THE USE OF DELIBERATIVE METHOD IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM

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The project named Higher Education Reform was established in 2004 as one of the implementation elements of the European higher education policy. The core activities of the project were executed throughout the formation of National Teams of Bologna Experts who had the task and duty to contribute to the general and real awareness-rising on the topic of the higher education reform among different stakeholders in participating countries of the Bologna Process. The Croatian National Team of Bologna Expert (Hrvatska stručna skupina za Bolonjski proces) was established in 2011. Among the diversity of activities executed by the student representatives in the Team, the important place is reserved for the deliberative workshops held during 2013. The target groups of the deliberative workshops were students and other stakeholders in the higher education. This paper presents the process of including the stakeholders in educational reform through the deliberative workshops. During the workshops, the organizers found out how the stakeholders are rethinking on some of the aspects of the Bologna Process, how they perceive and value the work of student representative and volunteering activities, and what they think about the extra-curricular activities of the student and how they value such activities. The form of deliberative workshops encouraged participants to freely and in constructive way express their thoughts and expectances in order to exchange ideas and knowledge about the matter, and to make a decision on common suggestions to solve a particular problem in the context of higher education (introduction of a new practice, modifications and alternations of existing practices, etc). This type of the application of deliberation method is extremely useful, which is the reason for the suggestion of the method's use in preparing, implementing and evaluating the educational reforms.

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1. INTRODUCTION – BOLOGNA PROCESS

One of the most significant educational reforms in Europe during the last twenty years, if not more, is certainly the case of the implementation of the European policy of higher education. The integral part of the European higher education policy was the launching of the Bologna Process in 1999 and the creation of a European Higher Education in 2010. The aim of the Bologna process was the creation of a supranational (European) educational framework in which the participating national systems of higher education will be included and therefore connected. In other words, the EHEA is the set of common principles of the European higher education which underlies and modifies the core foundations of the national HE systems.

The underlying European public policy in this case was, of course, the economy policy which aimed at the creation of unique European trade market. In order to do so, there are many obstacles to be broken, one of which is the recognition of the qualifications in across European countries. This is the reason why the European higher education policy is to be considered as one of the policies of negative integration of the market.

Nevertheless, the key aim of the higher education reform is the recognition of qualifications as one of the conditions for free movement of the labor force in the European market. With the creation of the unique set of common principles, the process of modification of national systems of higher education had begun.

In order to achieve the above indicated general objective, certain goals of the Bologna process (such as mobility, increased employability, introduction of ECTS, learning outcomes and quality assurance systems for facilitated recognition) have been taken into consideration by policy-makers in the field of higher education, as well as accompanying set of instruments, while the policy process itself included all relevant target groups. According to the Bologna Follow-Up Group's Report (BFUG, 2009) entitled "Bologna Beyond 2010" the European higher education reform can be envisaged as consisting of action lines and policy areas.

The action lines of the Bologna Process can easily be defined as the activities focused on "clearly-defined operational outcomes" (BFUG, 2009: 5). As shown in Figure 1, there are three main action lines:

- Degree structure and qualification frameworks
- Quality assurance system
- System of recognition of qualifications.

Figure 1. Action lines of the Bologna Process

The aim of the action lines is the creation of structure and procedures which will facilitate the implementation of defined planned activities in particular policy areas. As defined in Bologna Declaration and subsequent declaration and conclusion of ministerial conferences between 2001 and 2015, the aim of the action lines is the creation of the unique system of higher education in Europe which consists of three cycles (bachelor, master and doctorate). The degrees are comparable across different national systems of higher education and are evaluated based on the common set of quality assurance principles and guidelines. On the basis of common structure and evaluation protocols, and with the creation of common European Qualification Framework and its linking with the national qualification frameworks, the qualifications, certificates and diplomas issued in any quality-based European university or college could easily be compared, translated and therefore recognized in any participating state of the European Higher Education Area. These tools or action lines, aimed at their creation, are beneficial in different policy areas as shown in Figure 2.

The mentioned tools and action lines are intended to impact different policy areas which generate the new value and wealth. As seen in Figure 2 there are 5 core policy areas: social dimension, employability, lifelong learning, international dimension and mobility. While social dimension as the policy focused on the widening of access to higher education to larger population and particularly of the endangered social cohorts (such as low-income students, students-parents, etc.) and international dimension which is focused on making European universities more attractive at the global level, other policy areas are focused on the impact of higher education on the general society and economy. In other words, they are focused on creating skilled and knowledgeable

individuals who have acquired core competencies for them to enter the workforce and be successful.

