Europeanisation and Higher Education: Towards a Core Curriculum in European Studies?

Ian Bache
Department of Politics
University of Sheffield

i.bache@sheffield.ac.uk

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Introduction

As a policy area that remains primarily national in control and orientation, European co-operation in education policy has attracted relatively little attention from a political perspective. This is particularly true where there is a direct engagement with the notion of 'Europeanisation'. This paper considers the motivations for and implications of increased cooperation in higher education (HE), taking as its main case study a current proposal for European universities to move towards a common core curriculum for the teaching of European Studies. This proposal, although not formally an initiative of the institutions of the European Union, receives support from the European Commission through its funding of the Thematic Network in Political Science, which is driving the core curriculum initiative.

The paper assumes, following Kogan (1978) that education is political:

> Politics are those processes of discourse through which members of society seek to assert and ultimately reconcile their wishes. So those people who wish to make education non-political are either failing to understand that the purposes and procedures of education reflected what people want, or they are trying, perhaps unconsciously, to restrict the rights of fellow citizens to participate in decisions of deep and abiding importance to them (Kogan, 1978: 15).

As such, the Europeanisation of HE has to be understood in the context of political and economic imperatives promoting 'ever closer union' between European states. In this context, there is a danger that debate on the *academic* implications of moves towards common core curricula may be subordinated to an overriding economic and political rationale that undermines the potential pedagogic benefits of greater European cooperation in this area.

Europeanisation and Domestic Change

Most Europeanisation studies have considered the impact of the EU on its Member States (see, among others, Ladrech, 1994; Bulmer and Burch, 1998; Knill, 2000; Cowles et al, 2001; Smith, 2001; Anderson, 2002; Olsen 2002; Dyson and Goetz, 2003). However, Helen Wallace (2000) among others has argued that the EU is itself a feature of Europeanisation, which is a process with a longer history and broader geographical coverage than that of the EU. For the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to attempt resolution of these conflicting perspectives on Europeanisation. As the focus here is on developments 'beyond' the EU, in that cooperation is wider than Member States alone, I necessarily adopt a definition that is not EU-specific. However, as the case study will demonstrate, the reality is that EU actors and institutions, despite a low profile formally, are far from disconnected from this process of Europeanisation.

In addition to spatial and temporal issues connected to definitions and coverage of Europeanisation, there has also been considerable debate on *what* should be studied and how. In particular, there has been some broadening of Europeanisation research from an early emphasis on formal institutional adaptation and change - often drawing on historical institutionalist approaches - to concern also with the impact of European values and policy paradigms on discourses and identities at domestic level (for an overview, see Bache and Marshall, 2004). This shift reflects broader trends in the study of EU-matters, characterised by a growing interest in sociological institutionalism and constructivism.

However, both EU-specific and broader Europeanisation studies, whether emphasising historical or sociological institutionalism, share a number of themes that are useful here. In particular, there is an emerging consensus that Europeanisation effects differ. They differ across states; they differ within states; and they differ across different dimensions, in that formal institutional and policy changes have been more apparent than changes in identities and values. There has also been considerable variation in Europeanisation effects across different institutions and different policy areas. In broad terms, this is because there are variations in the pressures 'coming down' from the European level and there are variations in the response of domestic

actors and institutions according to how these pressures fit with existing domestic preferences and practices.

There is also consensus that, in trying to understand the impact of European cooperation on domestic politics, two-way pressures operate: Member States seek to 'upload' preferences to the European level, as well as 'downloading' European level decisions. While acknowledging this interactive dynamic, the focus here is primarily on the 'downward' flow of pressures, with Europeanisation defined as *the reorientation of aspects of politics in the domestic arena in ways that reflect the policies, practices or preferences of European-level actors/institutions.*

Curricula and the Social Context of Higher Education

In general terms, curriculum development should be understood in the context of the constantly changing relationship between HE and society. While historically the influence of dominant social institutions, such as the crown and the church, exerted at most an indirect influence on universities, HE institutions have been increasingly influenced directly by the state, the market and economic institutions and have adopted the language of society. In short, higher education is rapidly being transformed from being 'an institution *in* society to becoming an institution *of* society' (Barnett, 1994: 157: *italics added*). How this influence is accommodated or resisted varies considerably, depending on factors such as the nature of the discipline in question and the standing of the institution within a particular social context. Two ways in which HE is potentially influenced by society relate to *marketisation* and *identity-construction.*

