education\\_ertu.pdf](https://research-srttu.wikispaces.com/file/view/Research+Methods+in+Education_ertu.pdf)
- Cole, D., & Tibby, M. (2013). *Defining and developing your approach to employability: A framework for higher education institutions*. The Higher Education Academy:  
[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/employability\\_framework.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/employability_framework.pdf)
- Communiqué: Prague (2001). *Towards The European Higher Education Area*. Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on May 19th 2001. European Higher Education Area:  
[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/PRAGUE\\_COMMUNIQUE.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/PRAGUE_COMMUNIQUE.pdf)

Communiqué: Berlin (2003). Realising the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003. European Higher Education Area:

[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Berlin\\_Communique1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Berlin_Communique1.pdf)

Communiqué: Bergen (2005). The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals.

Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005. European Higher Education Area:

[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen\\_Communique1.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Bergen_Communique1.pdf)

Communiqué: London (2007). London Communiqué. Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world. European Higher Education Area:

[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/London\\_Communique18May2007.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/London_Communique18May2007.pdf)

Communiqué: Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009). The Bologna Process 2020 - The European Higher Education Area in the new decade. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009. European Higher Education Area: [http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven\\_Louvain-la-Neuve\\_Communique%20A9\\_April\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communique%20A9_April_2009.pdf)

Communiqué: Budapest-Vienna (2010). Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area. European Higher Education Area:

[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Budapest-Vienna\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration.pdf)

Communiqué: Bucharest (2012). Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area. European Higher Education Area:

<http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Bucharest%20Communique%202012%281%29.pdf>

Crosier, D., Purser, L., & Smidt, H. (2007). Trends V: Universities shaping the European Higher Education Area. EUA Publications: [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/eua\\_trends\\_v\\_for\\_web1b9364ca84b96a879ce5ff00009465c7.pdf](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/eua_trends_v_for_web1b9364ca84b96a879ce5ff00009465c7.pdf)

Currie, D. (2005). Developing and Applying Study Skills: Writing Assignments, Dissertations and Management Reports. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development:

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/E4D6775E-07B6-4BCF-A912-C3DE563C3F74/0/1843980649SC.pdf>

- Denicolo, P., & Reeves, J. (2013). Developing Transferable Skills: Enhancing Your Research and Employment Potential. Sage Publishing: [http://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/58777\\_Denicolo\\_&\\_Reeves.pdf](http://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/58777_Denicolo_&_Reeves.pdf)
- Dewsbury, B.M. (2015). Debating the Role of Higher Education in Society. National Center for Biotechnology Information: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4416521/>
- ECTS Glossary (2015). European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System Glossary. European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/glossary\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/glossary_en.htm)
- ENIC-NARIC (2014). Welcome to the enic-naric website. European Network of Information Centres in the European Region (ENIC) National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (NARIC): <http://www.enic-naric.net/welcome-to-the-enic-naric-website.aspx>
- 'Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan' (2012). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe. O.J. COM/2012/0795. European Commission: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0795>
- EQF (2016). Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). European Commission: <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/descriptors-page>
- 'ESCO Portal' (2014). European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations. European Commission: <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>
- ETER (n.d.). About ETER. European Tertiary Education Register: <http://eter.joanneum.at/imdas-eter/>
- Europass (2016). About Europass. Europass: <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/about>
- European Commission (2016). The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area. European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en.htm)
- European Parliament (2006). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning. O.J. 2006/962/EC. EUR-Lex: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962>



- European Students' Union (2015). Bologna With Student Eyes 2015. European Students' Union:  
[http://www.processodibologna.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/BWSE\\_2015.pdf](http://www.processodibologna.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/BWSE_2015.pdf)
- Farish, D.J. (2015). What Is the Purpose of Higher Education? (Part 1): Attack of the Politicians. Higher Ed in Crisis: <http://higheredincrisis.org/2015/02/what-is-the-purpose-of-higher-education-part-1/>
- Faust, D.G. (2010). The Role of the University in a Changing World. Royal Irish Academy, Trinity College, Dublin. Harvard University: <http://www.harvard.edu/president/speech/2010/role-university-changing-world>
- Goldkuhl, G. (2012). Pragmatism vs interpretivism in qualitative information systems research. European Journal of Information Systems, (21), 2, 135-146.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/ejis.2011.54>
- 'Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs' (2016). Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs. Digital Single Market: Digital Economy & Society. European Commission: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/grand-coalition-digital-jobs>
- Haug, G., & Kirstein, J. (1999). Project Report: Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education. EUA Publications: [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/higher-education/offdoc\\_bp\\_trend\\_i-1068715136182.pdf](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/higher-education/offdoc_bp_trend_i-1068715136182.pdf)
- Haug, G., & Tauch, C. (2001). Trends II: Towards the European Higher Education Area - survey of main reforms from Bologna to Prague. EUA Publications: [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/higher-education/offdoc\\_bp\\_trend\\_ii-1068715483262.pdf](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/higher-education/offdoc_bp_trend_ii-1068715483262.pdf)
- Havergal, C. (2015). UK Engagement Survey: universities have limited impact on students' 'soft' skill development. Times Higher Education: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/uk-engagement-survey-universities-have-limited-impact-students-soft-skill-development>
- Karasek, Z. (2011). Transferability of Skills across Economic Sectors: Role and Importance for Employment at European Level. European Commission:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7124>

