

Institutions and Ideas: The Political, Economic, and Social Context for the Bologna Process

A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competencies to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space.

The Bologna Declaration (excerpt), June 19, 1999

Although there have been some doubts about aspects of European regional integration, particularly regarding the monetary union, the cooperation in higher education has continued to progress with increasing membership since the inception of the Bologna Process. Within a theoretical framework of institutions and ideas, this book considers the European Union (EU) countries and the case studies of Portugal and Spain. The independent variable is the political economy context acting upon the dependent variable of policy reform and higher education attainment. In light of the Bologna Process, the Europe 2020 economic strategy provides targets for higher education attainment in the EU Member States, along with an average target for all 28 countries. The Iberian countries, Portugal and Spain, have had similar political and economic experiences since ending authoritarian rule in the 1970s. This similar political context is useful methodologically to control variables as much as possible to focus on the independent and dependent variables of analysis. These countries, despite having similar political backgrounds,

have diverged on the timing of implementing the criteria of the Bologna Process, given that reform has been more rapid in Portugal in some circumstances. With similar backgrounds of having ended authoritarian rule approximately a decade prior to joining the EU in 1986, Portugal and Spain implemented the credit and degree system components of the National Qualifications Framework in 2007.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention has been adopted nationally as part of policy reforms undertaken in the Bologna Process to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Rauhvargers et al. 2009:122).¹ There are three defining aspects of domestic politics:

1. Structure of government (unitary vs. (quasi-)federal)
2. Leadership consistency providing support for the reforms
3. Funding for education or wealth (measured by GDP per capita)

Each is important for policy change and cooperation at the international and European and institutional levels in the multi-level context. “It is important to acknowledge that a European common space for higher education can continue to exist and play a positive role in the future even though the European integration process might be stalled or even in some ways reversed” (Bologna Process Researchers’ Conference 2014). The relative success of the Bologna Process may be compared to more challenging initiatives for regional integration in Europe, such as the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The euro, as the common currency of the EMU, was introduced as a physical currency in 2002, three years after the Bologna Process launch. Approximately one decade into the Bologna Process, the global recession in 2008 was marked by an asset loss worldwide of more than a trillion U.S. dollars when the financial markets spiraled downward. The economic crisis in Europe heightened in early 2010 when Greece revealed its troubles with sovereign debt. Nevertheless, the Bologna Process continued to progress steadily into its second decade. In recent years, there have been a rising number of domestic political voices resisting the initiatives of EU, particularly in response to economic uncertainty, which has intensified with increasing globalization.

This book identifies significant influences of the political economy as they relate to the implementation of the Bologna Process objectives

for policy convergence. This is done by evaluating the political economy context as it influences higher education policy reform at the national level. The Lisbon Strategy, initiated in 2000, and the Europe 2020 economic growth strategy, initiated in 2010, are led by the European Commission. These initiatives have had a co-constitutive relationship in concert with the Bologna Process, which has provided the impetus for the international policy coordination in higher education that is achieved with the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

The policy reform in the Bologna Process varies across countries, depending on various political economy contexts and stakeholder influences. This book's focus is on the reform of the EHEA credit and degree structure at the national level, as well as higher education attainment. Most participating countries had achieved the credit and degree structure criteria by the 2015 EHEA Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, Armenia. National quality assurance criteria and international degree recognition criteria are also central to policy reform in the Bologna Process. The institution of quality assurance agencies in each of the 48 countries builds trust among all participants in the EHEA (Amaral 2013; Llavori de Micheo 2013). The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental policy initiative. This liberal intergovernmental, state-led cooperation provides states with the power to determine the direction of the policy (Moravcsik 1998; Bickerton et al. 2015). Although the Bologna Process originated with the four countries that were signatories to the Sorbonne Declaration, outside of the European Commission, the European Commission became a partner during the development of the Lisbon Strategy and the OMC in the early 2000s (Gornitzka 2007; Keeling 2006).

