

## PREFACE

Globalization and technological advances have been hallmarks of geopolitical and economic change since the end of the Cold War. Since the beginning of the 1990s they have had a significant influence on the trajectory of national economies, individual opportunity, and higher education systems worldwide.

The expansion of the European Union (EU) has been a part of this wave of globalization. At the end of the Cold War, there were 12 EU member states; today there are 28. The region of Europe experienced political, economic, and social change as the EU enlarged eastward. The project to establish the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), among select countries within the EU, introduced the common currency, the euro, in 1999. This temporally intersected with the initial meeting of European education ministers to launch the Bologna Process on June 19, 1999. The objective was to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010.

The Bologna Process and EHEA were instrumental in unifying European countries to work toward a common framework for higher education. At the time, there were more than a dozen candidate countries to accede to the EU, all eager to participate in this unprecedented initiative in the regional integration of higher education. On the heels of Europe's establishment of a common market—known as the Single Market—as an economic partnership in 1992, the Bologna Process and

EHEA formulated qualifications for recognizing academic degrees across participating countries to create a unifying higher education system.

Despite these steps toward Europeanization, the outcome of the recent United Kingdom (UK) referendum (June 23, 2016) on whether to exit or remain in the EU—which became known as Brexit—demonstrated the desire of the majority of UK voters to exit. This has been interpreted by some as a rejection of globalization, but whatever the underlying sentiment of the UK populous, the old adage attributed to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus rings true: Change is the only constant.

Nevertheless, globalization—defined as the interconnectedness of economic, political, cultural, and technological activity—continues. The ideas of a cohesive Europe and the institutions to enable recognition of academic qualifications, constructed by the Bologna Process, reflect a sociocultural European identity and the aim for a dynamic, growing economy in the twenty-first century. These geopolitical changes have been especially powerful in the decades following World War II, which divided Europe politically. The challenge is for each country and its citizens to define their economy's and culture's relationship to globalization in our time.

This book provides explanations for change in a political economy context, where the interests of sovereign states and economic markets intersect. It complements research on regional integration in Europe that has expanded from economic and political cooperation post-World War II into newer policy areas, including education in recent decades. In the twenty-first century, higher education institutions have increasingly played dual roles—as recipients of policy change from Europeanization and as agents of policy change in the knowledge economy that is characteristic of the twenty-first century. Some of the findings described in this book are the importance of consistency in political leadership, the structure of government, and dedicated funding for achieving higher education policy reform, as well as the significant relationship between gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and higher education attainment in the countries in the EU.

The process of Europeanization, as well as globalization and inter-governmentalism, has been a catalyst for higher education policy reform. Previous experiences provided me with observations of European cultural and social life. Bringing together my educational and professional experiences, I have attempted to assess the political, economic, and social contexts shaping higher education reform in the region of Europe.

Any errors and inconsistencies in this book are my own. As a student in Madrid, Spain, and in Bologna, Italy—as well as on a professional assignment in Helsinki, Finland—I learned about the transformation of countries in Europe. This led me to focus my doctoral research on political economy within the European Union Center of Excellence in Miami, Florida. Specifically, the Iberian countries have been compelling as case studies, given the political governance and socioeconomic changes that they experienced in the decades prior to joining the EU simultaneously in 1986.

My research findings on the European experience in higher education reform are instructive for other world regions. The interdisciplinary approach of my research in the social sciences helps to explain institutional change in economics and political science as well as to understand organizational change management in business.

This book is intended for students and researchers of globalization, international economics, and higher education policy. Further, it is hoped that all readers with an interest in international relations, regional integration, and institutional change will find this book informative and insightful.

Houston, USA

Beverly Barrett

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Beverly, B.  
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