

“Running the gauntlet”: The Bologna Process in Greece

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Abstract

Greece has not been among the signatory countries that rushed enthusiastically into the implementation of the Bologna Process; it has only gradually and grudgingly managed to adopt some of its provisions over the last decade. This paper sheds light on the forces and factors that have put obstacles in its way, including: (1) the epistemological traditions of the Greek academy insisting on the intrinsic value of scientific research irrespective of the practical application of its findings and on the detachment of scientific knowledge from vocational qualifications; (2) the long standing politicization of students that have been busy defending their vested rights in the management of university affairs to allow them to get involved in a process that could allegedly only dispute their prerogatives; (3) the prevalence in public discourse of a conservative ideology, bringing together an odd mixture of leftism, populism, statism, demagoguery, and triviality that paralyzed irresolute and short-sighted politicians and made certain social sectors—always suspicious of the gifts of the “European Danaos”—skeptical; and (4) the socio-political upheaval triggered by the present economic crisis in the country.

University education: The shade of tradition

Greek education has been traditionally open to European influence. In fact, the Bavarian Regency established the Greek education system in the 1830s. Consequently, the structure and organization of the Greek university followed the German prototype: academic freedom and university autonomy, the “chair-holding” full professor and his subsidiaries, the School, the Rector, and the monarch’s right of involvement in the selection of the university authorities were just some of the institutions introduced. The ethos of the Humboltian university, with its emphases on humanism, intellectualism, idealism, and thorough research was also imitated (Mattheou, 2008a). Lack of university traditions in the nascent country, admiration for Western science and its regenerating powers, and the fact that most professors had studied in Europe, all contributed to making foreign influences effective. In a sense the Greek university was simply demonstrating along with the other newly created social and political institutions its admiration for European culture in all its manifestations. It is characteristic in this respect that during the early years of independence, Greek political parties were named after their affiliation with the major powers of the time (the English, the French, and the Russian Parties) that patronized political affairs, and

that for the rising middle class European lifestyles were the yardstick for its social behavior (Svoronos, 1976).

Certainly the Greek university was not the exact copy of its German prototype (Fasoulakis, 1989); after all, institutions always “morph as they move” (Cowen, 2009, p. 315; Mattheou, 1997, 2010). Prevailing conditions and national priorities had gradually molded its specific character over the following decades. Born at a time when nationalism swept across Europe, with its embryonic infrastructure and vast Greek populations left outside its national boundaries, the nascent state had to cater to a number of crucial and urgent matters. The state had to specify its cultural identity and transform cultural heritage into a new national ideology (Kitromilides, 1983, 1997; Tsaousis, 1983), develop the human resources —the educated citizens that would staff state bureaucracy and satisfy the needs of society for doctors and teachers (Mattheou, 2007; Dimaras, 1977)— and look after the education of the Greeks that still lived under Ottoman occupation (Kitromilides, 1997). Hence, from the very beginning, the Greek university’s mission was primarily national. Its commitment to the national cause made it very popular, forging close links with the state and legitimizing state surveillance over higher education (Dimaras, 1977; Pantasidis, 1893). For nineteenth-century contemporaries as well as for modern historians, it was the university that managed to refute Fallmerayer’s (1984) bilious argument that modern Greeks were not the descendants of ancient Greeks (Paparigopoulos, n.d.) and resolved the issue of whether classical antiquity, as the proponents of Greek Enlightenment supported, or the Byzantium heritage, as the Church maintained and all those who regarded with suspicion and occasionally animosity the “subversive” ideas of European Enlightenment, secularism, liberalism, impiety etc., should form the basis of Greek cultural identity. It was also the university that produced the teachers who kept alive the national character and the Greek language among the unredeemed Greeks (Kitromilides, 1997). Finally, it was the university that served as the ladder —certainly narrow— for upward social mobility (Tsoukalas, 1977). Therefore, the state could count on the university for support and university professors could rightfully look forward to appreciation and prerogatives from the state. The national character of the university’s mission had its implications for the student body as well. Commitment to the cause of national integration found clear expression to the politicization —“with the blessings of the state at the time” (Dimaras, 1989, p. 49)— of students; a politicization that would gradually, over the next decades and in the course of historical developments, bring students to the vanguard of struggles for political and social liberation (Loucatos, 1989). Thus, in political terms students would gradually become considerably active actors not only in university —where the professorate retained, as in its German prototype, the upper hand— but also in social and political matters.