The stated intentions for the Bologna Process were to be updated in the communiqués following the EHEA Ministerial meetings, initially every two years until 2012. The EHEA education ministers currently meet every three years. The agenda includes international recognition of academic degrees, enhanced educational quality, mobility of students, and student-centered learning. While some communiqués stated the intention for greater employability of graduates that in turn will strengthen the European economy, the latest communiqué from Yerevan emphasized the student dimensions. The cumulative intentions can be summarized as supporting economic competitiveness for the participant countries

and for the region of Europe as an entity, and to support social cohesion (EHEA 2015). Alongside the economic growth in the common market and neighboring countries, international policy coordination in higher education aims to bring about cultural and social cohesion across countries, affirming the idea of a unified Europe. All of the Bologna Process countries are signatories to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe from 1954. The membership of the countries in the Bologna Process and the Council of Europe overlap. However, members of the Bologna Process such as Israel, Kazakhstan, and Belarus are not members of the Council of Europe. The Principalities of Monaco and San Marino are members of the Council of Europe but are not members of the Bologna Process.

INTERACTION OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

The Bologna Process is a key element to anchor new democracies in the practical implementation of broad, stakeholder-driven civic governance. Especially in Central and Eastern Europe, higher education institutions have played a key role in providing a refuge for people with policy views that challenge those of the state (Tyson 2013). This effort to build the EHEA is an example of the social construction of the idea of Europe (Christiansen et al. 2001; Lavdas 2006; Nokkola 2007).

There are three processes in the political economy that influence the Bologna Process. Global economic pressures act on national economic concerns and preferences of societal interest groups, which drive their engagement in the political economy. Domestic politics influence negotiations at the international level (Keohane and Milner 1996; Milner 1997; Putnam 1988). These negotiations and bargaining are part of intergovernmental cooperation (Moravcsik 1998; Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009). The norms transmitted from the EU socially construct preferences and impact the national level of domestic institutions through the process of Europeanization (Börzel and Risse 2000, 2012; Risse 2009; Schmidt 2009). These three processes are explanatory variables of the international political economy, which are traced throughout this book (Fig. 2.1)

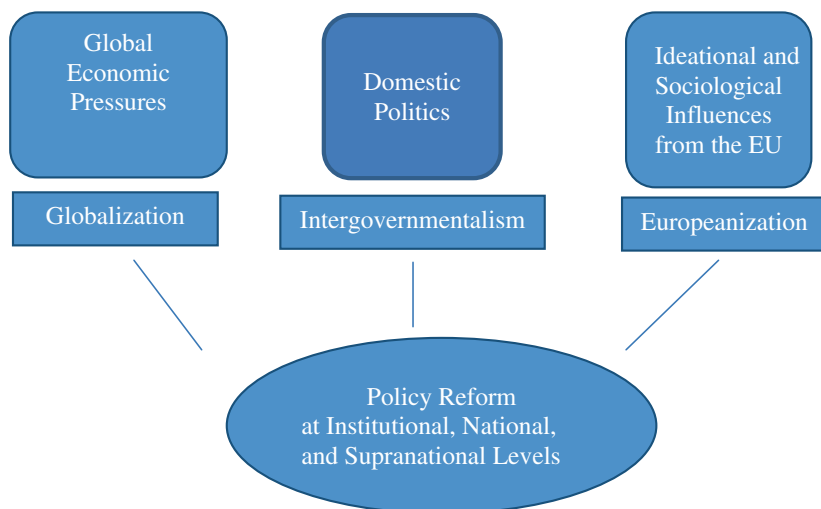


Fig. 2.1 International Political Economy Influences on Policy Reform

FOCUS ON DEGREE STRUCTURE CRITERIA AND EVOLUTION OF BOLOGNA PROCESS ACTION LINES

The focus of the research done to write this book, particularly for the qualitative case studies of Portugal and Spain, is the national-level institutional changes needed to implement the degree structure criteria of the Bologna Process. The second important focus is quality assurance, which is still in progress as countries continue to design their policies for national accreditation agencies. Each EHEA country has at least one quality assurance agency that is part of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) and complies with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The third important focus, and the ultimate objective of the Bologna Process, is international automatic recognition of academic qualifications across participating countries. This is challenging because of differences in educational quality across countries and institutions within countries. The participating countries affirmed their commitment to automatic recognition at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in April 2012:

We are determined to remove outstanding obstacles hindering effective and proper recognition and are willing to work together towards the *automatic recognition* [emphasis mine] of comparable academic degrees, building on the tools of the Bologna framework, as a long-term goal of the EHEA. (Bucharest Communiqué 2012: 4)²