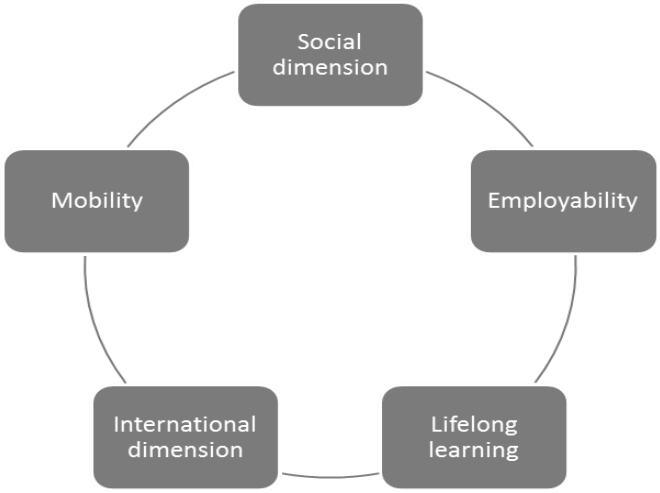

Figure 2. Policy areas of Bologna Process

In order for the European higher education project to be one of the global success stories, there is a vast number of activities which are being executed during the last two decades besides the work to be done in the future.

One of the implementing elements of the European higher education policy was the launching of the project entitled Higher Education Reform in 2004, the element of which was the creation of National Teams of Bologna Experts, the professionals selected from stakeholder cohorts who had the task to contribute to general and real awareness-raising about the potential and the possibilities offered by the reform of higher education. The target groups to the Teams were national and/or regional institutions accountable for higher education, teachers, students, employers, etc. The Teams were established in all signatory states of the Bologna Declaration. The Croatian National Team of Bologna Experts was established in 2011 with representatives of students, academic teachers and higher education institutions. Among the activities carried out by the student representatives, the significant place is reserved for the deliberative workshops that took place during 2013. The target groups of the deliberative workshops were students and other stakeholders, but with the particular focus on students. The workshops focused on two inter-related elements:

a) European policy of higher education reform (with emphasis on the role of the students in higher education) and
b) Evaluation of student representative's involvement in the context of recognizing the benefits of non-formal and informal learning.

This paper is the representation of the experience in the use of deliberative workshops to engage the stakeholders in the education reform with the general aim of identifying the basic problems and offering either the introduction of new practices or the modification/alternation of the existing ones.

2. PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE

In order to make the processes and the context of the activity of the Croatian National Team of Bologna Experts more deliberate, and to create the basis for the understanding of the possibilities of deliberative workshops, let us briefly focus on the concept of the education reform and public policy cycle.

When discussing the general aspects of the educational reforms the question that may arise is: how does the educational reform come into existence? Let us start from the definition. According to the Glossary of Education Reform, an educational or systemic reform of education can have four different meanings:

"(1) reforms that impact multiple levels of the education system, such as elementary, middle, and high school programs;
(2) reforms that aspire to make changes throughout a defined system, such as district-wide or statewide reforms;
(3) reforms that are intended to influence, in minor or significant ways, every student and staff member in school or system; or
(4) reforms that may vary widely in design and purpose, but that nevertheless reflect a consistent educational philosophy or that are aimed at achieving common objectives."

Every out of four definitions of education reform can help us better understand the complexity of the European higher education reform. This reform impacts the system of higher education (1), it is aimed to make changes throughout the national systems of higher education in the participant countries of the Bologna Process (2), it changes the way the system is structured and they introduce new opportunities for students such as credit system, mobility (3) and it reflects the European integration ideas and principles which are translated into the common creation of the European Higher Education Area (4).

The systemic change in this case includes the creation of the supra-national framework of higher education, the more or less wide-ranging changes to be made in numerous national systems of higher education and the introduction of new practices in national HE.

In other words, the implementation of the Bologna Process is extremely complex area of the policy work which cannot be easily conducted. Instead, it has to be carefully planned in details and conducted in the way which is aligned with the strategic plans. This can easily be explained by the concept of classical public policy cycle.

The classical form of public policy cycle comprises various inter-related steps including problem definition, agenda setting, policy development, policy implementation and policy evaluation, as shown in Figure 3. Another name that is often used for "problem definition" is called programming.

