DEVELOPING GLOBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS IN THE 21ST CENTURY:

RESEARCHING THE LANGUAGE OF COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

by

Diane Martinez

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Theory and Practice of Professional Communication

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ABSTRACT


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Professional communication programs must be aware of the complexities and nuances of contemporary global communication and adapt their instruction to reflect these realities. Thus, there is a need for research efforts in global communication that provide insight into this type of communication.

This dissertation is a study of the language of collaboration and cooperation in professional and global contexts. Using Burke’s theories of identification and terministic screens, cooperation theory, activity theory, and a brief historical perspective on the European Union, I conducted a rhetorical analysis of Bologna Process documentation to study how this large and diverse membership is evolving and moving toward identification. Specifically, I explored the answers to three questions:
1. How were the common goals of the Bologna Process rhetorically developed in the ministerial communiqués?

2. In what ways was the goal of democracy or equal representation demonstrated in the documentation?

3. How did members negotiate between self-interest and the best interests of the group?

In professional communication where specificity and clarity often dominate conversations regarding effective writing, the Bologna Process demonstrates the opposite. Vague terminology is one of the most noticeable rhetorical aspects of the ministerial communiqués. Preliminary readings may deem such documents as political documents intended to deceive readers or mask accountability, but further analysis into the rhetorical situation of the Bologna membership indicate vague terminology can be seen as a way of giving members ownership of the Process and investing in the welfare of the group.

Further analysis also indicates that vague terminology and document hierarchy can create a democratic environment by encouraging social connections. Because working groups must continually reinterpret the language in the ministerial communiqués, the abstract and ambiguous terms in the communiqués invites participation from all members to debate and discuss the language from a standpoint of self-interest as well as the group’s interest.

Effective collaboration and cooperation may not always be the result of clear directives as is often taught in professional communication courses.
Instead, the Bologna Process documentation demonstrates that vague terminology may be a rather effective strategy for diplomacy and for encouraging democracy, especially with diverse multinational group members.

(218 pages)

Diane Martinez

Globalization presents opportunities, but also challenges for all professions, most especially for professional communicators. Likewise, professional communication programs must be aware of the complexities and nuances of contemporary global communication and adapt their instruction to reflect these realities. Thus, there is a need for research efforts in global communication that provide insight into the intricacies of this type of communication.

This dissertation is a study of the language of collaboration and cooperation in professional and global contexts. Using Burke’s theories of identification and terministic screens, cooperation theory, activity theory, and a brief historical perspective on the European Union, I conducted a rhetorical analysis of Bologna Process documentation to study how this unusually large and diverse membership is evolving and moving toward identification.

In a field where specificity and clarity often dominate conversations regarding effective communication, the Bologna Process demonstrates the opposite. Vague terminology is one of the most noticeable rhetorical aspects of the ministerial communiqués, the top level of Bologna documentation. Preliminary readings may deem such documents as political documents intended to deceive readers or mask accountability, but further analysis into the rhetorical situation of the Bologna membership (i.e., political and historical ties) indicates there may have been other motives for such imprecise language. Instead, the vague terminology can be seen as a way of giving members ownership of the Process and investing in the welfare of the entire group.

Further analysis also indicates that vague terminology and document hierarchy can create a democratic environment by encouraging social connections and subsequent documentation. Because working groups must continually reinterpret the language in the ministerial communiqués, the abstract and ambiguous terms in the communiqués invites participation from all members to debate and discuss the language from a standpoint of self-interest as well as the group’s interest.

Effective collaboration and cooperation may not always be the result of clear directives as is often taught in professional communication courses. Instead, the Bologna Process documentation demonstrates that vague terminology may be a rather effective strategy for diplomacy and for encouraging democracy, especially with diverse multinational group members.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>FORCES OF GLOBALIZATION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of Technical Communicators</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical Background</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outline of Chapters</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Bologna Process</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bologna Objectives</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How the Process is Managed</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identification and Terministic Screens</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consubstantiality</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motives</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rhetoric Goes Green</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terministic Screens</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus and Climate Change</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation Theory</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity Theory</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History of the EU As It Relates to the Bologna Process</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. ANALYSIS RESULTS OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMUNIQUÉS......58
   Overview of the Ministerial Communiqués .........................59
   Rhetorical Patterns.....................................................62
       Vaguely Worded Objectives........................................67
       Benefits of Abstraction and Ambiguity..............................74
       Vague Verbs..........................................................76
       Building Unity .....................................................80