It is not possible to assess each aspect of the Bologna Process and its implementation in this book. The focus is on the reforms in academic degree structure and higher education attainment as part of Europe 2020. The political economy context provides explanations as it facilitates or impedes convergence on the original policy criteria of the Bologna Process. The qualitative research focuses on the criteria of the degree system action lines for the three tiers (or cycles) of degrees—bachelor, master, and doctorate—and the NQF, which defines the qualification content of degrees. Countries in the EU have two NQFs: a national/EU qualifications framework and an EHEA qualifications framework. At the national level, policy implementation takes place when the primary sources of legislative documents are created. However, this is not a linear process from the national level to the institutional level of governance. Following the introduction of reforms and criteria for higher education institutions, the national and institutional timing of policy implementation has varied across and within countries. It is important to distinguish among policy formulation, implementation, and reformulation (Cerych and Sabatier 1986).

The criteria for the implementation of the Bologna Process have evolved over time. During 2006, before the London EHEA Ministerial Conference, a set of 10 Bologna Process policy objectives was established (Reinalda and Kulesza 2006: 9). The central tenets of recognition of academic degrees and mobility of students are achieved through the policy implementation of these objectives and action lines across participating countries (Reinalda and Kulesza 2006: 9).³

Bologna Process Policy Objectives or Action Lines (2006)

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles (undergraduate and graduate)
3. Establishment of a system of credits (ECTS—European Credit and Transfer System)

4. Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles
5. Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of European dimensions in higher education
7. Lifelong learning
8. Involvement of students
9. Promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to other parts of the world
10. Doctoral studies and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area

The action lines of the Bologna Process have evolved at the EHEA Ministerial Conferences since 1999. The later action lines follow the earlier action lines in implementation. The ten action lines have been defined over time in Bologna (1999), Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), and Bergen (2005) before the London (2007) ministerial meeting. Later ministerial meetings have taken place in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve (2009), Budapest and Vienna (2010), and Bucharest (2012). In 2012, by the time of the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Bucharest, the previous 10 action lines had been refined to focus on key areas. The stocktaking indexes for 2005, 2007, and 2009, created to identify progress on these issue areas, were not continued as a format for periodic country reports. There were concerns about the consistency between the national and institutional levels of reporting in the stocktaking reports. The Bologna Process administrative tasks of national reporting on stocktaking have been criticized for not accurately reflecting institutional realities (Veiga and Amaral 2009a). The EHEA rotates the location of the Secretariat to be in the city where the next Ministerial Conference is scheduled to take place. In 2018, the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Paris takes the education ministers back to the city where the idea was created on May 25, 1998, with the Sorbonne Declaration.

At the EHEA Ministerial Conferences in Bucharest and Yerevan (in April 2012 and May 2015 respectively), the criteria and corresponding policy objectives aimed to commit the participating countries to the Bologna Process through 2020 and beyond. These policy areas were assessed in context within *The European Higher Education Area: Bologna Process Implementation Reports* presented in Bucharest (2012) and in Yerevan (2015) at the conferences of education ministers (Eurydice 2012 and 2015).

