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THE BOLOGNA PROCESS: BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND BUREAUCRACY

Abstract:

The Bologna process was aimed at making a Europe of Knowledge possible, but the standardization following the development of EHEA challenged its democratic values. The diminishing of the ideal of Humboldt and even democratic values seems to be the price to build a uniformed market of education in Europe. This article examines how the Bologna process affected the university process at the University of Nordland, one of the youngest universities in Europe. Weber's remark on the bureaucratization of education is used as a tool to reveal the ratio between democracy and bureaucracy in the process of establishing the EHEA 1999-2010.

Keywords:

The University of Nordland, Bologna, Norway, Weber, bureaucracy, Humboldt, democracy, the Quality Reform, EHEA, HEI.

JEL Classification: I28

Introduction

In this article I will examine how the Bologna Process affected the university process at the University of Nordland (UiN), one of the youngest universities in Europe. In the process of establishing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010, the Bologna Declaration of 1999 pointed at some action lines as well as declarations signed in Prague in 2001 and in Berlin in 2003.¹ Some of these action lines were followed up in the Norwegian Quality Reform of 2003. This reform was beneficial to the three university colleges heading for university status in Norway around 2000; namely the University of Stavanger (2005), the University of Agder (2007), and the University of Nordland (2011). These action lines were meant to facilitate the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, the adoption of a system essentially based on bachelor/master's degrees, the establishment of a system of credits, and the promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance and lifelong learning (Prague 2001).

During this process the university colleges grew closer to the universities in both structure and content. But, as Thomas Heinze (2010) has shown for the development of HE in Germany, even the established Norwegian universities adjusted themselves to the "ausseruniversitären" part of HE. The implementation of the Bologna action lines was most successful in the Nordic countries, making Norway one of the leading nations of HE integration in Europe, even though the country was outside the EU (Bergen and London 2010, p. 69).

The Bologna Process was a democratization process aimed at giving new groups access to the highest-ranked institutions of EHEA. It nevertheless still contained a democratic dilemma, due to the need for bureaucratization following its demands on standardization; thus the process both promoted mass education in Europe and challenged democratic values on the institutional level at the same time. In the clash between bureaucratization and democratization, the process in Norway broke the former university monopoly, giving space for three new universities during 2005-2011. I will use Weber's remarks on democracy and bureaucracy as a tool to reveal and discuss this dilemma in the university process at UiN. First - a brief introduction of it.

The University of Nordland

UiN can trace its roots back to 1920, when a nursing school was founded at the Nordland Hospital in Bodø, the County Capital of Nordland, situated north of the Arctic Circle. From this small beginning, with only one pupil, the institution has grown as a result of Norwegian regional policy, the development of mass education during the 70s and continued academic on-campus development. The formal starting point for the university process at the institution was the 1994 merging of five former independent colleges situated together on campus.

¹ The six were addressing common degrees, bachelor- and masterbased programs, joint credit system, mobility, quality assurance and promotion of the European dimension. The six were completed with three more action lines in the Prague Communiqué 2001; lifelong learning, institutions and students, promoting EHEA, and in the Berlin Communiqué with one more action line; the establishment of EHEA and European Research Area ERA as two pillars of the knowledge-based society. The Bologna Declaration of 1999 is available at http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/990719BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.PDF, read 20.02.14.

From the outset, UiN has been educating people for professions more than for academic careers, teaching and nursing being the most important areas, together with business management and administration. The plans for achieving university status were presented as late as by the then-institutional leadership in 1999, the same year as the Bologna Declaration was signed. The plans were not considered viable by most of its employees, however, the leadership had strong support from Mr. Jon Lilletun, the Minister of Research, Education and Church Affairs, and it also cooperated with the universities-to-be in Stavanger and Kristiansand (Agder). These two achieved university status in 2005 and 2007 respectively, after decades of political struggles and academic efforts, most intensely after 1999.. There was strong resistance from both politicians and academics when it came to whether or not the three should achieve university status, and there were no accreditation demands established in 1999. The 2003 Quality Reform, the 2003 establishment of NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) and the European Bologna Process, were to define the terms for becoming a university: The question of whether the three should achieve university status became just a matter of time when they fulfilled the demands.²

In 1999 there was no university between Tromsø and Trondheim, a distance of 790 kilometers. The students from Nordland County were expected to study in Tromsø, 320 kilometers north of Bodø, but the majority of them moved south to Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim. Hence, establishing the University of Nordland became a political argument for educating the youth in the north, keeping the population up in Nordland while also strengthening the competence in one of the counties with the lowest education level in Norway. UiN was built on four academic pillars with one doctoral pillar each; Bodø Graduate School of Business (PhD in Business), Faculty of Social Sciences (PhD in Sociology), Faculty of Professional Studies (PhD in Studies of Professional Practice) and Faculty of Biosciences and Aquaculture (PhD in Aquatic Biosciences). These pillars were a way of fulfilling the demands for accreditation. UiN achieved its university status as of 01.01.2011. It is a State university with its funding mainly coming from the Government. The institution had around 6,000 students and 560 employees in 2013.³

Weber's Remarks On Education

Weber's reflections on education in his work *Economy and Society* from 1922 helps us understand the consequences of the Bologna Process in light of democratic values. His discussion about the ratio between bureaucracy and democracy is a discussion about these two as ideal types; they are imaginary pictures rather than reality, highlighting essential aspects of the empirical phenomenon 'democracy' and 'bureaucracy'. His ideal types are neither regular nor empirical examples; they are rather tools that define the general principles of the phenomenon. He presents his historical sociology as a stand-off between historicism and positivism, and defines the ideal type as "an illusion which in itself is unambiguous" (Weber 2003).