Marketisation

Of particular importance in both the discourse and practice of contemporary HE institutions is the notion of 'marketisation'. As education has become subordinate to market demands, educators have increasingly adopted the language and rationale of market competition. Academic excellence is increasingly equated with improving international competitiveness, not least because as public funding to HE has been reduced, the advocates of additional funding for education have been forced to rationalise it in terms of its contribution to greater economic competitiveness. In other

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words, 'what was traditionally education's by-product function is now proclaimed as its ultimate goal' (McMurty, 1991: 210).

Yet in a number of ways the principles of education conflict with those of the market. McMurty (1991: 211-213) identifies contradictions between the market and education in terms of goals, motivations, methods and standards of excellence. The overriding *goal* of corporate actors in the marketplace is to maximize private money profits; whereas, the overriding goal of educators in schools, colleges and universities is to advance and disseminate shared knowledge. The determining *motivation* of suppliers in the market is to satisfy the demand of whoever has the money to purchase goods and services; whereas, the determining motivation of educators is to develop sound understanding whether it is wanted or not. The *method* of suppliers in the market is to sell the goods they have to offer to anyone at the best price they can get; whereas, the method of educators is never to buy or to sell what they have to offer, but simply to require of all who would obtain it that they fulfil its requirements autonomously. Finally, the measures of *excellence* in the market are: (i) how well a product-line is made to sell; and (ii) how problem-free the product is and remains for its buyers. By contrast, the measures of excellence in education are (i) how disinterested and impartial its representations are; and (ii) how deep and broad the problems it poses are to anyone who has it.

In a similar vein, Barnett et al (2001: 436) suggest that the relationship between higher education and the labour market is increasingly captured by Lyotard's concept of *performativity*, which implies 'doing rather than knowing' and 'performance rather than understanding'. The authors suggest that:

> 'In the performative society, there is a mistrust of all things that cannot easily be quantified and measured. Those knowledge fields that were once intrinsically valued for their own sake must now demonstrate their relevance to the wider world' (Barnett et al, 2001: 436-7).

As such, curriculum changes have to relate to this context in new ways (see Table 1)
Table 1: Traditional and Emerging Curricula

Traditional Curricula	Emerging Curricula
Knowing that	Knowing how
Written communication	Oral communication
Personal	Interpersonal
Internal	External
Disciplinary skills	Transferable skills
Intellectual orientation	Action orientation
Problem-making	Problem-solving
Knowledge as process	Knowledge as product
Understanding	Information
Concept-based	Issue-based
Knowledge-based	Talk-based
Pure	Applied
Proposition-based learning	Experiential learning

(Source: Barnett et al, 2001: 437)

Identity-Construction

The development of a shared European political identity is one of the three critical components of legitimacy for the EU system (Beetham and Lord, 1998), and arguably the one that provides integrationists with the greatest challenge. Socialisation through education plays an important role in identity-construction and thus control over education is potentially crucial to the future legitimacy of European institutions. As Olson (2002:8) states,

> Like other political systems, the EU makes efforts to justify their institutions, to develop a sense of belonging and to create emotional identification with the system among citizens. Aspirations of governance then include not only changes in behavioral regulation, opportunity and incentive structures, but also the molding of individuals and changes in mentality, causal and moral beliefs and ways of thinking.

In other words, moves towards ever-closer union require not only changes in structures and processes, but also in ideas and values.

Given the importance of education in the socialisation of citizens, and specifically its link to national (and often sub-national) identities, it is not surprising that member states have generally been reluctant to transfer competence over education to EU institutions. The way subjects are taught – the narrative – can be a mechanism for social inclusion or exclusion. As Ahonen (2001: 179) argues, narratives 'mediate experience within community', and reality 'is made into representations by those who experience it, and it is reinterpreted and resymbolized in the course of time. Social reality is, therefore, a construction that is processed and re-processed by a community'. As such, narratives are central to the development of collective identification. This argument has particular relevance in the context of determining curriculum content for European Studies: how European integration is understood (and taught) necessarily reflects a particular narrative (or narratives) that has the potential to be either being inclusive or exclusive in the construction of a European political identity.

