Changed Academic Relationship Between Professors and Students at Uni Potsdam: Impact of Bologna 2011–2012

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1 Introduction

The University of Potsdam (Uni Potsdam), a research-intensive university situated in former East Germany, is no stranger to the major German and European policy reforms that have transformed the German higher education system over the past decade and a half. Uni Potsdam's rich regional past, young institutional history, and low state funding present a remarkable context of reform. This case study analyzes the perceptions of 25 professors amid Bologna and national reforms and found significant changes to the structure of faculty work, teaching and learning, and interaction between professors and students (Hairston 2013). This paper focuses on one thread of these findings: the ways in which the Bologna Process, during major national reforms, has changed the academic relationships between students and professors at Uni Potsdam 2011–2012.

1.1 The Bologna Process

The Bologna Process stemming from the Bologna Agreement of (1999) was initiated by the European Commission and sought to (a) improve transferability of degrees for students across Europe and beyond, (b) support the goals of a united European Higher Education Area (EHEA), (c) restructure all European degrees to the Bachelor's/Master's/PhD model, and (d) address social issues like gender inequality and an increasingly diverse society (EHEA 2010; Pritchard 2010; Witte et al. 2008). As an original signatory of the Bologna Agreement and an invested member of the process, Germany was involved from the policy's inception.

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1.2 German Higher Education Reforms

Simultaneous to Bologna, the German higher education system also engaged in its own significant reforms. German higher education is traditionally a loosely coupled system, both institutionally and nationally. Over the past decade and a half, institutions and state officials (a) built a more prescribed curricular structure via Bologna, (b) agreed upon a degree qualification framework, (c) improved internationalization initiatives of the tertiary education system, (d) introduced tuition fees in some states in 2007 and in 2014 dropped fees and became free for all, (e) increased competition in professorial work within and between institutions, (f) expanded the professorial hierarchy to include the Junior Professor (JP), and (g) shifted governance responsibilities within institutions (BMBF and KMK 2008; Charlier 2008; Enders et al. 2002; Hoell et al. 2009; Witte et al. 2008). No doubt the many reforms coming from Europe and Germany have impacted the way Uni Potsdam's professors operated and students engaged.

1.3 The German Context

German professors and institutional leaders engaged deeply in discussions on issues pertaining to Bologna to ensure that implementation did not compromise the essence of the German university. A professor is a very elite status in German culture and is considered one of the top five most important professions in the country. When participants were asked what it means to be a professor in Germany today, their answers centered around three main themes: an earned privilege, a responsibility, and the best job in the world. The status is a privilege enjoyed after a long, difficult path to the professorate. It is a responsibility in which one manages the trust and funds of the state. Professors explain it is "the best job in the world" as an opportunity to work with talented students, enjoy constitutionally granted academic freedom, and engage in the scientific questions that most interest them. The special status of a German professor informs how they define their professional roles.

When the Bologna Process began in 2000, it meant greater imposed structure upon a traditionally less structured system. Historically, German professors acted as autonomous entities and managed their chairs and departments as individual structures disconnected from one another. Each professor maintains that his or her autonomous acts are justified by academic freedom. At times, various behaviors have resulted in differentiation within and a lack of cohesion across the system. Bologna, therefore, was not only highly resisted, but also challenging to implement.

1.4 *University of Potsdam*

An institution built in a region with a deep and colorful heritage, the University of Potsdam is a mid-sized research university established in 1991 in former East Germany, one year after reunification. This new university developed from inter-cultural negotiation, an emerging national identity, and a hope for Uni Potsdam's future in a reunified Germany. The genesis of Uni Potsdam required a significant level of compromise by leadership and professors, both to accomplish the goals of the university and to respect individuals' past (East) and present (Western ideals). The first president of Uni Potsdam was Dr. Rolf Mitzer, an East German. One current Uni Potsdam professor, who was employed when the university was founded, characterized Dr. Mitzer's reign positively. "And [the first President] came from the East, but he was enthusiastic, making a lot of mistakes, because he didn't know how it happens but he wanted to build up. [It was] fantastic. Really impressive for someone—he dream[t] and envision[ed]." As years went on, Uni Potsdam emerged as a research university by recruiting many university leaders and professors from the West and beginning the university anew, gradually changing the culture of the university. Originally, professors worked only on the Am Neuen Palais campus, a historical landmark. Today, the University of Potsdam is comprised of three vibrant university campuses located in Golm, Griebnitzsee, and Am Neuen Palais across the city of Potsdam. Each campus houses distinct disciplines and possess its own campus history (Universität Potsdam 2011, 2013; Zimmerman 2011).