Weber discusses democracy in the classical term "government by the people" and makes some remarks on it (Lijphard 1984). He states that the "demos" itself, which means a shapeless mass, is not "governing" the organization or state in question after a democratization process. Democratization is more about the governing of the people than the people governing. The very process is about new

² *Kvalitetsreformen i lys av Bologna-prosessen*, 10.07.2007, published on http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/tema/hoyere_utdanning/bolognaprosessen/kvalitetsreformen-i-lys-av-bologna-prose.html?regj_oss=1&id=439552.

³ dbh.snd.

ways of finding those in government, giving people channels of power through elections to ensure that the leaders are representing “public opinion” (Weber 1978, p. 985).

Weber points at the universities in Germany, with an elected President and Deans representing the university, as an example of a case where *direct democracy* is practiced (Weber 1978, p. 948, 955). He also explains that the direct democracy is challenged basically by size;

As soon as mass administration is involved, the meaning of (direct, my remark) democracy changes so radically that it no longer makes sense for the sociologist to ascribe to the term the same meaning ... (Weber 1978, p. 951)⁴

Weber defines bureaucratization in general as “a certain development of administrative tasks, both quantitative and qualitative” (Weber 1978, p. 969). According to this definition, bureaucracy is seen as the actual result of this development. Democratic mass parties make mass democracy possible. They are “inevitably” accompanied by bureaucratization, which poses a challenge to the very nature of democracy (Weber 1978, p. 985):

The political concept of democracy, deduced from the “equal rights” of the governed, includes these further postulates: (1) prevention of the development of a closed status group of officials in the interest of a universal accessibility of office, and (2) minimization of the authority of officialdom in the interest of expanding the sphere of influence of “public opinion” as far as practicable (Weber 1978, p. 985).

On the other hand, because of its decision-making by rules rather than by discretion, thus treating people equally, bureaucratization brings *passive* democratization along with it. Weber saw a parallel between bureaucratization and democratization, though he also warned against overstatements about it, “however typical it might be,” because these democratization processes often are connected with status groups (Weber 1978, p. 990).⁵ In other words; according to Weber, bureaucratization is a two-edged sword that both undermines and provides for democratization.

When Weber examines the effects of the rational bureaucratic system of government on society, he points to its effect on the nature of education and personal culture (*Erziehung* and *Bildung*) (Weber 1978, p. 998). Weber points at the examination system as a crucial part of both higher education and bureaucracy – it is a point of practice where these meet and join in a way that makes education serve bureaucracy more than democracy:

Firstly, it creates a culture of choosing and preferring the qualified by introducing a system of specialized examinations. This alters the nature of education towards bureaucratic procedures, as bureaucracy itself is dependent on the possibility

⁴ In other words, according to Weber, the challenges faced by mass education in the 70s and 80s in Norway had to change the way democracy was lived out in the universities. The establishing of regional university colleges can be seen as a way of handling this challenge without having to change the universities according to the increasing number of students. See Weber, Max. *Makt og byråkrati. Essays om politikk og klasse, samfunnsforskning og verdier*, Gyldendal, Oslo, 2000, s. 153.

⁵ Weber states that “There is also the possibility – and often it has become a fact...- that bureaucratization of the administration is deliberately connected with the formation of status groups, or is entangled with it by the force of the existing groupings of social power.”

of ranking officials by the degree of qualification. Second, the qualified becomes a privileged “caste” which favors some against others according to their diplomas:

If we hear from all sides demands for the introduction of regulated curricula culminating in specialized examinations, the reason behind this is, not a suddenly awakened “thirst for education,” but rather the desire to limit the supply of candidates for these positions (high status and economical beneficial positions, my remark) and to monopolize them for the holders of educational patents (Weber 1978, p. 1000).

The diplomas also give social prestige and the rights to demand payment according to status instead of outcome, to promotion by seniority and to be provided for as an old-age (Weber 2000, p. 154):

This development is, above all, greatly furthered by the social prestige of the “patent of education” acquired through such specialized examinations, the more so since this prestige can again be turned to economic advance (Weber 1978, p. 1000).

In this way, bureaucracy itself paves the way for less democratic development as it by nature struggles to gain its own employees, who tend to form a social class of their own with their benefits and rights (Weber 2000, p. 155).

According to Weber, bureaucracy always has been a development that has come relatively late (Weber 1978, p. 983). But when bureaucracy is fully established in an administration, the system it creates is “practically indestructible” and cannot be replaced or disposed of (Weber 1978, p. 987, 988). Weber warns of generalizing on this topic; every historical case must be analyzed on its own to see how bureaucracy develops (Weber 1978, p.991). In summary, the bureaucratization of education equals an increasing demand for theorization and documentation of knowledge in the educational system, favoring the “specialist” instead of the “cultivated man”:

Behind all the present discussions about basic questions of the educational system there lurks decisively the struggle of the “specialist” type of man against the older type of the “cultivated man”, a struggle conditioned by the irresistibly expanding bureaucratization of all public and private relations of authority and by the ever.increasing importance of experts and specialized knowledge (Weber 1978, p. 1002).

