

The Bologna Process and Australia

A study of the attractiveness, diffusion and rejection of a global reform idea.

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the Australian response to the Bologna Process and the reasons behind this response. It examines how ideas travel and the various perspectives that explain why certain ideas gain prominence over others. The impact of the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education are both key to this study, but a third middle perspective, emphasising the irrationality of actors in a public policy setting and the randomness of the travel of ideas, is also considered. These theoretical perspectives provide the backdrop against which the initiatives contained in the Bologna Process and Australia's response to these initiatives can be considered. A theoretical framework is then used to analyse the characteristics necessary in an idea for it to be successfully implemented.

The Australian Commonwealth government initiated much discussion regarding the Bologna Process within the higher education sector through the release of a discussion paper in April 2006. Both this discussion paper and a cross-section of responses made by university associations, industry groups, students and unions are examined in the thesis. The University of Melbourne, having recently undertaken a series of reforms which invoked and in some respects resembled aspects of the Bologna Process is given additional consideration as a case-study. The responses emphasised the perceived benefit of having a diverse higher education system in Australia, confusion as to why the Australia would choose to follow the Bologna Process reforms, and a sense that Australia would be better served by concentrating on its role within Asia and maintaining competitiveness with North American universities.

The thesis concludes that both the Bologna Process and the response to the Bologna Process from Australian governments and institutions can be characterised as the products of a multitude of influences. While the rhetoric surrounding the Bologna Process emphasises cooperative international engagement, the influences of competitive globalisation and of a "muddling through" approach can both be seen to influence the Bologna Process and responses to the Bologna Process made by Australian governments and institutions. The ultimate rejection of the implementation of the Bologna Process in Australia, at least in its current form and in the current climate, is an example of the forces of globalisation and internationalisation not always impacting upon higher education systems in a predictable manner.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Through the Bologna Process, European universities and governments are currently enacting widespread reforms aimed at harmonising aspects of higher education to improve the mobility of students and staff and to further the objectives of a Europe comprised of “stable, peaceful and democratic societies” (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p 1). Interest in the process is widespread, as individual countries and regions consider the implications of the Bologna Process on their own higher education systems and examine appropriate responses. In April 2006 the Commonwealth government of Australia released a discussion paper on the Bologna Process, calling on submissions from industry groups, university associations, higher education institutions, student groups, unions and other interested parties. The debate that the discussion paper and submission sparked surrounding the practicality and desirability of seeking compatibility with the Bologna Process is ongoing, however already clear trends have emerged regarding how stakeholders in the Australian higher education system view the Bologna Process and Australia’s role in the global higher education marketplace. This thesis uses a variety of theoretical perspectives to examine the forces that have driven the idea of the Bologna Process to Australia and Australia’s subsequent response, in order to better understand the rationale for this debate in Australia.

1.1.1 The Australian higher education system

The term “Australian higher education system” could be misleading without clarification. Australia operates a federal system, with six States and two Territories having regulatory control over universities, technical colleges and other forms of higher and further education in their borders. The federal government (called the Commonwealth government, or commonly in their own literature, the “Australian government”) provides the vast majority of funding to universities. In order to provide a national perspective, in this text wherever possible I have referred to the policy directions provided for the whole of Australia by the Commonwealth government rather than individual States or Territories.

What constitutes a higher education institution in Australia? The term “higher education” incorporates three types of organisations that are recognised under State, Territory and Commonwealth Australian laws. Institutions are defined as a ‘university’, a ‘self-accrediting provider’ or a ‘non self-accrediting provider’. Australia currently has 39 universities, of which 37 are public institutions and 2 are private. In addition, there is one branch of a foreign university and four self-accrediting higher education institutions in Australia. There are several hundred non-self-accrediting higher education institutions registered with various State and Territory governments. These higher education institutions serve a variety of different purposes and markets. As well as the obvious geographic markets created by the vast distances between Australia’s major urban areas, higher education institutions can be categorised according to mission and practice.

The universities all engage in research, with many engaging in research across a broad spectrum of areas. Some universities may focus on particular specialties, whilst other may make little more than token gestures towards serious academic research. Approximately two thirds of Australia’s universities are grouped into various professional associations. Most prominent amongst these groupings is the *Group of Eight*, a self-styled peak body representing eight of the country’s most well known universities. Membership of the *Group of Eight* consists of the vice-chancellors (presidents) of eight of Australia’s leading universities. *Innovative Research Universities Australia*, *Australian Technology Network of Universities* and *New Generation Universities* are the three other associations, representing between five and ten universities respectively, occupying what would commonly be considered the second through fourth tiers of Australia’s university sector.

The non-university sector is diverse in its constituency, which include specialist colleges, theological colleges, and colleges focussing on non-traditional disciplines (DEST, 2007). Non-universities may engage in research but it is more common for these institutions to engage only in teaching. This thesis concentrates primarily on the university sector as it is this element of the Australian higher education sector that is most engaged internationally and has the most influence on policy development and direction.

1.1.2 Funding and student enrolments

The Commonwealth government traditionally provided the bulk of funding to universities in Australia. This situation has changed over the past 20 years, most dramatically in the past 10 years. Whereas in 1995 Commonwealth funding accounted for 60 per cent of total higher education revenue, by 2005 it accounted for just 41 per cent (Group of Eight, 2007, p 21). Universities have therefore been required to make up the shortfall in funding by finding new income streams. This has largely been achieved through recruitment of foreign fee paying students and the gradual deregulation surrounding the imposition of fees upon Australian students. Since upfront tuition fees were reintroduced to Australian universities in the 1990s the Commonwealth government has capped the amount that students may be charged and the number of Australian students who may be enrolled in upfront fee paying places. Although a new Commonwealth government was elected in November 2007 which has indicated that it may abolish up front fees for Australian students, a clear higher education policy is yet to develop and the future of public funding of higher education in Australia will not be known until a recently announced review of the sector is completed (DEEWR, 2008).

The Australian higher education sector serves a very large number of students. In 2006 (the last year for which complete data is currently available), 984,146 students were enrolled in Australian higher education institutions (DEST, 2006B, p 1). This was a 2.8 percent increase compared to 2005. Of these students, 733,352 were Australian and 250,794 were foreign (DEST, 2006B, p 1). This means that over 25 per cent of students in higher education institutions in Australia are non-Australian. Within the domestic student population, 539,934 (73.63 per cent) of the students were enrolled as undergraduate students and 177,229 (24.17 per cent) were enrolled as postgraduate students (DEST, 2006B, p 2)¹. Within the overseas student population, 143,739 (57.31 per cent) of the students were enrolled as undergraduate students and 93,220 (37.17 per cent) were enrolled as postgraduate students. An additional 13,835 were enrolled in other forms of higher education (DEST, 2006B, p 3). These figures show that in both raw numbers and as a percentage of the overall population, international students have become a key social and economic component of the Australian higher education system.

¹ These figures leave 16,189 domestic students unaccounted for.

1.1.3 Global trade in higher education services

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is a multilateral agreement made by countries participating in the World Trade Organisation. It came into effect in 1995 and is the services equivalent to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which regulates trade of goods. Trade in higher education services is one area in which the GATS aims to reduce barriers in four specific areas or “modes”: cross-border supply (which includes distance delivery and virtual universities), consumption abroad (students studying in another country), commercial presence (which includes branches of a university or satellite campuses operating in another country), and presence of natural persons (which covers teachers travelling to foreign country to teach) (Latvian Rectors Council, 2002). In addition there are also a number of more generic barriers that can apply to trade in all four modes. These include a lack of transparency of government regulation, domestic laws being unfairly administered, subsidies not being transparent, discriminatory taxation laws and foreign investors being treated unfavourably compared with other providers (Latvian Rectors Council, 2002).

Opinion differs greatly as to the effect that increased liberalization of trade in education services is having and will continue to have. Trade in higher education services has grown quite effectively without specific GATS related commitments from member countries (Nielson, 2004). GATS liberalises “trade” rather than “higher education” (Nielson, 2004). There can be many drivers for trade and countries that have ratified GATS remain free to engage in activities outside the scope of GATS. The benefits of the GATS is also disputed by some critics, such as Lorenz who argues that by redefining higher education as a service like any other that democratic political control over higher education is being eroded (Lorenz, 2006, p 131). Regardless of these divergent views, any discussion of global higher education would be incomplete without an awareness of the impact, and the potential further impact, of the GATS on trade in higher education services.

1.1.4 Global competition in the higher education sector

Global trade in higher education is undoubtedly of great economic importance to many countries. In 2002, approximately 1.9 million students were studying at higher education institutions outside of their country of origin, which is an increase of 15 per cent over the

previous year (Marginson, 2005, p 2). In Australia, the importance of international trade in higher education is very high due to a combination of domestic reform and successful marketing. Australia has the highest percentage of foreign tertiary students of any OECD country and in absolute terms it is the fourth largest provider of tertiary education to foreign students in the world, behind only the USA, UK and Germany (Williams and Van Dyke, 2004, p 1). By 2004, international enrolments comprised 23 per cent of all enrolments in Australian universities (Williams and Van Dyke, 2004, p 1). Higher education earns Australia in excess of A\$5 billion per year in student fees and other expenditures by international students, and provides universities with 15 per cent of their incomes (Marginson, 2005, p 2).

The growth in worldwide tertiary education places is set to continue rapidly in the coming two decades. An Australian report from 2003 forecast the global demand for tertiary education places is set to grow from approximately 100 million student places in the year 2000 to approximately 260 million places by 2025 (IDP, 2002). The Commonwealth government estimates that up to 7 million students will “seek to obtain an international education experience, especially in an English-speaking environment” (Nelson, 2003, p 3). Much of the developed world is also seeing a change in the patterns of the type of student engaging in higher education, away from school leavers and towards adults, as life-long learning becomes more important to meeting labour market needs and personal needs.

However global higher education looks in the future, Australia’s strategic position in relation to its major competitors in the higher education market will be a matter of great importance. Competition is likely to come from three main sources. Firstly, Australia will compete for students with other countries in which English is the language of instruction. There has since 2003/04 however been a decline in international education affecting all of the major Anglophone destination countries, particularly amongst undergraduate enrolments (AEI, 2005, p 10). Australia has offset some of this decline through significant growth in enrolments from countries in Southern and Central Asia such as Nepal and Sri Lanka (AEI, 2007A).

Secondly, Australia will face competition for students with Europe united under the post-*Bologna Process* model of a single degree structure, diploma supplement and credit transfer system. Many European countries are recognising the benefits international students bring,

and are targeting new markets through an increasingly emphasis on the provision of postgraduate courses taught in English (Clark, 2007).

Thirdly, Australia will face the prospect of many Asian countries with emerging economies seeking to retain their own students, attract other Asian students and possibly attract domestic Australian students to the emerging mass higher education sectors. There are indications however that China is making significant progress in turning from a net exporter of higher education to a very significant player in the field of higher education export; China's 2004 international student enrolments represent an increase of 42 per cent from the previous year (AEI, 2005, p 8). Other Asian countries are increasingly asserting themselves as higher education exporters through initiatives such as the "Global Schoolhouse" (Singapore) and "twinning degree program" (Malaysia) which aim to strengthen local institutions and attract prestigious international universities to deliver on-shore higher education (AEI, 2005; Singapore Education, 2006; Malaysian Education, 2008).

1.1.5 The attractiveness of the Bologna Process

In addition to sparking the interest of Australian higher education reformers, the Bologna Process has provoked considerable interest in other parts of the world. Various countries and regions have engaged in a combination of imitation, cooperation and observation of the Bologna Process. It has ceased to be a uniquely European reform, and has become something of a template for higher education reforms, with countries sometimes considering the adoption of select reforms while others seek to implement wholesale changes. This interest has arguably spread throughout the world with the exception of North America, whose leading universities enjoy a status that makes higher education reformers in the region somewhat impervious to European higher education reform agendas.

Since the 2003 Berlin Summit of education Ministers, the Bologna Process has explicitly incorporated the need for European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries to engage with the rest of the world through what it calls the "external dimension" (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). Although the "external dimension" of the Bologna Process is primarily concerned with promoting the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education institutions to non-Europeans, it does also emphasise the need to look beyond Europe and to engage cooperatively with other regions (WENR, 2007). In turn,

many other regions are seeing the benefits to cooperation of adapting their own higher education systems to become more compatible with the EHEA. The countries of the Maghreb in northern Africa are now re-aligning their higher education systems (based on the French model) with the three-cycle “*licence, master, doctorat*” which follows the Bologna Process’s 3+2+3 structure (WENR 2006). In sub-Saharan Africa the impact of the Bologna Process is less obvious, however an international conference on “The African Universities’ adaptation to the Bologna Process” was held in the Democratic Republic of Congo in July 2007. The conference sought to examine why African universities may seek to adapt to (or adopt aspects of) the Bologna Process, issues of quality assurance and accreditation and the role of international financial organisations in the promotion of the Bologna Process in Africa (Obasi, 2007). Western and Portuguese speaking African nations are also in the preliminary stages of sub-regional reforms to make their systems more compatible with the EHEA (WENR, 2007).

In the Asia-Pacific region, an Asia-Pacific Education Ministers’ Meeting was held in Brisbane in 2006. The meeting spawned a follow-up group to examine issues of quality assurance and mutual recognition of qualifications throughout the region, and much like the Bologna Process follow-up groups, Ministers will continue to meet on a bi-annual basis to discuss progress regarding these reforms (Clark, 2007). In Latin America, “the Bologna Process is considered a key conceptual background” for reforms designed to improve student mobility, flexibility of programs and labour market mobility (Riveros, 2005, p 2). It is acknowledged however that the Bologna Process is not a perfect fit for Latin America as it does not address the infrastructure and funding systems that are prevalent in the region where a much smaller percentage of people attend university and where higher education institutions play a different role in society (Riveros, 2005, p 2).

1.2 Rationale

The Bologna Process is a major higher educational reform currently being implemented throughout Europe. The fact that European universities and governments are voluntarily enacting widespread reforms, which in some cases radically overhaul existing systems, is of great interest throughout the world. European higher education is in a state of transition from 46 often incompatible and conflicting higher education systems to a single European

Higher Education Area. The speed and (at least initial) enthusiasm with which the Bologna Process has been formulated and acted upon has surprised not only the participants in Europe, but also those countries which have an interest in retaining their own high profile in the global higher education consciousness. The Australian higher education sector, which is highly internationalised and dependent upon its success as a major player in the global higher education market, has been particularly keen to monitor the Bologna Process and lead discussions on the creation of parallel regional processes which emulate or are compatible with those of Europe. Australia is, for its size, an incredibly successful exporter of higher education. Any developments which could threaten this standing, by heightening the status of another region or attracting students away from Australia, is inevitably the subject of discussion and debate.

While the intrigue surrounding the Bologna Process is undeniable, the questions of how Australia has reacted and why the government has directed debate towards reforms that seek to emulate aspects of the Bologna Process require further consideration. The Australian higher education system is vastly removed in geography, economics, ideology and other circumstance from that of Europe, yet the idea of achieving compatibility with this foreign system has been raised. This thesis attempts to break down the influences that are exerted on ideas as they travel by utilising a variety of theoretical perspectives. Applying different theoretical perspectives to the actions of the Bologna Process provides a number of models through which the driving forces behind various actions can be distilled. These models can then be overlaid against Australia's reaction, to help determine the perspectives that are driving Australia's response to the Bologna Process. This process can help provide answers to the questions of "Why Bologna?" and "Why now?" in the debate surrounding Australian higher education.

1.3 Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to answer the overall question of the extent to which institutions and governments in Australia have responded to the Bologna Process initiatives. Undertaking this review requires the study of the attractiveness, diffusion and rejection of a global reform idea. In view of this question and underlying theoretical basis, the following sub-questions are considered in this text:

- (1) How do ideas travel through time and space and how are they diffused in a foreign context?
- (2) Why are certain reform ideas considered attractive and subsequently implemented while other reforms are rejected?
- (3) What is the Bologna Process and to what extent are its initiatives relevant to the Australian higher education system?
- (4) How has the idea of the Bologna Process travelled to Australia?
- (5) What theoretical perspectives have influenced Australia's reaction to the Bologna Process?
- (6) Why were the Bologna Process reforms ultimately rejected at implementation stage by the Australian higher education sector?

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 The nature of the study

This study of the Australian reaction to the Bologna Process utilises qualitative research methodology. The methodology is based upon document and text analyses from a variety of sources, as well as a single-case case study. The key documents used in the text analysis were the discussion paper issued by the Commonwealth government in 2006 and the responses to this discussion paper submitted to the government from interested stakeholders. A cross-section of these documents was selected for analysis, based upon a desire to analyse the views of responses representing university-groupings, vice-chancellors, unions, students, and industry. For this reason individual institutional responses (with the exception of the University of Melbourne case study) were not reviewed, although the three university association responses that were considered collectively represent over half of Australia's universities.

The research questions identified for this topic suggested an exploratory approach was best suited for this study, as this allows sufficient flexibility to adapt the structure of the research

as necessary as and when new theoretical pathways are needed. The research plan utilises “unreconstructed logic”, meaning that it does not follow step-by-step rules in an order to fit a pre-existing research construct in order to look “clean and neat” (North Carolina Wesleyan College, 2006). This type of approach dispenses with the restrictions that can otherwise occur if the researcher becomes entangled in inflexible concepts and frameworks early in the research process (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). This unreconstructed logical approach was useful when the research revealed that the idea of the Bologna Process had ultimately been rejected in Australia, opening up a new pathway of examination utilising the framework of Røvik (following Meyers) into the characteristics that lead to the successful implementation of ideas.

The research involved a consideration of three perspectives as to how ideas travel and what influences the diffusion of these ideas. This section drew upon a broad range of research into the role and impact of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. The role of change theory in the travel of ideas provided a middle ground to these two theories, emphasising the irrationality of public policy determination and the occasional randomness through which reform ideas can travel in time and space. Together these perspectives provided half of the theoretical framework for the study. The other half of the theoretical perspective is found in the consideration of the implementation of certain ideas and the rejection of others. This line of enquiry became relevant to the study once it became apparent that the Australian higher education sector as a whole had rejected the implementation of the Bologna Process in Australia in the current time and circumstances. Stylised and extreme models of each perspective were then created in order to distil the essence of the motivation that exists behind the various Bologna Process reforms. These models, while unrealistic, help to reveal whether the actions, or sub-ideas, of the Bologna Process that originated from certain perspectives were more likely to be implemented than others. The analysis of the Australian response to the Bologna Process was then undertaken within this theoretical framework, to determine how and why the idea of this particular reform travelled to Australia and why it was ultimately rejected by the Australian higher education system.

1.4.2 The appropriateness of the study

In determining the appropriateness of any qualitative research study, Marshall and Rossman suggest that the researcher considers whether the research should be done, whether it can be done, and whether the researcher wants to do the research (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). In this study the answer to all of these questions is affirmative. The research should be done as the Bologna Process is the single biggest higher education reform in the world today, and the interest that it generated in Australia, one of the world's major higher education exporters, is worthy of analysis. Despite its relatively small population, the policy direction and reactions of the country that is the fourth largest exporter of higher education in the world are unarguably of interest to the broader higher education community. Secondly, the research can be done in a qualitative manner. The release of a discussion paper on the topic of the Bologna Process by the Australian Commonwealth government and the submission that this paper generated meant that a document review became a feasible method of carrying out the research. The addition of a case-study focussing on the present reforms of the University of Melbourne added another layer of analysis to the study. Thirdly, I wished to undertake this study to improve my understanding of the self-perception of the Australian higher education sector and its position in the international higher education community. I determined that the manner in which Australia responded to the Bologna Process could provide insight into the confidence and robustness of the sector and demonstrate how Australia is placed to cope with future challenges to its current high status in the competitive world of international higher education.

1.4.3 The choice of case study

Yin notes that there are two circumstances in which a case study may be a useful research tool. One use is to examine an exploratory or descriptive question, while the other is when the researcher wishes to illuminate a particular situation by getting closer to it (Yin, 2004, p 2). The case study chosen for this research was chosen for the second reason – to highlight the reforms occurring between 2006 to present at the University of Melbourne under the title of the “Melbourne Model”. The choice of which university to focus on in this case study was obvious. Case studies can be chosen when a particular case is extreme or unique (Yin, 2004, p 8). The Melbourne Model is the first example of an Australian university choosing to abandon the traditional Anglo-Australian model of lengthy professional undergraduate

degrees in favour of generalist undergraduate degrees which either stand alone or are coupled with professional second-cycle Masters degrees. The resemblance of this model to the Bologna Process degree structure, coupled with repeated references throughout the University of Melbourne's explanatory and promotional material for the Melbourne Model, meant that a single-case study to analyse the content and drive behind this reform was justified. By undertaking this case study the overall research could distinguish between the phenomenon of the Melbourne Model reforms and the context of the broader debate surrounding the Bologna Process that was occurring effectively simultaneously. Yin notes that the case study format allows for the researcher to "tolerate the real-life blurring between phenomenon and context" (Yin and Davis, 2006, p 5)

1.4.4 Validity and reliability

The validity of any study can be measured in different ways. Some authors suggest that validity and reliability are less applicable to qualitative research than quantitative, given the inherently subjective and interpretive nature of qualitative research (Silverman, 1993, p 153). It seems inappropriate to dismiss the relevance of validity and reliability in qualitative research entirely however, given that these two concepts can be reinterpreted in a qualitative research context. While notions of validity and reliability may have different meanings depending upon whether research is qualitative or quantitative, validity and reliability have nonetheless been considered in this study.

