Colloque international
«Éducation/formation: la recherche de qualité»

18-20 avril 2006,
Ho Chi Minh Ville, Viêt-nam,

Quality Assurance: Changing Policy Agendas, Power Relations and the Implementation of European Policies at National Level: The case of Greece

Stamelos G. – Papadiamantaki Y. – Bartzakli M

University of Peloponnese – University of Patras

Introduction

The paper discusses the implementation of European policies concerning the creation of European Higher Education Area and European Research Area (EHEA/ERA) and the creation of a quality assurance system in Greece.

The first part focuses on the shifting EU discourse on HE and the implications of current EU policies for the construction of EHEA/ERA. The second part discusses the difficulties of adjusting European policy framework at the national level. This is exemplified by the attempts of the Ministry of Education (MoE) under two administrations (socialist and conservative) to introduce a quality assurance system in Greece and the opposition with which it has met. The third part analyses the deadlock reached, the implications of EU actions for actors in the Greek university system and the changes in the balance of power involved.

1. From Quality Assessment to Quality Assurance: a shifting European Discourse

It can be argued that issues related to quality assurance were on the EU policy agenda since the '70s (Jallade,2003). However until 2000 the emphasis was on the transparency and recognition of qualifications. Between 1975 and 1985 seven Directives were adopted concerning the "mutual recognition of diplomas and certificates, including measures to facilitate the exercise of the right of establishment and freedom to provide services"(EC, 1989, 1992, 1996). In 1988 Directive 89/48/EEC issued the Directive concerning a general system of recognition of higher education diplomas relating to vocational training of a minimum length of three years. The main principle of the directive was that recognition must be based on mutual confidence and comparability of training levels. In 1994 the report on "Recognition of diplomas for academic and professional purposes: Interaction for a single European area for education, training and the professions"(Jallade,2003:230-231) listed a number of proposals under five headings

- Information
- Mobility
- Intentional Convergence
- Quality Assessment
- Academic Professional forum.

Here the issue of quality assessment is presented in the EU discourse, as a prerequisite for the comparability of degrees and in order to enhance the mobility of the labour force.

Since 1999/2000, quality assurance acquired heightened importance due to the policies for the creation of EHEA/ERA. Currently two parallel processes, both aiming at the creation of EHEA, occur: Bologna and Lisbon[1]. Below we present the overlap of rationales and objectives.

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[1] Here one should note that not all signatory countries in the Bologna Process are member states of the European Union. In contrast signatory countries in the Lisbon process are exclusively members of the EU. The reader is cautioned that the term European policies refers both to policies that are to be implemented by EU member states and to policies agreed upon by EU and other European states.

1.1 The Bologna Process

The Bologna process led to a wide range of actions at national level in many signatory countries. With varying scope and pace governments undertook initiatives towards achieving Bologna objectives in interaction with higher education actors and stakeholders. They focused on the reform of degree systems and the expansion of ECTS, to be used as a generalised basis for transfer and accumulation of credits (Haug & Tauch, 2001). Since Berlin the discussions comprised learning outcomes, competencies, teaching and evaluation methods, expanding their scope from structure to the inner logic and the development of study programmes.

At the Prague meeting (2001), the following key points were confirmed:

- *Simplifying the patchwork of higher education qualifications:* existing organisations and networks such as NARICs[2] and ENICs[3] were requested to promote simple, efficient and fair recognition.

- *Ensuring high standards:* higher education institutions, national agencies and the ENQA[4], in co-operation with corresponding bodies from countries, which are not members of ENQA, were requested to establish a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice.

- *Improving mobility within Europe and attracting students from around the world:* Ministers confirmed their commitment to the removal of all obstacles to mobility and agreed on the importance of enhancing the attractiveness of European higher education for students from Europe and other parts of the world.

- *Lifelong learning:* is still considered an essential element of the EHEA

This agenda emphasised in particular the role of quality assurance in ensuring high quality standards and in facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout Europe, and gave a boost to the establishment of ENQA in 2000.