A second significant deviation from the German (and larger sense, European) prototype, revealing the peculiar assumptions of the Greek university, concerned the socio-cultural aspects of its mission. From the early years of its establishment, society was perceived—at least this was the prevailing idea—as a cohesive and meaningful body of relationships and responsibilities, with social groups working together for the common good. After all, Greek society had never actually gone through the process of industrialization to develop a sound class consciousness (Tsoukalas, 1977). The positive side effect of this assumption, which was at the same time the result of the lack of powerful elites and an elitist ideology in the country during the first decades after its independence, was the prevalence of an egalitarian ideology. Allegedly education, even higher education, was not for the privileged few. As a matter of fact, it was widely believed that youth of lower socio-economic background, by being more motivated to try, stood more chances of success in the education system (Mattheou, 2006). Hence, public demand for university education has always been high—comparatively higher than in most European countries, even in the nineteenth century (Tsoukalas, 1977)—as a university degree was the passport for socially respectable employment in the public sector or in the professions and an indication of the highly appreciated “cultivated man” (Veremis & Koliopoulos, 2006). Consequently, higher education was considered a public good, a fundamental individual right of all citizens, and the obligation of the state to provide on meritocratic grounds.

Of significant importance for understanding the essence of Greek university education is also the appreciation of the epistemological assumptions that have traditionally pervaded it. Following its German prototype, knowledge produced and disseminated by the university was by definition scientific; knowledge was not considered to be the sum total of interesting piecemeal information and useful skills, but a coherent body of principles, laws, concrete research methodology, and models as well as examples of successful practice, all brought together in an undivided whole (Mattheou, 2006). Scientific knowledge was envisaged as a continuous approximation of truth that could be made possible through the exhaustive and endless testing of falsifiable hypotheses and the ability of the observer/scientist to disentangle him/herself from the observed. Objectivity was also interwoven with the belief in the universal validity of scientific knowledge and its purely cognitive character. Hence, idiographic or contingent attributes as well as normative, ethical, or aesthetic preferences had no place in a realm that claimed to be value-free and subjectivity proof (Mattheou, 2008b). The more objective and cognitive, the higher the status of the scientific cognitive domain and the university department that catered for it. Hard sciences were thus distinguished from soft sciences, including social and education sciences that had long been undervalued in Greek university education. More significantly, what characterized scientific knowledge was not so much its usefulness or practical application, but its intrinsic value in terms of satisfying human curiosity

and pushing the frontiers of knowing further ahead. Hence, quality university education was not primarily vocationally oriented, although it equipped a person with dexterities useful in certain vocations (Mattheou, 2011). On the other hand, university candidates were expected to have substantial cognitive skills and background knowledge and to be selected on objective, demanding, and meritocratic grounds; the assumption being that it is difficult to have quality higher education without a qualified and hard-working intake of students. Closely linked with these epistemological assumptions was the perception of quality in higher education. Seen as bastions of independent thinking, guarantors of national culture, and authentic interpreters of tradition, as well as creative institutions responsible for the development of the country's scientific and cultural capital, higher education institutions had over the years identified quality with creativity, scientific authority, public service provision, and institutional prerogatives for academics and had practically excluded from consideration issues of cost-effectiveness and accountability for their work; after all, universities were not to be bothered by “trivial” issues of this kind.

