



Prof. Dr. Socrates Kaplanis
TEI of Patras, Greece

Metron Ariston

Keywords:

- ✓ **Mobility: ECTS, CATS**
 - Academic, Professional Recognition
 - “Quality Assurance”: Management, Evaluation

- ✓ **Indicators**
 - Peers Standards & Conformity to E.C. Directives on “Products”
 - “Credibility”

PLATO SOCRATES DIALOGUES: ABOUT THE CITY

“The next stage in the training of our young men after music (Harmony) will be physical education.”

“Of course.”

“And here again they must be carefully trained from childhood onwards. My own opinions about this are as follows; let me see if you agree. In my view physical excellence does not of its self produce a good mind and character: on the other hand, excellence of mind and character will make the best of the physique it is given. What do you think?”

“I agree.”

The efforts, at European political level, to overcome the obstacles, in the four freedoms, as specified by the Treaties, are admittedly effective. As it concerns the mobility of the “educational products” that is, graduates, students and professionals, various studies show that many individuals suffer from the absence of a normalized standards system; a system that will provide for recognition of courses and degrees.

Up to now ECTS and the Directive 89/49 gave an impetus to that and put a transparent frame and the legal basis for academic and professional recognition. To plan an effective system for the above requirement, one is invited to draw parallel strategies and actions as the Directives for the free circulation of products do.

The study of the sequential stages and of the prerequisites and requirements to achieve this freedom, will disclose the relative position of curricula development, (ac) countable knowledge/competences/skills, assessment procedures, qualifications, etc. Within the whole frame of the mobility of graduates, students and professionals, as compared with the corresponding issues of the free circulation of products.

- ✓ The mobility of persons and especially, of students graduates professionals, from one m.s. to another, is somehow discouraged, as there is no (common) policy for Education & Training (E.T.) in the E.U.
- ✓ Harmonization of structures and degrees, is not, at present under any effective consideration, while on the other hand, normalization of standards for E&T, might be a rather welcome concept for adoption.
- ✓ The latter as a concept, was one of the intrinsic fundamental factors in ECTS and CATS.
- ✓ The adaption and practice of ECTS had as a prerequisite the mutual confidence and faith, between volunteeringly exchanging Higher Education Institutions. Although of no legal biding, it was effective in practice, with bilateral agreements and exchanges.
- ✓ The requirements to implement ECTS were, in one hand, the transparency in the management of student mobility, at administrative and academic level, and on the other, the understanding of each others curricula, the learning standards and the Institutional Culture. The implementation was attempted progressively via a formatted satisfactory description of courses, available or delivered, and the understanding of the chemistry of credits (allocation and award). However, the ECTS as implemented for Academic recognition of modules/courses attended, could not guarantee for the Quality of the learning environments, as well as the affectivity of Teaching & Learning, necessary indeed, for Academic and Professional recognition purposes.

1. The mobility, a draft shown in fig. 1, carries along all the possible configuration, the recognitions issue via an accrediting transaction. To award and accumulate credits, implies that the necessary documentation is available from the part of the Higher Education Institution and the course and that prerequisites and requirements are satisfied and the Credibility is established either a posteriori or ex ante, fig. 2.
2. The posteriori route is not tackled here, as it needs sampling and long time of experience and evaluation of exchanged “products”.
3. The ex ante approach is the one to investigate, mostly, as it will meet one of the prerequisites for the generalized concept of recognition to be presented, hereafter.