- Liao, Y. (2014). The Signaling Model: An Alternative Perspective on Education. The Queen's Business Review: <http://www.qbreview.org/the-signaling-model-an-alternative-perspective-on-education/>
- Lowden, K., Hall, S., Elliot., D., & Lewin, J. (2011). Employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates. Edge Foundation:  
[http://www.edge.co.uk/media/63412/employability\\_skills\\_as\\_pdf\\_-\\_final\\_online\\_version.pdf](http://www.edge.co.uk/media/63412/employability_skills_as_pdf_-_final_online_version.pdf)
- Melink, M., & Pavlin, S. (2009). Employability of Graduates and Higher Education Management Systems. Agency for the University System Quality in Catalonia:  
[www.aqu.cat/doc/doc\\_60722650\\_1.pdf](http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_60722650_1.pdf)
- Observer Editorial (2014). Higher education: for too long, we've avoided debating the true purpose of universities. The Guardian:  
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/25/higher-education-true-purpose-of-universities>
- 'Open Education Europa' (n.d.). Open Education Europa: Organization Profile. LinkedIn:  
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/openeducationeuropa>
- 'Opening Up Education' (2013). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources. O.J. COM/2013/0654. EUR-Lex: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1389115469384&uri=CELEX:52013DC0654>
- Page, M.E. (2010). Signaling in the Labor Market. Research Gate:  
<https://www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=57203eb793553b80bd624a8d&asSetKey=AS%3A355339720511488%401461730999093>
- Panitsidou, E. (2009). European Lifelong Learning Educational Policy in the Light of the "Lisbon Agenda": The Greek Case. Review of European Studies, Vol. 1, No. 1. Pennsylvania State University:  
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=45F3F19615B44AE9A222029B6A438BF7?doi=10.1.1.673.8853&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

- Ramaley, J.A. (2014). The Changing Role of Higher Education: Learning to Deal with Wicked Problems. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 18, Number 3 p. 7. Campus Compact Connecticut: <http://ctcampuscompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The-Changing-Role-of-Higher-Ed-Boundary-Spanning-Judith-A-Ramaley.pdf>
- Reichert, S., & Tauch, C. (2003). Trends III: Progress towards the European Higher Education Area. EUA Publications: <http://www.eua.be/Libraries/higher-education/trends2003final-1065011164859.pdf>
- Reichert, S., & Tauch, C. (2005). Trends IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna. EUA Publications: [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/higher-education/trendsiv\\_final-1117012084971.pdf](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/higher-education/trendsiv_final-1117012084971.pdf)
- 'Rethinking Education' (2012). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes. O.J. COM/2012/0669. EUR-Lex: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1389776578033&uri=CELEX:52012DC0669>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students*, 5th edition. Harlow, Pearson Education Limited.
- Sursock, A., & Smidt, H. (2010). Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Higher Education. EUA Publications: [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/trends\\_2010049364ca84b96a879ce5ff00009465c7.pdf](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/trends_2010049364ca84b96a879ce5ff00009465c7.pdf)
- Sursock, A. (2015). Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities. EUA Publications: <http://www.eua.be/Libraries/higher-education/trends-2015.pdf>
- University Rectors (1988, Sep. 18). Magna Charta Universitatum. Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum: <http://www.magna-charta.org/resources/files/the-magna-charta/english>
- de Villiers, M.R. (2005). Three approaches as pillars for interpretive Information Systems research: development research, action research and grounded theory. University of South Africa: <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/13199/SAICSIT%202005.pdf>

Yin, R.K. (2004). Case Study Methods. COSMOS Corporation:

<http://www.cosmoscorp.com/Docs/AERAdraft.pdf>

Yin, R.K. (2009). Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Fourth Edition. Centre for Environment and Development Studies Student Portal: [http://cemusstudent.se/wp-](http://cemusstudent.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/YIN_K_ROBERT-1.pdf)

[content/uploads/2012/02/YIN\\_K\\_ROBERT-1.pdf](http://cemusstudent.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/YIN_K_ROBERT-1.pdf)

Yorke, M. (2006). Employability in higher education: what it is – what it is not. Learning &

Employability: Series One. Higher Education Academy:

[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/id116\\_employability\\_in\\_higher\\_education\\_336.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/id116_employability_in_higher_education_336.pdf)

## APPENDICES

### Email correspondence: Ministry of Education

11/27/2015

Stoker, D.J.E. (12010146)

Your reference is E3268768

Dear Mr Stoker,

Thank you for your e-mail, in which you mention that you do a request for an interview for your international European Studies major at The Hague University, early in December.

Due to the large number of requests that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science for interviews for the purpose of a project or receiving inquiries they can not deal with substantive questions.

Information for school assignments, papers, theses and research projects is available on various websites. Down below you find 2 links to the websites, Mr Stoker.

<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/>

<http://www.government.nl/>.

You can also visit a public library or the library at your school or university. University websites can be a source of information as well.

Kind regards,

Silvia Janssen

Public Information Service, Government of the Netherlands

If you have any further questions about this matter or other questions relating to rules and regulations in the Netherlands you can send them through the contact form on [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl). In order to prevent spam and viruses we kindly ask you to use the contact form.

--- Original Message ---

From: d.j.e.stoker@student.hhs.nl

Received: 11/26/15 1:36:01 PM CET

To: Informatie Rijksoverheid

Subject: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science - Interview Request

Referring website:

Aard van uw vraag: Professional

Aanspreekvorm: Mr

Naam: D Stoker

Telefoonnummer: 0645184744

E-mailadres: d.j.e.stoker@student.hhs.nl

Organisatie: The Hague University

Onderwerp: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science - Interview Request

Vraag: Dear Mrs. Bussemaker,

My name is Daniel Stoker: a fourth year international European Studies major at The Hague University, currently drafting my final paper for the study. I am writing you to request an interview for my undergraduate dissertation on the value of a higher education degree in the Netherlands.

The research is a comparative analysis of bachelor diploma value to the United States, specifically in the development of tertiary education trends between the two countries. I am seeking to ascertain more qualitative data through an interview to add context to some preliminary research recently conducted. As someone who is knowledgeable in this subject I believe that you would be able to add substantial value to this research.

Some sample interview questions include:

- What are the primary roles of higher education institutions in the Netherlands according to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science?
- What is the value of a bachelor level diploma in contributing towards the advancement of Dutch society?
- What is the importance in retaining international talent in the Netherlands from working elsewhere once graduating?

The current timeline for my project is relatively short. I am looking to conduct an interview sometime in early December as the dissertation is due to turn in at the start of January. As you may be busy, if you are in fact unable to meet for an interview in person I would gladly choose for alternative method of collecting data, such as interviewing someone else from your department or conducting an email interview. Please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience; I can be regularly reached by email (d.j.e.stoker@student.hhs.nl) or by telephone (0645184744).

Thank you for your time and consideration in reading my request.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stoker

Email correspondence: Volkskrant

Maartje Bakker <maatje.bakker@volkskrant.nl> 12/1/2015

Dear Daniel,

I am afraid that I am not an expert on the subject you are emailing me about. I'm sorry, but I don't think it's wise to do an interview about this matter.

Kind regards,

Maartje Bakker

Stoker, D.J.E. (12010146)

11/26/2015

maatje.bakker@volkskrant.nl

Dear Mrs. Bakker,

My name is Daniel Stoker: a fourth year international European Studies major at The Hague University, currently drafting my final paper for the study. I am writing you to request an email interview for my undergraduate dissertation on the value of a higher education degree in the Netherlands.

The research is a comparative analysis of bachelor diploma value to the United States, specifically in the development of tertiary education trends between the two countries. I am seeking to ascertain more qualitative data through an interview to add context to some preliminary research recently conducted. As someone who has published work on higher education in The Volkskrant, I believe that you would be able to add substantial value to this research.

The current timeline for my project is relatively short. I am looking to conduct an interview sometime in early December as the dissertation is due to turn in at the start of January. Please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience; I can be regularly reached by email: d.j.e.stoker@student.hhs.nl.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reading my request.

Kind regards,

Daniel Stoker