University education in the whirlpool of reform

Most of the university's epistemological assumptions would remain strong, practically unaltered throughout the twentieth century, although, following relevant European trends, new disciplines — normally interdisciplinary or of lower academic status— would find their position in university courses and the establishment of new universities would add elements of epistemological pluralism to the system. The egalitarian ideology of university education would also remain strong and even become strengthened. Traditional parental aspirations to see their offspring through university, especially in the context of an increasingly competitive (in terms of qualifications) labor market and of the quest to redress injustice against those that poverty and political persecution after the Civil War had put to the fringe of society, advanced the argument on the public character of higher education and on the state's constitutional obligation to support it both financially and by legally blocking any private involvement in it (Article 16 of the Greek Constitution). In a sense, the egalitarian ideology had come gradually to substitute in public discourse the prevalence of the national mission of the university; the project of nation building and national integration, completed by the mid-twentieth century, had given way to more socio-political considerations.

Changes were more observable at the institutional level. Certainly the state retained its firm grip over the university, but the professorate had reinforced its position in it. By the 1950s, after successive purges from autocratic regimes (Fassoulis, 2001) and the far-reaching repercussions of the Civil War, most professors were of a conservative persuasion —“no scientist with socially subversive ideas has a place in the university” (Papadakis, 2004, pp. 307-308)— governing the university in a high-handed

manner to the discontent of other members of the academic community and especially students who did not fail to manifest it through demonstrations (Giannaris, 1993). The professorate was accused of nepotism, shady transactions with the state, obsolete teaching, arrogant and arbitrary behavior, and indifference for the needs of society and of their students (Papandreou, 1975). Co-operation of some professors with the dictatorial regime (1967–1974) was the last straw that sparked an extensive change to the balance of power within the university, with students gaining ground as the result of their contribution to the overthrow of the dictatorship (Dafermos, 2003).

This event reflected the broader and substantial changes, especially in the political field, that took place in the country during the post–1974 period: the country had found itself on the verge of war with Turkey on the question of Cyprus; the monarchy was abolished and a new democratic constitution was voted upon; post–civil war laws were dispensed with and the Greek Communist Party, illegal since the civil war, was legitimized; PASOK, a new socialist party, made an impressive entry onto the political scene and by 1981 was the dominant political actor; on the insistent effort of a conservative prime minister Greece joined the European Community in the late 1970s, despite the strong reservations of the Left; perhaps more significantly, public discourse became gradually dominated by left-wing jargon (Mandravelis, 2011). Although the political climate remained on a whole calm and functional, the confrontational culture of Greek politics survived.

It was within this context that the new law on higher education was enacted in 1982. The “chair” was abolished and all academic staff was given the right to autonomous research and teaching; university academic authorities and the rector were elected not only by professors, but also by the administrative staff and student representatives on an almost fifty-fifty percent basis; and university grounds were declared an asylum, with the police needing the permission of the senate to be allowed access on university grounds even in cases of criminal offense. The new law was an intentional attempt on the part of policy makers to create a more democratic and participatory university. As the authors of the law confessed some years later, the law was the result of a specific historical period and reflected its priorities (Kladis & Panousis, 1989). Consequently, the limitations and shortcomings of the law would become evident shortly thereafter. As most of its critics readily accept, the new law, despite its numerous amendments, led to partisanship, with student unions negotiating self benefits and prerogatives with candidate rectors and departmental chairpersons in return for their support (Pretenderis, 2006), and, at the same time, prioritized partisan interests and ideology over the university. It allowed militant student minorities of the Left to hinder, by use of force, decision taking by the senate (Karkagiannis, 2006) and to take possession of university buildings and vandalize them (Kindis, 2001); and it destroyed the unity of the student movement, with the National Federation of Greek Students having not convened since 1980,

as partisan student representatives could not agree on almost anything. Partisan politics and corporatism were also prevalent in the academy, while nepotism soon returned unimpaired (Rokos, 1999; Makrydemetres, 2006). Consequently the 1980s and 90s were dominated by demand for far-reaching reforms in higher education (Veremis & Papazisis, 2007). The Greek reform agenda, unlike perhaps trends developing in European countries at the time, included the modification of the electoral system for university authorities to weaken student union negotiating power; the limitation of excesses related to the misuse of university asylum; alterations in the system of access to higher education in order to better manage excessive student demand; the merger of small university units to improve cost-effectiveness; and last but not least, the establishment of private universities—an arrangement that presupposes constitutional revision—that would allegedly improve quality through competition. It is against this background that the course, the process, and the prospects of the Bologna project in Greece should be examined and understood.