While there are obvious and well documented differences between the process of European integration and the processes creating modern nation states, there are also commonalities between these processes that are instructive in relation to the importance of curriculum narratives and identity-construction:

> '… it was as a result of nationalism that history first became a hegemonic subject in the school curriculum. Modern nations were constructed through narratives about primordial nations that had their origins in the hereditary ethnic unity of communities, and which had inevitably, or would inevitably develop into nation-states' (Ahonen, 2001: 180).

For a curriculum to be inclusive, it must acknowledge alternative and embrace multiple alternative narratives: 'only in this way will people with different experiences be included in a historical community; where the past is both shared and multi-faceted, discussion can occur in an open space, and the future can consist of options' (Ahohen, 2001: 190)

There are, therefore, important choices to be made in how European integration is projected via the curriculum. For obvious reasons, the projection in some national contexts would not naturally be the same as in others or that desired by European-level actors. As such, the academic issues at stake are inevitably caught up in a struggle for policy control between domestic and European-level actors. Yet, as scholars of the EU have long reported, national resistance is not necessarily an ultimate barrier to Europeanisation generally and the enhanced authority of EU institutions specifically. Moreover, formal transfers of competence by member states are not the only means through which EU institutions exercise authority. The European Commission in particular has a long history of using its financial, informational and political resources to promote the creation of transnational networks of actors that further integrationist projects. However, while incentivising network creation is one thing: advancing a shared political identity within Europe is quite another. In the battle for control between national and European actors over the future of the integration process, education policy will be a vital territory. Already, there is a significant history of both conflict and emerging cooperation within Europe in relation to HE.

Europeanisation and Higher Education

Despite the fact that ' there has been an interlinking of the idea of a higher education dimension to Europe, and a European dimension to higher education since the Community's foundation' (Corbett, 2002: 123-4), a recent intensification of cooperation (and conflict) on the issue has been given significant academic attention (Haug and Tausch, 2000: Beukel, 2001; Field 2001; Rakic, 2001; Sadler, 2001: Wessels et al, 2001; Corbett, 2002). This intensification of cooperation in the 1980s and 1990s has led Beukel (2001: 124) to argue that 'aspects of education policy are an established part of the Europeanization of national policy-making'.

A distinction can be made between the formal expansion of EC/EU competences as set out in Treaties and as interpreted by the Court of Justice, and the less formal but increasingly prominent voluntary cooperation between states and HE institutions. In terms of the EU's role, the new wave of integration in the mid-1980s stimulated by agreement on the Single European Act, and the appointment of a new activist

Commission in 1985, promoted renewed intergovernmental cooperation between states on educational issues. This led to the formal adoption of a number of EC programmes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, including: COMETT (Community Programme for Education and Training in Technology); ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students); LINGUA (to fund and promote training and skills in foreign languages); TEMPUS (Trans-Mobility Programme for University Students); LEONARDO DA VINCI (to stimulate innovative training policies) and SOCRATES, which incorporated both ERASMUS and LINGUA, but was significant for extending activities to the new area of schools, through incorporation of the COMENIUS programme on school education (for further details on these programmes, see Beukel 2001)

One EC/EU initiative that is relatively overlooked in the few histories on education policy is the Jean Monnet project, established in 1990, which aims to promote and develop teaching on European integration. This project provides part funding towards a range of initiatives, including: subsidising professorships devoted to teaching on European integration ('Jean Monnet Chairs') and funding courses on the EU. By 2001, this initiative had supported 2,319 new teaching projects in over 500 universities, including 47 European Centres of Excellence, 491 Jean Monnet Chairs, 800 courses and 641 modules (Sadler, 2001). Funding from the Jean Monnet project is provided for new initiatives only, and the criteria for selection gives priority to compulsory courses in the study of European integration and to those 'reaching a wide audience'. Funding decisions are taken by the Commission in consultation with the European University Council for the Jean Monnet project, which comprises academic representatives put forward by the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences, and ECSA-Europe (European Community Studies Association), which brings together the national associations for European integration studies (Sadler, 2001). Field (2001: 2) has argued that the Jean Monnet project 'facilitates the standardisation and "Europeanisation" of European integration courses and curricula through the interaction of appointees'.