According to Weber, bureaucracy and democracy will always be in conflict because of their opposite natures. Hence, every democracy faces the challenge of a bureaucracy undermining its values. Nevertheless, mass democracy cannot exist without a certain amount of bureaucracy, which is one of its premises. Not to mention, individual needs will not be cared for until they concern a certain amount of people. In this way, democratization might weaken individuals and strengthen those in power. Weber calls the meeting between common man and officials “the leveling of the governed” (Weber 1978, p. 985).

In the following, Weber’s analysis contributes to understanding how the bureaucratization of HE in Europe during the last two decades has affected the university-building process in Nordland. The democratization process of Bologna demanded bureaucratization in order to gain mass education and internationalization in HE. Weber’s remarks enlighten the dilemma of the process; with mass education

demanding a uniform administration of EHEA. His focus on education serving bureaucracy more than democracy through favoring the qualified, who tend to constitute a privileged “Caste” and gain social prestige and rights, will be the main tool in this analysis. I will also use the ideal of Humboldt in order to understand the clash between democracy and bureaucracy in HE.

The Ideal of Humboldt

The ideal of Humboldt existed in both university and college circles since the early 19th Century; with personal culture (*Buildung*), the freedom of teaching and doing research by scholars and the freedom of choosing education by students as central values. The autonomy of the university was crucial in this tradition due to topics and academic thinking, even though it was administrated by the state, which employed its professors.⁶ The Humboldt ideal had significant influence as an ideal of what a university should be also in Norway; not a marketplace for knowledge asked for by the citizens, but an ‘Ebony tower’, giving answers to questions asked by researchers rather than society.

As the numbers of students increased in the 1970s, students had to take mandatory exams in order to gain a profession and professors had to teach on topics they had not done any research on. Nevertheless, the ideal survived and served as a source of identity and self-image among academics, in Norway even stronger than in Germany.⁷ Weber’s example of direct democracy in academia was the elected President and Dean, but only as long as the numbers of the electorate were low. The ideal of Humboldt was challenged by mass education because it was reserved for a small group of scholars; a democracy for the privileged.

In 2006, the Quality Reform in Norway was evaluated and a new system of measuring research was presented, the so-called “tellekantsystemet”, providing the HEIs with funding according to credits achieved and research published, in addition to the core funding. This system was motivated by the need for changing from research funding based on how many employees the HEIs had, to a system that encourages research publishing through scientific channels. This system is an example of a weberian instrumental rationality and leads to a diminishing of the ideal of Humboldt. The system has been criticized due to its undermining the possibilities for ground-breaking research, which needs, among other factors, long-term funding and risk-taking in order to push the research frontiers (Heinze 2008, p. 302-318). Heinze (2008, p. 315) suggests that a new funding organization aimed at ground-breaking research would be the best way to meet this new challenge. In other words, he recommends that the Humboldtian values are re-implemented in parts of the academic funding system by leaving the scale of production and rather revitalizing research based on curiosity and non-profit aims.

In 2007, the European University Association (EUA)’s Trends V report stated that:

⁶ Sett under ett NOU 2008:3, p. 18. Fosslund, Jørgen, ”Wilhelm von Humboldt: Dannelse og frihet – Det moderne universitet”, in Steinholdt, Kjetil and Lars Løvlie (Eds.), *Pedagogikkens mange ansikter. Pedagogisk idehistorie fra antikken til det postmoderne*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 2004, p. 210.

⁷ Sett under ett, NOU 2008:3, p. 19. Kehm, Barbara M., Svein Michelsen and Agnete Vabø, ”Towards the Two-cycle Degree Structure: Bologna, Reform and Path Dependency in German and Norwegian Universities, Higher Education Policy, 23 (227 – 245), 2010, p. 229.

... the greatest barrier to the successful implementation of Bologna is the traditional model of universities as independent and loosely connected faculties ... (EUA Trends V report, 2007)

In other words, the traditional perspective inspired by Humboldt was the biggest threat to the Bologna Process. How then could the process be so successful despite rejecting these traditional values? In 2005, the ministers participating in the process stated in the Bergen Communique that the Bologna Process did not over regulate HE in Europe;

... they expressed a determination that the commitment to improved consistency among academic structures, enhanced accountability, and more effective teaching should not undermine research and innovation. At the same time, while expressing wariness of overregulation, the ministers also “urge universities to ensure that their doctoral programmes promote interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills, thus meeting the needs of the wider employment market” (Bergen Communique, p. 4) ... (Bergen and London, 2010, p. 66.)