By 2003, (Berlin meeting) ENQA received the mandate to propose standards and guidelines for Q.A. in the EHEA. The report for "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance"[5] was drafted by ENQA, in consultation with the EUA, ESIB and EURASHE and upon discussions with various relevant networks and presented in February 2005.

The main recommendations of the report are the following:
- There will be European standards for internal and external quality assurance, and for external quality assurance agencies.
- European quality assurance agencies will be expected to submit themselves to a cyclical review within five years.
- There will be an emphasis on subsidiarity, with reviews undertaken nationally, where possible.
- A European register of quality assurance agencies will be produced.
- A European Register Committee will act as a gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the register.
- A European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be established.

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[2] National Academic Recognition Information Centres

[3] European Network of Information Centres

[4] European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education. ENQA's General Assembly confirmed in November 2004 the change of the former European Network into the European Association

[5] The term "quality assurance" in this report includes evaluation, accreditation and audit.

When the recommendations are implemented:

- The consistency of quality assurance across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will be improved by the use of agreed standards and guidelines.
- Higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies across the EHEA will be able to use common reference points for quality assurance.
- The register will make it easier to identify professional and credible agencies.
- Procedures for the recognition of qualifications will be strengthened.
- The credibility of the work of quality assurance agencies will be enhanced.
- The exchange of viewpoints and experiences amongst agencies and other key stakeholders (including higher education institutions, students and labour market representatives) will be enhanced through the work of the European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
- The mutual trust among institutions and agencies will grow.
- The move toward mutual recognition will be assisted.

The involvement of the EU in the Bologna Process is not limited to its membership of the Follow-up Group. It actively (financially) supports various activities that are considered part of it. Especially projects in areas such as quality assurance, the tuning of educational structures, qualification frameworks, and the development of (especially joint) master degrees (EC, 2003a, 2003b; Tauch & Rauhvargers, 2002).

1.2 The Lisbon Strategy

The challenges of globalisation and the knowledge economy, were acknowledged by the European Council at the Lisbon meeting (2000). The following strategic target was set for 2010: "To become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (EC, 2002). In the view of the Council, these changes required not only a radical transformation of the European economy, but also the modernisation of social welfare and education systems. Therefore the Commission was given a mandate to undertake action, without, however, enlarging the legal basis for it. The national governments have always been reluctant to transfer powers relating to higher education to the EU level, despite gradual changes over time. Reluctance to harmonization and standardization remains at least at the political level. Despite hesitations, the Education Council and the European Commission were called to reflect on the concrete objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns while respecting national diversity.

This new direction made clear that education was seen as a key factor in achieving the Lisbon agenda. The Barcelona European Council (March 2002) underlined this by pointing out that education was one of the bases of the European social model and that Europe's education systems should become a 'world quality reference' by 2010. It also demonstrated that the Commission was enlarging its field of operation and policy implementation in education. It openly states now that in addition to areas where article 149 and 150 of the Amsterdam Treaty (signed in 1997) define the European competencies and in which the EU programmes such as SOCRATES are being implemented, it also undertakes action in the context of the EU on the basis of political co-operation between Member States. This is not based on EU directives but takes the form of recommendations, communications from the Commission, consultations, or other working documents. This form of political co-operation has grown in education and training in recent years and has been boosted by the Lisbon summit (EC, 2002).

The Commission's work programme on the future objectives of education and training systems has set forth the following key objectives:

- improving the quality and effectiveness of education / training systems in the EU;
- facilitating the access of all to education / training programmes;
- opening up education / training systems to the wider world.

The achievement of these goals appears difficult, considering the lack of direct policy instruments. The Council defined a new approach to political co-ordination: the 'open method of co-ordination', which has as its main purpose to achieve greater convergence towards EU goals, in sensitive areas, such as education, where a common policy is not feasible but where there is a need for the creation of a more unified European policy space.