Beyond formal EU initiatives are less formal voluntaristic activities, notably the 'Bologna process' for the creation of a common European space for higher education by 2010 to promote citizens' mobility and employability. The Bologna Declaration

(1999) was a pledge by 29 countries[1], including all Member States of the EU, to reform their higher education structures in a convergent way. It was based on a shared acceptance that

> 'in spite of their valuable differences, European higher education systems are facing common internal and external challenges related to the growth and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, the shortage of skills in key areas, the expansion of private and transnational education etc (CRE undated: 3).

Moreover, the Declaration was more than statement of intent: it was a binding commitment to a programme of action based on a clearly defined *common goal* to create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education, and a *deadline* to complete the European space for higher education in 2010. A number of specific objectives were also agreed: the adoption of a common framework of readable and comparable degrees; the introduction of undergraduate levels in all countries, with the first degrees no shorter than 3 years and relevant to the labour market; ECTS-compatible credit systems also covering lifelong learning activities; a European dimension in quality assurance, with comparable criteria and methods; the elimination of remaining obstacles to the free mobility of students (as well as trainees and graduates) and teachers (as well as researchers and higher education administrators).

A follow-up to the Bologna conference was held in Prague in May 2001. This conference involved education ministers from 30 countries, along with representatives of the European Union, the Council of Europe and others. The Prague Communiqué, which emerged from the conference, reaffirmed the goals of the Bologna Declaration for comparable diplomas, credit systems and mobility, and added further commitments. These were that: modules, courses and curricula at all levels with a

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[1] The Declaration was signed by: Austria, Belgium (French community), Belgium (Flemish community), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Swiss Confederation, United Kingdom.

European dimension should be supported, especially when leading to joint degrees by institutions from different European countries; participating countries agree to arrange seminars to explore further cooperation in the areas of accreditation and quality assurance, recognition issues and the use of credits, joint degrees, the social dimension – in particular mobility issues – the enlargement of the Bologna process, lifelong learning and student involvement (Wessels et al, 2001: 8).

These initiatives were 'beyond' but not 'without' the EU. Wessels et al (2001: 8) clarified the role of the European Commission in what were initiatives led principally by actors within member states:

> 'Although the European Commission took part as an observer in the Bologna and Prague meetings, and even provided support for the latter, at the current stage the member states (and the non-member states and applicant countries) did not officially state a common intention to use EU institutions to advance the project, especially in those fields which could lead to legislative proposals of the Commission'.

The prominence of voluntaristic nationally-led initiatives in this sector reflects in part the suspicion with which national actors view an expanded formal role for the EU in Higher Education. Beukel (2001: 126) has argued that 'the very notion of "Europeanization of education" causes concern in most countries in Europe, one reason being that it is equated with homogenisation of the educational systems that could imply a loss of national identity'. Yet there is a strong 'marketisation' logic for enhanced European cooperation in this sector: international competition between HE institutions is intensifying and Europe-wide recognition makes sense for universities seeking to attract students and staff from an international marketplace. More generally, intensified global economic competition between states provides a strong logic for European cooperation on areas of research and skills development, which necessarily involves HE.

Yet while these initiatives are essentially voluntaristic, the more European cooperation grows, the less choice at least some HE institutions will have but to join in or risk 'outsider' status. In the absence of a general convergence, there is the

danger of a division emerging between convergent and non-convergent systems within Europe, with probable negative consequences for the latter as students are attracted to those universities that 'better guarantee the quality and thus the recognition of qualifications' (Campbell and van der Wende, 2001, cited in CEHEI, 2001: 2).

While there have been significant developments on a number of issues within HE, the Europeanisation of curricula has remained a distant prospect. However, a 'voluntaristic' process promoting cooperation in the areas of curriculum content is underway in the field of European Studies. A pan-European network of academics, assisted financially by the European Commission is leading this process. It is to this case we now turn.

Towards a Common Core Curriculum in European Studies?
The proposal to create a common core curriculum in European Studies is led by the Thematic Network in Political Science, later renamed EPSNet. It is part of a project called EPiSTEME (Enhancing Political Science Teaching Quality and Mobility in Europe) that was granted by the European Commission Directorate General for Education, Culture and Youth under the Thematic Networks option of the SOCRATES programme.[2] As noted by the Commission, 'the main aim of the programme is to enhance quality and to define and develop a European dimension within a given academic discipline or study area' (CEC Undated: 1).