The Bologna Process running the gauntlet of tradition and of a questionable reform

From the very beginning the Bologna Declaration had a negative, or at least circumspect, reception from almost all parts of the political spectrum in Greece. Reactions certainly differed depending on the ideological and political views of the actors, their position in the academy, as well as on the specific Bologna objective in question. Following the aforementioned assumptions and traditions of the Greek university, one could classify reactions as socio-political, epistemological, and institutional in nature. Yet there were also reactions culminating in total refusal to even consider entering into public debate on it.

The Bologna project was seen by some as irrelevant to the aforementioned reform priorities of Greek higher education. To their way of thinking, the Bologna project did not tackle the notorious malfunctions of the Greek university and did not provide answers to burning issues, such as the accommodation of excessive demand for university education or the irrationally extensive geographical dispersion of universities across the country that meant a waste of public funds and the lowering of quality standards. To some extent this was one of the reasons some actors were indifferent to the project and others, pre-occupied with the resolution of urgent problems, to quickly lose interest and involvement in public discourse concerning the Bologna Process. Others, coming basically from the Communist Left, recognized in it yet another attempt of capitalism to further its interests (Mattheou, 2005) and refused on ideological grounds to get involved in a discussion that could by implication give value to and legitimize a process that was by its very essence ideologically unacceptable.

Yet there were also those who pondered over the Declaration. Their criticism was basically directed toward the rationale of the Declaration itself as presented in its preamble, as well as the

objectives of developing a two-cycle degree structure, introducing a system of credits that would enhance flexibility of studies, and establishing a quality assurance mechanism for university education. From the socio-political point of view, the two-cycle structure proposal was seen as an attempt by globalization forces, imbued with “neo-liberal ideology and its obsession with the effectiveness of the private sector” (Xanthopoulos, 2001, p. 14), to impose “... the laws of free market in the crucial field of university education” (Xanthopoulos, 2003, p. 12). According to these critics, the Bologna project aimed at limiting “the state’s participation in the education policy and in its funding,” undermining “the fundamental principle of the existence of higher education as the first and most important Public Good,” and converting universities “into ‘enterprises’ with the full meaning of the word, which in order to survive [had to] hunt for ‘student-clients’ worldwide and competitively” (Xanthopoulos, 2003, pp. 12–13). The case of similar reforms in the United Kingdom, where “the starting kick-off was given” (Xanthopoulos, 2001, p. 5), was frequently mentioned as a threatening indication of what was in store. As the representative of the applied sciences to the Greek Rectors Congress put it, “the Bologna Declaration attempts to develop a mass, middle-level work force, of low cost and constricted —yet useful for the short term needs of the labor market— outlook [...] that would at the same time satisfy the client; the European citizen’s quest for university degrees, even spurious” (Xanthopoulos, 2001, p. 11). The split of university courses into undergraduate and post-graduate, introduced by the Bologna two-cycle degree structure, was for the same official a dangerous development both on academic and socio-political grounds. At the undergraduate level, “low quality mass education with low resources and limited infrastructure, deprived of the oxygen of basic research and functionally adjusted to cheaper and obviously ineffective forms of teaching” would unavoidably lead to the development of “an uneducated and deeply insecure majority of cheap labor force, unable to adjust itself to the changing vocational circumstances and resist the continuous limitation of its democratic rights” (Xanthopoulos, 2001, p. 6). On the other hand, the development at the post-graduate level of the “centers of excellence, that would select their students among those that could afford paying the fees” would increase “inequality of access to scientific knowledge” and would consequently lead to an even deeper social divide in the knowledge economy between the “haves” —“the wealthy, the dominant economic and political class”— and the “have-nots” —“the non-privileged yet still ‘merchandable’ few” from the lower classes (Xanthopoulos, 2001, pp. 6–7).