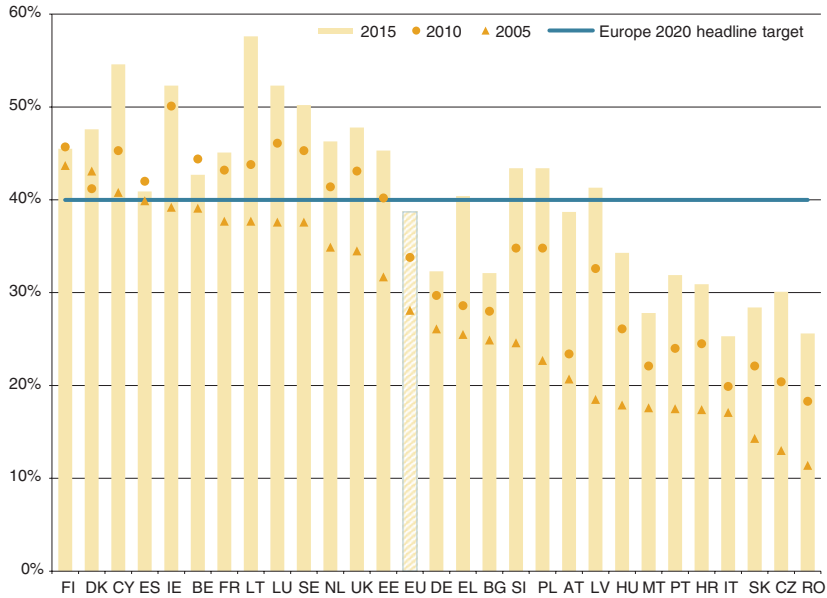


Fig. 2.2 European Commission. 2015. “Higher Education Attainment, 2005–2015”. Directorate-General of Education and Culture. Education and Training Monitor. Page 48. *Source* Eurostat (EU-LFS, 2005–2015). Online data code edta_lfse_03. *Note:* The indicator covers the share of the population aged 30–34 years having successfully completed higher education (ISCED5–8); break in time series in 2005 for DE, ES, MT, and SE; in 2010 for BG, DE, HR, NL, PL, RO, and UK. The data on higher educational attainment 2005–2010 for AT should not be compared with data from 2015, since under ISCED 1997 the qualification acquired upon successful completion of higher technical and vocational colleagues is reported in ISCED level 4, not in ISCED level 5 as in ISCED 2011 implemented from 2014

Bologna Process Refined Criteria and Objectives (2012)

1. Degree system
2. Quality assurance
3. Social dimension
4. Effective outcomes and employability
5. Lifelong learning
6. Mobility and internationalization

7. Student-centered learning
8. Recognition

These relatively abbreviated criteria that have evolved aim to appeal to a broader audience and emphasize the key aspects of higher education as they relate to both social cohesion and human capital development for maximizing the growth potential of the economy. These criteria complement the European Commission's economic growth strategy, established in March 2010 and called Europe 2020. Building upon themes from the Lisbon Strategy in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the economic growth strategy of Europe 2020 addresses the global context of slowed growth in developed countries and focuses on the five key areas of (1) education, (2) employment, (3) innovation, (4) social inclusion, and (5) climate/energy sustainability. Higher education attainment is measured as part of the Europe 2020 economic growth strategy (Fig. 2.2). These five key areas of the economic growth strategy are interdependent and are supported by the component of attainment in higher education to advance the overarching goals of a "smart, sustainable, and inclusive Europe."

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS: REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The theoretical foundations that guided my research for this book are drawn from previous work in international political economy, on theories of policy coordination that consider both domestic politics and international relations (Keohane and Milner 1996; Milner 1992, 1997), and on theories of historical institutionalism and institutional change (Hall 2010; North 1990, 2005; Olsen 2009a, 2010; Pierson 2004). Within the purview of policy coordination and institutional change, there exist even further subsets of analysis. Policy coordination or policy convergence takes into account competitive pressures from globalization (Rodrik 2011; Rosamond 2002; Spring 2009), domestic political pressures (Putman 1988), and institutional design together with credible commitments of actors at various levels of governance (Maassen and Olsen 2007; Moravcsik 1998; Rodrik 2000).

Institutional theory, which is the basis for institutional design and change, may be viewed in historical, rational, and sociological perspectives (Hall and Taylor 1996; Peters 2012). Historical institutionalism is

valuable for process tracing and the contextual understanding of regional integration and the European project in particular (Pierson 1996, 2004). Rational institutionalism and sociological institutionalism are used to explain, respectively, the preferences of state actors and the influence of the supranational entity of the EU. This analysis of institutions is referenced in the theory promulgated by Andrew Moravcsik in *The Choice for Europe* (1998), a seminal project that advanced the centrality of states in leading policy decisions through rational self-interest in a liberal intergovernmental approach. The state-driven policy positions were challenged by theorists who argued that the EU is primarily a supranational entity (Keohane and Hoffmann 1991). Moravcsik's position, built upon previous decades of literature on regional integration theory that determined integration, stemmed from functional dynamics of cooperation in particular issue areas, such as the production of coal and steel or synchronizations of telecommunications and postal services (Mitrany 1943). This phenomenon in a neo-functional perspective identified spill-over effects from particular functional areas of cooperation into ever more broad areas of political cooperation (Haas 1964). The liberal intergovernmental policy process is descriptive of the Bologna Process, and it is enlivened in the Bologna Declaration.