Initiated in 2001-2002 and continued in 2002-2003, EPiSTEME was initially structured around five sub-projects: the use of ICTs in teaching political science; producing multinational European studies modules; improvement of job opportunities for political science graduates outside academe; training doctoral students as teachers; and lastly teacher and student mobility improvement measures (Goldsmith and

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[2] Thematic Networks are a key innovation of the Socrates-Erasmus programme. They were created to 'deal with forward-looking, strategic reflection on the scientific, educational and institutional issues in the main fields of higher education'. Generally, a Thematic Network is a cooperation between departments of higher education institutions and other partners (e.g. academic organisations or professional bodies). Normally, all countries participating in the Socrates-Erasmus programmes (EU, EFTA and Candidate Countries) should be represented in a Thematic Network.
(source: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/tnp/index_en.html)

Berndston, 2002: 78). The EPiSTEME II work-plan consists of the following thematic projects: ICT Teaching in Political Science, and the one that is the focus here, Political Science and EU-Studies.

The Political Science and EU-Studies project was viewed as a 'response to the EU's ever-increasing part of our polities, its rapid development in recent years and, as a consequence, to the growing demand for up-to-date, flexible and comprehensive teaching programmes on European Integration Studies' (EPSNet, 2002: 1). The project had two phases. The first phase involved compiling and assessing information on the state of teaching European Politics as preparation for the development of a core curriculum. This involved analysis of a questionnaire that had been mailed to academics across the EU who taught European Studies. The second phase included the development of a set of teaching models for use by a 'broad variety' of political scientists in the EU or beyond and a proposed menu of relevant topics for European Politics courses (EPSNet, 2002: 1).

The Common Core Curriculum for European Studies

The proposal for a common core curriculum in European Studies is outlined in two documents. The first of these, by Wessels[3] et al (2001), sets out the basic assumptions and proposals for the project. The second paper, by Umbach and Scholl[4] (2003) takes the thinking on the project further. The proposal has both explicit educational and labour-market objectives.

The main arguments presented for this initiative can be summarised as follows. First, that as the EU becomes more important, more complex and more relevant, the teaching on Europe gains more salience for university curricula as well as for the democratic legitimacy and stability of the evolving political system. Second, in view of the growth and differentiation of analytical and theoretical work on the EU, the links between both teaching and research need to be reinforced with potentially productive effects in both directions. Third, the curriculum should help mobility in

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[3] Wolfgang Wessels is Jean Monnet Chair of Political Science at the University of Cologne and is leader of the Political Science and EU-Studies project.

[4] Gaby Umbach and Bruno Scholl are researchers on the Political Science and EU-Studies project at the University of Cologne.

various ways, such as reducing 'transaction costs' for crossing both disciplinary and national borders. Finally, the development of the curriculum should stimulate reflection among the academic communities about the fundamentals of their discipline (Wessels et al 2001: 3).

While the project's sponsors define a core curriculum as 'a list of items considered as essential knowledge in a determined field', they are keen to emphasise that no uniform curriculum is proposed. However, they suggest that the core curriculum should have an important theoretical or academic component and at the same time should prepare students for the European-wide job market by teaching about the institutions and procedures of the EU itself and related politics and policies. Moreover, it should not be restricted to course outlines presenting the general topics to be addressed, but instead offer course tools going beyond lectures (e.g. the information technologies available, new teaching approaches etc.)

Umbach and Scholl (2003: 72) argued that the core curriculum should go 'beyond theoretical and academic topics'. They suggested that to prepare students for the European job market, it should also include: a more technical, practical dimension that covers the institutions, political processes and skills necessary for careers in an international environment; and, be directed at facilitating mobility in the job market by reducing the 'transaction costs' of crossing disciplinary and/or national borders. Overall, while remaining reluctant to over-specify the components of a core curriculum in European Studies, the project sponsors argued that a 'hard core' of items should be identified, 'in which the history, theory, institutions and policies of the EU count as indispensable and fundamental components' (Umbach and Scholl, 2003: 74).