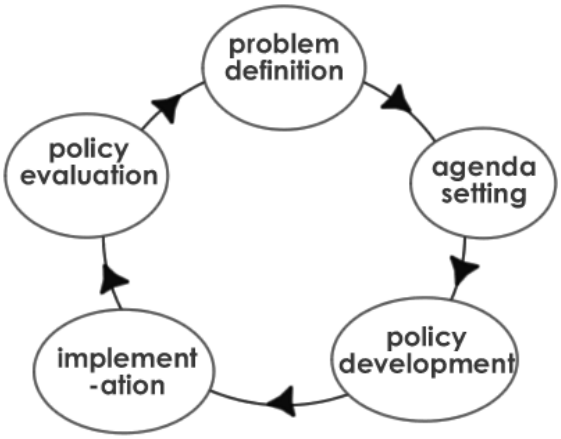

Figure 3. Classical policy cycle

Source: http://europeandcis.undp.org/blog/2013/06/28/policy-2-0-can-we-move-beyond-the-classic-policy-cycle

According to Nelson (2008), the problem definition stage comprises the identification of the problems that need to be acted upon by government, the decision-making about the questions that need more political attention and the definition of the nature of the problem. The next stage in the policy cycle is the agenda-setting which comprises the creation of the common goals, identification of the necessary financial resources, assessment of the effect of policy implementation, the choice of the implementation instruments and

instruments for decision-making. Policy development usually comprises of the legitimation aspects of the public policy i.e. the creation of the baseline for the policy implementation which includes the assuring of the necessary support for the implementation such as legislative support, executive support, consultations with interest groups, referendum, etc.

The final two stages are crucial for the policy because they represent the stages in which the policy shows outcomes and outputs. During the implementation process, the structure of the organization accountable for public policy implementation is being created, as well as the resources for implementation and monitoring of the implementation of the policy. The final stage of the policy is the evaluation which refers to the assessment of the success of the previous stage, correctness of decisions made, and the degree of attained desired outcome. This stage is crucial because it also includes the decision-making on the continuation, modification or dismissal of the further implementation of the public policy.

According to Soer (2013) in the contemporary dynamic environment, the classical policy cycle is not enough. It needs to be expanded and empowered so that during every stage of the policy-cycle the decision-makers and administrators pay attention to the changes in the environment. By use of the environmental scanning, it is possible to get a valuable feedback throughout the complete policy cycle and, based on the feedback information, it is possible to adapt all steps of the further policy implementation. This way, the key stakeholders are constantly included in the cycle from problem definition to evaluation. The decision-makers ought to be flexible and adaptive to the changes in every step of the policy cycle.

And while the practice explained by Soer (2013) is very useful in collecting data and information for policy analysis, some political scientists claim that the use of the methods of deliberation (such as environmental scanning) throughout the complete policy cycle is not always the best solution. Analyzing various practices, Petković (2008:29)[1] concludes:

> *"While the practice of deliberative research can be useful as additional tool to approach the local knowledge, better comprehension and creation of policies, in my opinion, this form of research is not the necessary pre-condition of the quality interpretational policy analysis. On the contrary, it*

[1] As translated by authors.

seems that the misperceptions, ideological influence or power influence, or simply the lack of interest or knowledge among citizens, which are the core of the deliberative analysis and its only legitimate subjects and instances that has to approve its results and conclusion, can also jeopardize the quality of the analysis. Therefore, I think of the deliberative practice as one to be taken by a dose of reservation and not to make it the a priori element of interpretational policy analysis."

3. EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND DELIBERATIVE WORKSHOPS

During the process of preparation, implementation and evaluation of educational reforms, the information from stakeholders can be collected in various ways, and one way is through deliberative workshops. Deliberative workshops are similar to the focus groups, but unlike them participants in this type of group discussions are going through a process of deliberation (Myant, Urquhart, 2014).

The term deliberation comes from the Latin word "deliberare" and "deliberatio" which means thinking, and thinking through weighing and examining all the arguments, reflection for or against an object of discussion. Therefore, the term deliberative discussion implies that kind of debate that presents information, which is then evaluated and tested through arguments. Although the first to use the term deliberation was Joseph Bessette (1980) when analyzing the effects of the US Congress, the deliberative method as a method by which the scientific method examines public opinion was created in 1988 by Professor James Fishkin from Stanford University (Fishkin, 1991). Numerous authors were since devoted and paid great attention to the deliberation in their scientific and research projects, among which stands out Amy Gutmann whose research has shown that the system of education deliberative approach is simply the best option (Gutmann, Thomson, 2004).