The method helps states to progressively develop their own policies towards commonly agreed objectives, by providing a co-operation framework for the states with a view to convergence of national policies. It is based essentially on:

- defining jointly the objectives to be attained;
- accepting commonly-defined benchmarks (statistics, indicators) enabling Member States to know where they stand and to assess progress towards the objectives set;
- disseminating tools to stimulate innovation, the quality and relevance of teaching programmes (best practice examples, pilot projects, etc).

This provided both the initial impetus and the political means for the preparation and adoption in 2002 of a detailed work programme on the future objectives of education and training systems (EC, 2002).

This method of common objectives, translated into national action plans, and implemented through consultative follow-up and peer review, which may act as pressure groups, shows overlapping characteristics with the Bologna process. However, the European Commission is leading this process directly.

1.3 A shifting European Discourse

Based on the above it can be noted that European action in higher education have expanded both across policy levels and geographical borders.

Since 2000 a shift in the EU discourse can be discerned. Past discourse focused almost exclusively on quality assurance as a means for enhancing cooperation among higher education institutions, degree comparability and recognition. The scope of the policy was European; the rationale was mainly economic and focused on quality assurance as a tool promoting mobility with a view to the creation of a European labour force. Currently the EU is setting forth a European strategy to complement national policies in order to cope with globalisation pressures. The Lisbon agenda repeatedly refers to a widespread concern for the enhancement of the standing and attractiveness of EU institutions. The rational is both economic and political and an explicit element of competition has been introduced in the European discourse on higher education.

A growing concurrence of the Bologna objectives and the agenda of the European Commission can be observed. Characteristically the report for "Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance in the EHEA" states: *"Quality Assurance in H.E. is by no means only a European concern. All over the world there is an increasing interest in quality and standards, reflecting both the rapid growth of higher education and its cost to the public and private purse. Accordingly, if Europe is to achieve its aspiration to be the most dynamic and knowledge-based economy in the world (Lisbon Strategy), then European higher education will need to demonstrate that it takes the quality of its programmes and awards seriously and is willing to put into place the means of assuring and demonstrating that quality. The initiatives and demands, which are springing up both inside and outside Europe in the face of this internationalisation of higher education, demand a response. The commitment of all those involved in the production of these proposals augurs well for the fulfilment of a truly European dimension to quality assurance with which to reinforce the attractiveness of the EHEA's higher education offering"* (Quality Assurance Report, 2005:9)

Still, there are differences between the two processes.

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The Bologna process was undertaken bottom-up while the Lisbon process is led directly by the Commission; fact which has implications in terms of perceived ownership. There are differences in terms of the mode of multi-level governance these processes represent. The Bologna Process can be seen as characterized by "mutual adjustment" whereas in the case of the Lisbon process one could speak of "intergovernmental negotiation" (Scharpf, 2001).

The EU's main rationale for action seems to be an economic one, which is again visible in the Lisbon process and the communication on the role of universities. And although the broad motivations and objectives of the Bologna and the Lisbon processes are similar, there is a social dimension and 'public good' argument in the Bologna process. Characteristically the Bologna Follow-up Seminar, organised during the Greek Presidency of the EU, stated that: "*the participants noted the increasing trend towards global competition in H.E...but... reaffirmed that the main objective driving the creation of the EHEA and the internationalisation of HE on a global level, (i.e. the Lisbon strategy) should be based on academic values and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world*" (Bologna Follow up Seminar, 2003, Conclusions:1)

Differences also exist with respect to the range of countries and actors involved, as higher education institutions and students are more directly involved in the Bologna than the Lisbon Process.

2. Localising European Policies: The Case of Greece.

2.1. Structural Reforms related to European Policies

Currently Greece's H.E. system comprises two differentiated sectors (university and technological) and three cycles of study in accordance with the requirements of the Bologna process as refined in Prague. By constitution, universities are public institutions. The establishment of private higher education institutions is not allowed. Universities are fully self-governed legal entities of public law, under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (MoE).