The University of Potsdam is the youngest and largest university in the state of Brandenburg (Landes Brandenburg 2008). Inevitably the university is influenced by its former East German context of Potsdam. Participants for this study come from a variety of different European countries and from the all four geographic areas of Germany. One LCWiSo explained the transition after reunification was eye opening. He/she shared: "You must see, in the GDR, one did not have the possibility to read a book from West Germany; we had only East German books and Soviet Union books. So far it was sort of a new worldview. I think one's own belief [system] comes from the fact that you can watch the world, and this possibility was only for the first time allowed and through close contact with many professors and other people from West Germany, this is where we were able to get a different view of the world. I think that was a good process."

Before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the largest East German Paedagogische Hochschule (teaching college) was situated on what is now the University of Potsdam's main campus (Am Neuen Palais). Following reunification in 1990, most East German professors were not absorbed into the new university out of fear of their allegiance to socialist principles. However, a few East German professors still remain. One LCWiSo explained: "But I think in recent years in particular, we made great progress in fully integrating these colleagues as well. And I don't think we look at them differently and I'm not sure they look at us differently: the Western imports. But of course you know...in social science and humanities it matters even more than natural sciences, the paradigm is totally

different. And these were people who were on a career path to be the academic elite of the GDR and that didn't happen. That didn't happen. And so you got, you have a degree of sensitivity for that, I think."

In Potsdam, the Uni Potsdam experienced a convergence of all reforms, and this study offers policy makers a micro-level analysis of the macro-level reforms. Major findings include (1) an increased pressure for professors and students as a result of this convergence, (2) more demands on time, and (3) less formality between professor and student. This article provides insight into extant literature on this topic; it explains the conceptualization and methods used for this study, presents the results, and discusses how the Bologna Process has impacted the faculty and student relationship at this one institution. These reforms have meant that Bologna has (a) required professors to adapt in new ways, (b) threatened the Humboldtian ideal of a German university, and finally (c) created confusion that will continue without further harmonization, described in greater detail below.

1.5 Literature Review

Researchers agree that the impact from Bologna on higher education in Europe has been extensive (Adelman 2008; Kehm 2010; Kehm and Teichler 2006; Mayer et al. 2007; Welsh 2009). Scholars have conducted research on its impact in countries such as Italy (Aitolla et al. 2009), Russia (Gänzle et al. 2008; Grigor'eva 2007), and Spain (Fernández Díaz et al. 2010). Many studies point to the unintended outcomes and failures of the Bologna Process (Hoell et al. 2009; Reichert 2009). For example, the extended implementation has led to "Bologna Fatigue." Hoell et al. (2009) argue that, given student retention and degree-credit transfer confusion, Bologna has not yet accomplished its mission. Erling and Hilgendorf (2006) suggest that the imposition of English as the common EU language has caused an "Englishization of the domain" (273).

Few scholars have studied the direct impact of the Bologna Process on professors in Germany. Winkel (2010) found that German professors experience roadblocks in their professorial work due to the added time from the increased accountability and degree reforms. He recommended that "faculties should be given much more autonomy to act when it comes to degree reform. This way, better results can be achieved, barriers to acceptance dismantled, and phenomena of demotivation reduced" (310). But beyond Winkel, this is the only study done specifically on the impact of Bologna on German faculty at one institution at the time of this study.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

Conceptually this study concentrates on the micro-level of inquiry. Structuralism and symbolic interactionism were used to analyze the change to university

structures and the professorial interactions with one another and their students. The unit of analysis is the role, “a comprehensive pattern of behavior and attitude that is linked to an identity, is socially identified more or less clearly as an entity, and is subject to being played recognizably by different individuals” (Turner 2000, p. 112). Professorial roles at one university include the behaviors and attitudes towards teaching, research, and service, as well as advising, mentoring, collaborating, etc.