The purposes and objectives of the project are clearly and honestly set out. There is no attempt to disguise the relationship between the project and the legitimacy of the EU as a political system, nor its link to market demands. These aspects are reflected on critically below. However, before the critical assessment, it is important to reflect on the pedagogic and academic potential of this initiative.

Pan-European cooperation of this sort provides obvious opportunities for the transfer of ideas on teaching, learning and assessment. Beyond this, but not unrelated, the project provides an outstanding opportunity for interdisciplinarity across previously separate academic boundaries. The responses to the survey undertaken for the common core curriculum initiative suggested that 'there was broad agreement on the fact that a strict separation of the disciplines politics, law, and economics (and sometimes history and sociology), is hardly feasible in European Studies, and would not provide a complete picture of the uniqueness of European integration. Unfortunately, cooperation with other disciplines is not yet a matter of course' (Wessels et al, 2001: 10).

For many scholars, the arguments in favour of interdisciplinarity in curriculum development are growing stronger. Boyer (1994: 118) has suggested that: 'In the coming century, there will be an urgent need for scholars who go beyond the isolated facts; who make connections across the disciplines; and who begin to discover a more coherent view of knowledge and a more integrated, more authentic view of life'. The existing organisation of universities, structured around disciplinary boundaries, encourages students to think in 'boxes'. An alternative approach would be to focus courses around themes or issues that would require academics to bridge disciplines because no single discipline would be able adequately to handle such a course. The study of European Integration provides a good example of such an issue, with its cultural, economic, legal, political and social aspects. Moreover, greater European cooperation on this issue provides an opportunity to transcend the disciplinary boundaries that are deeply embedded at national level, rather than reproduce these restrictive intellectual boundaries on a grander scale.

A Critical Assessment

There is a clear and undisguised link between the need for mobility in the EU labour market and the development of a common core curriculum in European Studies. There is also a clear link made between education and the development of citizen awareness and identification with Europe as a means of democratising and stabilising the emerging political system at EU level. This section takes a critical look at both of these imperatives for change.

Economic Imperatives: the dangers of marketisation?

While the market-driven context in which HE operates cannot be ignored, the relationship between education and market demands is not a straightforward one and, most importantly, education should not be subordinate to the market. In relation to the first of these points, Mason et al (2001: 134) raise doubts over the extent to which a causal link can be assumed between what students learn and their subsequent performance at work: their findings are that the connections between student achievement and job performance later are 'tenuous at best'. In relation to the second point, there are contradictions between the market and education in terms of goals, motivations, methods and standards of excellence. Market-driven education does not prioritise knowledge and understanding for its own sake, but for its contribution to economic competitiveness: while the first of these makes a direct contribution to the quality of the human experience, the latter makes an indirect contribution at best. Following this, there is much value in McMurty's (1991: 210) argument that 'the long-term development of education and of civilization itself requires the autonomy of education from market command'.

In a real sense, much of the debate around Europeanisation and HE is closely identified with the debate around marketisation. Market integration remains central to the process of European integration and related Europeanisation pressures in HE. Academic freedom is important in this market-driven context to ensure that subject-related learning is not subordinated to the provision of generic skills for the workplace. Of course, this is a concern in both national and European contexts, as national governments increasingly seek to steer HE curricula. Related to this, it is evident that non-Europeanisation would not and does not insulate HE institutions from market pressures. In their study of developments in Britain, Saunders and Machell (2000: 287) 'came across several examples of curricular change or trends which were introduced on the basis of a perceived need for students to rehearse, in an explicit way, the employment practices they were likely to enter'. Thus, the issue at stake here is not with Europeanisation *per se*, but the extent to which this process reinforces trends in the marketisation of HE that threaten the free pursuit of teaching and research.

Political Imperatives: the danger of a single narrative

Specifically in response to the common core curriculum proposal, Heather Field (2001: 1) argued that 'an approach to the teaching of European integration which aims at standardisation and the removal of "bumps in the road" would risk losing valuable understandings and stifling the development of new approaches'. The differences in how European integration is understood and taught in different contexts relates to a number of factors. Some differences can be explained according to the nation or region in which it is taught, others by academic discipline and yet others by intellectual preferences or values, which can lead to the exclusion of some ideas or approaches towards understanding integration. As such, Field (2001: 3) argued that 'just as there are differing constructs of the EU itself (Diez 1997), there can be no single "right approach" to the teaching of European integration'.