Kvale offers an interpretation of validity that can be used for qualitative research, emphasising the need for three criteria to be present in valid research: correspondence (where the research corresponds with reality), coherence (logical consistency) and utility (whether the study is able to be generalised) (Kvale, 1989). These three criteria can be seen in this study, with the weakest of the three being the criterion of the utility of the study. Given the specific context of the Australian higher education sector and global higher education environment in 2006-2007, any attempt at generalising the specifics of the study is problematic. The aspect of the study with greater utility is the theorisation surrounding the travel and implementation of ideas, of which the Australian reaction to the Bologna Process is but one example. The case study of the University of Melbourne is not presented as representative of the national higher education system, but was instead selected to showcase a special situation relevant to the broader study. Kvale's other two criteria of

correspondence and coherence are both met through the use of representative examples of responses to the issues surrounding the Bologna Process as presented by the Australian Commonwealth Government.

The validity of research can also be measured by determining whether the research measures what the researcher thinks it is measuring (Kerlinger, 1978 cited in Kvale, 1996). The issue of validity comes into the various stages of the study, including the accuracy of the description of theoretical perspectives, the design of the study and analysis of data. In this study the theoretical perspectives are drawn together from the research of a broad array of authors to ensure as much reliability and validity as possible. The source material directly relates to the primary research questions. The submission made by various stakeholders to the Commonwealth government discussion paper were all sourced from the relevant governmental website and all explicitly state the purpose of their creation, their source and date. The nature of the study requires interpretation of data generated in response to the discussion paper, which is the point of the study at which validity and reliability is hardest to determine. Every effort was made to ensure that the data extracted from the text analysis was representative of the response and exceptions and limitations were noted in the text. For a text analysis of this type there are not clear rules that guarantee validity. Ratcliffe notes that:

“Any rules, therefore, that purport to guarantee validity (i.e., prove the truth content) of the information generated by an inquiry system ought not to be taken to represent reality. They are merely rules that have been made by human beings (inquirers), and they thus necessarily serve human purposes and goals. Such rules are therefore inevitably normative: They prove; only that we are playing by the (current) rules.”(Ratcliffe, 1983, 159)

The nature of the research and the complex political circumstances surrounding higher education reforms of this scale make firm assertions regarding the absolute reliability and validity of the study impractical. Within this context and noting the limitations discussed below, the findings of the study nevertheless provide a reliable insight into the failure of the global reform idea that is the Bologna Process to be implemented in Australia and provides evidence as to why such a failure may have occurred.

1.4.5 Limitations of the study.

The primary limitation of the study is the breadth of data sources utilised. Thirty-four submissions were received by the Commonwealth government in response to the discussion paper released on the Bologna Process in April 2006. With additional capacity to analyse all of these responses the overall picture of the response of the Australian higher education sector would have been stronger. The cross-section utilised in the study provides an indication of the trends of responses, however it cannot be a substitute for a comprehensive review. The data sources were also limited by being restricted to text analyses. Interviews were not utilised for practical reasons. The lack of access to senior government and university policy-makers (an issue heightened by the change of Commonwealth government mid-way through the study period) made useful interviews unviable. This lack of access was combined with the realistic belief that the commercial sensitivity of much information regarding universities' international activities would render the content of any interview to be limited to official institutional policy, which were available in text format. As Blaikie notes, the decisions about data sources are influence by the practicality of accessing those sources (Blaikie, 2000, p 28).

A second limitation is the timing of the study. The Bologna Process is still in the process of being implemented throughout Europe and the content of the reforms remain in a state of evolution. The bi-annual Ministerial summits that have occurred since the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 have so far added an additional four elements to the content of the Bologna Process. It is arguable that a study of this nature would be better suited to an analysis of the Australian reaction to the Bologna Process after the Bologna Process has had a chance to be fully realised in Europe. Many of the submissions from Australian stakeholders advocated a "wait and see" approach, and indicated a preference for further observation of the outcomes of the Bologna Process prior to committing to any action. This limitation could potentially be overcome if the study was conducted a further five years from now. The incompleteness of the European implementation of the Bologna Process does not render my own study invalid, but it does restrict its utility.

2. Theoretical grounding

2.1 Introduction

The first question that is raised when asking how Australia has responded to the Bologna Process may well be “why is Australia responding at all?” The Bologna Process is in essence a European idea designed with a European political and geographic context in mind. Why would a country so geographically, and in some respects culturally, removed from Europe respond to a European idea? Even assuming a desire to respond exists, can Australia implement a quintessentially European idea? Can the “idea” of the Bologna Process travel, and if so, how? What factors influence the implementation of some ideas and the rejection of others? Numerous different perspectives can attempt to explain why and how ideas are dispersed over time and space and how they come to be implemented.

This chapter examines three perspectives in order to provide a theoretical basis as to how and why an idea such as the Bologna Process might travel to Australia. Firstly, Czarniawska and Joerges use what I have labelled “change theory” to write about how ideas travel in time and space. Secondly the perspectives of authors such as Scott, Beerkens, Enders, Douglass, Marginson and van der Wende, who write about interpretations and meanings of “internationalisation” and “globalisation” and the effect each has had on the movement of ideas in higher education, are compared. Using “change theory”, internationalisation and globalisation as starting points I examine how these authors and others theorise that an idea such as the Bologna Process could travel to Australia. Through the use of stylised models it becomes possible to examine how these three perspectives could be operationalised and to characterise the various actions of the Bologna Process as motivated by one of these three perspectives. The characteristics of ideas that determine whether or not they are implemented or rejected are then considered using an expanded version of Røvik’s framework. This helps to determine what characteristics the idea of the Bologna Process had to possess in order for it to be implemented, and provides background for the analysis of the Australian response to the Bologna Process in Chapter 4.

2.2 “Change theory” and the travel of ideas

Change theory provides one explanation for how ideas move through space and time. The movement of ideas raises many questions. Why do ideas that have existed for certain periods of time suddenly materialise into action? How do these ideas travel across time and space? Why are some ideas institutionalised while others are cast of as fashion? These questions all relate to how an idea or series of ideas such as those contained in the Bologna Process can be transported and implemented (or not implemented) in Australia. Czarniawska and Joerges see the travel of ideas as a series of small local movements through time and space (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, pp 13-48). These local movements can join together to make an idea ‘global’. When an idea travels from Europe to Australia it does so through a series of small steps and local networks. Technological advances such as the Internet and email that have become part of the fabric of the movement of ideas in the time since Czarniawska and Joerges published their book in 1996 enhance this process. These new technologies, as well as the advent of faster and cheaper transportation options, allow local networks to expand and ideas to travel much faster than they have before, and encourage a new expanded definition of “local” that includes networks that are “local” to any given person or group of people, irrespective of the geographic proximity of the actors involved. Czarniawska and Joerges argue that “What we call ‘global economy’ is a network of many local economies, which thus acquire an unprecedented scale and scope of action” (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, p 22). In their definition, ‘global’ is not a state that exists above or beyond ‘local’, but rather is part of the same continuum. In this sense ‘global’ can be seen to refer to a “hugely extended network of localities” (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, p 22). Whereas once a “local” network may have been defined within a city, country or region, it can now include individuals throughout the world. Czarniawska and Joerges’s basic premise can therefore be paraphrased in a current context in the following manner: that small economies/networks that are bound together in some manner irrespective of physical proximity become global economies/networks when they acquire an unprecedented scale and scope of action.

2.2.1 Ideas and fashion

Czarniawska and Joerges examine why certain ideas may be accepted and passed through a network whereas others fail to gain support. How does the tension between fashion and

institutionalisation with regard to the travel of ideas influence which ideas are accepted and adopted within a network and which are cast out? Why have ideas such as the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area become fashionable while other ideas have not? In many senses institutionalisation and fashion seem opposed: fashion represents transience and frivolity, while institutionalisation can represent stability and order. Czarniawska and Joerges disagree with this construction. They believe that although fashion exists at the fringe of institutions, it plays a valuable role in determining what ideas are and are not eventually institutionalised. Fashion has durability in time and space, which means it can be used by institutions to test out new ideas and practices. Institutions then adopt those fashions which suit them and discard those which do not (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, p 25). Those ideas which can be presented as being natural progressions on exiting ideas lend themselves to transcending fashion and becoming institutionalised.

The next question is then why a fashionable/institutionalised idea becomes global while another idea remains local. The obvious answer that “some ideas are intrinsically better than others” is not the same conclusion that Czarniawska and Joerges reach. They believe the answer does not lie in the particular attributes of the idea or the characteristics of the problem that the idea is addressing. Instead the “perceived attributes of an idea, the perceived characteristics of a problem and the match between them are all created, negotiated or imposed during the collective translation process (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, p 25).” Writing about the Bologna Process, Olson and Maassen note that while it was “initiated as a countermove to EU and external sectors, it has increasingly become dependent upon the Commission and its definitions of problems and solutions” (Olson and Maassen, 2006, p 13). In this case the problems and solutions can said to have followed after the implementation of the idea, rather than vice-versa. It is therefore not the content of the idea that determines its fashionability and institutionability. Czarniawska and Joerges state that without too much exaggeration it can be claimed that given favourable circumstances that most ideas can be proven to fit most problems (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, p 25).

2.2.2 Noticing and enacting ideas

If it not the inherent qualities of an idea that determine its success, then the issue of why some ideas are noticed become important. Czarniawska and Joerges state that people reading the same texts see different ideas depending party on what they want to see, but also

depending upon what they are able to notice. When a person approaches an idea they do so in terms of what they already know. Sometimes the encounter with the idea will confirm this existing knowledge and at other times the idea might re-arrange their entire beliefs. This is why unfamiliar ideas can take a long time and be subject to numerous repetitions before they are properly observed (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, p 27). “Discovery is not the act of finding out something which was previously unknown, but the act of obtaining knowledge for oneself by using one’s own mind (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, p 28).” Individuals play a very large role in determining which ideas are “discovered” by those around them through intentional and inadvertent means. Individuals operate in all sorts of political and cultural power structures that can influence who is prepared to listen to whom and at what time. While individuals obviously intentionally influence people in certain situations, ideas can also be subliminally conveyed to groups of people who may use an individual or group to anchor an idea in order to subvert the barriers of the political or cultural barrier that may be in place with regards to their idea (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, pp 29-30). The ways and reasons certain ideas are enacted can therefore become intriguing.

An idea which gives a name to something that is already being done can sometimes be deemed important. Ideas that for centuries might be considered unworkable may be able to be implemented due to political, social or technological changes. It is arguable that the idea of the Europeanisation of higher education is one such idea that has been periodically raised but only now has become workable. The political context of the European Commission, the cultural context of a rapidly expanding European Union, the social context of mass higher education throughout much of Europe and the technological context of improved communication and transport speed may all have combined to finally created the conditions by which an idea that was first embodied by the travelling scholars of medieval times can finally be implemented on a broad scale. So long as the idea keeps “touching down” repetitively in the consciousness of groups or individuals, then it has the ability to become an action at some point in time. Such a process does not rely on logic and rationality, but on a convergence of favourable circumstances, and to a degree, luck. In some respects change theory is compatible with Lindblom’s “muddling through” theory, that rejects “rational-comprehensive” rationale for decision making by bureaucrats in favour of the idea that many public policy decisions are made on split-second judgements and limited information (Lindblom, 1959).

2.2.3 How and why has the idea of the Bologna Process travelled

The ways in which an idea can travel through time and space seem many and varied. A good idea may go unnoticed, while a bad idea may suit a particular time and circumstance. A big idea, such as the Bologna Process, might represent what Czarniawska and Joerges refer to as a “master-idea”: that is an idea that can serve as a focus for a fashion or institution while simultaneously allowing new ideas to form, gestate and operate. A “master-idea” may take the form of an ideology or movement that exists in opposition to a perceived flaw in the present – postmodernism and positivism are two examples. In an example with relevance to the Bologna Process, “There seems to be a magic attraction to big projects, used as umbrellas for many actions already in existence, giving meaning and legitimacy to those about to begin, and providing a space for plans, dreams and designs” (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996, p 40). It could be argued that by bringing together a number of ideas already existing in various stages of enactment under the umbrella heading of “The Bologna Process”, that we are witnessing a “master idea” at work. Through repetition and familiarity, the idea of the Bologna Process has become enshrined as a positive paradigm of change. The terminology and “master-idea” of the Bologna Process can then be expanded and utilised by different actors in different ways in different places.

One of the questions posed at the start of this chapter was “Why would Australia respond to the Bologna Process”? If the Bologna Process is indeed a “master-idea” then this partly explains its appeal to the Australian Commonwealth government. The Bologna Process, as such an idea, can provide legitimacy and credibility to other ideas and in some manner deflect doubts and criticism away from these smaller ideas. The question of “why now” is then answered by noting that ideas, including “master-ideas” may bounce or reappear at different times and places and rely upon being noticed and implemented to take effect. Once the ideas behind the Bologna Process were noticed and formulated into a policy, this gave them greater exposure and opportunity to be notice in other times and places. Of course this does not fully explain the “why” and “when” of Australia’s interest in the Bologna Process: many other parts of the world have not shown equal fascination. The practicalities of operationalising an idea have much to do with the economic, political and social realities of different countries, an issue which is discussed later in this chapter.

2.3 Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education

A huge body of work exists regarding the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. These two concepts are often used in a confusing way and are sometimes used interchangeably. “Globalisation” is a concept that is occasionally used as an all-encompassing phrase or even a “non-concept” to describe all of the changes that have occurred since a given period of time – often the 1970s or late 1980s (Enders, 2004, p 367). There are so many varied and complex definitions of globalisation and internationalisation that it is necessary to clearly define how these terms are used throughout this text.

“Internationalisation” is perhaps best described as a more formal and limited process than globalisation. It describes relationships that exist across borders between different institutions (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007, p 11). It is a formal process because it relies upon specific agreements between two or more persons or organisations. Internationalisation requires no qualification with regards to speed or volume of interaction, and therefore could incorporate, for example, interactions dating back to the travel of scholars between Paris and Oxford in medieval times just as readily as it refers to modern interactions. Internationalisation may also contain an element of co-operation and inclusiveness (at least within Continental Europe) not present in the definition of globalisation (van der Wende, 2007, p 6). Internationalisation therefore encompasses international cooperation such as academic exchange that pre-date the current era of economic competitiveness that exists between many large higher education systems.

In contrast “globalisation” implies a much larger and less structured type of interaction. It is often, somewhat vaguely, referred to in terms of a “widening, deepening and speeding up of world wide interconnectedness” (Held et al. 1999, p. 2). Marginson and van der Wende provide one of the most concise definitions of globalisation as “the processes of world-wide engagement and convergence associated with the growing role of global systems that criss-cross many national borders” (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007, p 11). Yet this definition does not tell the whole story either. Beerkens alternatively suggests that globalisation can be defined in four different ways: as a geographical concept, as a concept of authority and power, as a cultural concept and finally as an institutional concept (Beerkens, 2004, p 8). This definition is perhaps too broad to be readily usable, and leaves

globalisation as a large and slightly unwieldy concept. Enders, following Scott's 1998 analysis, suggests that globalisation should refer primarily to the processes of increasing interdependence between States (as opposed to the interconnectedness inherent in internationalisation), culminating in the convergence of economies and the liberalisation of trade (Enders, 2004, p 367). Douglass provides a similar definition, making reference to the opening up of markets, but adds the elements of technological and communications advancements, such as the Internet (Douglass, 2005, p 445).

“Internationalisation” and “globalisation” are therefore best described as two concepts which are most easily defined with reference to their similarities and differences to the other. The concepts of globalisation and internationalisation are not part of the same continuum. Globalisation is understood primarily in terms of global economic competition and trade of higher education services, while internationalisation remains connected to a more cooperative, non-competitive and non-fiscal approach to higher education (Marginson and van der Wende 2007, p 11). In this text I use internationalisation to refer to scholarly and cultural forms of international engagement, collaboration and exchange. It refers to bilateral and multilateral agreements between institutions or governments whose primary purpose is something other than trade. Alternatively, I use globalisation to refer to the opening up of higher education markets throughout much of the world in the past 20 years, with an emphasis on trade and assisted by information technology and communications innovations that have seen the speed at which information and individuals travel increase rapidly during the same period.

2.3.1 Context and conditions affecting modern higher education

The higher education systems of Australia and the vast majority of Western and Northern Europe now operate in what Martin Trow described in 1970 as “massified” systems of higher education. Trow was writing about the change that occurred throughout the higher education systems of many developed countries in the 20th century that saw higher education participation rise from “elite” (less than 15% participation) to near “universal” (more than 50% participation). Trow famously wrote that “We are now seeing what was a privilege that became a right transformed into something near to an obligation for growing numbers of young men and women” (Trow, 1970, p 4).

Massification provides the context in which internationalisation and then globalisation have come to influence higher education. Massification, with its associated strain on resources and increasing demand upon public funds (in the case of publicly funded higher education systems), can be argued to be one of the causes of the shift from the internationalisation to globalisation of higher education. In many countries, including Australia, the large scale export of higher education services is often attributed to the relative decline in per student funding for universities that has arisen since the era of massification took place (Douglass, 2005, p 471). Massification can therefore be seen to have a direct link firstly to internationalisation and then subsequently to globalisation, due to pressures that increased higher education participation rates placed upon public finance and the pact between societies and their higher education institutions. Paradoxically, the massification of higher education systems that results from increased domestic patronage can then create the very circumstances that force universities to adopt an international and global outlook in order to survive. This situation then raises questions about the identity of the university and the extent to which it engages in international and global relationships.

The question of whether universities are inherently international institutions is also an interesting one. The traditional answer to this question is affirmative – that higher education was always more internationally open than most sectors because of its immersion in knowledge, which has never respected national boundaries (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007, p 5). Scott however believes that this is a false proposition, and that the example of the *studia generales* of medieval Europe, in which scholars roamed between universities such as those at Oxford, Bologna, Coimbra, Salamanca and Paris does not prove the existence of a strong international element amongst ancient universities (Scott, 1998, pp 109-110). He states that such limited international connectedness is not a precursor to current fluidity of movement of scholars and students through out the world due to the inherently different nature of nations and the more fluid boundaries of Nation-States in medieval Europe. It is arguable that the current geo-political situation in Europe in 2008 reflects a far more open Europe than at any time in the past few centuries. European Union laws protecting the free movement of goods and labour along with initiatives such as the *Schengen Agreement* practically and symbolically break down many borders between member states. While the European Union admittedly does not encompass all of Europe, European Union laws and practices cannot be ignored. It is also interesting to note that Scott is writing in 1998, before the signing of the Bologna Declaration.

There is also a strong argument to support the inherent grounding of universities within the national context. Most modern universities have been established and funded by States in order to foster agricultural and industrial advancements in order to meet the needs of developing economies and societies throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Scott refers to the “millions of tax dollars or pounds are poured into higher education because politicians believe that universities fulfil certain vital national purposes,” through agricultural, medical, engineering, military or other forms of advancement. “Universities, to the extent that they are funded to serve these national purposes, cannot be described as international institutions” (Scott, 1998, pp 110-111).

When the extent to which universities remain rooted in their own national contexts and policy frameworks is considered, it becomes obvious that the extent to which a university or other higher education institution is able to, or is forced to, engage in international and global activities is very much contingent upon their location and domestic circumstances. The extent to which a higher education system might engage with international actors is dependent upon factors such as the existence of quality local institutions, the capacity of information technology systems to support online delivery from out-of-country providers, and the socio-economic conditions that prevail at the given time (Douglass, 2005, p 448). The extent to which any two countries engage actively in international or global higher education trade may well be contingent upon the relative quality of the local institutions, the capacity of those institutions to export education to other countries, the information technology infrastructure that exists in the country, the attractiveness to foreign institutions to establish facilities in the any given country, legislative restrictions, social and religious environments, the relative cost of higher education, the language of instruction and political stability (Enders, 2004, p 365). Each country (and in many countries, individual regions or institutions) operates under different sets of circumstances which necessarily influence the extent to which that country/region/institutions engages with other countries. The complexities of international relations between different systems can raise its own problems when the flow of knowledge becomes distorted in favour of some countries over others. Domination of globalised higher education by a few countries (such as the USA, UK, Germany, France and Australia at present, and potentially China in the near future) can of course be problematic for those countries that become reliant upon imported higher education services. The OECD area hosts 85 per cent of the world’s foreign students in the mid-1990s, and 57 per cent of these foreign students are from outside the OECD area

(Vincent-Lancrin, 2004, p 20). Altbach notes that 'It is important to ensure that globalization does not turn into the neo-colonialism of the 21st century' (Altbach, 2004).

Having recognised that higher education system and institutions exist in different states of readiness to engage in globalised higher education, the next question is whether those higher education systems and institutions with the ability to engage in globalised higher education should seek to orient themselves as wider (more international), deeper (more local) or both (Scott, 1998, p 121). The answer to this question depends largely upon the role of the institution and its place with its higher education system. Is the institution part of an elite within the higher education system, capable of establishing links internationally, or should it focus on domestic issues such as access and equality? Scott's key point is that while sometimes there is a clash between the global and mass roles of universities, in other respects there is an alignment and synergy between home demands of mass higher education and global imperatives (Scott, 1998, pp 121-122). On the one hand trade liberalisation, commodification and global economic competition can create new opportunities for higher education systems that find themselves under pressure through decreased and/or inadequate public funding, but on the other hand, engaging in globalised higher education can appear to many as somewhat alien to the values of higher education (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007, p 11). Scott notes that:

"It would be a mistake to interpret the pressure to recruit more international students in some countries... as a reinforcement of internationalism. Rather it is an attempt to make good the funding gaps created by the unwillingness of the First World government to maintain public expenditure levels in the face of perceived resistance from consumerist voters..." (Scott, 1998, p 125).

The relationship between massified higher education systems, internationalisation and globalisation is therefore complex. Mass higher education has led to the situation in many higher education systems in which resources become stretched and public funding increasingly scarce. This has in turn seen institutions forced to turn small scale cooperative international engagement into larger scale commercial globalisation. There is a risk that global higher education could be dominated by those countries with the resources and conditions that allow them to capitalise on the popularity of globalisation to prop up their own under funded domestic systems. "At any event it should make us suspicious that the most powerful actors, and the most likely winners, praise internationalisation of higher

education almost unconditionally, and push aside the anxieties of the less powerful actors” (Teichler, 1999, p 9).