Technological education institutions function by their own statutes, which are similar to, but not the same as, university statutes. As a result of Bologna and on the basis of Directive 89/48 TEIs were granted university status (Law 2916/2001)[6]. Since the inception of Greece in the EU (1981) the MoE has adopted a "laissez-faire" policy towards EU education programmes and policies. Existing quasi-governmental organisations coped with the formal requirements (such as the creation of a NARIC/ ENIC) while it was left to the academic staff and higher education institutions to decide upon the degree of participation in EU actions. Policies for the creation of EHEA/ERA, involvement of the MoE in the Bologna process, and the determination with which the EU pursues the Lisbon strategy, have intensified the interest of the MoE in the development of a more explicit policy. Such a policy change can be seen as related to the Greek steering model of H.E., which involves direct supervision of H.E. institutions by the MoE, and requires state intervention and legal reform for the implementation of current EU policy.

The structure-related phase of the reform (1999-2002) provided policies for structural reforms in the higher education system (repositioning of TEI, expansion of the higher education –i.e. university and TEI sector- creation of new programmes and differentiation of services provided by the institutions) and the enhancement of access to H.E. institutions. Furthermore the Ministry seems to have set forth a policy for the dissociation of university degrees from

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[6] A transitional period is set (until 2008) to allow TEIs to re-organise and submit new statutes. The binary system still holds, as the institutions retain their technological character. However, TEIs are now granted the right to conduct research, establish joint master's programs in co-operation with universities and confer the corresponding degrees. They do not offer third cycle degrees (Stamelos and Papadiamantaki, 2004).

professional rights. During this phase, despite the opposition of the academic staff and repeated strikes, most of the necessary laws were passed and implemented.[7]

2.2. Evaluation and Quality Assurance

A second phase of the reform, concerning the development of a quality assurance mechanism, in line with Bologna and Lisbon, is still pending. The assessment and evaluation of H.E. institutions has proven to be a highly sensitive issue, which meets with the stern opposition of the (majority of the) academic community. Such opposition poses difficulties in the development of policy, as the prerequisite for a successful implementation of any educational reform is the support of the academics and higher education authorities. Furthermore, the establishment of a quality assurance system appears to be a precondition for the integration of the Greek education system in the EHEA/ERA.

Since the early '90s and under two different administrations the MoE is trying to provide an institutional framework for the assessment and evaluation of H.E. with no success.

2.2.1. The Efforts of the PASOK Socialist administration: 1990-2003

In 1992-95, the MoE passed a law regarding evaluation. The law provided for a Council to implement the assessment and evaluation processes, the members of which would be appointed from a catalogue of candidates prepared by the Rectors' Conference. The opposition of academics was intense and the law was never implemented.

Subsequently the MoE tried to reverse the negative climate through the development of a bottom up policy, aiming to encourage and facilitate the development of a "quality assurance culture in H.E. institutions".

During the first phase of EPEAEK[8] (1995-2000) the MoE promoted the participation of institutions, on a voluntary basis, in assessment and evaluation:

- Since 1995 six Greek universities supported by the MoE participated in the Institutional Evaluation Programme of the EUA.
- In 1996-97, a pilot-project for the evaluation of H.E. institutions was implemented for one AEI and one TEI, in the framework of the "European quality evaluation programme for H.E.".
- During 1998-99 the MoE set up a quality assessment programme, funded under the first phase of EPEAEK. Participation in quality assessment was a prerequisite for the funding of programmes of studies. This resulted to an impressive number of departments participating in evaluation processes: 7 AEI (42 departments/programmes of study) and 5 TEI (31 departments/programmes of study).

Currently 10 out of the 19 universities and 45 out of the 240 university departments have participated in some form of evaluation procedure.

In 2001 a public debate was initiated to reach an agreement on the implementation of Bologna. The academics' professional association -POSDEP- opposed the implementation of a quality assurance system and the repositioning of TEI in the education system. It adopted a militant stance against the proposed reforms. Furthermore it declared that it refused to accept "*the neo-liberal orientation of the university sector and commercialised knowledge*"; a development seen as a result of GATS agreements, WTO policies and the Bologna process,

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[7] The Law on Lifelong Learning Institutions was opposed and an agreement for the award of the Diploma Supplement and the use of ECTS as a generalised basis for transfer and accumulation has not been reached.