1.7 Methods

This case study was grounded in an interpretivist paradigm seeking to understand rather than change the status quo (Rossman and Rallis 2003; Willis 2007). It was conducted as an embedded single-case design (Yin 2003) with two primary areas of interest: professorial work and role definition as it provided a space, within which such a distinctive policy impact study could freely develop.

This particular university setting was selected as a representative case study of a formerly East German Universität that is research intensive and a non-winner of the Excellence Initiative. Participants were purposely criterion sampled from two disciplines and two career stages: economics/social sciences (WiSo) and natural sciences (NatSci) and then early career (1–10 years) and later career (11+ years) (Patton 2002). Twelve early-career and 13 later-career professors participated for a total sample of 25 professors. Of those, twelve were WiSo and 13 were NatSci. Interviews, document analysis (European, German, and institutional), and observations were conducted between November 2011 and March 2012.

This study employed the method of data analysis in qualitative research known as coding. “Coding is a procedure that disaggregates data, breaks them down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments” (Schwandt 2007, p. 32). This was done in four ways: initial coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding (Charmaz 2006). Following each interview and subsequent transcription, I unitized the data separating each transcript into individual ideas. Conceptually, these units were small, logical concepts that shed light on one small idea or belief of the participant. For initial coding, I employed a constant comparative method, in which I identified a code for the first unit, and then for the next I decided if it matched the first or required its own code. This method was continued through hundreds of units comparing one against another. Upon completion of initial coding using the constant comparative method, focused coding was used to further categorize each code into larger emerging themes. For example, units of data included initially coded “hours teaching per week,” “student learning,” and “lectures” and data units were then categorized during the focused coding process as “teaching.” Once the data were defined both by initial and focused codes, I then organized each category “into subcategories, [which] specific[d] the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassemble[d] the data you have fractured during the initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis” (Charmaz 2006, p. 60).

This process is known as axial coding. For teaching, one axial coding category could be “increased demands on teaching prep time.” Lastly, for theoretical coding, I created matrices for ECNatSci, ECWiSo, LCNatSci, and LCWiSo so to compare behaviors and beliefs across groups. In the theoretical coding stage, I used the lenses of structuralism and symbolic interactionism, which led to my final conclusions for this study.

2 Results and Discussion

2.1 Context and Structure

In 2011–2012, Uni Potsdam enrolled 20,999 students, who were served by over 200 professors, resulting in a student to faculty ratio of 100:1. That year, the university obtained €44 million in external research funding (Gesamtfläche der Universität Potsdam 2013). Brandenburg, the university’s home state, receives the lowest funding allocation in Germany, thus Uni Potsdam must often do more with less and secure additional revenue without charging tuition. As a former East German state, challenges from reunification and rebuilding costs remain a strain to the budgets of today, and higher education is no exception. As such, Drittmittel (external research funding) accounts for a significant portion of the revenue for the university’s operation.

Capitalizing on its location in Brandenburg and its proximity to Berlin, Uni Potsdam collaborates with a dozen well-known research institutes to supplement its Drittmittel and to elevate its productivity. One LCNatSci stated, “We are probably the science faculty in Germany with the most extra-university institutes and jointly-appointed professors per capita.” These research institutes provide student research opportunities, and institute researchers with teaching and student recruitment opportunities. Indeed, these collaborations augment opportunities for both university faculty and institute researchers, creating a scientific hub for the region.

The following section outlines Uni Potsdam’s implementation of the Bologna Process and the study’s major findings, for how it has meant (1) greater pressure for all, (2) more demands on time, and (3) less formality between professors and students.

2.2 Uni Potsdam’s Implementation of Bologna

The Bologna implementation at the University has occurred through three phases since 2005. The first phase can be characterized as the resistance phase that, given its outcomes, was not successful. Although the faculty changed the degree nomenclature from the Diplom and Magister to Bachelor’s and Master’s, the programmatic content, instructional practice, and academic organization has remained the same. One ECWiSo described it as “The majority of professors here in this faculty were not

so enthusiastic about Bologna at the beginning... So, their strategy was to ignore it because at the beginning you could open new studies on the base of Bologna, a new master's and bachelor's program. There was no fixed date. In this faculty, they ignored it and they [wanted] to postpone as long as possible."