We hereby undertake to attain these objectives – within the framework of our institutional competencies and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of University autonomy – to consolidate the European area of higher education. To that end, we will pursue the ways of *intergovernmental* [emphasis mine] co-operation, together with those of non-governmental European organisations with competence on higher education. (Bologna Declaration 1999)⁴

Theories of policy coordination are found in research on the international political economy (Keohane and Milner 1996; Milner 1997). The important role of institutions in this process calls for analysis through a variety of institutional perspectives that contribute to political economy explanations. Recognizing that International Political Economy and International Relations theory literature most frequently present the historical, rational, and sociological perspectives of institutionalisms, these three types of institutionalisms are the most relevant to this research. Historical and sociological institutional perspectives place the Bologna Process in a chronological context of regional integration in Europe, driven by social leaders and their interests. Rational institutionalism

explains the preferences of states that seek to maximize their benefits and utility in political power and economic influence. Current interpretations of these institutionalisms build upon the previous regional integration literature, which is discussed in Chap. 3 (Haas 1964; Keohane and Hoffmann 1991; Mitrany 1943; Pierson 1996).

The liberal intergovernmental theory advanced by Moravcsik is important to interpreting the Bologna Process as a Member State-driven initiative supported by the supranational framework of the EU. By committing to the tenets of the Bologna Process, the Member States have de facto endorsed its objective to create a European higher education area, enhance economic competitiveness, and strengthen Europe as a regional power in the world. From the beginning, the Bologna Process was related to the cornerstones of European Commission education policy, such as learning mobility and recognition of qualifications across countries (Kania 2012). This shows that the normative power of the EU extends beyond the 28 Member States, given that 48 sovereign states are participating in the Bologna Process. Sociological institutionalism explains the contextual power of the EU in the region and the institutional constraints to policy implementation that exist across various levels of governance. This is connected to social constructivist notions of the EU as a power that establishes norms, creates institutions, and provides regional identity. The preferences of the state and the influences of the EU interact in the “policy space” between national power and supranational governance. The policy diffusion of European ideas has driven the policy reforms through the top-down process of Europeanization acting on the national level (Berry and Berry 2014; Börzel and Risse 2000, 2012). In this work, historical institutionalism is important as a synthesis between rational and sociological institutionalisms (Hall and Taylor 1996). The qualitative case-study comparisons of Portugal and Spain show that, ultimately, rational motives to pursue internationalization were important for the policy implementation at the national level, through the 2007 laws to establish the requisite NQFs.

The European Union’s motto “unity in diversity” is at the heart of the Bologna Process’s impetus for policy coordination. The objective is for higher education to complement the mobility of labor, capital, goods, and services in the Single Market. The European project for regional economic integration began with economic and political cooperation in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), as a result of the Treaty of Paris in 1951. Following this post-World War II

agreement, the six original countries of France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux (Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) continued their cooperation from the ECSC to create the European Community with the Treaty of Rome in 1957. In the more than half a century since then, the cooperation has intensified among the original members and has broadened to include additional member states in the region. The Treaty of Maastricht signed February 7, 1992, stated in Chap. 3, Article 126:

The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Treaty of Lisbon, signed December 13, 2007, went further to define the European Union's extent of engagement with education policy⁵:

1. The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity (The Lisbon Treaty 2009 Title XII, Article 165).
2. Union action shall be aimed at:
 - encouraging mobility of students and teachers, by encouraging inter alia, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study (Title XII, Article 165).

The regional integration that began in the mid-twentieth century expanded into the policy space of education through the formal treaties that had economic and political foundations before becoming manifest in the Bologna Process at the end of the century. Policy initiatives occasionally find resistance to change at the levels of governance of the state and in the sub-regions, such as in federal systems of government (Börzel 2000; Lijphart 1999). In recent years, resistance to the Bologna Process has been present at the levels of state and of higher education institutions due to some skepticism of these stakeholders toward the EU. Concerning institutional changes in the EU, two decades ago Robert Keohane and Stanley Hoffmann identified the realist political sources of decision-making at the commencement of the Treaty of Maastricht (Keohane and Hoffmann 1991). With the signing of the Treaty of

Maastricht in 1992, the European Community became the European Union. More than two decades of liberal intergovernmental cooperation has ensued since that important step in regional integration. Moravcsik built upon these ideas with his argument that liberal intergovernmentalism is a rational motivation that has a tripartite explanation of integration: “economic interest, relative power, and credible commitment” (Moravcsik 1998: 4). Translated into the context of this research, the tripartite explanation provided by Moravcsik corresponds to the three central dynamics that influence policy coordination in higher education. These central political economy processes, which serve as explanatory variables for the implementation of the Bologna Process, are combined with Moravcsik’s tripartite explanation in the following synthesis of ideas:

1. Globalization: Given *competitive economic pressures* and globalization, states continue to pursue their economic interests.
2. Intergovernmentalism: *Domestic politics* at the level of the state continue to drive decision-making in an intergovernmental context of relative power.
3. Europeanization: *Norm-setting leadership for the region* stemming from the supranational European Union is the context in which credible commitments are made.