Across disciplines and sub-disciplines there is often common content on EU courses, including the names of institutions, their formal powers and the details of their policy competences. Beyond description, however, the significance attached to these aspects varies enormously according to approach and interpretation. Across different nations, there are differences also. For example, European integration in France tends to be taught under the heading of 'European Law', but in Germany and the UK is more likely to be taught under the heading of Political Science/Politics (Field, 2001). This may make a difference in terms of what is deemed essential to the curriculum. Moreover, approaches to teaching European integration vary across countries. Field identified how tutors in the US are more likely than those in Europe to use 'advocacy exercises' as a teaching tool: an approach that may be connected to US education being more oriented to training future lawyers.

Following this argument, a curriculum most likely to achieve inclusiveness and promote European unity most effectively would be one that recognises different constructs of the EU and presents a range of valid competing narratives. Thus, a central challenge for the common core curriculum initiative is in identifying core elements without imposing, or at least promoting, a particular 'take' on European integration. This remains a significant challenge, particularly as a survey of academics conducted for the common core curriculum project revealed that courses on the EU delivered in both the EU and the US depend on a relatively small number of 'Anglo-American' textbooks.

There is a need for caution in relying on what is 'out there' already in developing a curriculum. Some, if not all, of the dominant textbooks on European integration will have been written in response to perceived teaching needs, thus legitimising and reinforcing existing curriculum content. In this context, this approach to curriculum development can become self-perpetuating and requires a critical approach to ensure that the chosen narratives are inclusive rather than exclusive. A valid criticism of the dominant texts on the EU is that the focus of most research on European integration 'has tended to be at the "grand project" and "high politics" level' rather than 'an emphasis on "ordinary people" and how it affects them' (Field, 2001: 10). In this view, the dominant narrative is an exclusive one.

The project sponsors' counter to the potential development of a dominant if not single narrative within the common core curriculum is to build flexibility into the curriculum design, include only a small number of common core elements and emphasise that the adoption of the curriculum by academics would be voluntary. The problem with the final argument, as with other aspects of Europeanisation of HE, is that once a critical mass of academics and institutions have volunteered to adopt such a curriculum the financial costs of not doing so increase with continued outsider status.

Conclusion

It is difficult not to see the proposal towards a common core curriculum as part of the broader economic and political drive for European integration. The Commission has supported the project and clearly has an interest in those aspects that develop awareness and understanding of the EU and promote European identity. This is consistent with the Commission's mission and indeed with its mandate from the Member States. Moreover, this has been the Commission's position in relation to a number of HE initiatives it has funded (e.g. the Jean Monnet project and various exchange and mobility programmes), which have been supported by the Member States.

On one level, the common core curriculum initiative may be seen as unique and, as such, only of interest for its own sake. Viewed from another angle, the case study raises issues that may have broader significance should the EU come to play a larger

role in education policy-making: all the indications are that this is a likely development for two reasons. First, there is a powerful economic imperative for increased European cooperation in higher education, both for HE actors and political and economic elites. Second, there is a compelling political logic to a greater EU role in education to embed the emergent political system. In this regard, education has a crucial role to play in the socialisation of European citizens and the construction of a European identity. As Kogan (1978: 18) put it, education 'transmits the dominant culture to new generations'.

This paper does not argue against the process of Europeanisation in this area. The dangers of Europeanisation relate to the extent to which worthy pedagogical and academic objectives are subsumed by the drive to promote political and economic integration in Europe. More positively, greater cooperation within Europe on curriculum issues promises advantages in promoting the exchange of ideas in relation to curricula and teaching practice and, particularly, in promoting interdisciplinarity. Whether the focal point for this cooperation should be progress towards a 'core curriculum', in the sense generally understood by educationalists, is very doubtful. Instead, cooperation should focus on promoting opportunities for educationalists to develop curricula that are critical and inclusive, and that seek to enhance academic freedom and the quality of the student learning experience. On a larger scale, Europeanisation also provides a major opportunity for national HE institutions and actors to resist together what they may not be powerful enough to resist in national isolation: that is, the greater encroachment of economic and political intervention in academic life.

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