The implementation phase was much more successful, lasting three to four years prior to 2009. This second phase focused on learning outcomes, program content, professorial and student responsibility, graduate employability, increased accountability, and increasing student assessments (Prüfungen). To make the implementation of the new two-track system (BA/MA) easier, and to lower the resistance of the students and the staff of the German state and federal governments, the German Rector's Conference decided to introduce the new system and to close the traditional system over a period of several years. Thus, old and new study programs were offered simultaneously.

Diplom and Magister students remain in the Uni Potsdam system. Having begun their studies prior to Bologna, many of the Diplom students continue to take too many years to graduate. Some professors indicated the lack of a structured course of study permitted students to become dilettantes. A non-German ECNatSci exclaimed "Because once you had...if you were a student for seven years, you had the flexibility to study whatever you wanted. Then you wake up after seven years and say, "What am I doing here? I'm not employable." So that's one thing. It's beautiful, but it's not really practical, if you really think about it." Thus, as a time limitation was not imposed, the system never held students accountable, and their procrastination often led to a lengthened residence. An LCWiSo noted that almost 600–700 Diplom students in WiSo alone are continuing to study at Uni Potsdam over multiple cohorts.

Starting in 2009 or 2010, the current phase of acceptance includes greater tolerance, better organization, and additional understanding of the requirements for success. An LCWiSo explained that after "evaluating the programs", the faculty recognizes that it "must reorganize them. [Professors] must make them more innovative and that is the phase we are now in."

The Diplom degree is, however, still quite valued by many of the faculty. Many feel very strongly that the Diplom garners great prestige in Germany and its graduates are regarded as well-educated, knowledgeable individuals with a breadth and depth of knowledge in their particular area of study. One LCWiSo added "And many thought that [the] German Diplom is recognized as best in the world." An ECNatSci stated, "What my impression is that people here are very proud of what they had." With multiple student cohorts, varying degrees of buy-in, and just merely the nature of transitions, Bologna inevitably created challenges on Uni Potsdam's campus for both students and professors.

2.3 Greater Pressure for All

Amid structural changes, the Bologna Process has influenced the ways in which professors now must interact with their students in regards to knowledge

acquisition. The contextual change propelled a transformation of the student-professor relationship in two distinctive ways. First, Bologna shifted the academic paradigm from one in which students take full responsibility for their own learning, attending lectures at will, to one that is focused on learning in the context only of what the professors are teaching. Second, Bologna shifted the learning expectations by employing many more examinations, generating the practice of studying only that which will be tested, and reducing students' desire to learn for learning's sake.

2.3.1 Learning Paradigm to Teaching Paradigm

For Professors, Bologna's shift in German culture from a student-learning paradigm to a professor-teaching paradigm has resulted in transferring a higher level of responsibility from students to professors. Professors now must teach at specific levels, provide more points of accountability, and ensure that students are meeting learning outcomes at every turn. In fact, one LCWiSo stated that this shift has resulted in greater expectations by students from the professors. "The students expect from us even more [now] that they are carried through the semester."

Interestingly, as professors assume responsibility for what students learn, students have become partners in the process by holding professors accountable to the outlined learning outcomes throughout the semester. However, professors indicate that students feel justified in learning nothing more and nothing less. The pressure on professors is coming from above with the implementation of the new academic structures, and below with the expectations of students to do well in the new system. The squeeze from the top on students has resulted in the compartmentalization of student's knowledge for the sake of achieving within the parameters. The value is therefore now on the targeted teaching and the outcomes of exams, and not on learning for learning's sake.

Formerly, in the Diplom/Magister culture according to the Humboldtian model of higher education, the student was considered to be a self-responsible young researcher; the responsibility belonged to students to attend lectures and seminars, take notes, read material, synthesize knowledge, and prepare for large final examinations at important points in their educational path. Professors constructed and delivered lectures and ultimately tested students on synthesized knowledge in mid-degree exams. Much less emphasis fell on the shoulders of professors to teach at certain levels and to ensure incremental individual student's mastery of knowledge. The responsibility has shifted to the professors to ensure that the students are engaged and learning systematically. The culture has shifted from one of learning for learning's sake to one more regimented and focused on teaching, outcomes, grades, and assessment. This shift for both parties has been nothing short of dramatic.