2.3.2 Knowledge economies and the flow of ideas

While internationalisation and globalisation are able to coexist, the increased globalisation of higher education over the last 20 years has seen a sharp increase in the speed and quantity in which ideas travel around the world. The shift in developed (and developing) economies away from material production and manual labour towards “knowledge economies” has created an environment where “the ability to compete successfully in the world context has come to be seen to rely on the production of higher value-added products and services, which are in turn dependent on knowledge, especially scientific and technological knowledge, and on continual innovation” (Naidoo, 2003, p 249). Knowledge economies render the flow of goods and people less important than the flow of ideas. Globalisation, internationalisation and change theory all offer perspectives on the manner in which information travels throughout the world and the role different higher education sectors and institution types play in this process.

The globalisation of higher education has had an ambiguous effect on industry, science and technology and vice versa. Scott argues that globalisation has led to a concentration of capacity for scientific research and innovation in a few economies, and by logical extension, a few university systems. These universities require monopolised, sophisticated and expensive infrastructure (such as nuclear accelerators and complex laboratories) in order to maintain their position at the pinnacle of scientific research (Scott, 1998, p 120). There is a flipside to this situation however. The results and output of the “big” science produced at these elite universities can be reproduced virtually anywhere. This means that a less elite higher education institution that does not possess sufficient infrastructure to compete in the higher echelons of innovative research may nevertheless possess sufficient resources to engage in the secondary research activity that needs to be carried out in the aftermath of bigger scientific breakthroughs. This same effect can be observed within some individual higher education systems, where universities continue to carry on the major research and non-university institutions, which are influenced by this research culture, carry on the routine work.

This example demonstrates that while globalisation may lead to a situation where certain key scientific resources are concentrated in the hands of relatively few institutions, the same process also creates a situation where there is a trickle down of labour to other types of institutions. This is a global version of the hierarchies among universities described by Clark in 1983; the vertical division of labour between different types of institutions operating with different types of resources (Clark, 1983, pp 36-43). The importance of the travel of ideas in discussing globalisation is that to some extent globalisation can be characterised as the source of, and the partial solution to, the inequalities that exist between and within the higher education systems of different countries. While this trickle-down of knowledge does not dispel the need to take heed of Altbach's warning that globalisation could become the neo-colonialism of the 21st century, in the context of higher education it is some comfort to recognise that the flow of ideas is not necessarily a one-way proposition. It is also important to note that outside of the hard sciences many disciplines are less infrastructure-reliant, and that in these fields the direction and flow of ideas is dependent upon individuals more than objects and infrastructure. While the gap in income levels does ensure a significant flow of students and researchers will continue from developing to developed countries, this does not show the entire picture regarding the flow of people and subsequently ideas. Kapur and McHale state that the bulk of migration will take place within developing countries themselves (particular rural-city movements in China and India), with the second largest migration flows occurring between developing countries (Kapur and McHale, 2005, p 1). Movements of these types, when coupled with the trickle down effect in hard sciences described above, indicates that globalisation can, and should continue to, result in a circular flow of people and movement throughout the world rather than simply reinforce the so-called brain drain of ideas (and people) from the developing world to the developed world.

2.3.3 Globalisation, internationalisation and the Bologna Process

How does the Bologna Process fit into this context of massified domestic higher education facing international and global pressures? Is the Bologna Process an agent of change or a European reaction against globalisation which emphasises a European identity? Cerych answers this question by describing the Bologna Process as “a more or less traditional inter-governmental process, relatively flexible, respectful of university autonomy and

automatically supportive of diversity of higher education” (Cerych, 2002, p 123). Cerych makes this statement without drawing the distinction between internationalisation and globalisation outlined at the start of this chapter however, as he goes on to state that the creation of a European Higher Education Area is a part of a more general process of globalisation and that universities can be seen in some senses as advance agents of globalisation. Enders partly answers the question through supplementing the distinction between internationalisation and globalisation with a third concept: “regionalisation” (Enders, 2004, p 368). Enders uses “Europeanisation” as an example of regionalisation, which encompasses aspects of both internationalisation and globalisation. From an internationalisation perspective, regionalisation sees benign mutual co-operation and interactions between governments, sectors and institutions at a variety of levels. From a globalisation perspective, “regionalisation” can be seen as a localised version of the globalisation process and a defensive reaction to competitive trade pressures from other parts of the world (Enders, 2004, p 368). If regionalisation is in fact the best description of the changes taking places under the auspice of the Bologna Process, then further consideration is required to determine which of Enders two versions of regionalisation is most fitting.

To determine how the Bologna Process fits into this context, it is necessary to determine whether it is in fact a new initiative, or whether the Bologna Process is a convenient label for existing measures and ideas. The question can be answered in both the affirmative and negative (Cerych, 2002, p 122). To some extent, the Bologna Process is the culmination of a long tradition of academic fluidity that stretches back to medieval times. The spread of the Humboldtian throughout the world is further evidence of the fluidity of higher education systems of previous centuries. More recently, programmes such as Erasmus and Socrates have increased student and staff mobility (Cerych, 2002, p 122). On the other hand, student and staff mobility within elite higher education systems represents a far different proposition than mobility within the mass higher education systems that dominate much of Europe today. There has been a quantitative and qualitative expansion in what higher education means since the days when scholars travelled from university to university on a sporadic and informal basis. The debate as to whether the Bologna Process is something new is also relevant to “change theory”, which considers why ideas travel through networks at certain points in time and space. If the Bologna Process really isn’t a particularly new idea but rather the re-branding of existing ideas, then why is it now that Australia is taking notice? Is

the content of the Bologna Process less important to Australia than the “master-idea” of the Bologna Process itself? These are questions which are considered throughout the thesis.

2.4 Operationalisation of perspectives

The operationalisation of these three perspectives is the key to understanding how they have variously been considered in the Australian context. In order to determine the extent to which the Australian higher education sector is responding to the Bologna Process, it is necessary to first determine how broad forces such as globalisation, internationalisation and change theory can be practically distinguished from one another when examining specific policy and operational changes. The operationalisation of these perspectives provides a framework through which assertions can be made about the probable force (or perhaps dominant force) behind a particular operational or policy suggestion. It is however unrealistic to believe that particular operational and policy changes are always going to be clear-cut or simple to describe. The ten actions that constitute the Bologna Process (which are described in more detail in Chapter 3) constitute a mixture of ideologies and demonstrate elements of internationalisation, globalisation and change theory in their composition. Each theoretical model is an example of the focus and structure that a higher education system might have were it to be purely the product of each specific perspective. These models then serve as three frameworks through which the Bologna Process ideas can be compared to Australian higher education reforms in the following chapters.

In order to create an analytical framework through which to view the effects of the Bologna Process on the Australian higher education system it is first necessary to create models of each perspective. It is not proposed that any such model of a higher education system does or could practically exist – these are merely constructs designed to assist in the analysis of each perspective and to distil certain ideas. Each of these models presented below appears slightly dystopian due to fact that each of perspectives analysed relies upon the existence of mitigating factors to tempers their more extreme fringes. They do however serve a useful purpose in distilling the essence of the perspective behind higher education reforms by allowing an insight into the type of influence that has led to particular actions.

What therefore might a modern higher education system based as closely as practicable to the perspective of globalisation look like? A globalised higher education system, and the

institutions that operated within the system, would have an overwhelming outward orientation with little social, financial and perhaps even physical connection to any given State. Pure globalised higher education would make the concept of a State-based higher education “system” redundant, given that each institution within the non-system would instead be integrated into global networks, alliances and connections. This non-system would see the “inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before” to enable higher education institutions to have global connectedness and global influence (Friedman, 1999, in Douglass, 2005, p 447). Globalised higher education would tend towards elite rather than mass education, but with the elite comprised of financial elite who could pay high tuition fees, rather than the social or intellectual elite of previous times. Globalised higher education institutions would seek international standing, reputation and profit through the creation of knowledge and the sale of that knowledge to industry. Globalised institutions would be heavily deregulated (and in the purest form, entirely unregulated), operate without government influence (and by extension, without public funding) and would be run entirely as businesses. Student and staff mobility would be encouraged in so much as it furthered the other aims of the institution. Institutions would be fiercely competitive in attempting to attract the staff and students from throughout the world who best further their objectives, and would be similarly competitive in seeking to attract corporate sponsorships and industry linkages.

By contrast a higher education system based purely on the perspective of internationalisation would look quite different. In this model the concept of the higher education “system” would remain in place. Internationalised systems rely on the existence and influence of States to give them identity, and institutions would conduct relationships with other institutions from within this context and identity. Internationalised higher education systems may engage extensively with foreign systems through the formal bilateral or multilateral arrangements that universities and governments create. The system would emphasise collaboration over competition and international engagement would be a secondary focus of the system. Due to the links between the State and institutions, the system would remain regulated to some degree, which would allow for the contribution of public funds to institutions. Funding sources and management styles are not restricted by an internationalised system, as it has no bearing upon the international engagement of higher education institutions in this model. International links and engagement would be encouraged, and student and staff mobility would be undertaken to further the creation and

dissemination of knowledge, rather than for reasons of profit. As van der Wende noted, “the proportion of students and staff who actively participate in international activities is usually quite limited” (van der Wende, 2007, p 2), meaning that even in an internationalised higher education system international activities may remain at the fringe of many institutions. Such engagements would therefore be encouraged but not forced upon institutions in an internationalised system, as State support structures would continue to exist. Serving the needs of the geographically local population would remain the focus of the higher education system, and different types of institutions could serve different purposes.

Finally, a change theory model of a higher education system would look quite different again to the previous two models. It is a different type of model, much more ad hoc in style and lacking the ideological certainty of the globalisation and internationalisation models. It serves as a middle way between the extremes of globalisation and internationalisation. The change theory model is largely reactive. It relies upon networks of individuals and institutions intermingling to transmit ideas through time and space. In this respect it resembles the internationalisation model. Change theory differs however in that it does not rely upon formal arrangements and collaboration to function. Neither institutions nor the State are required to create links in order for change theory to operate. The networks through which ideas travel can be loosely coupled, with information flows irregular. Conversely in this respect change theory is closer to the more random interaction that characterises the globalised higher education model. Change theory picks elements from both of these models and from other sources. While these informal networks transmit ideas, change theory relies upon specific ideas being noticed by an individual or group that has the influence to promote it, or the ability to influence others to act as a champion for the idea. In change theory the inherent value of an idea is not particularly important, meaning that a change theory-based higher education system could display attributes of any other type of system provided that the idea was noticed and implemented. Change theory states that it is likely however that those ideas which repeatedly travel through time and space are those which are more likely to be noticed, meaning that consistently fashionable and popular ideas are more likely to be implemented than those that are not. Practically, under the change theory model those elements which had proven successful in other time and places are likely to become incorporated in the model higher education system regardless of ideology or source.

2.5 Ideological models and the Bologna Process objectives

Having created three models based on the perspectives analysed earlier in this chapter, the next issue for examination is how these perspectives relate to the Bologna Process. Do the specific actions of the Bologna Process correspond with one particular ideology, or are they the composite of two or more perspectives? The answers to this question help determine the extent to which the Australian higher education system is responding to the Bologna Process and the extent to which reforms are the product of other forces perspectives. This section does not examine the actual Australian responses to the Bologna Process – this occurs in Chapter 4.

2.5.1 Objectives that are compatible with an internationalisation perspective

The majority of the Bologna Process objectives can be characterised as broadly associated with an internationalisation perspective. This is understandable given that the Bologna Process is the product of multilateral government engagement that began with four countries in the Sorbonne Declaration of 1998 and has since spread across most of Europe. The circumstances of the creation of the Bologna Process lend themselves to collaborative objectives rather than competition – governments were not setting the rules of competition, but rather seeking to bring certain divergent aspects of European higher education closer together. Although the European Commission is now a notable actor in the process, the fact that the Bologna Process was a multi-lateral idea rather than a centrally imposed concept sets the tone for the type of objectives within the process. Specifically, six of the ten objectives are readily associated with an internationalisation perspective:

- The adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees (Objective 1);
- The adoption of a system essentially based on three main cycles (Objective 2);
- The establishment of a system of credits (Objective 3);
- The promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance (Objective 5);
- The promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education (Objective 6);
- and
- The inclusion of higher education institutions and students (Objective 8).

These six objectives all call for the establishment or promotion of collaborative ideas to assist in pan European student and staff mobility. Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 5 are in many senses the essence of the Bologna Process, and all four contain initiatives which seek to make comparability and compatibility of higher education throughout Europe easier. Objectives 6 and 8 are more esoteric, but nonetheless promote inclusiveness and cross-border collaboration. These six objectives can be contrasted with the content of the GATS negotiations, for example, which set rules for trade and the reduction of trade barriers among participant countries. Rather than imposing negative obligations these six objectives focus on the promotion of certain mutually beneficial ideas to assist in the creation of the EHEA.

2.5.2 Objectives that are compatible with a globalisation perspective

By contrast, and for the reasons mentioned above, very few of the Bologna Process objectives can be characterised as compatible with a globalisation perspective. Two objectives however do contain elements that can be considered to fall within the realm of this perspective. These are:

- The promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement (Objective 4); and
- Doctoral studies and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area (Objective 10).

Objective 4 has relatively little to do with higher education systems per se. Instead, the objective is concerned with removing political barriers to movement for students and staff of higher education within Europe. In tackling this issue the objective is moving beyond multi-lateral higher education agreements and into the politics of regionalisation. Objective 4 is far more similar in tone and content to the GATS agreement and purports to influence government interaction beyond the sphere of higher education. As noted in the next chapter, this objective is not associated with many clear actions, but it is notable for its difference in style and content to other objectives.

Objective 10 is also somewhat different to the internationalisation perspective objectives. It seeks to marry elements of the EHEA (namely doctoral studies) with the European Research Area (ERA), which is a creation of the European Union (EU). This too has impact beyond

the multilateral agreement level at which many other Bologna Process objectives operate. Approximately 1/3 of the countries in the EHEA are not EU members, which raises issues concerning the extent to which it is both practicable and desirable for the EHEA to influence the ERA and vice versa. The inclusion of a reference to an EU organisation such as the ERA in the Bologna Process objectives could be seen as the influence of regionalisation and therefore globalisation upon the Bologna Process.

2.5.3 Objectives that are compatible with change theory

The final two objectives of the Bologna Process fall into the category of objectives that are compatible with change theory by default, and because both possess elements that set them apart from the other objectives. These two objectives are:

- A focus on lifelong learning (Objective 7); and
- The promotion of the attractiveness of the EHEA (Objective 9).

Objective 7 fits into this category because it essentially an old idea that has been rejuvenated under the banner of the Bologna Process. Lifelong learning is an idea that has dropped in and out of fashionability throughout the world over the past decades. It's inclusion in the Bologna Process objectives is an example of opportunism, in so much as it fails to fit with the other objectives and can be seen as being added under the “master-idea” of the Bologna Process in order to give its promotion more gravitas. The fact that this objective was not one of the original six objectives may also be telling with regard to its relative lack of importance and fit within thin the Bologna Process.

Objective 9 fits into this category because of the confused language employed by Ministers regarding actions associated with this objective. This objective sums up one of the overall aims of the EHEA, and the higher education objectives of the Lisbon Strategy, by embodying the desire that Europe becomes “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world” (Lisbon Council, 2000). As noted in Chapter 3, the language used with regard to this objective changes significantly over time. The Lisbon Strategy language fits very much into the competitive globalisation perspective, encouraging European higher education institutions to compete with those from abroad (and possibly with each other). By the time of the Bergen Ministerial summit in 2005 the language used surrounding this objective was much more conciliatory and emphasised collaboration.

Partly this can be explained by the different motivations of the Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna Process, however this objective clearly contains both elements of globalisation and internationalisation perspective.

2.6 Implementation of ideas

Having considered how ideas travel through time and space, the next issue to consider is why certain ideas are implemented while others are rejected. While change theory attempts to provide its own explanation based on factors such as the extent which an idea is recurring, and the suitability of environmental factors to allow for the implementation of an idea, it does not provide a framework through which a set of factors that influence the implementation of ideas can be formed. Similarly, ideas present in internationalisation and globalisation require a framework through which their implementation or rejection in a given context can be considered. Advocates of the institutional approach to the flow of ideas, such as John Meyer, state that the growing diffusion of ideas can be attributed to the globalisation of institutional conditions. Others, such as Kjell Røvik, believe that such an emphasis on rationality of action within organisations fails to acknowledge the extrinsic influences upon the implementation of ideas (Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall, 2002). Røvik proposes seven characteristics that determine the extent to which ideas may be successfully adopted (Røvik 1998, in Stensaker, 2007). These seven characteristics state that to be implemented an idea must be socially authorised; theorised; productivised; progressive; harmonised; dramatised; and individualised.

In addition I propose that an eighth criterion relevant to the successful implementation of ideas be added to Røvik's seven criteria. The *expediency* of an idea is a relevant factor, particularly when examining meta-ideas that span geographic borders and involve multiple layers of governance. While *expediency* is linked to the notions of *social authorisation* and *harmonisation* (discussed below), this eighth criterion is necessary to acknowledge the sometimes contrasting influences that surround the implementation or rejection of an idea.

The following sections consider the implementation of the Bologna Process against my expanded version of Røvik's implementation framework to determine how and why the ideas of the Bologna Process are either implemented or rejected in certain contexts. Although the Bologna Process is an idea that contains elements drawn from change theory,

internationalisation and globalisation, it is most practical to analyse how it has been implemented if the Bologna Process is treated as one coherent idea. Chapter 4 considers the response of the Australian higher education sector to the Bologna Process using this same implementation framework.

2.6.1 Socially authorised

Socially authorised ideas are those that are supported and backed by powerful figures within the relevant organisation or sector (Stensaker, 2007, p 105). In the context of higher education, this would include figures such as university Deans, senior government bureaucrats, industry leaders and leading academics. By supporting particular ideas these leaders and influential individuals give a social momentum to an idea which can lend it legitimacy amongst others within the sector. The Bologna Process is a prime example of a socially authorised idea. Although not a top-down directive from the European Union (and indeed the EHEA boundaries extend well beyond the confines of current EU membership), the Bologna Process gained legitimacy and *social authorisation* from the Ministers responsible for higher education who voluntarily signed the Bologna Declaration and from bodies such as the European University Association which have been supportive of the process since its inception (Bologna Declaration, 1999; European University Association, 2008). The support for the Bologna Process by these individuals and prominent organisations gave the initiative a social authorisation beyond what was probably expected by those who initiated the process. As a result, entire governments and in turn universities have fallen into line and accepted the social authorisation of the Bologna Process.

2.6.2 Theorised

Theorised ideas are those which are characterised as a universal solution to a large-scale problem (Stensaker, 2007, p 105). This means that the idea must be bigger than and independent of the particular problem to which it is being applied. It should be a universal idea that can be applied in different contexts irrespective of the type of institution it is being applied to, the size of the institution and other similar factors. It must be able to be abstracted from practice (Stensaker, 2007, p 105). As noted previously, the Bologna Process is not a single idea with a coherent philosophy, but instead is comprised of actions with sources in perspectives as diverse as globalisation, internationalisation and change theory.

To this extent, it is therefore difficult for the Bologna Process to be theorised in the sense that it cannot easily be treated as an abstract concept. Its collection of objectives and actions are not transferable to non-higher education contexts, and rely upon the existence of disparate yet broadly comparable national systems which it can seek to harmonise to derive any purpose. The Bologna Process can however be removed from its original European context as has been seen through discussions about alignment or imitation of the idea in Africa (WENR, 2006), Latin America (Tuning Latin America, 2008) and Australia. It has yet to be proven whether the harmonisation ideas present in the process are readily transferable outside of a European context, however the prevalence of the discussion of the Bologna Process beyond Europe indicates that the idea has the potential to be “universal” and theorised to some extent.

2.6.3 Productivised

An idea is productivised if it can be objectified, commoditised and purchased in a market (Stensaker, 2007, p 105). It is difficult for ideas to be implemented if they remain amorphous and unattached to specific actions. The central idea of the Bologna Process, namely the harmonisation of specific aspects of European higher education systems, has been productivised through its specific objects and actions. The 3+2+3 degree structure, the Diploma Supplement and the creation of new quality assurance structures are all example of the productivisation of an idea in that they create a tangible commodity from an idea. The fact that the Bologna Process does not mandate the creation of these products is slightly problematic. The fact that countries such as Greece, Switzerland and Spain can all ignore aspects of the Bologna Process while maintain theoretical support for the initiatives (Sedgwick, 2003) raises some doubt as to the extent to which the Bologna Process can be universally productivised. These products can also been taken and used in different contexts, such as the adoption of the Bologna Process degree structures in non-European universities (see Chapter 5) or the use of a Diploma Supplement within other regions. Nonetheless, the Bologna Process is for the most part able to be turned into a series of tangible actions and saleable products, meaning that it is at least partially able to be productivised.

2.6.4 Progressive

Røvik's fourth measure of the success of the implementation of an idea is that it must be progressive and capable of being distinguished as better than other ideas (Stensaker, 2007, p 105). This means that in order to be implemented, the idea in question must be better (or at least perceived as better) than existing practice or other alternative ideas that may also be considered for implementation. Is the Bologna Process better than what it is replacing? The answer to this question depends upon the context. The Bologna Process is a huge reform that has impacted upon the higher education sector in different ways, in different countries. The extent to which it can be characterised as progressive to some extent depends upon the state of the higher education in each country which is implementing the Bologna Process. For countries such as the United Kingdom with internationally competitive and prestigious universities, the Bologna Process may be deemed less progressive than those in which the higher education system was failing badly and in need of reform (Shepherd, 2007). In these countries the degree of progress represented by the Bologna Process varies from minimal (and possibly even negative progress in the case of the most advanced higher education systems) to enormously in the cases of many former Eastern Bloc countries (Sedgwick, 2003). When viewed from a pan-European perspective however, different criteria must be applied to determine whether an idea is progressive or not. In terms of achieving the objectives of increase student mobility and the harmonisation of higher education systems within Europe, there can be little doubt that the Bologna Process is a progressive idea. It remains subjective however as to whether this progress outweighs the diversity and autonomy that is lost from national systems as a result of implementation. If these national variances are put aside and the perspective of the pan-European harmonisation of higher education is considered, then the idea of the Bologna Process can be characterised as progressive in that it offers an improvement over existing models of interaction and comparability between national higher education systems.