- a. One should accredit or confer titles/labels to “products” of the other partners, provided that an agreement is signed as such. In this case credibility is enhanced through full documentation or quality certification but for Academic purposes. This issue is very significant and has to be examined in depth by all the component bodies.
- b. Competent certification procedures and the nominated certified body for that, underpin the above requirements. Neither, ISO 9000 as it stands nowadays, or any other existing Quality evaluation model could easily, prove themselves able to offer the service of assurance of the academic picture of Teaching & Learning, its affectivity and satisfaction of the related bodies and of the recipients of the “products”, unless they are adapted to the Education-Learning ethos.
- c. However, this requirement could, in principle, be satisfied if, within a period of 2-5 years Higher Education Institutions could try to establish Quality management models for their Teaching & Learning environments, their development & operation, the RTD & services, etc., while the achievements of their departments, staff and graduates, at all the above sectors, should be transparently highlighted and documented.
- d. Auditing by a transnational Peers’ group to cover several m.s., in average is considered as one key requirement, to gain a rich European impact of the Quality evaluation. Peers’ group composition: *academics, representatives from employers and also from sectoral Boards/Institutions, professional bodies, etc.*, is a guarantor that the evaluation report will provide a European component for the Credibility sought for the Academic & Professional recognition. A satisfactory report of the Peer group under the above synthesis, meets basic Quality principles and requirements.
- e. The generalised system of **Quality Assessment & ECTS/CATS** based on networks for auditing with European Peers’, as outlined above, provides to a large extent a metron, **metric system**, which underpins **pan** = (*totality, everything within the university sphere*) and **ariston**, under the meaning of: **a metrics system which provides effective and reliable measurements of all processes within the University sphere i.e. T.Q.M. approach.**
Credits and therefore ECTS provide the way to measure the effort by the learner to master the objectives of the learning module/curriculum. It measures relatively and it measures the output. It does not measure the student performance, done by the grading system and not the Quality of the performance of all the processes in the Higher Education Institution, which in the core to establish Credibility. A Quality Assessment model may provide for measurement of the performance of all processes, the level and targets (pre) et, via Strategic Planning and the satisfaction of all the concerned, i.e. the inside and outside University customers. All the above highlight the required Metrics System. It serves the requirements for Academic and professional recognition, as shown in fig. 2.
- f. What the Quality standards might be? After, a study of the equivalent or corresponding issues of the Directives for the free circulation of product, that might be a set of items like those, which one can identify in the flow diagram below, see table II, fig. 3.
There, one can realize that credit allocation, award transfer, etc. are elements of a more general system, which we might develop for the teaching & learning processes. For these standards, the processes’ performance has to reach, we need that the Quality System includes **Quality Indicators** too.
- g. However, for reasons of competitiveness and viability/sustainability and for meeting the requirements of the recipients to the University outputs, we may proceed further and the metrics system be accommodated under a T.Q.M. model, for educational establishments, rather than a generalized Q.M. model or extended ISO one, used in the market economy.
- h. This issue falls in another discussion about Q.M. models, which fit or could be developed by the Higher Education Institution themselves, provided an effective training and consultancy is available via (the) European networks.
- i. Conclusively, ECTS as a tool to measure Academic expected output-achievements should be integrated into a more general framework to Manage Quality and Evaluate Quality.
- i.a. Self-assessment exercises are incorporated within this model, while the evaluation of the performance of the Quality model, applied towards the continuous improvement, with Peers’ coming from various national & European bodies per case, provides a

complete (pan) Quality Evaluation system to audit documents, processes' performance and achievements.

i.b. The overall picture of the Peers' report gives (the) European passport to a University process with a satisfactory level of performance.

Conclusions:

Students or graduates having passed part of their studies in a Quality certified/qualified Higher Education Institute, could be able to transfer themselves to other m.s. for academic and professional activities, especially as some members in the peer group come from social partners of other m.s. and the co-signing of the Quality report binds, in general, their Institution and the authorities, they represent.

It is obvious that for a case of centrally regulated professions, such a Peer report may be considered, as a passport for access to professional activities in those m.s. where the peers do come from and so on.

However, the "passport" needs the Credibility to be built progressively with continuous efforts via a Quality Policy whose frame and marry together the European experiences we all have lived up to now in one hand and the perspectives and requirements of the European Citizens on the other.

APPENDIX

Join Declaration Convened in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999

The European process, thanks to the extraordinary achievements of the last few years, has become an increasingly concrete and relevant reality for the Union and its citizens. Enlargement prospects together with deepening relations with other European countries, provide even wider dimensions to that reality. Meanwhile, we are witnessing a growing awareness in large parts of the political and academic world and in public opinion of the need to establish a more complete and far-reaching Europe, in particular building upon and strengthening its intellectual, cultural, social and scientific and technological dimensions.

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 importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe.

The Sorbonne declaration of 25th of May 1998, which was underpinned by these considerations, stressed the universities' central role in developing European cultural dimensions. It emphasised the creation of the European area of Higher Education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the Continent's development.

Several European countries have accepted the invitation to commit themselves to achieving the objectives set out in the declaration, by signing it or expressing their agreement in principle. The direction taken by several Higher Education reforms launched in the meantime in Europe has proved many Governments' determination to act.

European Higher Education Institutions, for their part, have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European area of Higher Education, also in the wake of the fundamental principles laid down in the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988. This is of the highest importance, given that Universities' independence and autonomy ensure that Higher Education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands and advances in scientific knowledge.

The course has been set in the right direction and with meaningful purpose. The achievement of greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of Higher Education nevertheless requires continual momentum in order to be fully accomplished. We need to support it through promoting concrete measures to achieve tangible forward steps. The 18th June meeting saw participation by authoritative experts and scholars from all our countries and provides us with very useful suggestions on the initiatives to be taken.

We must in particular look at the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of Higher Education. The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European Higher Education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions.

While affirming our support to the general principles laid down in the Sorbonne declaration, we engage in co-ordinating our policies to reach in the short term and in any case within the first decade of the third millennium, the following objectives, which we consider to be of primary relevance in order to establish the European area of Higher Education and to promote the European system of Higher Education world-wide:

- Adaption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European Higher Education system;
- Adaption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate

degree as in many European countries;

- Establishment of a system of credits – such as in the ECTS system – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by the receiving universities concerned;
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to:
 - for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services
 - for teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training without prejudicing their statutory rights
 - promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies
 - promotion of the necessary European dimensions in Higher Education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

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 co-operation, together with those of non governmental European organisations with competence on Higher Education.

We expect Universities again to respond promptly and positively and to contribute actively to the success of our endeavour.

Convinced that the establishment of the European area of Higher Education requires constant support, supervision and adaptation to the continuously evolving needs, we decide to meet again within two years in order to assess the progress achieved and the new steps to be taken.