According to Bergen and London, the stakeholders have solved the challenge of overregulation by following two tracks; *both* quality assurance and the strengthening of courses and institutions. It could be, however, that neither of them preserved the ideal of Humboldt; in strengthening the institutions, the increasing formal demands on the management allowed it to gain more formal power, while the single faculty member lost some of his or her influence along the way. Is it true that the democratic on-campus channels did not match the Bologna Process at large and were removed? A European framework demanded institutions with stronger management on all levels. As a final remark on the European Parliament-Committee on Culture and Education in October 2011, professor Luzzatto underlined the need of more power top-down:

EHAE is ruled by inter-governmental agreements (which, in addition, include States not belonging to the Union). Reasonable links have often been found on a pragmatic basis, due to good will of all actors. Probably, good will is no more sufficient, if we aim at achieving completely the ambitious goals of EHEA; decisions at top institutional levels are needed (Luzzato, 2011, p- 11).

The EUA Trends IV report had as early as in 2005 suggested that strong and sensitive leadership “allowing enough space for internal deliberation” was needed in order to continue the reform (Bergen and London 2010, p. 63). At the 3rd Conference on the Knowledge Base for Higher Education Politics in Norway arranged by The Research Council of Norway, Director General Arvid Hallén stated during the opening session that the area of politics concerning higher education also needs to be based on research (Hallén 2014, web). Another question is therefore whether there is a democratic challenge to a society giving the key roles to researchers rather than elected politicians in shaping the future (Meyer 2002, p. 14). Or the opposite: What happens when the politicians and the experts are talking the same language?

What happens with democracy when those who are to represent the people, speak and act in the language of the experts? What has the state become, when those who govern, are thinking in concepts which lies far behind the experiences of common people? (Høvik 2002, p. 50.)

Kehm, Michelsen and Vabø found that the Humboldtian ideal of *Bildung* and *Lehrenfreiheit* in HE has been altered towards a system that more and more gives value to the combination of *Bildung* and professional training: “A ‘pure’ Humboldtian model was impossible to justify within the framework of a mass system of higher education” (Kehm, Michelsen and Vabø 2010, p. 240). In opening up to the masses, the Humboldtian values finally showed themselves as too élitist; to quote Weber, they served a qualified “caste” of academics, not society at large. The Humboldtian ideal showed itself insufficient for the new HE reality where *Ausbildung* and *Buildung* had to meet and today still need to adjust to each other. According to Kehm, Michelsen and Vabø (2010, p. 240) “a tense relationship between *Buildung* and professional training (are) continuing also within the new two-cycle degree structure”.

At the University of Nordland this is most evident at the Faculty of Professional Studies, which contains both the former nursing and teacher education, together with a philosophy-based Ph.D. program in Studies of Professional Practice. This faculty is of special interest when it comes to bureaucratization as it reveals the struggle between the “cultivated man” and the “specialist” (Weber, 1978, p. 1002).

Between Democracy and Bureaucracy

The Bologna Process gathered 49 European countries in order to cooperate in establishing common qualification frameworks for higher education in Europe, establishing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010 as a result of the process.⁸ In Norway, the Bologna Process was implemented top-down by the Quality Reform beginning with studies commenced in 2003 in all HE institutions.⁹ The diplomas were now compatible with other European countries, ensuring Norwegian students access to both jobs and study opportunities in Europe. A framework for qualifications of the EHEA which “shows the expected learning outcomes for a given qualification” (The official Bologna Process website) was developed during the process.

In this reform the previous mentioned action lines from the Bologna Declaration were followed by the establishing of a system with bachelor and master levels, the introduction of Diploma Supplement and the establishing of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The establishing of NOKUT the very same year and new quality demands on the HEIs were also a result of the Bologna Process. As early as 1995, the universities and university collages were placed under the same law; the Act on Universities and University Colleges.

Weber’s analysis of the threat against HE posed by the bureaucratization needed to document exercise legitimate authority underlines that this challenge is not new, although it appears in new areas and ways. Weber sheds light on the bureaucratization of UiN by three parameters, revealing some crucial aspects on *how* and *why* the process undermined democratic values: It favored the qualified, established them as a privileged “Caste” and provided the qualified with social rights and prestige.

Preferring the Qualified: The Demand for Theorization

As for the Bologna Process, there was space left to the institution for “internal deliberation”, but the overall framework made the institutions change their focus; from teacher to student, from numbers in to numbers out, from intended research to

⁸For more details see <http://www.ehea.info/>.

⁹http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/tema/hoyere_utdanning/bolognaprosessen/kvalitetsreform-i-lys-av-bologna-prose.html?id=439552.

published results. A defined space, not an open field, was left for “internal deliberation”.

At UiN this challenge gained strength after the university plans were to be realized after 2000. For instance, the former nursing school had a strong institutional identity and was struggling to find its place as a department under the UiN umbrella. The clash between professional studies and the more academic oriented disciplines of business and social sciences were also inevitable. The work identity had already changed from profession to academic grades in order to fit the college criteria in Norway in the 1980s; nurses teaching at nursing schools based on their professional experience were encouraged and expected to study for a master's degree and achieve a doctorate. Their former nursing school did not count as education at all.¹⁰ In some of the teachers' opinion, nursing had become an academic discipline built on theoretical knowledge more than human concern.¹¹

Under the UiN umbrella, the Quality Reform marked a further step in the race for qualification among the employees. In Norway the Bologna Process provided an opportunity to prolong an already ongoing development towards the EHEA; the Quality Reform was both an endogenous and an exogenous driven reform.¹² NOKUT was a non-political control organ based on academic and practical demands. This framework preferred the qualified, indeed, as their demands had to be fulfilled in order to gain university status.