2.6.5 Harmonised

An idea is harmonised if it does not cause disapproval from certain stakeholders or discriminate against certain groups (Stensaker, 2007, p 105). Røvik's perspective is that an idea is less likely to be implemented if it upsets certain dynamics between groups or individuals. It is unrealistic to assume that all stakeholders are likely to approve of an idea,

and in many ways the idea of harmonisation should be linked to that of social authorisation so that it is seen as stating that successful implementation is based upon both approval/authorisation from key stakeholders combined with the avoidance of disapproval from other key stakeholders. The idea of harmonisation does not sit comfortably with the implementation of the Bologna Process. There are numerous voices of dissent within the European higher education sector, however on balance the disapproval from these voices have been outweighed by the approval of different stakeholders. The source of the dissent determines whether or not the idea is harmonised, with dissent from lower in the hierarchy less likely to impact upon harmonisation than dissent from the top tiers of the hierarchy. For example, it has become evident that there is a gap between “top-down” policy at a governmental level and “bottom-up” reception and implementation at the departmental, administrative and students levels (Keeling, 2004, p 2), however so long as the power balance at the top tier of the sector (Ministers, university presidents, prestigious academics) remains unchallenged then the idea is likely to be harmonised. The balance between social authorisation and harmonisation is therefore a delicate one that requires the quantity and authority of disapproving voices to be balanced against those stakeholders in favour of implementing and idea. For the Bologna Process, this has meant balancing the approving voices of political leaders and university associations such as the EUA against those dissenting voices of academics, student groups and industry associations who have raised concerns regarding the impact of the reforms on higher education.

2.6.6 Dramatised

An idea is dramatised when it is supported by a narrative concerning how successful or unsuccessful an association or organisation is, based upon whether it did or did not implement a certain idea (Stensaker, 2007). Positive or negative dramatisation is designed to encourage or warn individuals that success requires the implementation of a particular idea. Implementation of the Bologna Process has relied upon both positive and negative dramatisation to give it sufficient weight. The opening stanza of the Bologna Declaration refers to “The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount” (Bologna Declaration, 1999), while on the other hand strong voices have warned

that failure to reform the sector will have serious negative consequences. In 2004, Noel Dempsey, the President of the Council of Ministers for Education said:

“We need to reach a stage where, in Europe, we can compete with the United States in terms of recognition, understanding and transparency of qualifications. We are a long way behind” (McKenna, 2004, p 5).

This double barrelled approach, emphasising both the benefits of implementing and the risks of not implementing the Bologna Process is a strong example of the effect of dramatisation of an idea, and has proved quite successful in stimulating action to implement the Bologna Process across Europe.

2.6.7 Individualised

Individualisation of an idea involves the idea being edited in a manner that allows individual organisations, stakeholders or individuals to see the idea as an opportunity (Stensaker, 2007, p 105). While an idea may include attributes which individuals perceive to have a broad social or sectoral benefit, the localisation or individualisation of an idea can make its implementation much more palatable. In the context of the Bologna Process, individualisation involves convincing higher education institutions, academics and students that they can personally benefit from the broader reform process. Many governments have recognised the benefits of engaging institutions, staff and students in the implementation process through “bottom-up” initiatives (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2007; Shepherd, 2007).

2.6.8 Expedient

The expediency of an idea is relevant to its success or failure in being implemented. While Røvik’s perspective of the seven aspects of implementation covers the factors relevant to many situations, it omits the situation whereby an idea may be supported or rejected for reasons relevant to the “bigger picture” which exist outside of the merits of the idea itself. Expediency, as an additional criterion, can therefore be characterised as an element that draws upon both social authorisation and harmonisation. These two criteria emphasise the power relationships that influence the implementation of an idea. The former states the need for support from strong leaders and influential stakeholders, while the other acknowledges

that successful implementation is most likely to occur if an idea maintains existing power structures. Expediency recognises that implementation decisions are not always logical or in the best interests of those responsible for implementation. Sometimes external needs, political agreements, parallel agendas and other issues influence whether an idea is implemented or not. A country with no specific interest in pursuing one set of reforms may do so on the basis of supporting another country. Alternatively, one organisation might implement an idea in support of another in the expectation of reciprocity when a new idea comes up for discussion. In this sense it can be seen the *expediency* is a legitimate influence on the implementation of ideas, particularly in large organisations or when one idea is part of a complex matrix of decisions.

In the context of the Bologna Process, expediency can be seen behind the decision of many countries and institutions to implement the process. This means that despite misgivings regarding the suitability of the Bologna Process for their own country or institution, many individuals, organisations and countries are nevertheless prepared to implement the idea. As the idea of the Bologna Process gained momentum, it became impractical for countries such as Russia to continue outside the margins of the process for fear of a form of isolation within the European higher education sector, despite the fact that implementation may not be desirable from a political or pedagogical point of view (Zapesotskii, 2006). The United Kingdom is another country that “cannot afford not to take part” in the Bologna Process, while at the same time holding major reservations about adapting its own higher education system (Shepherd, 2007). While implementation remains ongoing it is not yet possible to determine the influence that implementation based upon expediency may have on the quality of the implementation. It is possible that some countries or institutions not fully committed to the Bologna Process may implement changes more slowly or less completely than other more enthusiastic parties. The interaction between expediency, social authorisation and harmonisation in this context is also interesting. These three factors form a power triangle within the broader context of Røvik’s implementation framework, and the extent to which these three characteristics interact will influence the extent and quality of the implementation of an idea.

2.7 Conclusion

The theory behind the movement of ideas is complex. There are myriad reasons why certain ideas are successful, and become institutionalised not only in their locality of origin, but throughout the world. Different theoretical perspectives provide different explanations for this movement through time and space. Change theory provides one perspective for explaining how and why ideas travel. It emphasises the role of luck, persistence and pragmatism in the travel of ideas, acknowledging the “muddling through” theory espoused by Lindblom. That the essentially European idea of the Bologna Process has travelled to Australia in the early 21st century could be because it is a convenient idea, because it promotes cooperation, because it facilitates competition or for some other reason altogether. What is clear is that the idea has travelled through enough local networks that by 2006 it was the subject of a Commonwealth government discussion paper which is examined in Chapter 4.

Globalisation and internationalisation are two overlapping and often confused forces that also transfer ideas. Although both involve international engagement, these two phenomena arguably move ideas in different ways: the former through competition, trade and a focus on measurable economic indicators and the latter through cooperation, collaboration and intangible international networks. Neither globalisation nor internationalisation exist independently of the other, leaving a situation today where global competition may unexpectedly (and inadvertently) result in acts of collaboration, and in which cooperation lays the groundwork for future competition. In the case of Australia and many emerging Asian higher education sectors, the transfer from colonial internationalised collaboration to fierce global competition over the best students and staff can be observed through the changing nature of these sectors, and the shift in emphasis in their approaches to global engagement.

Against this backdrop of theoretical approaches remains the question of why and how the idea of the Bologna Process has travelled to Australia. What is the rationale for this travel, if in fact an idea needs a rationale to travel at all? All three perspectives discussed in this chapter provide some insight into this question. It is unlikely however that any one perspective, or force, can describe why this idea has generated such interest in Australia. Change theory suggests that the travel of ideas is somewhat random. If this is the case, then

the Bologna Process idea can travel to Australia via a few persuasive networks and individuals, who noticed the idea and sort to utilise it as a “master-idea” in Australia. From an internationalisation perspective, the idea of Australia seeking to engage in the same harmonisation mechanisms as Europe to assist in student and staff mobility, quality assurance and recognition is both probable and commendable. From a globalisation standpoint the interest in the Bologna Process could be deemed to be a pragmatic, defensive manoeuvre to guard against European inroads into the lucrative international student market that currently subsidises Australia’s higher education sector. The reality is probably a combination of these factors and influences, and probably are extrinsic motivations as well.

The creation of idealised models of each of the three perspectives is a means by which a framework can be used to help determine which of these perspectives has exerted influence over the Bologna Process. While the models are flawed and necessarily too simplistic to provide a detailed method of analysis, they do demonstrate the key elements and emphasis that a higher education system would possess if it was a pure representation of one of the three perspectives. A fully globalised higher education system would not be a “system” at all, but an outward oriented, deregulated market of competing, profit-led institutions. The purely internationalised system would remain rooted to the State and conduct its international engagements within the context of its local role and identity, with an emphasis on collaboration through knowledge creation and dissemination. The pure change theory model represents a “third way”, or middle ground between the extremes of internationalisation and globalisation, and is more reactive, taking popular, recurring ideas from a variety of sources and utilising strong leadership to implement ideas.

As demonstrated the Bologna Process appears to owe more to the forces of internationalisation than either globalisation or change theory. Over half of the Bologna Process objectives can be characterised as products of an internationalisation perspective, as they emphasise the collaborative and relatively non-competitive nature of the Bologna Process reforms. Some of the other objectives veer towards a globalisation perspective, whilst others seem to fit poorly within the Bologna Process framework and appear to be utilising the existence of the Bologna Process as a “master idea” to which other ideas can be attached. This framework is utilised in later chapters to analyse the Australian response to the Bologna Process. While it is unrealistic to expect purity of one idea driving the reform process, the framework does at least provide one means by which change can be measured.

Once an idea has reached a point in time and space, attention must then be focussed on why certain ideas are implemented while others are rejected. Using an expanded version of Røvik's implementation framework it can be seen that multiple factors influence whether an idea will be successfully implemented. In the context of the Bologna Process, social authorisation, harmonisation and expediency all play a significant role in ensuring widespread implementation. Similarly, the fact that the idea can be theorised, productivised, individualised and characterised as progressive also assists in widespread implementation. Finally, the dramatic narratives, both positive and negative, that have been built up around the Bologna Process assist in providing momentum for its implementation. While all eight of these characteristics need not be present in an idea for it to be implemented, they can all be found to greater or lesser degrees in either the meta-idea of the Bologna Process or within the sub-ideas and actions that it contains.

3. The Bologna Process

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide a brief background of the history, content and implementation of the Bologna Process. It does not seek to be a comprehensive analysis of the detail of the ten actions that have arisen from the process, nor does it seek to make more than a passing reference to the current state of implementation (see reports such as the European University Association's *Trends V*, for an analysis of the current state of Bologna Process implementation). This chapter serves as an introduction and seeks to provide enough information to the uninformed reader to allow for some comparisons to be drawn between current reforms in the Australian higher education system and the reforms undertaken as part of the Bologna Process. While there are many criticisms of the Bologna Process, this chapter is primarily concerned with the policy documentation behind the idea (and ideal) of the Bologna Process, rather than with the reality of implementation, the results of which will not become fully clear for many years to come. Those criticisms which relate to the nature of the Bologna Process however, such as the perceived lack of democratic control over the Bologna Process (van der Wende, 2003, p 16) are noted and considered in this chapter.

The Bologna Process is a commitment by 46 countries to try to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010. The process started out as a pledge by participating countries who signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999 to instigate certain reforms to make Europe mobility between European higher education systems easier and to make higher education in Europe more attractive to non-Europeans. The Bologna Process aims at creating convergence rather than uniformity amongst European higher education systems and, at least theoretically, the principles of autonomy and diversity are respected. The Bologna Process is not based on an intergovernmental treaty, but rather is formed by the adoption of several documents by the Ministers responsible for higher education in the participating countries (Council of Europe, 2008). It is therefore up to the government and higher education community of each participating countries to endorse or reject the principles of the Bologna Process, although the effect of international pressure for countries to do so should not be underestimated (Council of Europe, 2008).

3.2 Objectives of the Bologna Process

The overall objective of the Bologna Process is to create the EHEA by 2010 and to promote the European system of higher education throughout the world (Europe Unit, 2008). This prime objective has been broken down into sub-objectives to allow for actions to be developed and policies implemented. The original Bologna Declaration signed in 1999 contained six objectives (Bologna Declaration, 1999, pp 3-4). These have since been supplemented at post-Bologna Ministerial summits with an additional four objectives. The objectives come in two main types: those requiring the adoption or establishment of a new protocol or system, and those seeking to promote an outcome or overcome a barrier. The former grouping are far more certain in nature and more readily transferable into actions, while the latter group contain aspirational objectives which are inherently harder to define and therefore implement. The objectives are examined individually below.

3.2.1 Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

This objective calls for the implementation of the Diploma Supplement. The Diploma Supplement is a document issued to a student upon graduation in addition to the diploma awarded by the higher education institution. It describes the content and level of the qualification that the student has been awarded. The Diploma Supplement is a standard format and is designed to allow for comparison of qualifications throughout countries participating in the Bologna Process. This should in turn promote European citizens employability and improve the international competitiveness of European higher education systems (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p 3). At the Ministerial Summit in London in 2007 Ministers noted that although there has been progress in the recognition of diploma supplements, the range of national and institutional approaches to recognition needs to be more coherent (London Communiqué, 2007, p 3).

3.2.2 Adoption of a system essentially based on three main cycles

The Bologna Declaration called for the adoption of uniform higher education systems based on two main cycles of undergraduate and graduate studies. At the second Bologna Ministerial summit in Berlin in 2003 Ministers determined that it was necessary to expand

this objective to encompass a third cycle of Doctoral studies. As a result of the 2005 Bergen Ministerial summit (although not included in the actual text of the Bergen Communiqué or any other official text), credit ranges were ascribed to the first and second degree cycles (Bergen Communiqué, 2005, pp 1-2). No credits were ascribed to the Doctoral cycle. Ministers agreed that the first cycle be 180-240 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) points. This first cycle is often referred to as the Bachelor's degree. The second cycle is usually to be 90-120 ECTS points and is often called a Masters degree.

The Bologna Declaration states that "The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the Master and/or Doctorate degree as in many European countries" (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p 3). The length and ECTS credits ascribed to each cycle remained controversial at and after the Bergen Ministerial Summit. A report presented to the summit, "Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe", recommended that a Master degree programme within the EHEA require the completion of 300 ECTS points, of which at least 60 must be obtained at graduate level (Tauch & Rauhvargers, 2002, p 7). The short (60 credits) Master would allow the completion of a 300 credits degree only if it followed a 240 credit Bachelor in the same or a closely related field (Tauch & Rauhvargers, 2002, p 7).

Controversy arises from the fact that this structure does not account for the traditional English or the emerging Dutch one-year Masters programmes (Witte, 2006, p 138). The additional use of one-year honour's degrees (completed after a three year bachelor) in England and Scotland, combined with occasionally anachronistic labelling of degrees leaves the probability that confusion could still reign with regard to degree lengths and ECTS points (Tauch & Rauhvargers, 2002, pp 8-9). Despite the significant volume of reports and discussion on the nomenclature, length and ECTS points that should be related to the first and second degree cycles, "the framework for the two-cycle degree structure was only loosely defined at European level, leaving national actors ample scope for unique designs" (Witte, 2006, p 144). The Doctoral cycle has been largely exempted from debates regarding ECTS and length as the result of a desire not to over-regulate doctoral programmes (Bergen Communiqué, 2005, p 4). This does not make the doctoral cycle immune from controversy however, as the Bologna Process has been used in some countries, such as Sweden, as the impetus to reduce funding for Doctoral programmes from four to three years. Critics argues

that such changes could weaken educational standards and jeopardise employment prospects for graduate students seeking to obtain postdoctoral positions in North American and other regions (Schubert, 2006, p 373).

3.2.3 Establishment of a system of credits

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, more commonly known as ECTS, is a system aimed at facilitating the recognition of study undertaken by students when studying in a foreign European country. After being established as a pilot scheme in 1989, the ECTS has become important to the Bologna Process and has been identified by the participating countries as a cornerstone of the EHEA (Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2005, p 3). ECTS is based on the principle that one full-time study programme (estimated at 1500-1800) hours is equal to 60 ECTS credits. This equates to one credit for every 25-30 working hours (Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2005, p 4). Under the ECTS system there is however no direct link between contact hours and ECTS credits, in recognition of the fact that different types of contact hours require different amount of preparation, and that certain fields of study require more self directed learning than others (Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2005, p 5). Critics of the ECTS system liken the proposed EHEA-wide utilisation of the system as akin to the introduction of the Euro, ensuring that the "value" of higher education throughout Europe has is measured in the same credit points, making education more readily a commodity that can be traded off in the labour market (Lorenz, 2006, p 129).

3.2.4 Promotion of mobility

The objective to promote mobility of students and staff within Europe is one which is difficult to associate with identifiable actions. In 2001, Ministers declined to associate specific actions with this objective but instead made the following statement in the Prague Communiqué:

“Ministers reaffirmed that the objective of improving the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff as set out in the Bologna Declaration is of the utmost importance. Therefore, they confirmed their commitment to pursue the removal of all obstacles to the free movement of students, teachers, researchers and

administrative staff and emphasized the social dimension of mobility.” (Prague Communiqué, 2001, p 2)

One specific action the Ministers did refer to is the “Mobility Action Plan” agreed to at the European Council meeting in Nice in December 2000. The action plan aims to “define and democratise mobility in Europe”, “promote appropriate forms of funding” and finally “increase mobility and improve the conditions for it” (European Council, 2000, p 29).

In the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers noted “with satisfaction that since their last meeting, mobility figures have increased, thanks also to the substantial support of the European Union programmes” (Berlin Communiqué, 2003, p 4). This indicates that Ministers are pleased with the current student and staff mobility programmes already in place within Europe, such as the Erasmus and Socrates programme. The London Communiqué of 2007 however indicates a shift towards practical, non-higher education related matters that impact significantly upon the mobility of students and staff. The communiqué states:

“Some progress has been made since 1999, but many challenges remain. Among the obstacles to mobility, issues relating to immigration, recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements feature prominently. We recognise the responsibility of individual Governments to facilitate the delivery of visas, residence and work permits, as appropriate. Where these measures are outside our competence as Ministers for Higher Education, we undertake to work within our respective Governments for decisive progress in this area.” (London Communiqué, 2007, p 2)

The clarification of the actual obstacles that the participating countries are seeking to overcome is a positive step in determining the action that might usefully be taken under this objective. As noted by the Ministers in the above extract, many issues effecting mobility in higher education lie beyond the direct influence of Ministers responsible for higher education. These issues nonetheless require attention if the aim of the EHEA is to be fulfilled.

3.2.5 Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance

The objective to promote European co-operation through quality assurance is perhaps one of the key objectives of the EHEA and therefore of the Bologna Process. The “Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies,” to quote the full text, was the subject of significant discussion at the

Bergen Ministerial Summit in 2005 and resulted in two actions being included in the Bergen Communiqué. Firstly, the Ministers agreed to adopt the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA proposed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) (Bergen Communiqué, 2005, p 3). Secondly, the Ministers agreed in principle to a European register of quality assurance agencies based on national review, requesting that four bodies collectively known as the E4 report back to the Bologna Follow-up Group (Bergen Communiqué, 2005, p 3). By the London Summit of 2007, E4 had proposed a voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent register which gives the public access to objective information about quality assurance agencies (London Communiqué, 2007, p 4). This model was accepted by the Ministers.

3.2.6 Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education

This objective is the most esoteric of the ten objectives of the Bologna Process. It is designed to foster a sense of “Europeanness” amongst students studying at European higher education institutions, but offers little substance. The full text of the objective refers to the “Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research” (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p 4). Without specific actions attached to the objective it remains up to participant States and the Bologna Follow-Up group to interpret the objective, which they have so far done to little effect.

In the Berlin communiqué of 2005 Ministers “note that initiatives have been taken by Higher Education Institutions in various European countries to pool their academic resources and cultural traditions in order to promote the development of integrated study programmes and joint degrees at first, second and third level,” without entering into detail as to the content of those initiatives (Berlin Communiqué, 2005, p 6). More substantively this objective does appear to bring together other implied elements of the Bologna Process by stressing the “necessity” of ensuring that students spend substantial periods undertaking study abroad programmes, and also calls for barriers to joint degree programmes to be reduced (Berlin communiqué, 2005, p 6). While there is some cross-over with the objective to promote

mobility, it is noticeable that this objective does not receive any specific mention in the communiqué from the most recent Ministerial summit held in London in 2007.

3.2.7 Focus on lifelong learning

This objective was the first of three new objectives added to the Bologna Process after the Prague Ministerial Summit in 2001 (Prague Communiqué, 2001, pp 3-4). While the objective received some attention at the Berlin Ministerial Summit in 2003, it has since been granted only limited attention and few tangible actions have been developed as a result. In the Berlin communiqué Ministers called on countries in the EHEA to ensure that their qualifications frameworks included a broad range of flexible learning pathways and to ensure that proper use was made of ECTS credits (Berlin Communiqué, 2003, p 6). In 2007 however, Ministers noted that only ad hoc progress had been made in supporting flexible learning paths and lifelong learning (London communiqué, 2007, p 4). Ministers noted that “Only in a small number of EHEA countries could the recognition of prior learning for access and credits be said to be well developed,” and called for development of proposals to improve the recognition of prior learning in the EHEA (London Communiqué, 2007, p 5)

3.2.8 Inclusion of higher education institutions and students

The inclusion of higher education institutions and students in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area was the second of the three new objectives added at the Prague Summit (Prague Communiqué, 2001, pp 3-4). This objective, while worthy, provides relatively little in terms of practical actions, preferring to employ vague language regarding participation and inclusiveness. In the Berlin communiqué Ministers emphasised the need to ensure that students have appropriate study and living conditions regardless of economic background and also called for the production of comparable data regarding the socio-economic needs of students throughout the EHEA (Berlin Communiqué, 2003, p 5). At the London meeting in 2007 Ministers reiterated their call for adequate support services for students (London Communiqué, 2007, p5), however very little practical action has been taken under the name of this particular objective.