On the academic side of the argument, critics focused on the violation of the continental university traditions. The same critics warned: “at the same time a deeper political attack against the traditional structure and mission of ‘universitas’ is in evolution [...]. The university ideal, the dialectic essence of education, the systematic development of the inseparable unity of teaching and research,

without predefined economic or political goals are undermined” (Xanthopoulos, 2003, p. 12). The Greek academic community as a whole seemed worried about certain developments in European higher education, especially in England, where Polytechnics (institutions of mainly technical and vocational character) were upgraded overnight to universities, and which were already being used as a precedent for the “universitization” of Technological Educational Institutes (TEI; the Greek counterpart of English Polytechnics). The equalization of university degree level vocational qualifications with those of “quasi universities” was not the only concern. Traditional epistemological assumptions deeply internalized by the Greek academy were also a sincere cause for concern. Bologna’s degree structure, which welcomed the three-year undergraduate courses and advertised their correspondence with the labor market, was seen as a violation of the unified character of scientific knowledge. Critics argued that “the university graduate covers a wide spectrum of knowledge which, because it is based on solid scientific background, is itself renewing” (Xanthopoulos, 2003, p. 10). Hence, “the removal of fundamental scientific principles” from the university curricula as a result of the Bologna priorities, “together with premature, narrow and superficial specialization, based mainly on rote learning of the basics of a discipline, deprive prospective scientists of the ability to probe deep into the real essence of problems,” (Xanthopoulos, 2001, p. 6) thus degrading universities to higher vocational schools.

For similar reasons, some in the Greek academy also viewed the proposed credit system with great suspicion. The flexible organization of study courses in modules could perhaps facilitate mobility; prepare a more flexible, adjustable, and employable work force; and promote the European dimension, but to the critics’ way of thinking, it would undermine the very essence of scientific knowledge. They argued that the irregular and on many occasions arbitrary collection of easy credits, sometimes in “quasi universities” or in work places (prior learning knowledge) would certainly lead to the fragmentation of scientific knowledge into bits and pieces with no coherence, let alone contribute to the promotion of new knowledge or to the development of the critical mind and the reflective citizen.

The reception of the Bologna objective for the establishment of a quality assurance mechanism was also circumspect. For many, such a mechanism was contrary to the university tradition of autonomy and academic freedom. For others, the precedent of English and other European countries quality assurance agencies, their practice of assessing universities on criteria not always related to academic work, and the potential use of evaluation results for funding purposes from the state and market was an additional cause for concern (Katsikas, 2005). Moreover, many in the academic community were afraid that quality assurance mechanisms would lead to the diversification of funding across universities in accordance with market-like criteria and, even worse, that it would signify market involvement in higher education. Yet, on the other hand, the widely publicized malfunctions of university life, of which mention

was made above, had increased public concern and pressure for accountability to an extent that it was difficult for the academy to resist altogether the push for the establishment of some sort of quality assurance mechanism. Under the circumstances, the academy resorted to the “yes-but” argument (Babinotis, 2005).

The general circumspection against the Bologna Declaration was further enhanced by the revelation of the “crafty tactics” followed by the European conclave of education ministers in their successive meetings from Bologna through Prague and Berlin to the recent meeting in Leuven. The author of this paper commented elsewhere on these tactics, which have not escaped attention in Greece. He characterized the Bologna Process as a large exercise to market a new institutional identity for the university in Europe (Mattheou, 2004) —an exercise that was met with diverse degrees of success across different countries. In the Greek context some of these techniques soon became clear not only to the cautious analyst, but also to the academy as a whole, a fact that in itself reinforced its circumspection.