These compromises in the negotiating states’ “grand bargain” described by Moravcsik (1998) come into play between two levels: domestic politics and international diplomacy (Putnam 1988). This two-level negotiating is typical among national ministers of education in the ministerial forums of the Bologna Process.

A MIXED METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A mixed methodological approach uses complementary qualitative and quantitative methods to carry out empirical research (Goertz and Mahoney 2012). The quantitative cross-national data analysis used in writing this book considers 26 EU countries among the 48 countries undertaking higher education policy reform.⁶ The qualitative case studies, Chaps. 6–9, compare the processes of the policy implementation for degree structure criteria at the national level in Portugal and Spain. The qualitative case studies present the Iberian countries, Portugal and Spain, in historical institutional perspective from the pivotal time period of adoption of new democratic constitutions in the mid-1970s.

The quality assurance and automatic recognition criteria components of the Bologna Process continue in the implementation process, and this is of interest for future research. Given institutional change as part of democratic politics in the EHEA countries, this research reveals the strengths and weaknesses of change in the relationship between the political economy context and outcomes in policy reform. Qualitative research in case studies utilizes process tracing for historical and cultural analysis of institutions and policy-making decisions over time and to research the similar case-study countries to determine historical influences on policy and diverging outcomes not explainable by quantitative analysis alone (George and Bennett 2005: 253).

Research Questions on Policy Reform

The primary research question is addressed qualitatively and quantitatively:

- What are political and economic explanations for achieving the criteria for higher education reform, and higher education attainment, for countries in the Bologna Process?

Research Question 1 (RQ1)

The secondary research questions are addressed qualitatively and are opportunities for further research:

- What is the relationship of globalization, measured by regional integration in the economy by the extent of international trade, to policy implementation?
- What is the relationship of stakeholders'—academic, public, and private—commitments to policy reform on policy outcomes?

This mixed-methods project uses historical institutional analysis for qualitative case-study research and empirical analysis for quantitative research. This qualitative approach in historical institutional perspective is essential to interpret the intergovernmental and Europeanization influences that impact the policy reform within countries. Advancing this analysis, social constructivism is useful to explain how the Bologna Process originated as transnational policy discourse and developed into the material manifestation of policy adoptions and institutional changes (Nokkola 2007, 2012). Further, the European economic space and objectives for