3.2.9 Promotion of the attractiveness of the EHEA

The promotion of the attractiveness of the EHEA is the third of the objectives of the Bologna Process added in the aftermath of the Prague summit. It is designed to promote the openness of the EHEA and make Europe attractive to international students. The objective contains broad ideals but has also led to the introduction of programmes such as Erasmus Mundus, which provides scholarships to students from non EU/EEA countries to complete joint Masters Degrees at universities throughout Europe (Erasmus Mundus, 2007). Interestingly the Bergen Communiqué expresses the aims of this objective in terms that suggest cooperative ‘internationalisation’ much more than competitive “globalisation” (see Chapter 2). The communiqué states that:

“[The Ministers] see the European Higher Education Area as a partner of higher education systems in other regions of the world, stimulating balanced student and staff exchange and cooperation between higher education institutions. We underline the importance of intercultural understanding and respect. We look forward to enhancing the understanding of the Bologna Process in other continents by sharing our experiences of reform processes with neighbouring regions. We stress the need for dialogue on issues of mutual interest” (Bergen Communiqué, 2005, p 5).

The cooperative language adopted by the communiqué is contrary to the language of “increasing the international competitiveness of Europe” that is used in the Bologna Declaration itself (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p 2) and the Lisbon Strategy’s objective that Europe become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world.” It is possible that it is a combination of both internationalisation and globalisation rhetoric that is influencing the language used in the communiqués. The Ministers may be seeking a cooperative internationalised approach between EHEA member States in order to counter the globalised, competitive forces that constitute the threat posed by non-European higher education systems. Under this interpretation the “mutual interest” referred to in the Bergen communiqué could be defined as being those matters in which Europe and non-Europeans higher education systems are not competing, allowing room for both international cooperation and global competition to coexist within the Bologna Process. Alternatively, as 2010 approaches and Europe seems unlikely to usurp the United States of America as the “most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy”, it may be that a change of tone away from competition to cooperation is politically expedient.

3.2.10 Doctoral studies and synergy with the European Research Area

This final Bologna Process objective was added after the Berlin Ministerial summit of 2003. It is two-pronged and focuses on aligning the EHEA with the European Research Area (ERA) while standardising (but not overregulating) third cycle (doctoral) programmes. The Bergen Communiqué of 2005 notes that there is a need for an increase in the overall number of doctoral candidates in the EHEA. It urges universities to ensure that their doctoral programmes are structured, have transparent assessment and supervision procedures and correspond to a 3-4 year full time workload (Bergen Communiqué, 2005, p 4). The 2007 London communiqué reiterates this request by calling upon higher education institutions within the EHEA to “embed doctoral programmes in institutional strategies and policies, and to develop appropriate career paths and opportunities for doctoral candidates and early stage researchers” (London Communiqué, 2007, p 6).

The second prong of this objective acknowledges that the higher education sector is not the only sector undertaking research in Europe. The ERA was created by the European Union in 2000 as a central pillar of the Lisbon Strategy. One of the key goals of the ERA is to incite private investment in research in order for EU member states to contribute 3 per cent of their gross domestic product to research by 2010 (European Council, 2008). The ERA does not align comfortably with the EHEA however as the ERA is restricted to EU member states whereas the EHEA goes far beyond that and currently includes 46 members. Interestingly, the Bergen communiqué drew a distinction between the ERA and non-ERA European countries. It called for greater synergies between the higher education sectors of the respective EHEA member countries and other research sectors throughout Europe, as well as specifically mentioning synergies between the ERA and EHEA (Bergen Communiqué, 2005, p 3). By drawing this distinction the Ministers were acknowledging the role played by non higher education system research in significant European countries that sit outside of the EU, such as Russia, Turkey and the Balkan states.

3.3 Conclusion

The Bologna Process has proved to be a remarkably robust and enthusiastically implemented idea. From an original membership of 29 countries with six objectives to a current

membership of 46 countries pursuing ten objectives, the process has gained momentum towards the creation of the EHEA by 2010. The ten individual objectives that make up the actions of the Bologna Process have been treated with differing degrees of attention and significance by the member states. While some of the objectives break down into readily actionable processes and outcomes, others remain more esoteric, outlining unquantifiable and broad aims. Critics of the Bologna Process point to the over emphasis in the declaration (and policy documents that surrounded and followed its creation) on the economisation of higher education. The relationship between the “social dimension” of the Bologna Process seems at odds with those actions that promote regional and global competitiveness (Keeling, 2004, p 5). The somewhat cobbled together feel of the declaration, with its actions compiled across 4 years and in different contexts, can also make an overall policy agenda hard to identify. Together with the analysis provided in Chapter 2 however, this chapter should serve as a tool to allow for comparison between Australian and European reforms, and in analysing the Australian response to the Bologna Process.

4. The Australian response to the Bologna Process

4.1 Introduction

While awareness of the Bologna Process has spread organically throughout the Australian higher education sector since the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, it took some time before a sector-wide response to the issues raised by the Bologna Process was initiated. In April 2006 the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training released an issues and discussion paper entitled “The Bologna Process and Australia: Next Steps”. This paper provided a summary of the content of the Bologna Process, analysed the potential benefits and threats of the Bologna Process to the Australian higher education system and raised points for discussion and called for submissions from interested parties, of which 34 were received. This chapter briefly examines the content of the discussion paper and its responses, which to date forms the basis for an analysis of Australian responses to the Bologna Process.

4.2 The DEST discussion paper

The paper entitled “The Bologna Process and Australia: Next Steps” (the Discussion Paper) released by DEST in April 2006 was designed to “to initiate discussion on the significance of Bologna for Australia and possible Australian responses” (DEST, 2006A, p 1). The Discussion Paper is divided into four main sections. It provides background information on the Bologna Process, analyses the implication of the Bologna Process on the Asia-Pacific region, examines the benefits of compatibility and threats of incompatibility with the Bologna Process and raises issues for further discussion in the responses to the paper. The Discussion Paper concluded with 15 specific questions relating to the Bologna Process, which were used by many respondents as the framework for their own submissions to DEST.

4.2.1 The risks and benefits of Bologna Process compatibility

The Discussion Paper identified two types of potential benefits to the Australian higher education system that could arise from compatibility with the Bologna Process. These were facilitation of improved interaction and recognition of Australian higher education within European higher education systems and improved transparency for students and employers in the respective regions (DEST, 2006A, pp 7-8). The paper argues that while significant Australian/European mobility currently exists for students and academic staff, that impediments such as differing degree structures serve to prevent the maximisation of mobility opportunities. The Discussion Paper states if Australia intends to maintain or increase this level of enrolment in the post-Bologna Process environment in which European students are increasingly able to undertake a portion of their studies abroad, then the barriers to these students accessing Australian higher education should ideally be removed.

The second key benefit relates to increased transparency of the content of academic studies for both students and employers. Transparency of this sort is most obviously manifest through the Bologna Process reforms related to the establishment of the Diploma Supplement, the use of ECTS points and the compatibility of Australia's quality assurance frameworks with those of Europe. Australia already possesses a credit transfer systems (known as the EFTSU) which is a common measure of student workload, although unlike the ECTS it doesn't specify the workload in terms of learning outcomes and competencies (DEST, 2006A, pp 8-9). The Discussion Paper notes the possibility that the EFTSU (or the Asia-Pacific system – the UMAP) could be adapted to align more closely with the ECTS system.

The Discussion Paper also considered the reverse situation of the potential risks to the Australian higher education system if it remains incompatible with the reforms of the Bologna Process. The main risk to Australia is identified as being that the importance of the countries involved in the Bologna Process and the scale of their reforms may encourage other non-European countries (or regions) to align their own higher education systems with those of Europe. The Australian government implicitly acknowledged the threat of regional higher education alignment being influenced by the Bologna Process by instigating the Asia-Pacific conference in Brisbane in 2006, which set up an international working group to assess the conditions and suitability for Bologna Process style reforms in the Asia-Pacific

region. Whether higher education will remain regionalised, with limited capacity for mobility between regions, or whether the Bologna Process could be a catalyst for regional yet mutually recognisable higher education systems remains to be seen.

Finally, the Discussion Paper also notes that stimulating mutual recognition between the Australian and other higher education systems is a complex and difficult task that will be further complicated unless Australia makes an attempt at movement towards compatibility with the higher education systems of the Bologna Process (DEST, 2006A, p 9). It is arguable that European students could be taking a significant financial and educational risk by choosing to study beyond the bounds of the EHEA. There is a considerable risk, for example, that a student from an EHEA member country who chooses to study in (a non-EHEA compatible) Australia may not have his or her studies credited towards his or her degree or that the qualifications obtained by the student may not be recognised by employers, or that studying in Australia will become relatively more expensive than present (DEST, 2006A, p 10). Europe could also become a relatively more attractive destination for third-country (non-Australian and non-European students) than Australia. Given the reliance of Australia on the income provided by tuition and other ancillary fees paid by foreign students in Australia, any development which would reduce Australia's share of the international higher education market is potentially damaging. The combination of mutual recognition of qualifications across Europe, the increased use of English in post-graduate courses in Europe and the potential access to the European labour markets that graduates from these degrees could have, the overall "package" offered to foreign students may become increasingly attractive (DEST, 2006A, pp 9-10).

4.2.2 What would Australian compatibility with the Bologna Process entail?

The question of what compliance with the Bologna Process actually involves is one which requires attention. It is clearly unnecessary to comply with all aspects of the process in order to adapt the Australian higher education system to be broadly compatible with the key elements of the Bologna Process. Complete adoption of the process is implausible given both the fluid nature of the actions associated with the Bologna Process (which are added to and interpreted at the Ministerial Summits every two years) and the fact that Australia experiences different needs and pressures to the EHEA countries. The Discussion Paper

examines what constructive compatibility with the Bologna Process would involve and concludes that as a minimum the Australian higher education system would have to ensure:

- A three cycle degree structure;
- Promotion of the Diploma Supplement;
- A credit transfer system compatible with ECTS; and
- An accreditation/quality assurance framework which met Bologna Process criteria (DEST, 2006A, p11).

Theoretically, three of these minimum reforms for compatibility should be attainable in the medium term. Australian accreditation and quality reform structures are well advanced, and the concept of the Diploma Supplement has been embraced at least as an idea worth considering (DEST, 2006A, p 11). The EFTSU credit transfer system, while not compatible with the Bologna Process, is a starting point for future work, with the aim of compatibility with the UMAP system of Asia signalling an awareness of the need for the system to be usable beyond Australia's borders. It is the adoption of a strict interpretation of a three-cycle degree structure comprised of a 3+2+3 bachelor/master/doctoral system which poses a significant hurdle for Australia to overcome, given the sector's propensity for longer first cycle degrees, the Honours year, and shorter second cycle degrees.

4.3 Responses to the Discussion Paper

DEST received 34 submissions in response to the Discussion Paper from universities, industry bodies, unions, university peak bodies and other interested parties. Some of the submissions focussed upon the 15 specific questions raised by DEST in the Discussion Paper, while others restricted their response to one or two general points. The Appendix to this paper contains a summary of approximately 1/3 of the submissions, representing a cross-section of the stakeholders and other interested parties. The submissions as a whole are considered below. In addition to these submissions, DEST held a "Bologna Seminar" in September 2006 with the aim of inviting stakeholders to consider the implication of the Bologna Process on Australia (AEI, 2007B). The seminar featured two key announcements by DEST: firstly that it would fund a consortium of universities to develop a single agreed template for an Australia Diploma Supplement; and that a high-level steering group

featuring members of the higher education sector and DEST would be formed to monitor the Bologna Process and related developments (AEI, 2007B).

The positive and optimistic tone of the Discussion Paper did not carry through into the majority of submissions. While the Discussion Paper carried an air of inevitability about alignment with the Bologna Process, the respondents in general did not share this enthusiasm. While the range of responses was naturally varied, certain themes recurred commonly throughout the submissions. While support for aspects of the Bologna Process such as the Diploma Supplement were noticeable, rather than serving as a springboard for reform of the Australian higher education system and closer alignment with Europe, the Discussion Paper provided an opportunity for respondents to emphasise the existing quality and diversity of the Australian sector and reject the opportunity for massive change.

The first theme was: why Europe? Many respondents appeared confused as to why Australia would seek to emulate or align its higher education system with the EHEA rather than looking towards Asia or the USA. It was submitted that the Bologna Process was initiated to solve the specific problem of ailing universities increasingly unable to compete with the USA. While reliance on any of the university rankings system in judging the prestige or quality of the Australian system is fraught (Marginson, 2006A), Australia's higher education system appears relatively healthy when compared to Europe. The problem of lagging behind the top USA universities is arguably not as relevant to Australia, which according to the *Times Higher Education Supplement* has more universities ranked in the world's top 50 higher education institutions than all of continental Europe combined. It was also noted that Australia already possesses key elements of the Bologna Process package due to its historical development and alignment with the British system, such as a three-cycle degree structure, an internationally recognised quality assurance system and a credit transfer systems. Submissions critical of further reforms noted that Australia could waste significant resources on fine-tuning these existing mechanisms to match the EHEA without any tangible benefits to the Australian higher education system. These critics see much greater value in strengthening the international profile of Australian higher education through dissemination of information regarding the system, and on ensuring that quality standards of Australian degrees are internationally recognised, particularly by the USA and key Asian markets.

The second theme of the responses was that the variety of degree types and structures was a key advantage of Australia's higher education system and one which may be lost should the Bologna Process degree structure be strictly implemented. While some respondents seemed unaware of the flexibility of the EHEA degree structure, believing that a rigid 3+2+3 system must be universally applied, others believed that despite the flexibility to maintain longer first-cycle and shorter second-cycle degrees that compliance with the EHEA structure would be damaging to Australia. University and industry associations alike believe that institutions should be able to adopt Bologna Process compatible degree structure at their own discretion, but that any move to force all universities to align their degree structures with the EHEA would be counterproductive. This can be seen as a particular issue for professional associations such as ATSE and the AMC which represent industries in which graduates currently operate under different degree structures (typically comprising lengthier first cycle degrees) than those envisaged under the Bologna Process.

The conclusion this leads to is that the idea that the Bologna Process should be implemented in any substantial manner in Australia has largely been rejected by the Australian higher education sector and other stakeholders with significant interests in the sector. This is true at least to the extent that alignment with the EHEA would involve reforming aspects of the Australian system rather than merely adding to the current system. While the conservative Commonwealth government brought the idea of the Bologna Process to the discussion table, unlike in Europe the idea found little support from the various tiers of the sector that would be required to implement specific actions. With the exception of a level of support for the development of a Diploma Supplement and the further monitoring of the Bologna Process, the idea of the Bologna Process has successfully travelled to Australia but has been unsuccessful in its implementation. The next two sections consider the theoretical basis of how the idea of the Bologna Process has travelled and why its implementation failed, using the models and theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2.

4.4 The travel of ideas – the Bologna Process and Australia

The main catalyst for change, to drive a response to the Bologna Process in Australia, has been the Commonwealth Government through DEST. The universities, industry groups,

unions and other stakeholders who made submissions to DEST were merely reacting to proposed change. Their ideas and reactions are important to the analysis of why the idea of the Bologna Process failed to be implemented in Australia, which is the subject of the following section. It is however the motivations of DEST as the catalyst for change that require analysis against the framework of perspectives examined in Chapter 2. These motivations can reveal the drive behind the travel of the idea of the Bologna Process to Australia.

The relevant question to be asked in making a theoretical analysis of how the idea of the Bologna Process has travelled to Australia is: “Why does DEST believe that Australian higher education institutions should respond to the Bologna Process?” What forces have driven this idea from Europe to Australia and made it the subject of debate? How has the idea of the Bologna Process as a relevant higher education model travelled to Australia? Each of the perspectives analysed in Chapter 2 is considered in examining what may be DEST’s underlying motivation for bringing this idea to Australia and legitimising it through high level discussion. The Discussion Paper posed 15 specific questions to potential respondents. Many of these questions can each be broadly assigned to one of the three perspectives and can therefore serve as the basis for analysing the manner in which the idea of the Bologna Process has travelled to Australia and become manifest as the Discussion Paper.

4.4.1 The Bologna Process debate under the internationalisation perspective

The internationalisation perspective of the travel of ideas, as proposed in Chapter 2, emphasises international collaboration carried out in an organised and structured manner through a series of bilateral or multilateral links. A purely international system would see ideas travel through international collaboration, which takes place to further knowledge production and transfer. The higher education system would remain a product of its geography and would see the service of the local community as its primary purpose. In such a system ideas travel because they further these ideals and purposes.

Approximately six of the fifteen questions posed in the Discussion Paper emphasise the internationalisation perspective of the movement of ideas in higher education. These

questions emphasise the change necessary in order for Australia to continue international cooperation and knowledge transfer. They examine issues of student and knowledge mobility without reference to competition or global markets. The relevant questions are (DEST, 2006A, p 12):

- What further steps does Australia need to achieve a three cycle (Bachelor, Masters, and Doctorate) degree structure which is compatible with the Bologna architecture?
- Is there a need to review the content of Doctorate programmes to align them with Bologna thinking, given the Bergen declaration that Doctorate programmes should include interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills?
- Do we need to undertake further work in order to achieve a credit accumulation/transfer system compatible with the ECTS?
- Would our national accreditation/quality assurance framework meet Bologna criteria without further modification?
- What further processes do we need to put in place to make sure all stakeholders within the Australian system are kept up to date with developments in and implications of the Bologna Process?
- Would the introduction of the Diploma Supplement in Australia be viable and beneficial?

These questions emphasise that the motivation behind the Discussion Paper has at least some basis in internationalisation perspectives. The travel of ideas in this context has occurred as a result of the perception that further internationalisation of Australia's higher education is desirable, and that initiatives which promote such collaboration, information sharing and mobility should be the subject of debate in Australia.

4.4.2 The Bologna Process debate under the globalisation perspective

The globalisation perspective of the travel of ideas emphasises competition, markets and the outward orientation of a higher education system. Under a pure globalisation perspective universities are somewhat removed from their community and operate under market conditions with minimal public funding and government regulations. Many of these traits are recognisable as general policy positions of the conservative Liberal Party that was in office when DEST released the Discussion Paper in April 2006. The ideas inherent in a

more globalised higher education system can be seen in several of the questions posed in the Discussion Paper. The relevant questions are (DEST, 2006A, p 12):

- What risks do we run by failing to pay adequate regard to these European developments?
- What actions could be taken to address the implications of the Bologna Process for our Asia – Pacific regional interactions with Governments and higher education providers or our broader relations with the global education community?
- Would compatibility deliver real benefits for Australian graduates and employers in terms of labour mobility?
- Would longer courses, aligned with Europe, be more attractive to Australian and overseas students than shorter, cheaper courses based on the existing Australian model?

All of these questions emphasise an aspect of higher education policy that can be seen in the pure model of a globalised higher education system as outlined in Chapter 2. References to risks of non-compliance, “real benefits” to students and employers, and making the system “more attractive” all emphasise the global competition and market orientation of higher education. These types of ideas, in comparison with the internationalisation perspective in the previous section, travel via networks that encourage discourse around the commoditisation of higher education, and focus upon competition, deregulation and global orientation rather than formal collaborative networks. When considered in conjunction with the overall conservative values of the political party in power at the time the Discussion Paper was released, then the driver behind the travel of ideas can clearly be seen to be influenced to a significant extent by the globalisation perspective.

4.4.3 The Bologna Process debate under the “change theory” perspective

The “change theory” perspective of the travel of ideas occupies a middle ground between the extreme characterisation of internationalisation and globalisation perspectives. Change theory, as applied to the travel of ideas in higher education, can be characterised as more reactive than the other perspectives, and relies upon loosely coupled networks for the transmission of fashions and trends. Under the change theory perspective a leader can utilise an already popular “master-idea” taken from another context to bolster support for an idea and to shield it from criticisms. Ten of the questions posed in the Discussion Paper have been considered via the globalisation and internationalisation perspective in the previous

sections. None of the remaining five questions fits into either category, or into the realm of the change theory perspective. This is to be expected however, as change theory is based upon reaction to ideas and events and the opportunistic appropriation of ideas to suit specific purposes. In the context of the Discussion Paper, change theory can be used to understand why seemingly random ideas from extrinsic sources are incorporated into a debate seemingly dominated by the discourse of internationalisation and globalisation. For example, questions in the Discussion Paper relating to the regulatory structures surrounding higher education seem unrelated to other questions in the debate, yet they have been identified as worthy of inclusion in the discussion surrounding the Bologna Process. Change theory allows for these types of inclusions on the basis that certain ideas are adopted at certain times not based necessarily on the merit or relevance, but upon the existence of circumstances (often a champion of an idea or a network open to an idea) that allow for the idea to become institutionalised. In this manner issues that could otherwise be characterised as merely ancillary to the Bologna Process debate become very much incorporated into the overall debate.

4.5 The implementation of ideas – the Bologna Process and Australia.

Having ascertained how the ideas of the Bologna Process travelled and became contextualised in Australia, the key question is why this idea was, for the most part, rejected by the Australian higher education sector and other relevant stakeholders. After an initial burst of discussion and debate prompted by the Discussion Paper, why did interest in the implementation of the Bologna Process interest dissipate (Contractor, 2008)? The expanded version of Røvik's implementation framework can be used as a device to understand the characteristics necessary for an idea to be implemented in a new context. It is not suggested that all eight characteristics must necessarily be present for an idea to be successfully implemented, however the degree to which the various characteristics are met will greatly influence the success of the implementation. The characteristics that are most important to implementation of the Bologna Process in Australia are ascertained by examining the submissions to the DEST Discussion Paper and other critics of the attempt to implement this idea in Australia.