2.3.2 Expectations Changed and Intellectual Curiosity Declined

With so many additional parameters, professors are challenged to excite students in their academic journey. Recently, one LCNatSci finds less curiosity among the students. “You have to have all these exams at the end of each course. And [the students] are very much stressed out. And it is also frustrating because with some courses you really put your heart in it, and you try to tell them, look this is great and this is so interesting. And you would like them to be fascinated by your subject. But, in the end they just ask is this relevant for the exam? So it’s like going back to school.” Some professors are disappointed by the lack of intellectual curiosity as they seek to inspire future generations in their discipline. Many professors shared, however, that they thankfully still have some students who are always very curious and demonstrate a passion for their subject. The professors’ challenge is to reach the average student.

2.3.3 Students Are Learning in Boxes

Indeed, professors believe that students now are compartmentalizing their learning, rather than responsibly synthesizing their knowledge across coursework. An ECNatSci related that one former student explained to him, “‘Well, now I’m all just thinking about’-whatever the module he was taking at the time, and ‘I have no idea about [your class] anymore.’ It’s this way of thinking inside little boxes and you also notice this.” Another ECNatSci said,

You could argue that that has always been the case, simply because we teach these things as separate subjects. But I think there’s modularization and especially the fact that you have to do an exam at the end of each module, it contributes to this. I think somewhat it leads to a fragmentation of the student’s view of [my discipline]. When you give lectures like [an] introduction to [course] lecture, when you give lectures and you refer to something that they should have or that they have heard before or in a lecture parallel about, let’s say, [a different course]. You just look into blank faces or at least from 90 % of them. It’s so boxed in the knowledge, there is no concept that ultimately, it all hangs together and so what you learn in [the different course] has relevance for what I tried to teach them in [this course] and they are connected.

The issue of students learning in boxes was a very common theme across all groups of professors in their perception of the Bologna Process. They are concerned that the students are no longer able to synthesize their knowledge due to Bologna. The ability to synthesize material helps students in their future endeavors, whether in graduate work or the workforce. Yet, professors are frustrated at the start of courses when they have to backtrack to ensure that everyone has the same knowledge base. In the former degree system, they felt that students were able to build levels of knowledge with each course. Remediation and frustration merely adds additional burdens to the professorial role.

The compartmentalization of knowledge is oftentimes purposeful on the part of the student within the new structure, in order to achieve on the exams. Interestingly,

this compartmentalization of knowledge started in the early 1990s (Nugent 2004), but has been exacerbated by the Bologna system. An ECNatSci explained: “Also the fact that each exam that you take contributes to the final mark, it fosters a certain attitude on the side of the students which is to really only be concerned about what do I have to do to get the best possible mark in this exam. For example, after giving a lecture, probably the most frequent question you get is not something related to the contents of the lecture, some problem that they stumble across, but the most frequent question is which bits of these are relevant for the exam?” An LCNatSci said his students will tell him “We have studied this, but now we have forgotten it.” This change in attitude affects the entire learning culture for students and professors. Professors shared their excitement for interested students and what a joy it was to teach those who have a thirst for their field of study. One LCNatSci explained, “Yes, it has made it less fun since we have the Bologna Process.”

2.3.4 More Examinations

With more exams, the faculty believes that student pressure has increased. An exam occurs after each module within each course, requiring students to study, retain, and at times memorize very specific material. Professors are sensitive to the change for students. An ECWiSo, “[Yes], really. I feel sorry for them. Because I understand for them it is really hard to study in such programs.”