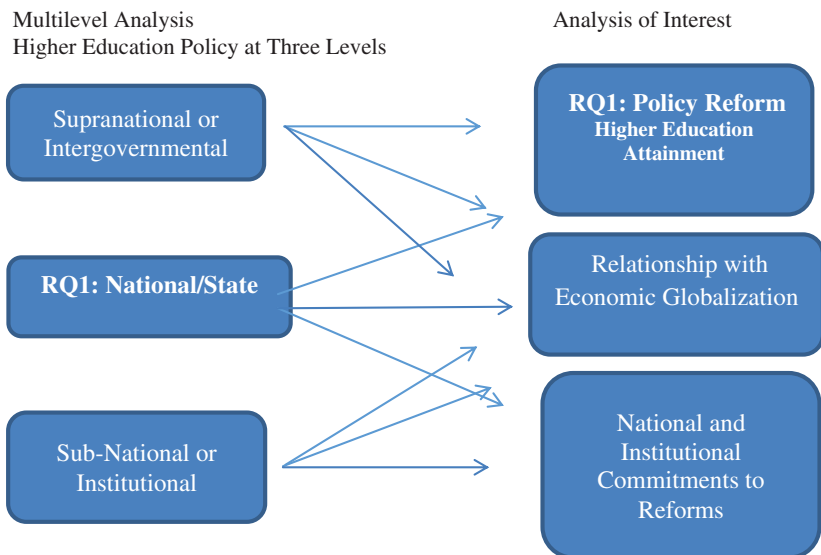


Fig. 2.3 Research Analysis Embedded within Institutional Structure

competitiveness can be explained by social constructivism (Rosamond 2002). A quantitative empirical approach complements the institutional perspectives and uses statistical analysis to measure the relationship of economic indicators to the education policy outcome of higher education attainment. The term “higher education” is used for higher education throughout this book. The higher education attainment benchmark comes from Europe 2020, the European Commission’s economic growth strategy.⁷ This relationship of the political economy context within countries to higher education outcomes is useful to consider when qualitatively evaluating the processes of institutional change. Regression methods explain the influences of independent variables—per capita GDP, R&D as percentage of GDP, economic integration through trade, employment, and government spending on education—on the dependent variable of higher education attainment. The quantitative analysis assesses higher education attainment as the dependent variable over time, from the start of the Bologna Process in 2000 until 2014. The 26 countries are assessed together, and Portugal and Spain are assessed uniquely to provide a closer look at variables in these case-study countries (Fig. 2.3).

RATIONALE FOR THE CASE STUDIES SELECTION

The purpose of presenting the case studies is to provide understanding that becomes generalizable and relevant to others countries experiencing these policy reforms. Chapters 6 and 7 on Portugal and Chaps. 8 and 9 on Spain provide qualitative case-study analysis to compare policy implementation at the national level in the two countries of the Iberian Peninsula. Five points of comparison in qualitative analysis provide the historical institutional framework to assess similarities and differences in higher education governance and administration:

Chapters 6 and 7:

1. National governance background
2. Political economy context.
3. Higher education governance

Chapters 8 and 9:

4. Role of stakeholders in policy process
5. Modernization of higher education institutions

The research offers a unique perspective by identifying trends in the political economy as they relate to outcomes in higher education policy across regions of the EU and specifically in Portugal and Spain. These countries are understood as most similar cases applying John Stuart Mill's "method of difference."⁸ There is an important diverging explanatory or independent variable, which is the structure of government, alongside other similar independent variables (Bennett 2004: 31; George and Bennett 2005: 50). The difference in the dependent variable of interest, which is higher education attainment, highlights Portugal's heightened pace in increasing higher education attainment and in moving forward with the EHEA reforms.

The structure of government is a definitive factor in the political economy contexts of these two case-study countries. The structure of government influences domestic policy decisions and international cooperation with the EU and neighborhood countries in the Bologna Process. Portugal has a unitary government, while there is a quasi-federal or devolved government of 17 autonomous regions in Spain. This raises the possibility that an explanation for policy reform divergence may be

found in government structure. The research design, using the method of difference, identifies the diverging independent variable in the political economy that explains the distinct dependent variable. The shared independent variable between these two cases is the broader governance context of being transition countries after authoritarian rule, before acceding to the EEC/EU simultaneously in 1986. Another shared variable of interest is the NQF degree structure, established through legislation in Portugal and Spain similarly in the year 2007.

Portugal, being smaller in population and in size of economy, may facilitate educational reforms on a national level more rapidly than larger, decentralized countries. The idea of “pathfinder” countries was introduced at the 2012 EHEA Ministerial Conference in Bucharest, to report to the 2015 Ministerial on best practices. Portugal has been among the nine pathfinder countries that have been exemplary in finding ways to implement the automatic academic recognition criteria of the EHEA, as the culmination of achieving policy reforms. While Portugal initially implemented some reforms more quickly and has increased attainment at a faster pace, Spain has had greater total attainment in higher education (Eurydice 2015). This book explains that government structure, as well as political support and institutional leadership, is key to policy reform. Even prior to the Bologna Process, because of transitions to democratic rule under new constitutions in the 1970s, there were ongoing higher education policy reforms in the Iberian countries at a national level that intersected with the European reforms introduced in 1999.

With the method of difference applied to these most similar country cases, there was a distinct outcome on the dependent variable of interest, namely, the expansion of higher education has progressed more rapidly in Portugal than in Spain. The average annual change in higher education attainment rate, over the period 2011–2014, was 5.5 percent for Portugal and less than 0.5 percent for Spain (European Commission 2015). There is an important diverging explanatory or independent variable, which is the structure of government, alongside other similar independent variables (Bennett 2004: 31; George and Bennett 2005: 50). Portugal has a unitary government and a population of approximately 11 million people. Spain has a quasi-federal governmental structure and approximately 44 million people, four times greater than the national population of Portugal. Other independent variables provide explanations concerning the extent of national support for reforms, politically and economically. In addition, it is pertinent to consider the starting points, from the

beginning of the Bologna Process, to evaluate higher education policy criteria in each national context.