4.5.1 Socially authorised

The attempt to implement the Bologna Process in Australia arguably lacked sufficient social authorisation from enough key individuals within the Australian higher education sector. Social authorisation requires that the idea be supported by powerful figures within the sector, yet the Bologna Process lacked significant support outside of DEST. To fulfil this criterion the Bologna Process would realistically have required support from institutions such as Universities Australia (the body representing university presidents) and the Group of Eight, the peak body for eight of Australia's most prestigious universities (AVCC, 2006; Group of Eight, 2006). The submissions from these organisations were cautious and ambivalent towards the prospect of any alignment with Europe that compromise Australia's autonomy and potential to compete and compare with North American and Asian institutions. Similarly, key industry groups such as the AMC and ATSE both failed to provide any social authority from an industry perspective by providing submissions to DEST that questioned the benefits (and emphasised the risks) of closer alignment with the Bologna Process (AMC, 2006; ATSE, 2006).

The only notable social authorisation for the idea of implementing the Bologna Process in Australia came from the catalyst for the entire debate: the then Minister for Education, Julie Bishop. In the preface to the Discussion Paper the Minister stated that, "[the Bologna Process] will have important implications for Australian higher education providers as we work to enhance our existing success and reputation as a provider of world-class education" (DEST, 2006A, p 1). Even this support diminished after the unenthusiastic response of stakeholders to the Discussion Paper (Bishop, 2006). The conservative government containing Minister Bishop was voted out of office in November 2007, removing the only champion of the Bologna Process from the spotlight and consequently removing any sense of urgency from the Australian higher education reform agenda (Maslen, 2008). The new government has not echoed the warnings of non-compliance with the Bologna Process, and it is notable that a recently announced review of higher education in Australia does not mention the terms "Bologna Process", "Europe" or "alignment" at any point (DEEWR, 2008). It therefore seems that while the idea of Bologna Process implementation never gained sufficient social authorisation, what little support it did have was expunged by the change of Commonwealth government in late 2007.

4.5.2 Theorised

For the idea of Bologna Process implementation to become theorised in Australia it needs to be characterised as an all-encompassing solution to a significant problem, rather than as a situation-specific policy. While the Bologna Process is not a single, unified idea, it was presented by DEST to the higher education sector as a universal idea to be implemented or rejected. As demonstrated in section 4.4, the idea of the Bologna Process somewhat problematically does not derive from a single ideology or source, but is comprised of aspects of internationalisation, globalisation and change theory. For this reason it becomes difficult to treat the Bologna Process as an abstract concept which could be applied equally in other settings or contexts. It simply cannot be extrapolated in this way. For example, the Bologna Process could not be applied to the manufacturing sector, dairy farming or the recorded music industry as it is context-specific set of ideas without a single unifying ideological basis. Some commentators attempt to equate the Bologna Process with globalisation and to some extent extrapolate its initiatives to represent a new type of international compatibility (Bishop, 2006; Figel, 2007, p 2). Such an approach does not bare close scrutiny however, as it is clear that the Bologna Process is both a response to and a driver of globalisation, internationalisation and other influences.

If the idea of the Bologna Process is twisted slightly to represent the broader idea of “Europeanisation”, then it is more susceptible to being theorised. The problem with this interpretation is that it becomes an idea searching for a problem. Australia’s higher education system is generally seen as robust and attractive to international students, particularly from East Asia. ATSE, the Group of Eight, the AVCC and other respondents to the Discussion Paper emphasised a need to maintain a focus upon Asia and North America rather than Europe (ATSE, 2006; Group of Eight, 2006; AVCC, 2006). Compatibility with Europe, or Europeanisation of the Australian higher education sector, is not seen as something that is generally desirable or beneficial to Australia. Those who foresee problems within the Australian higher education sector concentrate on the potential consequences of a downturn in the export of higher education to international students (Harman, 2006, p 16) or domestic issues. Europeanisation is rarely, if ever, seen as a broad solution to Australia’s problems, whether in the context of higher education or more generally. The implementation of the Bologna Process in Australia can therefore be characterised as an idea

that is unable to be theorised due to its lack of a unifying theoretical basis and more broadly its lack of relevance in Australia's geographic context.

4.5.3 Productivised

The Bologna Process represents the epitome of an idea that can be readily productivised. The broad idea behind the Bologna Process, namely the harmonisation of higher education and the creation of the EHEA, has arguably been subsumed by the individual action lines that now, for many, represent the Bologna Process. These actions lines are generally products, meaning that effectively the Bologna Process as a popular concept is both the idea of the EHEA and the specific products that are contained in the Bologna Declaration and subsequent Ministerial communiqués. The Discussion Paper outlined the products of the Bologna Process clearly and attempted to stimulate debate on their implementation, either as a group or individually. Those products were the 3+2+3 degree structure, the Diploma Supplement, an ECTS compatible credit transfer system and EHEA compatible quality assurance mechanisms (DEST, 2006A, p 11).

The 3+2+3 structure is a strongly identifiable, yet somewhat misleading, product. The Bologna Process does not prescribe a 3+2+3 structure and in fact allows for flexibility for the lengths of the various degree cycles. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Spain and Greece are choosing to maintain systems that are incompatible with a rigid interpretation of this system (Sedgwick, 2003). While many submissions note that flexibility does exist within the 3+2+3 structure, they also demonstrate a fear that the structure could become normalised and thus form a cohesive product capable of precise definition and implementation (ATSE, 2006; AMC, 2006). Further, while there is some incompatibility regarding the length and status of degrees between Australia and Europe, this is relatively minor compared to the pre-Bologna diversity present throughout Europe. Given the close resemblance to existing Australian degree structures to the 3+2+3 system (AVCC, 2006, pp 3-4) and the lack of a clearly defined alternative, the Bologna Process degree structure has not been successfully productivised in Australia.

The Diploma Supplement has largely been successfully productivised in Australia, and is unarguably the aspect of the Bologna Process which has been the most successfully implemented in Australia (Bishop, 2006). A consortium of universities is currently

redeveloping a model of the Australian Diploma Supplement which is expected to be funded by the Commonwealth government in 2008 for future implementation (Meek and James, 2007). In another sense the Diploma Supplement is also highly productivised as it results in a tangible, real new product.

Qualifications frameworks have been productivised under the Bologna Process through the decision at the Bergen summit in 2005 to link European qualifications with existing national frameworks (Bergen Communiqué, 2005). Australia has already productivised its qualifications framework through the establishment of the AQF in 1995 (AUQA, 2006). Similarly, quality assurance within the EHEA has been productivised as the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (AUQA, 2006). Australia has a similar pre-existing national organisation (AQUA) for quality assurance, meaning that productivisation of the concept of quality assurance in Australia is unnecessary.

As noted in section 4.4, not all aspects of the Bologna Process are readily turned into products. Overall however, those actions which lend themselves to productivisation have been successfully turned into products. Despite this specific success, the overall implementation of the Bologna Process has not been successful. This leads to the conclusion that the largely successful productivisation of the idea of the Bologna Process was largely irrelevant to the failure of the idea to be implemented, given that the products, where tangible, of the Bologna Process often represent variations on existing Australian higher education products.

4.5.4 Progressive

For the idea of the Bologna Process to be implemented, it must be demonstrated or perceived to be superior to what it is replacing. This is perhaps the major flaw with the implementation of the idea in Australia. The lack of progress represented by the Bologna Process is a recurring theme throughout the majority of submissions to DEST, and is also found in other critical voices from within the Australian higher education sector. Peak organisations such as Universities Australia, the Group of Eight, the National Tertiary Education Union and industry organisations all emphasised the comparative success of the Australian higher education system when compared with those of Europe (AVCC, 2006; Group of Eight, 2006; NTEU 2006; ATSE 2006; AMC 2006). Much of this belief stems

from Australia's comparatively good performance in international rankings (although Australia is in general ranked much more favourably in the Times Higher Education Supplement than by the Jiao Tong equivalent) and the fact that Australia ranks as the third highest exporter of higher education in the world (Harman, 2006, p 16).

The overall attitude to altering the Australian system to implement the Bologna Process was therefore that the idea was not perceived to be progressive, and could in fact be regressive. Critics noted that any changes that negatively impacted upon Australia's capacity to align with Asia and North America at the expense of alignment with Europe would be a backwards step for the Australian higher education system (AVCC, 2006). The progression/regression issue is dependent upon the perception of how successful the Australian higher education sector actually is. Critics such as Marginson suggest that the position and performance of the Australian universities within the THES rankings have been vastly inflated and that Australia's leading universities are not quite as good as they are sometimes perceived to be (Marginson, 2006B, p 6). The reliance upon high numbers of international students is similarly open to characterisation not as a sign of international prestige and quality but as a potential vulnerability if Asian higher education export trends shift away from Anglophone providers and towards East Asian countries (Clark, 2007). Overall however the consensus amongst the submissions was that where small differences did exist between Australia and Europe they were readily surmountable and that a move to adopt the Bologna Process in Australia would not be progressive (Maslen, 2008).

4.5.5 Harmonised

Ideas that are harmonised require the maintenance of the power balance between the key stakeholders whom the idea affects. In the case of the Bologna Process this means that universities, academic staff, industry associations, unions and students would maintain their relative position in the power hierarchy. Lack of harmonisation was not an apparent complaint with regards to implementing the Bologna Process in Australia. Most respondents and critics emphasised issues that related to the bigger picture of Australia's role in the international higher education community than grievances based upon personal or organisational opposition. The Group of Eight, which represents the most powerful group of universities in Australia, made only a muted response to the Discussion Paper (Group of Eight, 2006). The key student group (National Union of Students) and academic union

(National Tertiary Education Union) also failed to make any significant representations regarding a shift in the power balance as the result of the potential implementation of the Bologna Process, beyond noting the detrimental financial impact upon students that longer sequences of degrees could entail (NUS, 2006; NTEU, 2006). This does not conclusively prove that the idea was harmonised – a lack of harmony can be disguised by directing attention away from personal objections to more altruistic concerns – yet the lack of any narrative suggesting disharmony does indicate that harmonisation was at best a minor issue in Australia. This can partly be explained by the fact that the idea of implementation gained little momentum (and little social authorisation), and the fact that the one aspect of the Bologna Process which was successfully productivised (the Diploma Supplement) does little to impact upon the power balances in the sector. If for example the 3+2+3 degree structure had been successfully productivised, students and industry groups may well have expressed harmonisation fears related to the shift in status of undergraduate qualifications, consequent changes in the length of studies required to obtain professional qualifications and the detrimental financial impact noted above.

4.5.6 Dramatised

The dramatisation of the Bologna Process was one of the key drivers of its proposed implementation. The Discussion Paper focuses on both positive and negative dramatisation to encourage the implementation of the process in Australia. The Discussion Paper emphasises “the profound effect on the development of higher education globally”, as well as the risk that non-alignment would leave Australia as a less desirable destination for international students (DEST, 2006A, pp 3-10). The AVCC takes the negative dramatisation approach, stating that “Any engagement by Australia with Europe through the Bologna Process must not result in a diminution of the diversity of the Australian university system” (AVCC, 2006, p 1).

Dramatisation of the Bologna Process seems to be a worldwide and somewhat circular phenomenon, not restricted to its advocates (and detractors) in any single region. While Europe emphasised the need for implementation through statements such as the Lisbon Council’s conclusion that Europe must become the “most dynamic and competitive knowledge economy in the world” (Lisbon Council, 2000), other countries and regions appear to be playing a circular game of catch-up. Australia, Asian, Latin America and

Africa have all held consultations regarding potential responses to and alignment with the Bologna Process. Even the USA (through NAFSA), widely considered to be home to the world's best universities, has noted:

“the possibility of Australia and China adopting the Bologna degree structure for their respective education systems, which, if implemented, would leave the United States on the outside looking in during the decades ahead” (Clark, 2007)

It can be concluded that in Australia, as elsewhere, the Bologna Process idea has been very successfully dramatised. The dramatisation is predictive however, given the ongoing nature of Bologna Process implementation in Europe, meaning that advocates and detractors are to some extent guessing as to what the possible positive and negative consequences of compliance/non-compliance could be. This detracts from the weight of the dramatisation – there is no completed success story to demonstrate the consequences of Bologna Process implementation – regardless of the volume and occasional hysteria of predictions (Maslen, 2008). Nevertheless the weight of positive and negative stories coming from both sides of the debate has meant that the idea of the Bologna Process has been thoroughly and successfully dramatised in Australia.

4.5.7 Individualised

The individualisation of the Bologna Process involves convincing stakeholders that the process is a positive opportunity for individuals and organisations. In the Australian context, much rhetoric has focussed on emphasising that universities, staff and students will all be more internationally competitive under a Bologna Process aligned system. The University of Melbourne, discussed in more detail in the next chapter, emphasise the increased mobility and competitiveness of individuals under the Bologna Process (University of Melbourne, 2006A; University of Melbourne, 2006C). Inherent in this argument is the notion that Australia's universities, staff and students are not internationally competitive at present or will necessarily fall behind their international counterparts if they do not align with the Bologna Process. Such an argument belies the fact that universities now have more scope than ever for developing strategy and setting their own direction (Marginson, 2007, p 125).

Relatively little attempt was made by DEST to individualise the idea of the Bologna Process. To some extent the Bologna Process is too big of an idea, or collection of ideas, to be readily

individualised and made accessible to specific individuals and organisations, rendering this aspect of Røvik's framework less relevant to the implantation of the Bologna Process than to the implementation of other ideas. The fact that the Bologna Process involves sector-wide reform at a national and international level, leaves little scope for personalised narratives beyond the broad platitudes concerning international competitiveness and innovation. To the extent that it is relevant to the Bologna Process in Australia, it is fair to conclude that the characteristic of individualising an idea has not been successfully carried out in this circumstance.

4.5.8 Expediency

As noted in section 2.6.8, expediency is a characteristic of the implementation of ideas that should be added to Røvik's framework. It helps to explain why ideas that are not obviously beneficial to certain individuals and organisations nonetheless receive their support. In many ways it is linked to the social authorisation and harmonisation characteristics. For the Bologna Process to be expedient in the Australian context it must be in the best interests of the higher education sector as a whole, even if the individuals and organisations endorsing it do not directly benefit from its implementation. The responses by university associations such as the Group of Eight, Innovative Research Universities Australia and other types of stakeholders often demonstrate a significant amount of expediency (Group of Eight, 2006; IRUA, 2006). It is apparent from the combination of reticence to openly criticise the Bologna Process coupled with the lack of support for reforms, that many submissions in response to the Discussion Paper were performing a balancing act. The Group of Eight, for example, made a surprisingly sparse contribution to the debate considering its influence within the sector (Group of Eight, 2006). Many responses seemed loathe to criticise the suggestion that the Bologna Process be implemented in Australia lest DEST determine that reforms should go ahead, leaving the opposing organisations and individuals in an awkward situation. The early stage of implementation throughout Europe and the lack of urgency in adopting reforms have meant that expediency has not been a major factor in the implementation of the Bologna Process in Australia. Despite the benefits of cooperating with governmental reform initiatives, the Bologna Process failed the expediency test in that it was not politically (or otherwise) expedient for key stakeholders to support the implementation of the idea despite other misgiving they may have felt regarding this idea.

Almost all respondents also made reference to the importance of Asia, and to a lesser extent North America, in shaping the future of Australian higher education (for example: IRUA, 2006; AUQA, 2006; NTEU, 2006). These references, which are in some senses tangential from the questions posed by the Discussion Paper, indicate another kind of expediency is operating upon key Australian higher education stakeholders. This can be described as a form of negative expediency, best summarised as being that despite any perceived benefits of the Bologna Process that these stakeholders will seek to block implementation of the idea because they believe it is expedient to do so given their preference for alignment/collaboration with Asia and North America. For example, a stakeholder may see pedagogic or financial incentives to adopt the 3+2+3 degree structure, however other competing extrinsic interests may make it expedient to oppose the implementation of the idea. Such examples are by their nature hard to prove, however the complexities of issues involved in implementing an idea as large as the Bologna Process suggest that stakeholders often undertake a difficult balancing act in determining the most beneficial (or least prejudicial) response for themselves or their institutions.

4.6 Conclusion

The Discussion Paper, along with the seminars, communiqués and submissions that it inspired, marked the first serious attempt by Australian government and higher education institutions to collectively consider the benefits offered and the threats posed by the Bologna Process. The optimistic tone of the Discussion Paper and the sense that alignment with the Bologna Process is to some extent inevitable did not carry through to the submissions made to DEST by university groups, unions, student bodies and professional associations. While the range of responses was naturally varied, certain themes recurred commonly throughout the submissions.

When considered through various theoretical perspectives, aspects of the debate concerning the Bologna Process in Australia can be seen to stem from different sources. Certainly aspects of the debate initiated by DEST demonstrate that internationalisation and globalisation have influenced the travel of many ideas. Other ideas are less obviously attributable to either of these perspectives however, and are more readily explainable with reference to the ad hoc and reactive idea-appropriation that characterises “change theory”.

The conservative values of the then-ruling government at the time that the Discussion Paper was released can also be seen in the questions posed for discussion, however no single theory or ideological perspective can explain the broad mix of ideas discussed amongst the Australian higher education sector.

Consideration of why the idea of alignment with the Bologna Process failed to be implemented in Australia is equally complex. Røvik's expanded theoretical framework provides the basis by which the elements required to successfully implement an idea can be considered in the Australian context. Tellingly, only three of the eight criteria could be considered to have been present in the attempt to implement a form of the Bologna Process in Australia. The attempt to implement the Bologna Process lacked sufficient social authority, was incompatible with theorisation, not sufficiently progressive and it was not able to be individualised. Aspects of the idea were well productivised and the Bologna Process as a whole was dramatised well for the Australian context. The harmonisation of the Bologna Process was not an issue in the Australian context given that relatively little progress regarding implementation was made, however it had the potential to be a problem for implementation had the process gone further and if reforms had seemed more likely. Finally, the additional characteristic of expediency can be seen in the cautious submissions of many responses to the Discussion Paper, which while unenthusiastic regarding the prospect of alignment with the Bologna Process were nevertheless careful not to criticise the process itself or the fact that DEST had stimulated debate on the topic.

Unsurprisingly, with only three of the eight implementation criteria suggested by this framework satisfied, the idea to align the Australian higher education system with the Bologna Process failed to be implemented. As a result, the initial enthusiasm demonstrated by the conservative Liberal government had dissipated and was lost altogether once the Labor government came to office in 2007 (Maslen, 2008). Ancillary activities such as the group established at the Asia-Pacific Education Ministers' Meeting in April 2006 and the high level steering group announced in November 2006 also appear to have lost momentum, although both technically remain active. The Australian response to the Bologna Process can therefore be characterised as muted, with the initial enthusiasm of DEST countered by the failure of the idea to satisfy a sufficient number of implementation criteria due to the cautious response of stakeholders.

5. Case study: The University of Melbourne

5.1 The “Melbourne Model”

The University of Melbourne is the first Australian higher education institution to restructure its teaching, learning and research to more closely align itself with models used in other countries and regions. The nature and the timing of the changes undertaken by the University of Melbourne in the current climate of discussion of the Bologna Process warrants special examination as a case study. While the previous chapter noted the observations and submissions made by interested stakeholders regarding the potential impact of the Bologna Process, 2008 has seen the actual implementation of changes by the University of Melbourne that have relevance to the Bologna Process, even if they were not always directly inspired by it. The University of Melbourne acknowledges that its reform initiatives seek to align the university with both European and North American higher education systems in order to improve recognition of degrees from the university, as well as to make their qualifications “an attractive option for Australian and international students who currently choose a European or North American destination” (University of Melbourne, 2006A).

The initiatives undertaken by the University of Melbourne are grouped together as the “Melbourne Model”. The Melbourne Model includes the consolidation of the number of undergraduate degrees offered by the university, the (flexible) adoption of the 3+2+3 degree structure, the promotion of second-cycle professional degrees as the entry point to the labour force for certain professions, the removal of contemporaneous double degrees, the downscaling of the Honours year as the main pathway to doctoral studies and the emphasis of breadth of learning and research throughout all three degree cycles. Student intake into these “new generation” degrees under the Melbourne Model commenced in 2008.

5.2 The Melbourne Model degree structure

The most prominent feature of the Melbourne Model is the change in degree structure and length. The 3+2+3 degree structure already in existence at the university has been retained, however undergraduate degrees have shifted in focus to become generalist degrees rather than the professional degrees. The university has commenced the phasing out of the existing 96 undergraduate degrees offered in 2007 and the replacement of them with six, stand-alone “new generation” degrees that are intended to offer generalist education as well as a pathway to professional, second-cycle degrees (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 1). These new generation first-cycle degrees have generally been reduced to three years in length. The six “new generation” first-cycle degrees replacing the existing undergraduate degrees are the: Bachelor of Arts; Bachelor of Bioscience; Bachelor of Commerce; Bachelor of Environments; Bachelor of Music and the Bachelor of Science (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 5). Typically 25 per cent of studies taken by a student enrolled within one of these six courses will be taken in a discipline outside of their main course of studies (University of Melbourne, 2006D, p 3). This “breadth” of study initiative is a move towards ensuring that the new generation first-cycle degrees contain some of the elements of generalist education present in their North American equivalents.

Several prominent elements of undergraduate education previously common to the University of Melbourne (and which remain prevalent at other universities in Australia) have been dispensed with or marginalised under the Melbourne Model. Of these, the abolition of the contemporaneous double degree is notable. Many institutions and faculties allow students to pursue two Bachelor degrees contemporaneously, with some reciprocal recognition of credit occurring between the two degrees. This led to the situation where, for example, a student could pursue a double degree Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in four years, whereas studied separately, the courses would both entail three years of full-time study. The Melbourne Model replaces double degrees with the “academically and professionally enriched ‘Bachelor plus masters’ sequence” (University of Melbourne, 2006D, p 4). Double first-cycle degrees will now only be available as sequential degrees with some reciprocal recognition of credit, in order to preserve the concept of a cohort moving through each degree (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 10).