In addition to the change of identity in some of the programs, the demand for theorization made the staff work even more for the administrators than before. While earlier being at service of staff, some of the new tasks of the bureaucracy were now to ask the faculty staff to work for them, thus reversing tradition; filling in the right forms, following set deadlines, changing programs after new standards initiated by the Bologna Process, etc..Leisyte calls this an important shift in the EHEA;

Trained administrators are more and more involved in decision making processes at the universities in Europe ... (Leisyte 2012.)

At UiN this trend was seen in the increasing role the central administration came to play in setting the scene for getting University accreditation ever since the time the vision was published in 2000. It was already heavily involved in the process leading to UiN's first doctoral program, a PhD in Business. After several declines from the expert committee, President Frode Mellemvik and Director of UiN, Stig Fossum, cooperated with Jon Lilleun, the Minister of Research, Education and Church Affairs, to acquire a political accreditation of the Ph.D. program, announced in February 2000. Both (Norwegian) colleges and universities stated that this should have been a strictly academic question, invalidating arguments of regional aspects of higher education in Norway as brought forth by Lilleun. The university members of the expert committee resigned their office as a protest, leaving the “Norgesnettråd” (Norwegian Network

¹⁰ Interview with professor Ruth Olsen 20.12.2010, together with my colleague Svein Lundestad.

¹¹ Interview with professor Berit Støre Brinchman 04.02.2011, together with my colleague Svein Lundestad.

¹² See Kehm, Barbara M., Svein Michelsen and Agnete Vabø, ”Towards the Two-cycle Degree Structure: Bologna, Reform and Path Dependency in German and Norwegian Universities”, *Higher Education Policy*, 23 (227 – 245), 2010, p. 240. Kwiek, Marek and Peter Maassen (eds.), *National Higher Education Reforms in a European Context. Comparative Reflections on Poland and Norway*, p. 18. See also http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/tema/hoyere_utdanning/bolognaprosessen/kvalitetsreformen-i-lys-av-bologna-prose.html?id=439552.

Council) unable to perform its accreditation work. As The Norwegian Council of Universities and The Norwegian Council of University Colleges, among other stakeholders, found a joint interest in the “Bodø Case”, they joined forces in The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions that same year. After the establishing of NOKUT in 2003, the possibility for politicians to intervene in the accreditation of Ph.D. programs were significantly reduced.

Now the scene was set by the state-driven bureaucracy of NOKUT, allowing professionals to consider whether the institutions of HE fulfilled their task or not, and whether they were to have new programs accredited. This ‘Bologna shift’ in HE in Norway introduced the universities and university colleges to a common reform, which to a large extent brought them closer to each other. In Bodø the Quality Reform made the vision of achieving university status more likely, as they adjusted the degrees, programs and credits in line with the EHEA standards together with the rest of HE institutions in Norway. The division between universities and university colleges were reduced.

According to Kwiek and Maassen (2012, p. 18), the Quality Reform increased the autonomy of the institutions of HE in Norway. They list up several areas where institutions now had more influence and, as a consequence of this, more responsibilities; increased rights for HE students, a system with Bachelor and Master degrees as standard elements, executive boards, increasing internationalization and student exchange, 40 percent of the funding based on performance, and the possibility for University Colleges to apply for full university status on certain conditions (five Master programs and four PhD programs). In other words, the autonomy of the *administration* of HEIs was increased. The changes all demanded new administrative practices, procedures and tools which, due to path-dependencies, could be seen as more demanding on resources in the old universities than in the three new ones.

During the period from 2000 to 2010, the staff belonging to the central administration at UiN increased with 27 percent.¹³ The old universities in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø all together had an average growth in their central administration way beyond UiN, 67 percent in the same period. The new universities accredited in the period 2005-2011 in Kristiansand, Stavanger and Bodø (UiA, UiS and UiN) had an average growth in their respective central administrations with 17 percent. The numbers suggest that the new universities had more flexibility in implementing the reforms than the ‘old’ and established institutions did, although it demanded some expansion of the central administration.¹⁴

The difference in administration needed to implement the Quality Reform in new vs. old universities brings up Weber’s analysis again; a system of dominion established through rational bureaucracy on behalf of political democracy is very difficult to change and almost impossible to destroy. This is some of the reasons why reforms are a greater headache for old HEIs than new ones. To quote Weber;

Such an apparatus makes “revolution,” in the sense of the forceful creation of entirely new formations of authority, more and more impossible – technically,

¹³ In 2000 the central administration at UiN had 97 employees while in 2010 they had 123, 3 employees. Numbers are from the DBH-database at snd online at <http://dbh.nsd.uib.no/statistikk/>.

¹⁴ In this way it seems as the new universities had advantages which can be compared with those following *late starters* during the industrial revolution; the need of change came at a time when the newer universities still were in great molding, while the others had to use great administrative effort in order to implement the new demands.

because of its control over the modern means of communications ..., and also because of its increasingly rationalized inner structure (Weber 2009, p. 219) .