[8] EPEAEK is the Greek "Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training". The programme is co-funded by the EU (75%) and the Greek State (25%).

which would eventually lead to the degradation of the public university. Given the opposition to the implementation of the Bologna process, POSDEP assumed the role of a collective actor representing academics in Greece.

Not all academics opposed the implementation of policies proposed by the Bologna process. This is clear in the participation of key academics and/or the Rectors Conference representatives in the international fora related to Bologna. However those who oppose Bologna are expressing their views openly in public (Yetimis and Zontiros, 2000).

The professional association of TEI scientific teaching personnel (OSEP-TEI) equally opposed institutionalised evaluation. The association rallied the majority of TEI scientific personnel, around the most controversial issue of the implementation of Directive 89/48 concerning the repositioning of the TEI in H.E.. Although the status of TEI personnel was to be upgraded, long debates and strikes were held regarding two main points of friction related to evaluation and quality assurance:

- the request for evaluation of the programmes of studies offered in the TEI and
- the demand for the upgrading of the qualifications of the scientific teaching personnel, few of which have completed doctoral studies[9].

Finally, the student body remained rather apathetic in view of these developments. Currently, the student movement is weak[10], in comparison to the militant movement that actively participated in educational reforms in the past. Greek student unions do not participate in the activities undertaken by European and international student unions concerning Bologna, while small numbers of students rallied in protest against Bologna.

In March 2003 the MoE submitted to the Rectors' Conference a draft law for the establishment of the "National Council for Quality Assurance and Assessment of H.E." (NCQAA). The MoE emphasised the relation of the NCQAA to the European policy on quality assurance and stressed that the law was an outcome of an analysis of European quality assurance systems, supplemented by opinions of international experts and adjusted to the specificities of Greek education.

The Council would have the following competencies:

- Preparation of a four-year programme for the assessment of H.E.
- Appointment of external evaluators and organisation of seminars to familiarise institutions with quality assurance.
- Analysis and evaluation of the results of quality assessment
- Organisation of a databank to follow-up the assessment process and offer statistical data concerning H.E. institutions.

The MoE expected to pass the law by the end of 2003, but national elections and a change of administration stalled the process.

2.2.2. Efforts of the New Democracy Conservative administration: 2004-2005

The efforts of the new administration concentrated on the passing of the law for Lifelong Learning Institutions and the new Law for Quality Assurance (which also includes articles

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[9] To the eyes of the personnel involved it was unacceptable to ask them to obtain a doctoral degree in order to remain in the position in which they have served for several years. The demands of OSEP-TEI focused on granting immediately and unconditionally tenured positions to scientific personnel (approximately 2.500 persons), which has served for several years.

[10] Although students vote regularly for the election of a presidency of the National Students' Association (EFEE), opposing parties were not able to agree to a common presidency in the past twenty years.

regulating the use of the ECTS and the award of the Diploma Supplement). The law for Lifelong Learning (3374/2005) passed before the parliament.

The new Law on quality assurance is based on the ENQA proposals and provides for both internal and external evaluation processes. Evaluation will be effected through the "Organisation for quality assurance in Higher Education" (A.D.I.P.). The evaluation will be effected along four axes:

- Quality of Teaching
- Quality of Research
- Quality of Programmes of Study
- Quality of other Services: administration, infrastructure, use of new technologies, transparency and effectiveness in the use of economic and other resources.

Internal evaluation of the Departments and Faculties (and through them of the higher institutions) will be repeated regularly, the latest every 4 years. Each higher education institution should form a "Unit for Quality Assurance", headed by the Rector or the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, to coordinate and support the evaluation processes in each institution. In each Department a Quality Assurance Team is formed by members of the teaching and research staff and students of the department. The process results in an internal evaluation report.

Furthermore, an external evaluation is effected by a 5-member Committee of independent experts, which studies in depth the results of the internal evaluation report.