Secondly, the “Honours” year system, by which an undergraduate degree (with some exceptions – principally degrees with durations exceeding three years) was extended by an additional year in which the student completed additional research and wrote a small thesis, has been retained by the Melbourne Model. While it appears anachronistic, the university has chosen to utilise the Melbourne Model as merely one pathway to doctoral studies rather than as a replacement of Honours. The university notes there is still considerable support from within the university for an Honours pathway into doctoral studies, and that while eventually one or other of the 3+2+3 system or the Honours system may become the favoured pathway, for the moment both routes should be available (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 15). The Honours year may therefore continue to be added to new generation first cycle degrees and will remain part of the undergraduate structure at the University of Melbourne.

The university’s new generation of two-year professional second-cycle degrees also commence in 2008. The university had previously offered a mix of second-cycle degrees of both one and two years duration. The new degrees are of two years duration partly to compensate for the reduction in the length of the first-cycle degrees that the majority of students would previously have completed prior to becoming eligible to enrol in a second-cycle degree. In 2008, the university has commenced 12 new generation Masters courses in addition to the Juris Doctor of Law course (University of Melbourne, 2007). At least five additional Masters courses will be added in the coming years (University of Melbourne, 2006D, p 4).

In adopting this new structure the university has stressed that it will maintain some flexibility. The Melbourne Model documentation specifically invokes the Bologna Process in excluding a number of (unspecified) professional disciplines from the 3+2+3 approach (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 2). It remains to be seen how flexible the system becomes. Inevitably too much flexibility will warp the 3+2+3 system beyond recognisability and renders the benefits that it offers less obvious. Too little flexibility, particularly amongst those disciplines in which professional associations demand extensive and specific training, could result in the Melbourne Model becoming marginalised in comparison with universities utilising traditional Australian degree structures. The University of Melbourne seems aware of this balancing act, noting that “If graduate programs insist on specific undergraduate courses as necessary pathways, however, the

consequence will simply be to lengthen courses of students without increasing disciplinary breadth, thus defeating the education objectives of the Melbourne Model project” (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 8).

5.3 Criticisms of the Melbourne Model

The most common criticism of the Melbourne Model relates to funding. Current funding mechanisms in the Australian higher education system provide the majority of Australian students with a government-subsidised HECS place (repaid as a loan on an income-contingent basis, recently renamed as a Commonwealth Supported Place, although still commonly referred to as HECS). Some Australian and all international students pay upfront fees at a much higher rate than the subsidised HECS places. Typically second-cycle degrees are not subsidised, although student loans are provided to many students. Until 2007, institutions had been prevented from charging upfront fees to more than 35% of their Australian students, although this cap was removed by the Commonwealth government (Bishop, 2007A). In the election campaign for the 2007 Federal election, the victorious Labor party pledged to abolish full-fee paying domestic places at universities, although this policy has yet to be enacted.

In the 2006 Melbourne Model strategic plan, the university predicted that at undergraduate level 5-10% per cent of students would be domestic, fee-paying students, while around 20 per cent would be international fee paying students. In graduate degrees it was estimated that only 1/3 of students would be in government-supported places, with the remaining 2/3 split between domestic and international fee paying students (University of Melbourne, 2006C, p 6). New-generation undergraduate courses range between \$16,000 and \$25,000, and postgraduate courses such as Juris Doctor in Law can exceed \$85,000 (University of Melbourne, 2008). Students who could have previously obtained a professional degrees under a HECS place are now effectively required under the Melbourne Model to enrol in an undergraduate degree (with a reasonable chance of receiving a HECS supported-enrolment) and then a professional graduate degree (with approximately a 50 per cent chance of having to pay upfront fees). The main criticism of this new system is that it is elitist, with degrees being lengthier and more expensive, which discourages people from disadvantaged backgrounds from enrolling (Morton and Tomazin, 2007). The university has countered

criticisms that the Melbourne Model will lead to inequality due to increased fees by introducing a new scholarship and bursary system, worth \$100 million in the first three years of the model (University of Melbourne, 2007D, p 7).

The Melbourne Model can also be criticised as unnecessarily prolonging university education by devaluing undergraduate degrees and forcing students seeking professional employment to undertake second-cycle, graduate degrees. The decision by the University of Melbourne to retain the Honours year while implementing its new degree structure has arguably confused the status and value of first-cycle degrees. The first-cycle degree with Honours remains, for the moment, a legitimate pathway into third-cycle, doctoral studies. Students can bypass the second cycle altogether by opting to undertake Honours. The Honours year is deemed an extension of the first-cycle rather than as an abridged version of the second-cycle, calling into question the legitimacy of describing the Melbourne Model structure as 3+2+3 (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 16). The response by industry to the new structure is unpredictable, and will probably remain in a state of flux for several years as employers compare the standard of graduates of new generation degrees (at post graduate and undergraduate level) with their non-Melbourne Model contemporaries. If, for example, accounting firms deem graduates from the University of Melbourne's new generation Bachelor of Commerce degree to be under-prepared to commence employment, the addition of an Honours year to that degree, or more likely the addition of a second-cycle degree, will become the default course of study at the University of Melbourne for students wishing to join that field. The same could apply to any other discipline in which industry determines that graduates from the new generation first-cycle degrees compare unfavourably with graduates from professional first-cycle degrees from other institutions. This could have wider ramifications and could eventually lead to students completing traditional professional undergraduate degrees to also complete second-cycle degrees in order to appear to "match" the qualifications of the University of Melbourne contemporaries.

Finally, it is arguable that the Melbourne Model is fixing a problem that doesn't exist. The University of Melbourne is (on most measures) Australia's highest internationally ranked higher education institution, constantly ranking in the top 25 in the world. The radical institutional reform that underpins the Melbourne Model can be characterised as a large and unnecessary risk that is being undertaken to place Melbourne in a higher echelon than its Australian counterparts. The Melbourne Model was not initiated in response to falling

enrolments or failing research output, but rather in an attempt to further its position in international rankings and strengthen its position in the global higher education marketplace (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 1).

5.4 The Melbourne Model and the Bologna Process

The extent to which the Melbourne Model has been designed to align with the Bologna Process is unclear. There are undoubtedly some elements in the model that align with reforms in the Bologna Process, while other elements seem to remain ignored. Some initiatives in the Bologna Process cannot be as readily adopted by a single institution, requiring instead system-wide implementation, arguably leaving the university with little say in whether to attempt to implement them or not. Alternatively, the University of Melbourne could have arguably have attempted to align its own practices directly with those of the EHEA, bypassing regional compatibility in favour of the “Europeanisation” of its own degrees. For example, the university could overlay an ECTS scale over its existing credit transfer system to further facilitate mobility between the university and EHEA countries. Beyond changes to the degree structure however, very few of the Melbourne Model reforms seem overtly influence by the Bologna Process. Despite this the University of Melbourne’s own literature makes repeated references to the Bologna Process, and also invokes similarities with North American and Asian higher education systems. For example, the university has stated that:

“The Model draws on the 3+2+3 or three cycle structure identified within the Bologna Process, the objectives of the North American undergraduate ‘liberal education’, and related developments in Asia, but does so within the context of Australian higher education policy and history.” (University of Melbourne, 2006B, p 2)

Linking the Melbourne Model to the structures of higher education systems in other parts of the world is an obvious strategy of self-promotion. The university has acknowledged that convincing students, employers and professional bodies that the new model has educational and vocational advantages is crucial to the success of the Melbourne Model (University of Melbourne, 2006C, p 19). Scattered throughout the literature produced to explain and promote the Melbourne Model are numerous references to both the Bologna Process and the North American “model”. Most references to the international attraction of the Melbourne

Model refer to both. The question then raised is: why would the Melbourne Model align itself equally with both the North American higher education system and the EHEA? The answer appears to lie in that the Melbourne Model is not fully committed to following either system (or any third way). The degree structure resembles the EHEA, however references to broad, liberal education are linked to North America.

The attraction to aligning a new model of higher education with the North American system is apparent. North America contains a disproportionately high number of the world's most prestigious and highly ranked universities, many of which are household names throughout Australia and much of the rest of the world. References to "North American" liberal education in the context are clearly designed to invoke images of Ivy League schools and other grand research universities rather than the faceless community colleges and less glamorous institutions that provide the bulk of North American higher education. If the University of Melbourne wishes to confirm its place in the upper echelons of the world's universities, then references to a new model that emulates aspects of the North America system makes sense. Less obvious, however, are the reasons to call upon the Bologna Process and the EHEA. European universities, at least outside of the United Kingdom, would seem to have far less name recognition and prestige in Australia. While a deep rooted deference to European traditions and history may carry some cultural cache in Australia, it seems curious that in the Melbourne Model literature the Bologna Process holds equal billing with North America.

Despite the relative lack of prestige of European universities when compared with North American institutions, there are numerous reasons that the university may wish to emphasise the link between the Bologna Process and its own reforms made under the Melbourne Model. These reasons could include a desire to influence the policy direction of the broader Australian higher education system by emphasising the reforms taking place in Europe in the hope that regulatory and funding mechanisms might be altered in a manner favourable to the University of Melbourne. Under the previous Commonwealth Government much rhetoric had focussed on diversifying the Australian higher education system (Bishop, 2007B), and it is probable that the university was seeking legitimacy for its own structural reforms by invoking the reforms of other international regions, including Europe. While the North American model may be a more desirable model to emulate, it is relatively stable. The advantage of using the Bologna Process in this case is that the Australian reforms can be

matched with contemporaneous reform in Europe. This links back to the concept of the Bologna Process as a “master-idea”, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Attracting students, both Australian and international, is another reason to highlight the alignment with the Bologna Process as well as North America. The literature accompanying the introduction of the model emphasises “education without borders” and that the Melbourne Model will make students “global citizens” (University of Melbourne, 2006D). The portability and presumed mutual recognition of the university’s new generation degrees is one of the key attractions of the Melbourne Model. The extent to which the University of Melbourne’s new degrees will be treated differently from those of other Australian universities remains to be seen. The Melbourne Model in many ways hinges on students and employers, in both Australia and international settings, being aware of and responsive to the differences between the Melbourne Model and traditional Australian higher education providers. Under this international portability promotional strategy it is logical to call attention to as many international alignments as possible. While sporadic references to an alignment with Asia are included in promotional and explanatory texts, the dual references to North America and Europe that occur throughout the Melbourne Model literature are indicative of the markets that the university may wish to align itself with.

5.5 The Melbourne Model and the travel of ideas

The University of Melbourne is, along with DEST, one of the two bodies in Australian higher education that has attempted to act upon the Bologna Process in some form. The university’s motivations in acting can be examined against the framework of the travel of ideas that was established in Chapter 2. While the rhetoric, promotional material and explanations regarding the Melbourne Model use certain parallels to promote the changes that have taken place, considering these initiatives against the perspectives of internationalisation, globalisation and change theory can provide an insight as to the underlying motivations for the changes that have occurred. The Melbourne Model appears to have drawn from all three of these perspectives, and each in turn is analysed below.

5.5.1 The Melbourne Model under the internationalisation perspective

The internationalisation perspective of the travel of ideas emphasises collaboration with international partners in an organised, structured bilateral and multilateral manner. Universities seek out arrangements which further the transfer of knowledge which emphasise cooperation rather than competition. International activities are important to the university but the university remains entrenched in its geographic location and the needs of its community. Elements of such a model can be witnessed in the Melbourne Model. The change in degree structure to match the model proposed by the Bologna Process can be seen as an attempt to improve the mobility of students between regions. Altering the nature of first-cycle degrees away from a professional orientation in favour of generalist education can be seen as the means by which University of Melbourne graduates can gain degrees more readily accepted and understood within the North American higher education system which houses some of the world's most highly rated universities. By preparing students with a generalist educational background and better enabling them to engage with education systems and employers throughout the world the university is arguably utilising an internationalisation perspective by removing a barrier to the flow of information that had previously existed in the form of reduced capacity for student flows. The university is considering making international study (or an online "U21 Global subject") a compulsory element of all undergraduate study, further emphasising international collaboration with partner institutions. The Melbourne Model can also be characterised as having an internationalisation perspective given that in some respects it removes the University of Melbourne from the broader umbrella of the Australian higher education system, freeing the university from the benefits and detriments of perceptions of what Australian higher education entails, forcing the University to rely upon its own direct relationships with other institutions, governments, industry and students to define its reputation.

5.5.2 The Melbourne Model under the globalisation perspective

The globalisation perspective of the travel of ideas emphasises competition, markets and outward orientation in higher education institutions. Under a pure globalisation perspective universities have limited physical, cultural and economic links to their geographic location and community. Universities engage in international activities in order to maximise profit

and increase their influence. Globalised universities operate most effectively with minimal regulation and engage actively with industry. Once again, elements of the Melbourne Model can be viewed as incorporating aspects of this stylised and extreme rendering of globalisation perspective. The Melbourne Model can be seen as the policy of an institution that believes it has outgrown its own geographic constraints. The university is effectively stating that it believes the traditional degree structures and educational model of Australian higher education is preventing it from maintaining and furthering its aim of being one of the “world’s finest universities “ (University of Melbourne, 2006D, p 2). The Melbourne Model is a means of distancing the University of Melbourne from the Australia higher education system as a whole and entering the global sphere of higher education. It is a means of reducing reliance on waning government funding (Morton and Tomazin, 2007), and of aligning the university with what it deems to be its natural peers and competitors. By offering globally recognised degrees, the university hopes to attract Australian and international students who are prepared to pay high tuition fees for their degrees. The Melbourne Model’s own strategic plan notes that prestigious North American institutions:

“Have no difficulty persuading people that the years and dollars they ask for are well spent. They point to the quality of the educational experience and to clear evidence that graduates from these institutions achieve better jobs and higher salaries than people who study elsewhere.” (University of Melbourne, 2006C, p 19)

The University of Melbourne under the Melbourne Model can therefore be characterised as acting as a globalised university, with an overtly outwards orientation, trying to reduce its financial reliance on public funding and emulate prestigious North American institutions. Its move towards attracting more fee paying students and the alteration to government regulations which has allowed the Melbourne Model to be operationalised, both show that elements of a market oriented, globalisation perspective are operating upon the flow of ideas.

5.5.3 The Melbourne Model under the change theory perspective

The “change theory” perspective of the travel of ideas occupies a middle ground between the extreme characterisation of internationalisation and globalisation perspectives that have been used in this text to distil certain ideas. Change theory as applied to the travel of ideas in higher education is more reactive than the other perspectives, and relies upon loosely

coupled networks for the transmission of fashions and trends. The Melbourne Model is an interesting example of how this perspective can operate. It is not difficult to characterise the Melbourne Model's coopting of the "master-idea" of the Bologna Process as a clear example of change theory at work. By utilising knowledge and acceptance of an existing concept such as the Bologna Process (or more precisely the degree structure of the Bologna Process, although this distinction is rarely, if ever, drawn by the university itself) when describing the Melbourne Model, the University of Melbourne is able to normalise institutionalise change with less resistance than might be otherwise expected. The presence of references to the Bologna Process in the Melbourne Model literature could be attributed to a desire to present the need for change in the university as a *fait accompli*, as part of a broader movement of change that is irrepressibly taking place throughout Europe and the world. By utilising the master-idea of the Bologna Process, the Melbourne Model draws itself within the umbrella of the legitimacy of this idea and protects itself against the need for extensive justification and defence.

Utilising the change theory perspective, the Melbourne Model can also be seen as the ad hoc selection of ideas that have existed for a considerable period of time but have been drawn together by a leader. Glyn Davis, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, was brought from Griffith University to Melbourne specifically to steer the university in a new direction (Morton and Tomazin, 2007). By taking the degree structure from the Bologna Process, the generalist education concept from North America, and altering funding arrangements in an altogether different manner, the Vice-Chancellor has effectively plucked various ideas from a variety of sources to create a new model. This methodology invokes the randomness of change theory in which a good idea may remain unacted upon until an individual or network seizes upon it and champions it with sufficient success. The components of the Melbourne Model can be characterised as such ideas, which have moved from fashion to institutionalisation and back to fashion again before being operationalised and acted upon as part of the Melbourne Model.

5.6 Conclusion

The Melbourne Model is a significant initiative that radically alters the degree structure of one of Australia's leading universities. The broad, yet far from complete, move away from

lengthier professional undergraduate degrees to generalist undergraduate and professional postgraduate degrees is the key to the reform. The University of Melbourne appears to be picking and choosing elements from foreign higher education systems that it believes can improve its international standing (and rankings), without aligning itself with any particular country or region. The promotional and explanatory literature surrounding the Melbourne Model uses references to the Bologna Process and North American higher education liberally, and equally, as a justification and explanation for the changes being implemented. While the process contains elements that can be characterised as emanating from a globalisation or internationalisation perspective, the most compelling analysis suggests that the University of Melbourne has used the “master-idea” of the Bologna Process (and the weight of argument that supports it) as an umbrella under which it can shield itself from criticisms. The Melbourne Model in reality has little in common with the Bologna Process, other than a broad preference for a 3+2+3 system, although it seems increasingly likely that both the University of Melbourne and EHEA countries will use that as a very loose framework only. The Melbourne Model appears to be comprised of ideas collected by a strong leader who has utilised the idea of the Bologna Process and the legitimacy invoked by comparisons with prestigious North American institutions to drive a reform process. The success or otherwise of the model is likely to be determined by how students and employers, both Australian and international, perceive the status of both the new generation first and second cycle degrees.

6. Conclusion

The failure of the implementation of the Bologna Process in Australia makes an interesting case study regarding the supposedly irrepressible nature of globalisation in higher education. Much discourse surrounding globalisation and internationalisation carries an air of inevitability. These terms are often used in a manner as to make them synonymous with progress and modernity, an update of past practices and an improvement on what has gone before. Technology exists which has greatly increased the speed at which ideas can now travel: the Internet, improved and less expensive telephone communication, email and cheaper air-travel have all allowed information to be transmitted between individuals and groups far more quickly than ever before. With this technology has also come to some extent the idea that ideas should not only travel more quickly, but also be implemented more willingly. Ideas exist and are readily communicated, but it can often appear that little thought is placed upon the suitability of ideas in different contexts and environments.

A dichotomy still exists in the world of higher education between North and South, massified and elite systems, funding ideologies and population sizes. The notion that higher education can be reformed through the adaptation and subsequent adoption of a single model of higher education belies these differences. The improved capability to transmit and receive ideas has instead become linked with a parallel compulsion to implement ideas that may or may not be appropriate in another context. Higher education reformers need to consider not only the context of their national or regional higher education system, but also the broader social and economic context they operate in, prior to assuming that an idea can be transplanted and implemented successfully. The example of the discussion that is occurring regarding the implementation of a Bologna Process style system in Africa or Latin America, where higher education participation rates measure significantly below those of North America, Australia and much of Europe, indicates that perhaps the broader context is absent from considerations regarding higher educational reform. Attempting to emulate European reforms without first addressing the same issues of access, finance and quality of higher education faced by the higher education systems of more developed countries in previous decades will likely lead to a schizophrenic and disjointed higher education systems throughout many parts of the world.

The contrast between Europe and Australia is less pronounced and dramatic than that of Europe and Africa, or Europe and Latin America. The similarities are significant enough that the many differences between these two parts of the world are sometimes overlooked by those individuals and institutions in Australia that wish to adopt European reforms. The reality of two continents with vastly divergent circumstances of population, history, language, geography, governance and culture should automatically raise the question of how well reforms designed for one will necessarily fit the other. The response to the Discussion Paper by the majority of stakeholders in the Australian higher education sector shows that at an institutional and organisation level there is an awareness of these differences and that the popularity and momentum of reforms does and should not guarantee the worldwide implementation of that particular idea.

Globalisation, internationalisation and change theory all offer different perspectives on this phenomenon of the travel of ideas. They offer alternative explanations as to the driving force behind change and for the manner in which ideas reach certain times and spaces. Taken to the extreme, globalisation can be characterised as a malignant force at odds with educational values, in which corporate values and financial incentives drive human behaviour. By contrast, the distillation of internationalisation leaves a far more benign influence, in which a vast network of academic staff and students cooperate beyond international borders. These two caricatures of perspectives provide an insight not only of how ideas actually travel, but of the forces that act upon ideas as they move throughout the world. The middle approach, compatible with the “muddling through” perspective of Lindblom, emphasises the lack of coherent policy, opportunity for reflection and the role of chance inherent in the travel of ideas. Lindblom’s perspective reminds us that ideas, and the individuals who champion and implement them, do not operate in a contextual vacuum and are not slaves to any single perspective or theory. None of these perspectives acts independently of the others. Ideas seemingly steeped in internationalisation will invariably exhibit traces of globalisation, or some other theory that cannot be rationally explained. Similarly, most policy decisions that appear haphazard and irrational will nevertheless be informed by the context in which the decision maker operates – a context in which globalisation and internationalisation are likely to be drivers of action. Despite the lack of purity of theoretical perspective present in any given idea, understanding the context and composition of certain ideas provides useful indicators for assessing how and why certain ideas travel in time and space while others remain ignored.

In the context of higher education, the flow of ideas around the world and the pressure to imitate and adapt to trends is apparent. Attempts are made to transplant ideas that were formed and implemented in often quite specific contexts to altogether different contexts. The Bologna Process is one such idea, comprised of elements with their source in globalisation, internationalisation and change theory. The relative success and speed of adoption of the Bologna Process within Europe has surprised many observers, who had not predicted that a voluntary, bottom-up reform of this type and magnitude could be so effective (Sedgwick, 2003). Perhaps this unexpected enthusiasm prompted reformers throughout the world to consider the applicability of the Bologna Process to their own domestic systems.