The increased autonomy pointed out by Kwiek and Maassen strengthened *the bureaucracy* of HEIs and, to a certain degree, undermined the autonomy of the faculty staff.¹⁵

Favoring the privileged “Caste”

The advantages of the established universities were diverse, one of them being their network in the bureaucratic sphere. In the period 2000-2005, The Ministry of Education and Research (MER) in Norway published four reports containing phrases that divided the old and the coming universities into two categories when it came to formal and academic terms. This was done despite the clear intent from the Mjøse Committee from 2000 that these institutions were to be accredited and supported by equal rules and regulations (NOU 2000:14, p. 45). Some of the reason why this happened could be the strong loyalty between the old universities and MER.¹⁶

Firstly, the government in 2000 published a White Paper 27 about the Quality Reform, suggesting that the new universities could be accredited with only one doctoral program (Mellemvik 2011).¹⁷ This was supported by the bureaucratic staff in MER, as it was aimed at making the new universities lose their credibility (Jahr 2014).¹⁸ Secondly, MER translated the demand for “stable organized research training” from Parliament into the NOKUT regulations as a demand of having Ph.D. students which had had their disputation on most of the doctoral programs. This demand delayed the accreditation of the new universities. Thirdly, the draft law relating to the Universities and University Colleges from 2002 and 2005 both suggested formal differences between the old and the coming universities when it came to academic rights. Finally, a 2005 White Paper on research had a small remark on page 149 that the old universities were to be research universities, quietly leaving the coming universities in different league.¹⁹

The Parliament unanimously corrected all these attempts to change the developing of new universities. It was the universities-to-come that had perused the documents and informed the politicians. A main reason why the Parliament could lead the way was that the government was in minority. Hence, the Parliament had to approve of what MER presented, before it becoming law. In weberian terms, the élitist democracy of the Government was extended to the elitist democracy of the Parliament. Even though democratization, according to Weber, is about governing the governed more than representing them, the Parliament was in this case representing the universities-to-come while MER rather represented the privileged “Caste” of the old universities. The “unprivileged” could in this way influence the outcome, with one exception. The definition of “stable, organized research training” in the regulations of NOKUT was but left for NOKUT to re-define. Because of this, the demand went from three to two Ph.D. programs with candidates who had finished the program (Eriksen

¹⁵ Some of the growth in the old universities may also be explained by understaffing.

¹⁶ This issue was pinpointed by the regional newspaper *Fædrelandsvennen*, which stated that MER was “a state within the State” working against governments and politicians under cover of “quality assurance”. *Fædrelandsvennen* 12.07.2002, p. 2. Editor by Finn Holmer-Hoven.

¹⁷ Frode Mellemvik is professor and previous president at UiN.

¹⁸ Ernst Håkon Jahr is previous president at the University of Agder.

¹⁹ St. mld. nr. 20 (2004 – 2005), *Vilje til forskning*, MER, 2005, p. 149.

2006, p. 154). This definition delayed the university process both in Agder and in Nordland (Jahr 2014, Eriksen 2006, p. 153, 154).

The old universities and MER had the same agenda; protecting the university label. To intervene in this sphere, in weberian words, the privileged “Caste” of HE in Norway was closely connected with strong opposition from both the universities and MER. The struggle of the universities-to-be could be seen as a struggle bottom-up for new HEI to enter into this privileged “Caste”. The Norwegian university colleges were a result of mass education starting in the 1970s, bringing higher education opportunities to common people in their region in order to meet the local needs for professional training and competence. Despite strong political and bureaucratic attempts to separate the two types of HEIs, the university colleges in Nordland, Agder and Rogaland acquired the right to conduct research, and due to academic drift they gradually moved towards the universities. In the developments the last decades, including the Bologna Process, the universities and university colleges have met increasingly the same demands through regulations and the Act on Universities and University Colleges from 1995.

An unwanted and often overseen consequence of favoring those producing results in HE, is the fact that it favors production over quality and originality; the organizational and institutional frameworks can be seen as restraints for academic creativity (Heinze, Shapira and Senker, p. 619). Heinze et al. underline that scientific creativity is released when funding is based on trust rather than results. In this we see two of the weberian rationalities set up against each other: value-rational against instrumental, with a clash between Humboldtian values and goals of outcome as result (Ritzer 2009, p. 33).

In the process of meeting the requirements from NOKUT, the central leadership of UiN had to meet national demands. This left a more narrow space of academic freedom to the faculty staff in order to develop the four Ph.D. Programs. In other words; it may seem that the administration was strengthened while the faculty staff lost some of its impact. The central leadership cooperated with the researchers in developing new paths for doctoral education in order to ensure that the demands from NOKUT were fulfilled.

Social Prestige and Rights

There is one aspect that may explain why academics agreed on the goal if not the process: the social prestige and rights following the university status. Their own personal benefit stemming from the achieving of university status was assumed to be a consequence of academic drift, but was rather bureaucratic by nature. Higher wages, more academic opportunities and higher academic status ensured advancement opportunities through more professorates and possibilities even after retirement, as emeritus, in addition to stronger institutional autonomy, providing the opportunity to establish doctoral programs not aimed at satisfying NOKUT’s demands for university status.