The recent pressures from the global recession and Eurozone crisis are considered for Portugal and Spain. The pressures of globalization acting on economy, politics, and society are ongoing. The greater than 100 percent debt to GDP for the Iberian countries remains burdensome as they emerge from economic assistance programs. These trends in the economy during the global financial crisis (2007–2009) preceded changes in political party leadership in the countries. In Iberia in 2011, the electorate voted to replace the Socialist leaders in the Prime Minister's office in both countries; in June in Portugal and in November in Spain. Then in late 2015, Portugal returned to Socialist party leadership. Spain remained without a new government for most of 2016. National priorities and EU priorities are occasionally aligned and are often in tension, for interest groups and political parties. Since Portugal's government agreed to accept EU funds in 2011 and Spain agreed to accept funds for the banking sector in 2012, there were opportunities for enhanced cooperation between the national leadership and the EU. The role of stakeholders—from the academic, public, and private sectors—is discussed in the qualitative case studies. More than a decade of reform provides an appropriate time period for application of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) to assess the roles of stakeholders from the academic, public, and private sectors (Sabatier and Weible 2007). The outcomes in policy reform, to achieve the Bologna Process objectives, are influenced by the international political economy processes of intergovernmentalism and Europeanization (Bickerton 2015; Börzel and Risse 2000, 2012).

COMPLEMENTING THE SINGLE MARKET: THE CASE FOR THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The Bologna Process and the EHEA have been created to complement the common market and its four freedoms: labor, capital, goods, and services. This common market in Europe is known as the Single Market, formally established in 1992 with the Single European Act, and it is a model for common markets globally (Egan 2015). There remain opportunities and challenges in the political economy to achieve regional integration in higher education. This under-researched area is an emerging field of academic inquiry. The knowledge economy of the twenty-first

century is central to the analysis of the Bologna Process objectives in the second decade. In the second decade, many of the 48 participating countries have achieved the policy convergence objectives. However, there is an opportunity to provide institutional support, at the European level working in cooperation with the European Commission, to countries that can continue to advance on the policy reforms (Lagier 2016; Tyson 2016).

Within the context of regional integration, the Bologna Process is the most ambitious undertaking in the world for policy coordination of higher education. Given that the region of Europe is the most economically and politically integrated region, it is appropriate that this continent drives an unprecedented initiative toward convergence of higher education credits, degrees, educational quality, and recognition across sovereign states.

The following chapter considers the policy processes of intergovernmentalism, a state-driven process, present alongside Europeanization, a top-down process influencing the states. A historical institutional approach is taken to understand trends in regional integration and higher education cooperation through these policy processes. This provides historical explanations for the development of the Bologna Process—as international cooperation in higher education that is part of the process of regional integration that began in the post-World War II era.

NOTES

1. The Lisbon Recognition Convention is the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. This was developed by the Council of Europe and the United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It was adopted by national representatives meeting in Lisbon on April 8–11, 1997. As countries join the Bologna Process, they adopt the Lisbon Recognition Convention. See Appendix C.
2. The 2012 Ministerial Conference and Third Bologna Policy Forum documents available at: <http://www.bologna-bucharest2012.chea.info/background-documents.html>.
3. The mobility of students was earlier supported by the European Commission with the Erasmus program established in 1986. This is explained in Chap. 4.

4. The Bologna Declaration was signed on June 19, 1999, in Bologna, Italy, by 29 ministers of education. Please see Appendix C for the full text of the Bologna Declaration.
5. See Appendix D for the Treaty of Lisbon, Article 165 in Part 3, Title XII, on the EU role in education.
6. The statistical analysis does not include the countries of Luxembourg or Croatia, for which there is limited data. Therefore, 26 of the 28 current EU member states are included in the data analysis in Chap. 5.
7. The Europe 2020 economic growth strategy was launched in March 2010 by the European Commission. More information is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm.
8. A method for determining the research design and selected countries for case-study analysis comes from John Stuart Mill's logic of comparisons in *A System of Logic* (1843).

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