As a first communication technique, the Bologna Process signatories systematically avoided any direct reference to the economy as the main driving force behind the Declaration. Despite the clear emphasis of almost all official EU documents to the knowledge economy, competitiveness of Europe in the globalized world, significance of developing close links with business, and employability in the labor market as well as the importance of innovation and ICT (European Council, 2000), and despite the relevant discourse in most national contexts, the signatories of the Bologna Declaration found no words to express their concern on all these issues. Strangely enough, “the necessary competencies to face the challenges of the new millennium” as well as the necessity of “research systems to continuously adapt to changing needs” (Bologna Declaration, 1999) were given no economic undertones. The only clear yet still indirect reference to the economy was the Declaration’s concern for “increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education” which should “acquire a world-wide degree of attraction” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). “By hiding their real intentions the signatories were clearly attempting to avoid direct linkage of their proposals with neo-liberal policies and hence to sidestep political reactions on the part of those who disagreed with the universities following the market slavishly” (Mattheou, 2008, p. 463). After all, the Greek delegate to the meeting that preceded the signing of the Declaration had himself testified that the initial wording of the Declaration was substantially different from its final, official version. More emphasis was given in the former to economic aspects, such as issues of the employability of European citizens “and to the competitiveness of European higher education in the context of a globalized economy” (Kladis, 2001). These evasive tactics reinforced the conviction of some that there was a shady side to the Bologna Process.

The second communication technique was based on the high praising on the part of the signatories of the “extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions of Europe” as well as of “the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies in Europe” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Clearly the signatories, in an attempt to distract public opinion from the real economic objectives of the Declaration, played upon Europeans’ heartstrings (i.e., the social and cultural achievements and traditions in which Europeans take pride) and their fearsome past experience of conflict. Yet the Greek academy did not buy into the distractionist tactics. All these appeals to the common European cultural heritage were “fancy words” used simply to guild the pill of the market attack on universities, Greek critics commented. On the other hand, the Declaration underlined the respect of the signatories for European diversity, or in their own words by “taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national educational systems and university autonomy” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Contrary to its predecessor, the Sorbonne Declaration, they avoided words like “harmonization,” implying obligation on the part of European countries to comply with the provisions of the Declaration. As a matter of fact, the signatories made every effort to present its provisions as being loosely advisory for the national education authorities (Mattheou, 2004). They also declared that universities through the European University Association (EUA) and students themselves through the European Students’ Information Bureau ([ESIB], since renamed the European Students Union [ESU]) had already given their consent to the Bologna project in the Salamanca meeting, to which the Greek delegation in Salamanca commented that “certain important member universities of the CESAER were seemingly absent from the meeting” and that “similar absences were also registered on the side of distinguished Anglo-Saxon and European universities (outside the CESAER)” (Xanthopoulos, 2003, p. 5). As for the students, the same delegation reminded, “there were also massive student reactions against the objectives of the Bologna Declaration (e.g., 100,000 students ‘shook’ Madrid on January 12, 2001), which of course, were totally ignored by ESIB.” Certainly the views of Greek students were also not heard in Salamanca, as the extreme politicization of Greek students along party lines prevented them from appointing a unified delegation to ESIB.

Finally, as a third communication technique, every effort was made by the signatories to present the Declaration as a reform initiative that was based on common sense and the accurate appreciation of the needs of European countries and developing international trends. By the same token the Declaration was also presented as comprising a series of technical and well elaborated proposals for the necessary rearrangement and adjustments in higher education, which would not only leave intact but would also revitalize fundamental university institutions. Much emphasis was given in this respect to structural issues (seemingly of a purely technical character), such as the readability and comparability of degrees,

enhancement of student mobility, and promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance and strengthening of the European dimension in education (Mattheou, 2004). Many in the Greek academy however did not fail to notice (Mattheou, 2004) the crucial remark of the report of the Follow-up Group of the Bologna Declaration, which raised the issue of values pertaining to the Declaration: “A question which is becoming more apparent as the process progresses,” the report underlined, “is that of which values and consents, concerning higher education are common or to what extent are they shared among the signatory countries” (Lourtie, 2001, p. 3), thus disclosing the pretenses on the technical character of the Declaration. They also did not fail to notice that the ministerial conclave in its next meeting in Prague “found no room in their common statement to deal with the really important issue of values” (Mattheou, 2008, p. 469).