The stance of POSDEP remains unchanged and (small-scale) strikes were organised in October and November 2005 in 'defence of the public university'. However (previously silenced) academics in favour of the new policies have now made public their opposition to POSDEP and have constituted a new professional coalition to represent them within POSDEP.

3. Understanding the Deadlock: Status, Policy and Power.

One cannot understand the deadlock to which the efforts of both administrations have arrived, unless the issue of implementation of policies is examined from a social policy perspective. Here we shall make use of ideas used in the Policy Advocacy Coalition framework (Sabatier 1988; 1991). Following Sabatier, one may consider policy making as a continuous process, with no strict beginning and end, the content of which is influenced by changing coalitions of ideas and interests[11]. In this respect one should examine the way the policy agenda in education was set and the networks of policy advocacy coalitions formed, each with its own ideas about policy content. However a coalition is a reflection of the ideas and interests about a set of policy issues. Therefore the analysis should not be limited to actors and networks, but also consider values and conceptions.

Rapid change in the external world, especially social and economic factors and the advocacy of new solutions to policy problems, can disrupt previously stable patterns of interests and exchanges. Thus the interaction between external changes (such as changes in EU policies) and domestic ideas and interests can be seen as one factor explaining policy developments.

In the case of Greece the relations between the key-actors in the university sector, i.e. academic staff and the state (MoE) were unperturbed, until 1998/99. Academics did not opt for collective action, but were able to pursue their demands through direct communication

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[11] Such coalitions involve politicians and bureaucrats both at the national and the EU level, interest-group representatives (including academic staff of universities and TEI and their representatives in professional associations), researchers, students and journalists.

with the MoE. This pattern of exchange might be seen as related to the provenance, social background and composition of the academic staff. Heightened frictions due to the establishment of a quality assurance mechanism have altered the situation. One should take into account that the debate on the positioning, performance and competitiveness of higher education is recent and was introduced in the education agenda following the European and international debate about the new role of the university and the creation of a EHEA/ERA.

On this issue two coalition networks have formed:

One network advocates the implementation of Bologna policies. The MoE is the initiator and the main actor in this network. The formulation of an explicit EU discourse on the role of education concerning European integration and policy for the development of a unified EHEA/ERA influenced MoE and its "laissez-faire" stance towards Europeanisation policies. MoE presented for the first time an explicit policy for Europeanisation, acknowledging it as a dynamic process that provides an alternative to globalisation pressures.

Given the Greek steering model of H.E., the issues of attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA (Lisbon strategy) and of evaluation and comparability of European H.E. systems (Bologna process) have to be addressed at the state level. The MoE embraced the EU discourse, retaining few reservations, related to state regulation of education and the influence of the globalized context. In this effort the MoE is assisted by experts at the EU level, a minority of the academic staff of universities and the scientific staff of TEIs (who have already accepted in principle the implementation of Bologna).

However, this new, not yet fully developed, 'discourse', led to an opposition between the MoE and the majority of the social partners on the repositioning of TEI and the evaluation of H.E. institutions.

An opposing coalition network was formed, comprising the majority of university academic staff and a minority of the student body, which question the usefulness of implementing Bologna policies in Greece and rally around POSDEP.

During the PASOK administration the balance appeared to tilt in favour of the anti-bologna coalition network, which was more vocal and achieved dominance of the public opinion. The situation seems to change, and a part of the academic community appears to embrace MoE's views. However, the professional associations of faculty members of AEI support a commitment to free and public university education that would guarantee not the employability in the narrow sense, but also the professional rights of H.E. graduates. The structural reforms in line with Bologna were and still are resisted by a good part of the H.E. community, i.e. faculty members of AEI and TEI, professional associations and, to a lesser extent, students.

The two networks still compete in the policy arena, attempting to dominate public opinion in the public debate concerning higher education, despite the fact that the Law on Quality Assurance has been passed before parliament.