This shift compels professors to construct each exam, tying questions directly to the course’s learning outcomes. The value of each small exam now adds up the value of the few larger exams in the former system therefore creating incremental pressure throughout the course of study rather than a few times during the whole degree. On the other hand, one LCNatSci perceives an advantage to the increased pressure on students and the new examination structure; “Students complain about the fact that there are too many tests. But I think in the past it was so that the students up to the intermediate examination had little feedback on their true performance and here I see ...a sensible system [of] well-arranged tests that you can always get [formative feedback] of where you are currently, [what] are your strengths, and what are your weaknesses.” The exams provide more gradual feedback to the students and allow for more open communication between the professor and the student on a student’s progress. The feedback can help weak students to reassess and make corrections along the way. Most professors, both early career and later career and across the NatSci and WiSo, agreed that the Bologna Process has significantly increased the demands on students’ time and in the way they approach their work. More examinations emphasize grades, another new aspect of the evolving culture. Not surprising, professors have been forced to adapt.

2.4 *More Demands on Time*

Bologna has meant a greater demand on time, that professors must commit to advising students on navigating Bologna, writing learning objectives, preparing to teach, and of course, also engaging in their own academic endeavors. Advising students also plays a more significant role in professorial life today as professors must help students (1) navigate the new system, (2) plan their academic path, and (3) decide options for study abroad.

2.4.1 Navigating Bologna Changes

The new degree structure has required students receive regular guidance from professors. Guidance is necessary because professors and administrators are still formulating courses of study and making tweaks along the way. The policies that guide the curriculum appear to change from year-to-year as the university refines its processes. For a professor, the ever-changing new policies have increased the amount of time he/she must spend, first, to know the details of what a student should need to know for their degree requirements and coursework options, and then to communicate and advise students on these matters. Unlike in some US colleges, no office of academic advising is available to students to support in these efforts; it is solely the role of the professor to advise as well as the responsibility of the student to learn about requirements independently online or in course catalogues.

2.4.2 Student Mobility Issues

The Bologna Agreement envisioned European student mobility through the transferability of credit points, recognition of degrees, and shared European-wide cultural knowledge to harmonize the EHEA. Mobility includes both baccalaureate degree recognition within and across European countries as preparation for graduate study and international study for a semester or more. In advising students, professors find three areas of challenge: (a) a semester away from Potsdam jeopardizes students' timely completion of their degree, (b) German modules and credit points are not necessarily equivalent or compatible between different countries, and (c) students have become more averse to studying abroad as a result of less time and more regulation.

2.4.3 Fewer Students Studying Abroad

The numbers of students who study abroad have decreased after Bologna at Uni Potsdam. One LCWiSo explains this phenomenon, "I mean what we see in the faculty is some of the problematic consequences of Bologna. The number of

students that have gone on student exchanges has actually gone down rather than up because we have three-year degrees.” Students do not feel they have time to study abroad and if they do, they have faced challenges with transferring their international credit back to Potsdam.

In the social sciences, an ECWiSo described the issue, “I think we encourage students to go abroad, which of course is a problem in all these Bologna schemes. When we design new Bachelor’s degree programs it’s always a question, it’s a bigger debate in Germany, if you want an eight semester BA and of course this is exactly the trade.... If you had a six semester BA it’s very difficult to have an internship, which is very important for [this field], just to get to learn something about the job market and maybe do a semester abroad. It’s not always easy to fit it into six semesters.” Thus the shorter degree cycle in Germany contradicts the desire for greater mobility, which means that not all disciplines can meet the full experiential learning for its students in only six semesters.

When students take courses abroad they miss others while not at Uni Potsdam. Course equivalencies can be a challenge when courses are only taught every other semester and in some instances Uni Potsdam will not accept dissimilar transferrable credit if a student misses a specific course while abroad. Given the numbers who wish to study outside of Germany, the sheer magnitude of the needed faculty advising is great. One ECNatSci explained, “So if you look at all these students, it’s not so easy to always really fulfill this promise of mobility, that there are still lots of issues with recognizing certain modules that someone takes somewhere else as equivalent from modules here.”

Some disciplines or fields necessitate practical experience, extensive course work, but still prefer students to study abroad. Faculty are currently seeking new ways to encourage intra-EU mobility by requiring it as part of their degree curriculum hoping to reduce many of these challenges for their students. Most importantly professors want to ensure that students are positioning themselves as competitive in a new labor market of fellow Bachelor and Master graduates.