With all these communication techniques having failed to convince the Greek academy it is not strange that the Bologna project did not succeed in gaining the necessary political momentum in Greece. The situation would not change in the 2000s. It would not change even when the signatories in Prague asserted, “higher education should be considered public good and is and will remain a public responsibility” and “students are full members of the higher education community and ... should participate in and influence the organization and content of education at universities ...” (Prague Communique). To refute the first assertion, critics would simply quote Haug (1999) —the main author of the background report to the Bologna ministerial summit— in saying that “it is particularly unlikely that public funding will be available to support institutions and students for studies much beyond the normal duration of studies;” they would wonder how is it possible to detach responsibility from funding. On the other hand, the second assertion had no appeal to the interested party, as Greek student unions were on the whole hostile to the Bologna Process and had no intention to participate in it.

Faced with the hostility of the academic community successive governments found it difficult to comply with the Bologna objectives. The Greek university degree structure has remained unchanged: four years for the undergraduate courses (six for medicine and five for engineering), one or two years for the master’s degree, and three years for the doctorate. Curricula have also retained their main emphasis on academic pursuits rather than on qualifications better suited to the needs of the labor market; the traditional mission of the university and its fundamental epistemological assumptions still hold strong. However, students, faced with the problem of limited employment opportunities, deteriorated under the acute economic crisis the country is currently going through, are increasingly choosing courses with substantial prospects of employability and are seeking a place in master’s courses to improve their qualifications. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the diploma supplement were introduced, yet despite official assurances to the contrary, not all university departments

practice them and in any case credits are normally linked not with the course workload, but with the weekly teaching hours. The National Qualification Framework is still pending, while fair recognition of prior learning, including mainly the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, is far from being accepted by universities. Lifelong learning, although in principle recognized as indispensable to the university epistemological tradition, has not thus far allowed the university Institutes of Lifelong Learning, established by law in 2005, to function; student unions and part of the professorate have sabotaged them in the name of retaining the purely academic character of the university and prohibiting any potential involvement of the market in it (Moudopoulos, 2006). The reactions against the establishment of quality assurance processes and mechanisms were also strong. Finally, with considerable delay and after many unsuccessful attempts, a Quality Assurance Agency was established in 2005 and is presently making its first steps. Not that all ideological reservations concerning the involvement of the “evaluative state” to university autonomy have been dispelled, and that all departments have complied with the law. It is rather the public pressure for accountability and certainly the willingness of many academics to bring out their significant work, thus confuting the widespread acrimonious accusations against universities that allowed even the limited implementation of the law.

Coda

By its very nature the university is open to international influence; ideas, new knowledge, trends, and practices have always been crossing borders to mingle with and reform national traditions, social circumstances, and educational institutions. For historical reasons the Greek university was even more open to European influences. They had gradually led to the development of institutions and structural arrangements that proved to endure for decades, all the more so as the professorate acted as a force of stability and inertia. Circumstances prevailing in the 1980s were the catalyst for bringing about instability in the university backwater. The traditional balance of political power within the university was disputed, with leftism, populism, demagoguery, statism, conservatism, egoistic individualism, procrastination, and triviality, in an odd and at the same time explosive mixture, setting the tone in public discourse and preventing effective political action. Thus, over the last decades three diametrical opposite ideologies have been conflicting each other within the university walls: traditional egalitarianism with perverse leveling populism, epistemological strictness with laxity of discipline, and individuality with individualism. On the other hand Europeanization, especially after the country’s accession to the European Community, revitalized the age-long ideological dichotomy in the country —the Occidental and Oriental cultural outlook— which some academic analysts (Diamantouros, 2000) have described as endemic to Greek society’s “cultural dualism” and which one of the Greek prime ministers preferred to

call “the two Greeces.” Caught between the two it was difficult for the Bologna Process to bear fruit, the more so as political and university authorities have primarily to deal with long standing problems, peculiar to Greek universities. Thus, amidst the acute present-day financial crisis, which is also deeply socio-political, the ideological and institutional transformation of the Greek university still remains in abeyance (Mattheou, 2003) and consequently the prospects of the Bologna Process are quite uncertain.

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