When the HE sector in Norway in 2006 was reformed into a model where credit production, final exams and published research became sources of financial support, there was some opposition among the faculty members, however, not enough to reverse the process. The opposition was rooted in the Humboldt ideal, which revealed itself as an illusion rather than an ideal in the so called *tellekantssystemet*.

According to Kehm, Michelsen and Vabø (2010, p. 243), some of the explanation as to why the development in HE in Norway had much less opposition than e.g. in Germany is that the faculty members, despite losing their formal power, gained social prestige and rights during the changes. Although 55 percent of the faculty members asked said that the new two-circle bachelor’s degree was a quality

reduction, their opposition did not bring forth any results in policies. In Germany, on the other hand, the Government had to “reform the reform” because of strong opposition among faculty members (Kehm, Michelsen and Vabø 2010, p. 242). The Quality Reform undermined academic freedom:

From a Humboldtian perspective, the ‘schoolification’ of higher education is the essence of the transformations taking place. The academic freedom of the students and of the faculty – as they have to adjust to new modes of teaching and evaluation of students – is considerably reduced due to the study reforms ... (Kehm, Michelsen and Vabø 2010, p. 242.)

However, the windows opened towards other parts of Europe, and even the rest of the world, as well as the academic drift was made easier by the standardization of demands for achieving academic results. *The cost was the ideal of Humboldt*, which sees learning and teaching as a value in and of itself, to be taken care of by the experts. Now teaching was to serve the needs of the employment market. The gain was to play on the European field of HE, with all the possibilities coming from a larger university family and students coming from other countries. It was rational to establish EHEA. The question to be asked is whether the Ministers behind the Bergen Communique, who were insisting on not over-regulating the HE of the participant countries, failed to prevent this from happening. Professor Luzzatto at the University of Genoa, Italy, stated during the hearing of the European Parliament-Committee on Culture and Education, under the heading “The European Higher Education Area: State of Play,” in Brussels on 5 October 2011 that

... We surely know that there are sectors of society, mainly outside Europe, which look at HE merely as a market, and consider the students merely as costumers; but this is not the prevailing European attitude, and in any case is not the Bologna spirit ... (Luzzato 2011.)

The Bologna spirit was to allow diversity within national frameworks adjusted to the EHEA, but the reality came out differently (Bergen and London 2010, p. 61). While the adjustments to the European Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA (Bergen 2005) and the EQF for lifelong learning (EU 2007) demanded a total reorganization of curriculums and degree systems, the Bologna Process in reality molded a new university model, with universities becoming a hybrid between a marketplace and an academy (Pinheiro 2012, p. 15).²⁰ On campus, the faculty staff were driven more by incentives than professional values, leaving those who did not adjust to the new academic reality behind, with the overall threat of no time for research if they did not publish through blind peer review-channels. The market was not only potential students, but also the employment market – and the numerous meriting publication channels. The Humboldt university model was left behind, to the protests of experts who had no formal power to reverse the process, leaving those who followed the new set of academic rules with “bread and circus” – or, in Weber’s words – social prestige and rights.

²⁰ Pinheiro, Romulo, “Internal Transformation and External Engagement: Building a New University”, HEIKwp 2012/02, p. 15. Pinheiro underlines that the hybrid between disciplinary studies and professional studies gains both the economy and the academic development of the region.

Passive Democratization Through Bureaucratization

In the development at the European, national and regional level described above, we see an increasing and more uniform bureaucratization of EHEA. According to Weber, an administration establishing bureaucratic rules on a large scale will end up with a system which can hardly be reversed or destroyed. If we take a closer look at the processes going on in EHEA during the decade in consideration in this article, there are some changes taking place that demonstrate and actualize Weber's remarks.

Through the Bologna Process the HE sector in Europe headed towards a more uniform shape in order to exchange students and staff. In this process the administrations grew, both in universities and university colleges, in order to establish new and a higher number of exams, a new degree system, new marks and new curriculums, among other. As the administration grew, the bureaucratization process provided space for what Weber called 'passive democratization', a development which was difficult to predict for its opponents. Space was created through giving the old universities and the universities-to-come the same formal demands and bureaucratic systems. In this the two became more alike, and the passive democratization was, among other, found in the formalization of the demands from NOKUT for accreditation of new universities. The political decision of giving the applications for accreditation to NOKUT before it was sent to Parliament, established accreditation according to rules instead of discretion, a decision which "leveled the ruled" in a manner that allowed for new universities.²¹

The issue of who fulfilled the rules for accreditation went from being a question of political will (in other words, a democratic related question) to becoming a professional question. It was a matter of time and institutional will, and even though the bureaucracy of MER worked against it, the University of Nordland was awarded University status when it had all checked every box on the requirement list. In this way the passive democratization following the bureaucratization allowed for new HE institutions to enter into the university family. It was controversial, but not to be avoided as long as the politicians delegated some of their democratic power to NOKUT. Some politicians worked for this development because they saw it as the only way of establishing new universities; if it were to be left to the politicians, it would not be accomplished. As soon as this administration was formed, the system of domination it produced was not changeable or to be overlooked. To open closed doors into élitist realms of dominion, bureaucratization sometimes gives a better outcome than political struggles - with less complaints.