While the pressure to innovate and change is present, the direction of such innovation is not usually obvious. During a visit to the University of Melbourne in 2006, Professor James Wilkinson, the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University stated:

I don't think Australian higher education has any choice but to diversify and innovate now. There's a long lead time in education. It is not smart just to think that what worked well in the past might work well in the future. (Crommelin, 2008)

While Wilkinson is correct that it is smart to think about the future, those thoughts must be tempered with a consideration of context and appropriateness. As the French author Antoine de Saint Exupéry said: "As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it." DEST, in releasing the Discussion Paper, was undoubtedly thinking about what might work well in the future. Similarly, the Melbourne Model is an anticipation of the future image of Australian higher education and an attempt to pre-empt change and lead the pack. Yet DEST failed to identify the type of change being sought, or more probably the type of change which would at least be accepted within the higher education sector. DEST embraced globalisation and internationalisation and argued that the future lay in alignment with Europe. The University of Melbourne embraced a similar perspective but instead looked towards North America, with only token regard for Europe. Asia may look elsewhere, or create a new order of higher education based upon models that it finds preferable. It is impossible to predict accurately the trends that will become institutionalised and those that will be dismissed as a passing fashion.

The rejection of the implementation of this idea in Australia indicates that the onward march of global forces and popular ideas (however they are labelled) is not inevitable and does not occur without hiccups, or at least temporary detours, along the way. The prevailing ideas, or most popular idea, cannot always be applied out of context. Røvik provides a template for attempting to explain why some ideas succeed in implementation while others fail. The characteristics he prescribes as necessary for success revolve around power relationships and the selling of an idea. How these characteristics inter-relate and blend to form the circumstances that allow for an idea to be implemented is complex, yet the consequences for the Bologna Process in Australia were clear. The lack of sufficient support for the idea, and the inability of its backers to show the Bologna Process to be a progressive new product, lead to its rejection and apparent abandonment in Australia.

This rejection of the Bologna Process in Australia is not necessarily absolute, and does not preclude the resurrection of the idea at some future juncture. Ideas, and particularly those ideas that are popular or which gain momentum elsewhere, can be resurrected or revived in new forms and with new emphasises. The example of the University of Melbourne's extensive reforms demonstrates that universal sectoral approval is not always necessary for reforms to take place. As the implementation of the Bologna Process continues in Europe and other regions and countries more precisely determine their own positions regarding Europe, the idea of the Bologna Process will undoubtedly continue to be considered and debated in Australia. The unique position of higher education systems in countries such as Australia where institutions have some degree of autonomy allows for the possibility that in a slightly more globalised (and therefore deregulated) higher education system that more institutions, if not the sector as a whole, could choose to align themselves more closely with Europe. This scenario become even more likely should Australia's status as an international leader in higher education export diminish due to a regional shift in higher education power centres. For the moment however, the idea of the Bologna Process has been rejected at implementation stage in Australia and any future revival is the province of speculation. As a result, the Bologna Process makes an interesting study of the attractiveness, diffusion and rejection of a global reform idea.

Appendices

Appendix A - Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
3+2+3	The degree structure proposed under the Bologna Process, comprising a 3 year first cycle (Bachelor) degree, a 2 year second cycle (Masters) degree and a 3 year third cycle (Doctoral) degree.
AMC	Australian Medical Council
ATSE	Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering
DEEWR	The Australian Commonwealth Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (successor to DEST)
DEST	The Australian Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
THES	Times Higher Education Supplement

Appendix B – Summary of submissions

This appendix contains short summaries of some of the responses to the Discussion Paper analysed in Chapter 4.

Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee

The Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee (AVCC, now known as Universities Australia) is the industry peak body representing the Vice-Chancellors of Australia's universities. The AVCC responds separately to each of the 15 questions posed in the Discussion Paper, although it is possible to extrapolate some general themes for their submission. The tone of the AVCC response is that Bologna Process compatibility is not necessarily desirable for Australia or the only sensible option for the Australian higher education sector. The AVCC response is wary of what it views as pejorative descriptions of the Australian sector in the Discussion Paper, and warns against the use of dismissive language when describing Australian higher education (AVCC 2006, p 1). The submission notes that alliance with the higher education systems of North America and China may be of far greater importance to the Australian higher education sector than compatibility with Europe (AVCC 2006, p 2). The AVCC also notes that while the Discussion Paper focuses on the benefits of Bologna Process compatibility and the risks of Bologna Process incompatibility, it fails to examine the possible risks to Australia of seeking Bologna Process compatibility (AVCC 2006, p 1). The AVCC is clearly concerned that the diversity and quality that exists within the Australian higher education sector could be compromised by an attempt to overlay a rigid degree structures model. The AVCC essentially argues that many of the problems that the Bologna Process was designed to fix do not exist in Australia, and the altering the Australian higher education system to be compatible with a system which itself does not require uniformity is potentially a waste of resources, particularly given the divergent paths of North America and Asia.

One interesting recommendation made by the AVCC is that DEST undertake discussions with Asia-Pacific Governments to determine if those countries are looking to follow the Bologna Process structure or whether they are looking at aligning their systems with the USA/Canadian model (AVCC 2006, p 7). The clear inference from this recommendation is that Australia should adopt a monitoring stance to ensure that it can "pick a winner" and not follow a course that would isolate it from the type of higher education systems adopted by its Asia-Pacific neighbours. The United Kingdom is also viewed as an interesting reference point for Australia if Australia does choose to adopt a passive stance in relation to the Bologna Process. The United Kingdom is an Anglophone country in the EHEA with significant similarities in its higher education system to Australia, leading the AVCC to

conclude that its experiences and attitudes to issues such as course structure and course length could be useful references for Australia (AVCC 2006, pp 7-10). Overall, the AVCC takes a cautious and slightly negative approach regarding initiatives designed to make the Australian higher education system more compatible with the Bologna Process. Their concern is that Australia will align itself with the European system, while Asia may develop an incompatible system or else align itself with North America. Further, there is concern that longer professional undergraduate degrees may be compromised by a move to a 3+2+3 structure, while the future role and value of one-year Masters degrees is also uncertain.

Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies

The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDOGS) provided a submission to DEST concerned primarily with doctoral studies under the Bologna Process. DDOGS agrees that compatibility with the Bologna Process could facilitate international recognition of degrees from Australian universities and provide direct benefits to Australian student and employers (DDOGS 2006, p 1). Despite this, DDOGS has some reservations regarding pursuit of Bologna Process compatibility. Engagement with international academic staff is high, with 50 per cent of research degrees examiners coming from foreign countries and research shows that Australian research is already considered to be of a high quality by international standards (DDOGS 2006, p 1). DDOGS also note that compatibility with the USA, where interest in the Bologna Process is limited, may be more relevant in the field of doctoral studies than compatibility with the Bologna Process. It is clear from the submission that DDOGS sees some benefit of moves towards making Australian doctoral degrees compatible with those of the EHEA, but not to the detriment of the current high quality of Australian degrees or if such moves would hinder compatibility with the USA. DDOGS notes that the doctoral studies component of the Bologna Process is relatively immature and that further work will continue in this regard in the future, which DDOGS intends to monitor.

The Group of Eight

The Group of Eight (Go8) is the self-styled peak body for eight of Australia's leading universities. The Go8 response to the Discussion Paper is generally supportive of moves to make the Australian system compatible with the Bologna Process, although it draws several

caveats with regard to compatibility beyond Europe to Australia's other key partners and markets. The Go8 notes that "the internationalization of higher education reaches into all corners of the globe and an appreciation of this fact must influence how we respond to the Bologna Process" (Go8, 2006, p 2). Without being directly critical of the focus on Europe, the Go8 is making the point that links with India, Pakistan, China and the USA are all at least as relevant to Go8 member universities as links with Europe. The call for an "appropriate" response to the Bologna Process and the emphasis on links with both Europe and the rest of the world is most probably based upon the fact that the Go8 see themselves as Australia's best placed universities to compete with the international universities of the USA, and the submission is wary of any reforms or restructure of the Australian system that would reduce the Go8's ability to compete on the global stage.

Ultimately, the Go8 submission says very little about the Bologna Process. This can be construed as interesting in and of itself. The fact that the body representing eight of Australia's top ranked and most prestigious universities chooses to make only a very limited comment on what has the potential to be a major debate on the structure and focus of Australian higher education is intriguing, and this lack of comment has many potential causes. It is possible that this body does not wish to openly criticise the focus on the Bologna Process for political reasons, or that it has yet to determine a unanimous viewpoint. It is quite probable that within the Go8 exist vastly different opinions on the merits of pursuing Bologna Process compatibility, as evidenced by the fact that while one member (The University of Melbourne) has adopted radical restructures other universities in this group are retaining traditional Australian degree structures. Regardless of the underlying cause of this limited response, the fact that one of the major (and usually vocal) stakeholders in Australian higher education has chosen not to attempt to directly influence the debate on the Bologna Process is noteworthy.

The Australian Technology Network of Universities

The contrast between the Go8 submission and that of the Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) is strong. The ATN is resolute in its support of aligning the Australian higher education system with the Bologna Process, stating that "the case for ensuring compatibility between Australian universities and the Bologna Process is clear" (ATN, 2006, p 1). The ATN believes that aligning Australia's system with the EHEA would have clear

benefits for students and employers in Australia, as well as maintaining the international market for Australian higher education providers (ATN, 2006, p 1). The ATN believes the main risk from not seeking increased compatibility with the Bologna Process is that Australia's strong position as an education exporter will be lost if Asian countries align their systems with Europe but Australia does not (ATN, 2006, p2). While noting that some countries within Asia are presently aligned with the USA higher education system, the ATN does not appear to consider that a broader Asian alliance with the USA (rather than the EHEA) as a potential risk. The contrast between the enthusiastic support for compatibility with the Bologna Process by ATN and the cautious, and quietly dismissive tone of the Go8 submission is worthy of comment. As noted earlier, the Go8 represents Australia's elite research universities, all of which are ranked in the world's top 70 universities according to the 2007 Times Higher Education Supplement. These institutions exist amongst the world's elite and outrank all but six continental European universities. The Go8's indifference towards the Bologna Process could easily be predicated on a belief that Go8 universities do not need to alter their existing structures to compete for the best students and staff. In the same manner that the USA has been unconcerned with alignment with the EHEA, it is plausible that the lack of a strong response from the Go8 is born out of a lack of urgency to respond to what these universities may well privately believe to be a tier below them in the international higher education sector.

By contrast, the ATN represents what is arguably the third tier of Australia's higher education system. These universities do not rank as highly on any international measures as the Go8 universities. Yet they have a strong interest in the perception and reality of Australia collectively being recognised as an internationally attractive destination for foreign students. ATN members account for approximately 25 per cent of Australia's international students (ATN 2006, p 1). It clearly believes that Australia needs to protect its position in the higher education market and sees "no option in the longer term but to pursue a process of alignment with Bologna" (ATN, 2006, p 4). It is probably the relative lack of prestige of the ATN universities in the international market place compared to their Go8 counterparts that had encouraged the ATN to be so enthusiastic of Australian government intervention in this issue. The offer of the ATN universities to undertake a trial to determine the best way to pursue Bologna Process compatibility further emphasises the desire of this tier of universities to see the Australian higher education sector as a whole pursue greater alignment with the EHEA.

Innovative Research Universities Australia

Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA) represent the second tier of Australia's universities. The IRUA submission in response to the Discussion Paper is cautious and in some respects resembles the response of the AVCC. The IRUA believes that the Australian higher education system in many ways already resembles that type of system which the Bologna Process seeks to achieve (IRUA 2006, p 2). It cautions against using resources to make further changes in order to make the Australian system fully compatible with the EHEA on the basis that the changes may well be unnecessary (IRUA 2006, p 2). Similarly to the AVCC, the IRUA warns against diminishing Australia's comparative advantage against other countries by curtailing the variety in the Australian higher education system in favour of a 'one size fits all' approach to restructuring the system.

The "watching brief" proposed by the IRUA contains three elements. Firstly, it recommends that the Commonwealth government provide leadership in monitoring the Bologna Process by liaising with relevant European authorities, ensuring that the Australian higher education is understood throughout Europe and by engaging with Asia-Pacific countries to promote a regional response to the Bologna Process (IRUA, 2006, p 1). Secondly, the IRUA believes that there should be a forum through which Australian higher education institutions can discuss a common approach to the Bologna Process and where over-arching principles can be agreed (IRUA, 2006, p 2). Thirdly, the IRUA advocates leaving individual institutions to determine their own strategic decisions with regards to alignment with the Bologna Process, rather than imposition of a regulatory framework or mandatory reforms by the government (IRUA, 2006, p 2).

The IRUA response is interesting in that it calls for engagement with the Bologna Process by the government, but only for the purposes of acquiring, distilling and distributing information. Under the IRUA submission the Australian higher education system would be further fragmented and decentralised as individual institutions made decisions as to the extent (if any) that they would adopt Bologna Process reforms. Although not stated in the IRUA proposal, a third option would be a semi-regulatory approach from the government, whereby certain aspects of the Bologna Process would become mandatory in Australia (the Diploma Supplement and a credit transfer system, for example), while other aspects would remain discretionary. Under such a system it is feasible that the desires of groups with

disparate agendas such as the Go8 and the ATU could both be satisfied. Those institutions that felt the Bologna Process reforms to be detrimental or unnecessary for their particular mission could engage in relatively minor reforms, while other institutions could utilise the knowledge and influence of the government to fully embrace European markets (and marketability) through thorough compatibility with the Bologna Process. This type of middle ground is readily imaginable as the type of compromise approach that could appease both the internationally renowned institutions as well as those less prestigious universities that rely heavily on international students to support their institutions.

Australian Universities Quality Agency

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) provided a largely sceptical submission regarding the merits of alignment with the Bologna Process. AUQA's submission focussed on highlighting the deficiencies of the Bologna Process and emphasising the different contexts in which the Australian and European higher education systems operate. The submission notes that the Bologna Process was implemented to try to increase the competitiveness of European universities in a time when it was perceived that they were losing ground to their North American counterparts (AUQA, 2006, p 1). The AUQA submission highlights that the Australian higher education system is in a much more robust state of health and that trying to adopt the Bologna Process makes little sense. Instead of focussing on the activities in the EHEA, AUQA argue that Australia should be concentrating on identifying the strengths of the Australian system, ensuring that these strengths are further developed and further ensuring that clear information about the sector is available to other parts of the world (AUQA, 2006, p 8).

In contrast to other proposals, AUQA appears to see limited value in aligning the Australian higher education system with any other region or country, but instead highlighting the points of strength and focussing on the dissemination of information. Such an approach is inherently risky: if significant higher education systems in the Asia-Pacific region aligned themselves with the EHEA or the USA, then it is probable that despite the best efforts to publicise the merits of the Australian system that Australia's international higher education standing would decline. The AUQA approach could also be accused of overstating the attraction of Australian universities to international students. The question is raised as to whether the same volume of students would come to Australia to undertake higher education

if the system remained unaligned with other major regions throughout the world. Finding an appropriate mid-point at which both the strength, and attraction of Australia's higher education system is promoted, while at the same time the desirability of some form of compatibility with the EHEA (or any other region) is understood could be a worthwhile compromise.

Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering

The Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) delivered a response to the Discussion Paper concentrating predominantly on engineering education. ATSE notes that the current Australian engineering education system is broadly compatible with that of the EHEA, but emphasises some potential problems with restructuring Australia's four-year (with on-course Honours) Bachelor degrees and one or two year Masters degrees in engineering with a strict interpretation of the Bologna Process degree structure (ATSE, 2006, p 1). It should be noted that the Bologna Process does not mandate the 3+2+3 degree structure and that there is scope for different combinations of degree length and type. ATSE's concern seems to stem from a fear that a move towards a rigid degree structure that fits the three-year Bachelor and two-year masters degree profile of the Bologna Process would necessitate the creation of a sub-professional engineering Bachelor degree, and therefore effectively force those seeking employment within the field to undertake an additional Masters degree by default (ATSE 2006, p 1). ATSE contends that this would force engineering students of Australian universities to undertake an additional year of study for no discernible benefit, given the apparent satisfaction of employers with the quality of degree and the mutual recognition with USA engineering standards that Australia currently enjoys (ATSE 2006, p 1). In addition, many Australian engineering students undertaking doctoral studies bypass the second stage of the degree cycle, moving directly from the four year undergraduate degree to doctoral studies. ATSE's submission expresses the concern that for the reasons states above, prospective doctoral students undertaking the sub-professional three-year Bachelor degree would have little option but to undertake a Masters degree prior to entry into doctoral studies, thus also extending the length of their studies by an additional year (ATSE, 2006, pp 1-2).

The ATSE argument against the adoption of a strict EHEA-style degree structure is essentially based on two main premise: that the quality of engineering graduates under a

four-year Bachelor (including Honours) degree is of sufficient quality, and that the USA and Australia have mutual recognition of engineering education standards. Similarly to other submissions, the question raised is once again why would Australia adopt a solution to solve a problem that does not exist? In the case of engineers (and ATSE argue much the same with regard to applied sciences) a move away from a four-year Bachelor degree with Honours, to an essentially unusable three-year bachelor plus two-years Masters is arguably a backwards step. ATSE sees little value in compatibility with the EHEA and the lack of urgency in aligning the Australian system with that of the EHEA is implicit in the references to mutual recognition that Australian engineering education enjoys with the USA. The ATSE submission ultimately concludes that individual institutions should have discretion to align themselves with the Bologna Process if they choose, but that it is likely most engineering in Australia schools in Australia would choose to continue with the present structure.

Australian Medical Council

The submission from the Australian Medical Council (AMC) highlights the diversity of entry points and lengths of periods of study to gain a medical degree in Australia. The AMC notes that of the 15 medical schools operating in Australia, medical courses range from 4-6 years in length and depending upon the school are entered as either a graduate or directly from secondary school (AMC, 2006 p 1). Similarly to the ATSE submission, the AMC queries the value of trying to force the current diversity of medical degrees into a three cycle degree structure, and also notes that there are concerns amongst EHEA countries regarding the creation of three-year Bachelor degrees in medicine (AMC, 2006, p 2). The AMC also notes that it is involved in international quality assurance work and that as a result of this the USA's department of Education recognises Australian medical degrees as being comparable to USA issued degrees (AMC, 2006, p 2). The essence of the AMC submission is therefore very similar to that of ATSE: that reconfiguring medical education to meet a strict interpretation of the Bologna Process degree structure is both impractical and unnecessary. There is also a subtext that recognition by relevant authorities in the USA is a far more relevant concern than closer alignment to the EHEA member countries. The submission does not go so far as to criticise the Bologna Process reforms, but the absence of any reference to specific benefits offered by closer to alignment to the EHEA indicate that the

AMC sees any reforms undertaken with regard to making medical training in Australia more closely aligned with the EHEA as a concern rather than as a potential benefit.

National Union of Students

The National Union of Students (NUS) provided a generally negative submission in response to the Discussion Paper. The NUS states that its policy position with regard to the Bologna Process is “still evolving” but the overall tone of the submission is cautious while relying on some general criticisms of the Bologna Process authored by the ESIB (National Unions of Students In Europe). The submission attempts to respond to each of the 15 questions posed by the Discussion Paper as well as proving some general comments on issues including how funding mechanisms would be altered by any change in degree structure.

The NUS query whether second-cycle degrees would be funded through the HECS scheme or whether the current situation where tuition for second cycle degrees is commonly paid up-front would continue (NUS, 2006, pp 4-5). The submission also queries the financial impact upon both Australian and international students of lengthening many second-cycle degrees beyond their current one-year duration to two years. The NUS fears that unless second-cycle degrees are funded in a similar manner to first-cycle degrees that a fee-spiral could occur and both domestic and international students could be deterred from studying in Australia. The NUS submission also considers the issue of what alignment of the Australian higher education system with the Bologna Process entails, and notes that there are marked policy differences between minimalist implementation and total Bologna Process compatibility (NUS, 2006, p 4).

The backdrop of the NUS policy position that higher education should be “free” and publicly funded is relevant to this submission. Issues related to funding, commoditisation of education and class sizes have all been included in the content of the NUS submission which demonstrates dissatisfaction with the Australian higher education system. While the arguments raised in the submission are occasionally ad hoc, the tone of the NUS submission is that compatibility with the Bologna Process is an issues that should be ranked low on the agenda of necessary higher education reforms and that if Bologna Process oriented reforms

were to occur that the primary issue of concern to students would be how the financial impact of such changes would be mitigated by the Commonwealth government.

National Tertiary Education Union

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) provided a detailed submission that addressed all aspects of the Australian higher education system's compatibility with the Bologna Process. The submission is generally supportive in principle of attempts to move towards alignment of the Australian system with that of the EHEA countries, although there are caveats raised in relation to practicalities of seeking to align the Australian higher education system with the Bologna Process. The NTEU submission voices uncertainty as to the practicality of achieving such alignment given the different types of challenges facing higher education in Europe and Australia and questions the tangible benefits of such an alignment.

The NTEU submission states explicitly that it is supportive of the overall objectives of increasing staff and student mobility, increasing transparency in relation to degree structures, the Diploma Supplement, initiatives to increase international engagement and initiatives to improve quality assurance in the higher education sector both in Australia and internationally (NTEU, 2006, p 2). This support is tempered by concern for the need for Australia to maintain some form of alignment with China and other key Asian markets (NTEU, 2006, p 3). The submission notes that China is the biggest market for Australian, European and North American transnational education initiatives (NTEU, 2006, p3), which leads to the inference that Australia should wait to see what course of reforms China adopts (if any) before committing to a particular process. The NTEU questions whether the different types of funding models that exist between Europe and Asia-Pacific would hinder an attempt to introduce similar reforms. The submission raises similar concerns that if the professional qualification for students effectively becomes a Masters degree, that without an overhaul of the student funding system in Australia many students who are currently able to achieve a professional qualification (via a three or four year Bachelor degree) could be financially excluded from obtaining a professional qualification under a Bologna Process type of degree structure (NTEU, 2006, pp 14-15).

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