3.1. A shifting balance of power and a "double" hierarchy in Higher Education.

Institutions play a key role through the salience of levels of government and the interaction of government and committees. However one should not neglect the influence of individual agents. In the present situation the role of academics seems to be decisive and cannot be understood unless one takes into consideration alterations in the balance of power within higher education institutions that are implied by the implementation of Bologna and Lisbon and evaluation as an institutionalised activity.

Nowadays, the discourse concerning the standing and competitiveness of universities focuses on the necessity of establishing a quality assurance system which will facilitate the participation of Greek institutions in European and international research and educational

networks[12]. Such participation is considered indispensable for the integration of Greece in the EHEA/ERA and of good standing and reputation among an international peer-group. It appears that a new inter-university hierarchy may be formed, characterised by its international relations and which can be clearly juxtaposed to the traditional university hierarchy. Such a process will inevitably alter the criteria by which academics were accepted in and promoted through the ranks. The change appears to be significant to the extent that in the 1980's the (minimum) requirement for an academic was knowledge of one foreign language (Stamelos and Papadiamantaki , 2004)

Since the 1980's the opportunities offered by EU have created an atmosphere that is conducive to the development of personal initiatives concerning participation in mobility and research programmes. Gradually participation in European and international programmes brought to the surface the research potential of some Greek universities/departments and led to the creation of collaborations with institutions and networks of production of new knowledge. The research activities of institutions and/or departments foster and support their European and international profile and collaborations. Internationalisation activities seem to increase as a "natural" result of research and mobility programmes, even when the institution has no particular view in promoting relevant policies. In contrast institutions that present fewer research activities and have less developed infrastructure seem less able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by EU programmes. In such institutions internationalisation activities depend a lot on the initiatives of interested academics.

It appears that a new inter-university hierarchy is formed, characterised by its international relations; one that can be clearly juxtaposed to the traditional hierarchy, based on rank. Risking the danger of over-simplifying the situation we could say that academics, seem to be worried and motivated by the belief that institutionalised evaluation will lead to a new stratification of departments, institutions, fields of study and education systems and to with the transformation of education from public to private good.

This stratification will inevitably lead to an alteration of status within universities and upset existing power relations among academics and between academics and the MoE. However there is also another major concern, which relates to the stratification of education systems globally, and the positioning of the Greek education system in Europe.

In this respect one should note that globalisation pressures, the evaluation of H.E. systems across Europe and the formal stratification of institutions, may compromise the newly established international collaborations of particular departments/academics, who were in the past able to participate in international research networks.

3.2. Globalisation, Centres and Peripheries

The world of globalised higher education is highly unequal. Concentrating on smaller academic systems brings to the forth issues of inequality. While some manifestations of globalisation (e.g. the internet) are heralded as bringing knowledge equality to the world, the evidence is mixed. In some ways, globalisation opens access and makes it easier for students and scholars to study and work anywhere. But in many respects, existing inequalities are only reinforced and new barriers erected. The debate in higher education mirrors analyses of globalisation generally. While it is generally accepted that globalisation pressures are inevitable, some analyses of globalisation trends reveal problems that must be addressed and

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[12] Traditionally the competitiveness, standing and performance of Greek universities were judged by (a) the substantial number of Greek professors and/or researchers in foreign universities, research institutes and international organisations (b) of Greeks studying abroad and (c) the fact that graduates of Greek universities were able to follow successfully, study programmes of foreign universities, at graduate and doctoral level.

that tend to be overlooked in the dominant discourse on the topic (Stiglitz, 2002; Rodrik, 1997; Rodrik, 1999).

Powerful universities have always dominated the production and distribution of knowledge, while weaker institutions and systems with fewer resources and lower academic standards have tended to follow. Academic centres provide leadership in all aspects of science and scholarship-such as research and teaching, the organizational patterns and directions of universities, and knowledge dissemination. Centres tend to be located in larger and wealthier countries and benefit from the full array of resources- including funding and infrastructures such as libraries and laboratories for research, academic staff with appropriate qualifications, traditions and legislation in support of academic freedom, and an orientation toward high achievement levels on the part of individual professors and students and by the institutions themselves. Typically, top institutions use one of the major international languages for teaching and research, and enjoy appropriate support from the state for their work.