Fung (2007, p. 183) explained deliberation as:

"(...) the process of public debate in which participants provide suggestions for solving certain common problems. These proposals are based on arguments that other participants in the debate may accept or reject. In a simple formulation consistent with many of those in recent democratic theory, deliberation is a process of public discussion in which participants offer proposals and justifications to support collective

decisions. These proposals are being backed by justifications that appeal to other participants and by reasons that others can accept. These reasons, for example, may appeal to some common good (e.g., 'This is the best way to improve our school because ...') or common norms of fairness (e.g., 'You do this for me this time, and I do something else for you next time around'). When each participant decides what the social choice should be, he or she should choose the proposal backed by the most compelling reasons. When it generates social choices, deliberation becomes distinctive because, as Habermas put it, there is no force 'except the force of the better argument.' Other decision-making methods, by contrast, rely on authority, status, numbers, money, or muscle. Decisions resulting from deliberation may be more fair and legitimate because they stem out from reasons rather than arbitrary advantages. They may be wiser because they allow a broad range of perspectives and information to be pooled together. Discussion may help individual participants to clarify their own views."

Using the arguments, deliberative discussion participants represent their views (preferences) and try to persuade other parties to accept their position. It is important that participants in deliberative discussions in the decision-making process (proposals) are included with the willingness to question their personal starting position and, possibly, changing their attitudes (preferences). The goal of the discussion is to reach a joint decision (proposal) as a result of open debate and confrontation of arguments.

When it comes to the deliberation methods, the usual practice consists of informing the group of people that participate in deliberation, recognizing everyone's positions and focusing on argumentation with respect to other and willingness to hear other people's views.

In practice, the deliberative model of public opinion research is applied in different cases, some of which are resulted in the form of recommendations of public policy in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. An interesting example comes from Canada, British Columbia: in 2004 a group of 160 citizens engaged together in order to change the electoral model. During four months, 160 randomly selected citizens are being educated and engaged in discussion on the various electoral models for six weeks at 50 round tables. After 11 months of work, the method of deliberation helped citizens to make the decisions and recommendations for new electoral model on which the general electorate later on was deciding in a referendum. Similarly, in the United Kingdom in 2003 around 675 public meetings (open community meetings) were organized in order to discuss the issues of GMO. In this case, the participants

were selected according to certain socio-demographic criteria, nor random, but they have participated on a voluntary basis (Goodin and Dryzek, 2006, Smith, 2008). But in practice, the deliberative method more often was encountered in the work of various civil society organizations, NGOs, local and regional authorities, public institutions, to engage in solving some problems shared on micro levels. They are found in various forms of citizens' juries, planning cells, consensus conferences and deliberative polls. Goodin and Dryzek (2006) refer to them as mini-publics, which are used less often directly to create policies, and often it has an indirect effect - for example, as a means of informing, legitimizing, monitoring or evaluating.

4. INCLUSION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM – PRESENTATION OF THE CASE

During 2013, three deliberative workshops were conducted with students (N = 60), and one with decision-makers in higher education (N = 49) - academic teachers (of which the greater part was in managerial positions) and administrative staff from universities and colleges as well as with professionals from Ministry of Science, Education and Sport of the Republic of Croatia. Workshops were held in Zagreb, Rijeka, Split and Zadar, and participation was optional.

Through the introductory speech of 15 minutes, the participants learned about the topic of discussion and the arguments in favor or against it - in this case it was the policy of lifelong learning that is encouraged in various ways, and one of them was the introduction of practice of evaluating informal and non-formal learning. Themes are then accessed through extracurricular activities that allow students to study various informal ways. For this reason the workshop participants were presented with various forms and types of extracurricular activities and diverse practice of encouraging and evaluating extracurricular activities that can be found in domestic and foreign universities, with special emphasis on voluntary activities and work of student representatives. Following the presentation, workshop participants were divided into small groups of three to six participants. Each group was given one task - an example of extra-curricular activities for which they had to decide:

a) is this the kind of activity that should be evaluated; and
b) if the activity should be evaluated, which ways of evaluation do they suggest for this evaluation.

During the period of 10 to 15 minutes, participants of each group had been able to discuss the issue with other participants in order to reach a consensus and create proposals evaluation. Then each group presented its own perspective to other participants of the workshop, followed by the discussion. The group had to argue their positions, while the other workshop participants questioned, criticized and equally valid arguments had an opportunity to express agreement or disagreement.

