

lingua business

Bologna Process and What It Means to You

By Paul Gibson



By next year, all universities in the European Union must comply with a new 4-year university career model for most university degrees. The plan known as the “Plan Bolonia” here in Spain, has university students, teachers and even businesses in a silent uproar.

The Bologna Process started out long ago, almost ten years back, when the creators of the European Union discussed the need to have certain educational standards in place among the various Member states in order to allow for greater mobility among future members of the workforce in Europe. The plan sounds good on paper, but once you scratch beneath the surface, you suddenly discover a huge gaping black hole of uncertainty.

The plan was originally devised to encourage worker mobility in the European Union. This means that students could transfer from one university to another university in a different Member state with a simple transfer of credits.

According to the plan, this will encourage future workers to travel abroad to work in other countries and will better prepare future employees to accommodate the needs of the mobile workforce.

Aside from the drastic change from the “mid-term” and “final-exam” testing methods to a cumulative testing system, the years and methods of study will for the most part suffer serious modification. This means that a five-year economics degree will now be a 4-year college degree in Economics plus a two-year master’s degree, normally for the rich and upper classes that can afford such education.

The new system will require students to speak another language, aside from their native tongue. The language of business, English, is of course the most highly marketable. So now universities and educational institutions are scrambling to accommodate their organisations to make this change with the least amount of fallout possible. Several institutions are pairing up with the anglo-saxon system of entry exams that include tests of proficiency, such as the IELTS examinations and those offered by the British council. Students will have to attain at least a B1 level of language proficiency.

Besides the new language requirements, several countries are finding themselves at a loss when it comes to converting their curriculum to the new European standard. For example, there is no

list of obligatory courses or electives for Economics or any other career. There is virtually no agreement on subject matter, content or established criteria for examinations.

While EU officials and so-called institutions are hailing the Bologna Process, few have had the nerve to admit to the fact that the system is virtually non-existent and the framework for the new system is at best a shoddy sketch of what the ideal educational system might be. Some critics of the system see this as tailoring to the needs of big business by subjecting the design of existing education systems to the needs of businesses to carry out more and more business abroad.

As the year 2010 rapidly approaches, institutions, teachers, students, alumni and businesses alike are struggling to interpret (to understand) the characteristics and ramifications of such a system and an alarming number of them have absolutely no idea about how profound these effects will have on the future of tomorrow - our youth.