The world of centres and peripheries grows ever more complex (Altbach,1998a). The major international academic centres -i.e. leading research universities in the North, especially those that use one of the major languages (particularly English)- occupy the top tier.[13] But even within countries at the centre of the world academic system in the early 21st century[14] there are many peripheral institutions. One may argue that education systems (all over the world) become increasingly stratified. Top institutions are able to attract research funds while much of the rest lie on the periphery of the research centres. However these play important roles in both the academic system and in society. There are also universities that play complex roles as regional centres, providing a conduit of knowledge and links to the top institutions. In many ways, it is now more difficult to become a major player in higher education—to achieve "centre" status (Altbach, 1998b). The price of entry has risen. Top research universities require vast resources, and in many fields scientific research involves a large investment in laboratory facilities and equipment. Enabling institutions to remain networked for the Internet and information technology is also costly, as are library acquisitions and access to relevant databases. Universities in countries without deep financial resources will find it virtually impossible to join the ranks of the top academic institutions. Indeed, any new institution, regardless of location, will face similar challenges.

In some ways, academic institutions at the periphery and indeed entire academic systems in small and medium, industrialized or developing countries depend on the centres for research, communication of knowledge, and advanced training. Major journals and databases are headquartered at major universities-especially the U.S. and the U.K.-since international research journals are largely published in English. Most of the world's universities are mainly teaching institutions that must look elsewhere to obtain new knowledge and analysis. They lack the facilities for research, and even if they provide degrees beyond bachelor's level, are unable to keep up with current journals and databases due to the expense. Structural dependency is endemic in much of the world's academic institutions. Any discussion of globalisation cannot avoid the deep inequalities that are part of the world system of higher education. Globalisation has added a new dimension to existing disparities.

We have entered a new era of power and influence. Politics and ideology have taken a subordinate role to profits and market-driven policies. There is an even more immediate danger as multinational corporations are influencing universities and research institutes, a development that may lead to unpleasant monopolies and catastrophic dependencies, as is

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[13] World-class universities do exist elsewhere-Japan and several smaller European countries. A number of universities in China, Singapore, and South Korea are approaching the status of world-class research institutions.
[14] The United States, Britain, Germany, France, and to some extent Australia and Canada

shown by the US and the UK experience[15]. According to Monbiot (2000) research is passing in the hands of corporations which decide in which areas research will be effected, control the funds channelled in research and have a say on the formulation of results so that their interests are unharmed by research results. The danger of restriction of academic liberties is neither fictitious nor improbable. In fact it is so real that Unesco has taken a stance on the issue during the 29th General Assembly where 188 countries voted a "Recommendation on the situation of higher education staff" (Beridze,2000), while in the US and Canada a number of professional associations such as the *American Association of University Professors*, the *American Federation of Teachers*, the *National Education Association*, the *Canadian Association of University Teachers* and the *Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université* are protesting against the attack on academic freedom (Snyder, 2000).

Now, multinational corporations, media conglomerates, and even a few leading universities can be seen as the new neo-colonists-seeking to dominate not for ideological or political reasons but rather for commercial gain. Governments are not entirely out of the picture - they seek to assist companies in their countries and have a residual interest in maintaining influence as well. As in the Cold War era, countries and universities are not compelled to yield to the terms of those offering aid or fostering exchanges, but the pressures in favour of participation tend to prevail. Involvement in the larger world of science and scholarship and obtaining perceived benefits not otherwise available present considerable inducements. The result appears to be the same - the loss of intellectual and cultural autonomy by those who are less powerful.

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[15] At Cambridge, BP, Shell, Unilevel, Price Waterhouse, Marks and Spencer, Rolls-Royce, AT and T, Microsoft, Zeneca are already funding their own Chairs (MONBIOT G., 2000, *Captive state*, ed. Macmillan, London).

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