Examining the members of the committees processing the applications on behalf of NOKUT, they were all academics, except one student member. In other words, political power was delegated to (in most cases an elite of) academia. The members could dissent if they did not agree on the recommendations of the majority. The recommendations were usually followed by the board of NOKUT, which was given the authority to decide on accreditation on the basis of the evaluation report from the committee, a document from the board director and comments from the HE institution. From 2008 onwards, the board asked for a new round of considerations if

²¹ The University of Stavanger, however, applied for being judged by the old regime in their accreditation round due to their process of four PhD-programs which ended before NOKUT was established in 2003. Their request was heard, leaving their four doctoral programs out of NOKUT's rules and regulations. This was partly the reason why they were accredited in 2005, two years before Agder and six years before Nordland.

they dissented from the recommendations of the committee.²² In this way the passive democratization was visible even inside NOKUT, however, the democratic power was not based on “equal rights”, but rather on elitist values. The professionals with exams documenting their skills had a say, others did not. The process and its outcome were not decided by “public opinions”.

There was a lot of opposition from the NOKUT committees, as some of the members saw new universities as a threat against the quality of the sector. But as a member in a committee based on certain rules and regulations, the attempts of reversing or delaying the process of achieving university status appeared biased and, eventually: useless. The academics became officials with “an essentially fixed route of march” (Weber 1978, p. 988). In this way the ideal of Humboldt based on academic freedom (of the elite of academia) was violated, although the professors got a hand on the process through their participation in a system which molded them more than the other way around. To quote Weber:

Since the specialized knowledge of the expert became more and more the foundation for the power of the officeholder, an early concern of the ruler was how to exploit the special knowledge of experts without having to abdicate in their favor (Weber 1978, p. 994).

This is the main dilemma of the Bologna Process. While the bureaucratization of HE provides for a stronger position of the elite in academia, it also provides it with constraints. It both empowers and undermines their position. Professor Manuel Castells commented on the undemocratic nature of the Bologna Process during his stay at UiN in May 2014. As an academic situated both in Europe and the US, he stated that the European HE development is hampered by the strong mentality of control and pattern-making instead of encouraging an organic system of HE stretching out even outside Europe:

The US HE is completely diverse without a ministry of education, but still it is the best. It works as a great market with great mobility. The Bologna Process is creating more bureaucracy because it is based on control from the EU Commission instead of excellence and quality ... (Castells 2014.)

Conclusion

According to Weber, democracy is challenged by its “inevitably following” bureaucracy. At the same time, bureaucratization provides for passive democratization through its “leveling of equals”. Looking at the university process in Nordland, Weber’s analysis gives some understanding of how it was possible to gain university status. The European and national structural changes led to a more rule-controlled administration and therefore challenged the democratic process it was born out of. In this development the old universities were not able to adjust, unless their central administration grew. It did, on average 67 percent, while the new universities’ central administration grew with 17 percent between 2000 and 2010.

This bureaucratization process opened up a space for the HEIs in Agder, Rogaland and Nordland to become universities by “following the rules”; a passive democratization took place as the old universities lost their monopoly on the university title. The NOKUT committee was a manifestation of political power delegated to

²² Information per mail 04.04.2014, from Assistant Deputy Director General Gro Hanne Aas at the Department of Quality Assurance of NOKUT. Aas is responsible for the accreditation and quality ensurance of HEIs in Norway.

academics, who were reduced to officers handling the matter according to given rules. Weber questions the passive democratization following bureaucratization because it is often connected to certain social elitist groups. This democratization process was marked by the nature of bureaucracy, as it only gave room for the elites who could “play drums as ordered”.

The fact that some of the Ph.D.-programs developed were chosen to acquire university status rather than for reflecting the academic strength of the HEIs underlines the negative consequences of bureaucratization; it makes academics go in certain directions in order to fulfill demands on behalf of their institutions, instead of being free to do research according to academic demands. One could question whether the administrations of HEIs in the future will become “practically indestructible” and wonder which consequences this will have for the academic staff and development of EHEA after implementing the Bologna Action Lines on a large scale in Europe (Weber 1978, p. 987).

The development towards a more uniform EHEA could be seen as a threat to classical democratic values, as the bureaucracy takes over some of the autonomy in academia. However, the development of EHEA paved the way for the UiN achieving university status in 2011, an example of a window of opportunity that opened up when the established universities’ monopoly was broken through bureaucratization following the democratic process of mass education. In the case of UiN, the Bologna Process was crucial in order to acquire university status. The question is at what price. The ideal of Humboldt is already sacrificed due to its elitist nature, which argues that it cannot meet the challenges following mass education. One of the goals of the Bologna Process was to build a Europe of Knowledge, educating people for democratic citizenship.²³ This aim is threatened by the increasing bureaucratization, which “inevitable” follows it. However, it is also carried along by it. According to Weber, the very nature of education is violated by the bureaucratization following mass education. One way of avoiding this could be letting the democratic values of academic freedom lead the process.

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²³ This aim was declared in the conclusion from the presidency of the Lisbon European Council on 24.03.2000.

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Frode Mellempvik, professor and previous president at UiN, 03.01.2011. The interview was carried out together with my college, Svein Lundestad.