In some cases, under the force of the arguments of other participants, there were changes to the original point of view of the group, as well as changes or amendments to the proposal evaluation. Upon completion of the discussion of any particular group, the consensus that prevailed in the group was wrapped up and written down.

During the workshop, we gathered information about how the participants reflect on some aspects of the Bologna process, in any way how they perceive and evaluate the work of the students' representatives, voluntary work of students and how they feel about extracurricular activities of students and their evaluation. The collected proposals enabled us to recognize various student extra-curricular activities and to categorize them according to membership in a particular evaluated category. This was thus a step towards building an evaluation model, which could be presented to decision-makers.

Each workshop was led by two people, holding the presentation, explaining the tasks, clarifying doubts, taking the notes, facilitating, and moderating the discussion. Feedback of the workshop participants - students on the form of deliberative workshops that we used, showed high levels of satisfaction with the way they were familiar with the hitherto unknown aspects of the Bologna process and the opportunity to send their suggestions and create new practices. Feedback from participants of the workshop - the decision-makers were not systematically collected, but it was evident from the discussion that their attitudes were divided, which inevitably contributed to the heterogeneity of the group and an excessive number of workshop participants.

5. CONCLUSION

The form of deliberative workshops encouraged participants to freely and in a constructive way express their thoughts and expectances in order to exchange ideas and knowledge about the matter. The aim of the workshop was to make a common recommendation for solving a particular issue related to higher education, the introduction of the new practice or/and the modification or

alternation of the existing one. The use of the deliberative method enabled us to gather the information about the attitudes of students towards some aspects of the Bologna Process and towards the perception and evaluation of the work of student representatives and students volunteering as well as their conceptions of evaluation of student extra-curricular activities. The recommendations are categorized in different groups based on the evaluation, which is one step further towards the construction of the evaluation model which was presented to the decision-makers after the completion of the workshops.

According to our experience, three key roles of the deliberation method:

- The deliberative workshops enabled the implementation of the activities which result in attaining the specific goals and in contributing to the general goal of the Bologna Process. In other words, the deliberation method was shown to be useful because it has resulted in the awareness-raising of the stakeholders.
- The deliberative workshop is shown to be useful in collecting the data on the implementation of educational reform and it revealed to us the degree of the efficiency of its implementation. It had shown in which degree the stakeholders are aware of the Bologna process and how much the policy is really being implemented.
- The implementation of an evaluation dimension of the deliberation method enabled the collecting of data from the stakeholders on the basis of which the decision-makers and policy-makers conduct the programming and agenda-setting in the policy cycle of the higher education reform.

This type of application of the deliberation method is extremely useful, which is the reason for suggestion of the use of the method in preparing, implementing and evaluating the educational reforms in future.

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UPOTREBA METODE DELIBERACIJE U OBRAZOVNOJ REFORMI

Sažetak

Kao jedan od provedbenih elemenata europske javne politike visokog obrazovanja, 2004. godine pokrenut je projekt Higher Education Reform unutar kojeg su uspostavljene nacionalne skupine Bolonjskih eksperata čiji je zadatak bio doprinijeti općem i stvarnom podizanju svijesti o reformi visokog obrazovanja među dionicima u visokom obrazovanju u zemljama potpisnicama Bolonjske deklaracije. Hrvatska stručna skupina za Bolonjski proces u koju su izabrani predstavnici visokih učilišta, nastavnika i studenata uspostavljena je 2011. godine. Među aktivnostima koje su provodili studentski predstavnici, značajno mjesto zauzimaju deliberativne radionice koje su provedene tijekom 2013. godine sa studentima i drugim dionicima u visokom obrazovanju. U ovome radu prikazuje se uključivanje dionika u obrazovnu reformu putem deliberativnih radionica. Tijekom radionica doznalo se kako sudionici promišljaju o nekim aspektima Bolonjskog procesa, na koji način percipiraju i vrednuju rad studentskih predstavnika i studentski volonterski rad, te što misle o izvannastavnim aktivnostima studenata i njihovom vrednovanju. Upotrijebljena forma deliberativnih radionica omogućila je sudionicima konstruktivno izražavanje svoga mišljenja i očekivanja u svrhu razmjene ideja i informacija, a sve s ciljem donošenja zajedničkog prijedloga za rješenja problema, uvođenje nove prakse ili korigiranje postojeće. Ovakav tip primjene deliberacije u praksi pokazao se višestruko koristan, zbog čega se predlaže korištenje ove metode u pripremi, provedbi i evaluaciji obrazovnih reformi.