2.5 Change in the Formality of Student-Professor Relationship

The former German system was very hierarchical in nature requiring a high level of formality between the student and the professor. Although the social distance rules have not changed in theory, the new context within which professors and students must operate requires a different relationship between students and professors—one of greater support to be able to achieve mutual goals. However, the shift to professors’ central role in student learning, alongside an increased student pressure to perform in the context of greater technology and social media communication, has led students to change the way they address professors in certain contexts. One LCNatSci received a one-line email without a name; the student asked to make up

missed work. Not being able to identify the student from the personal email account, the professor was unimpressed with the informality of the petition. Another LCNatSci discussed other instances of student informality. “The students today, they are at the university [and it seems] much more like a school, and they expect so much for granted here, you know. I mean, if they have a small problem... they just send an email to each professor with small questions instead of asking their peers. Small things, not thinking what it means for us if we have to answer hundreds of student questions....”. For one ECWiSo, students disagreed with the final exam construction and together escalated their anger against the professor through a Facebook thread. The group of students eventually sent the professor a very nasty email that started a line of unprofessional behaviors between professor and a group of students and caused a great deal of stress for the professor. It is clear that Bologna is not the culprit of such interactions, but professors felt that the convergence of technology, generational shifts, and the increased demands on the student-professor relationship via reforms has meant a shift in the ways that students feel that they can communicate with professors. Now faculty members have to negotiate the new student attitude without precedent or experience.

Students are also more likely to display resistance to professional judgment. Responding to the pressure for grades leads students to argue with professors over decimal points. Their anxieties push them to question the content of each exam. Professors show great frustration with this change in mindset. Though the focus on exams and grades may be a familiar student attitude in some countries such as the United States, it is an unfamiliar concept in German universities. Therefore, the increased emphasis and subsequent informality creates a level of annoyance and stress on the part of the professors who must cope with the changed relationship.

Professors for this study agree that Bologna has imposed significant change to their work and not surprisingly to their interactions with their students. As such, we turn to how this fits within the larger context of German and European policy.

3 Discussion

3.1 Professors Are Adaptable Creatures

Over the past decade, professors have undergone dramatic changes to their work—increased competition, a new pay scale, introduction of the junior professorship, increased demands in teaching and research, changing attitudes of students toward learning, increased enrollments, and a greater management of their professorial roles. These reforms (Bologna and German) have meant a significant shift in professorial life at Uni Potsdam. Throughout this study, however, professors demonstrate their resilience and adaptability to change. Their adaptability comes both from necessity (i.e., legal regulations and guidelines) and their recognized benefit of the privileged role they play in society. Essentially, the benefit of their academic freedom, time with talented students, and their contribution to knowledge

outweigh the costs of bureaucracy and increased demands. Despite the pushes and pulls to their work, professors demonstrate the importance of upholding their academic freedom by engaging in the reform efforts rather than resisting them. They seek to have their voices heard—to be agents in the process—rather than merely complain from the sidelines.

This study offers a clear example of professors who have sought to find ways to make the Bologna Process reforms work in their academic life. They are not yet satisfied, however. Instead, they continue to contribute to the larger reform conversation and strive for a sense of equilibrium. Their adaptability to change will be the key to any university reforms effort's future success. Policy makers can continue to benefit from the commitment and thoughtfulness of academics in future policy formation.

3.2 Bologna Shifts Humboldtian Ideal

Bologna threatens the Humboldtian ideal (Pritchard 2004) of the university by reducing the responsibilities in the professional roles of teaching, research, and service and regulating a historically unregulated system. The Bologna reforms have externally imposed more teaching and advising responsibilities and additional administrative tasks. In turn, these demands have resulted in less time for professors to accomplish what they perceived as their core task—research. In the past, the allocation of time to these activities was the decision of each individual professor and never imposed by an external entity. These shifts have therefore created a paradox between external control and academic freedom, a conflict that appears unresolvable in the current iteration of the reform efforts.

The German university structure built by a community of scholars as a free-thinking organization is unwelcoming to the newly imposed external demands of Bologna. Professors explained that Germany took such a long time in implementing Bologna because they sought to remain true to the principles of *Lehrfreiheit*, *Lernfreiheit*, *Wissenschaft*, and *Bildung*. For professors, these academic freedoms are non-negotiable and in fact, a constitutional right. The interaction between the reforms and professorial work is couched in the need for a more tightly-structured measure of the quality of higher education—a social structure that provides the catalyst for the advancement of society.

Quality assurance is at the core of Bologna efforts. The Bologna Process' goal to harmonize degrees and not necessarily standardize (Michelsen 2010) has meant great confusion for the professors at Uni Potsdam who are caught between external control and professional freedom. This paradox means, for example, that a professor's efforts to interpret the reforms, coordinate ECTS points, decide on the departmental learning outcomes, and create aligned approaches to a regulated system are misaligned in autonomous acts.

In these modifications, Bologna has influenced a transformation from a system of intellectual freedom to a system of control. In addition, freedom under the

Humboldtian values was not merely freedom of thought. “Freedom meant the relative political autonomy of the university from interference from the above (the state) and from below (social demands of the society at large)” (Baker and Lenhardt 2008, p. 61). Accountability, quality, and assessment are all now mechanisms for control in professorial work and come from both above and below: above in terms of European and German impositions, and below in terms of society’s need for accountability of state funds. This newly constructed paradox in the German university between control and freedom has resulted in professors’ frustrations that are difficult to relieve. The Humboldtian concept remains an ideal, but within the current state of implementing Bologna, it is far from reality.

3.3 Without Further Harmonization, Confusion Will Ensure

Professors voiced their frustrations with the implementation of the Bologna Process especially in terms of ECTS points, modular definitions, student requirements, and a general lack of agreement across departments. Further harmonization of the Bologna implementation by the departments at Uni Potsdam is essential. This adjustment requires a greater level of agreement over the number of ECTS points per course. Greater harmonization could actually relieve many of the frustrations among faculty, as the pressure to specify the component parts of each degree and its modules would be completed, requiring only tinkering in the future. It also would relieve student confusion and reduce the necessary advising time for their degree completion. Collaboration within departments could determine criteria for the content of modules, points, and sequences. Adelman (2008) and Baker and Lenhardt (2008) both posit that the differentiation between professorial approaches to these tasks has created greater confusion and misalignment across ECTS point allocation, resulting in unmet overarching goals. Therefore, although Bologna overtly states harmonization over standardization, the internal system of alignment requires further standardized refinement within the departments at Uni Potsdam, both to meet Bologna’s goals for greater harmonization and professors’ goals for a reduction in administrative and teaching tasks imposed from above. Specific to Bologna, professors in this study offer six areas of advice for policymakers: (1) stop reforming, (2) improve processes for professors by leaving research to professors and reducing administrative tasks, (3) reduce new quality assurance efforts and allow for what has been implemented to play out, (4) rethink the professorial incentive structure that currently values research above all else, (5) build upon the university’s strengths when reforming, and (6) reduce the administrative tasks on professors by incentivizing support staff.

What resonated most from this study is that faculty members need more space and time for research and teaching and less commitment to governance and policy implementation. For policy makers, this means that continued efforts to further professionalize the implementation and quality assurance of the extremely structural and procedural aspects of Bologna would be well received, leaving the academic

aspects still with faculty. Also, when making decisions for faculty, policy makers at various levels should consider the significant time and space necessary for creative scientific inquiry and innovation in professorial work.

On the European level, continued efforts in collaborating and sharing between systems are highly beneficial. Doing so provides opportunities for both the tangible sharing of ideas and programs, and also the philosophical discussions of maintaining the structure while allowing for organic fluidity. As Bologna continues to be part of everyday life, professorial work will likely endure new demands as one of the universally most demanding, yet enjoyable professions. The discussion must be kept going between full professors, new academics, students, and policy makers, as the need for everyone's perspective at the table is essential to the future of a unified EHEA and a well-executed Bologna vision.

4 Conclusion

This case study of Uni Potsdam offers an in-depth look at the perceptions of professors in the natural and social sciences, and illustrates their perceived impact of Bologna on the student-faculty relationship as it relates to faculty work. This study seeks to offer the space for professors and the university to continue their efforts towards refining and advancing their 21st century “jung, modern, und forschungsorientiert” university.

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