4. ANALYSIS RESULTS OF WORKING GROUP DOCUMENTATION .93
   Overview of the Working Group Documentation ......................95
   Rhetorical Patterns........................................................101
   Results.............................................................................105

5. DISCUSSION.....................................................................128
   Power of Abstract and Ambiguous Language .......................130
   Promoting Democracy......................................................132
   The Power of Charter Documents ......................................138
   Agreement Versus Action..................................................141
   Additional Takeaways ....................................................145
       Challenge of Convergence............................................146
       Top-Down and Bottom-Up Rhetorical Approaches .................148
       Rhetoric Influences Reality ..........................................149
       Identity and Commitment .............................................152
   Further Study of the Bologna Process................................155
   Conclusion .........................................................................160

REFERENCES.........................................................................162

APPENDICES.........................................................................171
   APPENDIX A. List of Bologna Countries .......................172
   APPENDIX B. List of EU Countries .................................175
   APPENDIX C. Sample Bologna Documents ......................177
LIST OF TABLES

Table........................................................................................................................................Page
1.1, List of Documents Reviewed................................................................................................13
3.1, List of Ministerial Communiqués..........................................................................................61
3.2, Increased Membership........................................................................................................80
4.1, Problems with Definitions and Vague Terminology ............................................................. 107
4.2, Documents that Emphasize Survey or Questionnaire Data .............................................. 117
4.3, Partial List of BFUG Minutes Mentioning Lack of Participation................................. 119
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure.......................................................................................................................... Page
2.1, Map of Bologna countries......................................................................................26
2.2, Hierarchy of the Bologna Process.........................................................................31
2.3, An activity system.................................................................................................49
4.1, Hierarchy of Bologna documentation...................................................................94
5.1, EU countries.........................................................................................................144
CHAPTER 1

FORCES OF GLOBALIZATION

Thomas Friedman (2006) popularized the idea of a flat world, a world where more people than ever “collaborate and compete in real time...with people from more different corners of the planet...than at any previous time in the history of the world” (p. 8). But what Friedman calls flat, others call globalized. Globalization “refers to the integration of the world economy into one large market” (Faber & Johnson-Eilola, 2002, p. 136). It is the combination of knowledge, technology, and far-reaching communication like we’ve never experienced before, creating new opportunities for every country, indeed, every individual, in this world to compete for anything on any level. Globalization has presented new challenges for all professions, but most especially for professional and technical communicators because we are involved in the communication practices of all professions. One thing globalization has brought to light is that societal problems (environmental, health, and political) are not isolated nationally; the largest societal problems we face today are global issues because of our interdependence on one another and our global connections. And because of our global interconnections, there is no one discipline or even one country that can solve the problems that we face today. We must collaborate between disciplines, and we must collaborate internationally, especially in the areas of
science and technology (Sa & Oleksiyenko, 2011). Consequently, technical communicators are playing an increasingly important role in global collaboration and communication.

**Role of Technical Communicators**

Within the last 10 years, the face of technical communication and the role of the technical communicator have changed dramatically. Conklin (2007) has claimed these changes are due to the increasing role of science and technology in our lives, but also that the work of technical communicators involves more social interaction than in the past. Conklin quoted Moore and Kreth who elaborate on this point by listing some of the more social aspects of a technical communicator’s job:

> Today, technical communicators who add value to their organizations do not merely write and edit documents….We must manage complex strategies involving people, projects, goals, priorities, institutional rules and politics, national and international standards, cultural conventions, relationships between diverse technological platforms, and a variety of constraints. (p. 210)

Conklin’s study is aimed at exploring the social dimension of technical communication. He states that in the past, technical communicators worked more independently and focused on document creation; but, now technical communicators are entering a workplace where conflict is high due to interdisciplinary groups. But the social interaction of technical communicators is not just in working alongside diverse members; knowledge construction is very
much a technical communicator’s responsibility and one that calls for social interaction with others, as well as being “information coordinators” and not just writers. Thus, Conklin concluded that in the future, technical communicators will be “playing new, interactive roles within their organizations...[that] require [them to] act as facilitators and project managers, creating and maintaining a complex set of relationships” (pp. 216 & 226-227), and this “relationship management” (p. 227) will be just as important as their documentation skills (Conklin, 2007).

Collaboration implies cooperation on some level. After all, when parties work together, the fact that they are working together means there is some degree of cooperation, and usually the goal is to increase cooperation the longer parties collaborate. As instructors of technical communication we want to help students learn how to effectively collaborate, thus increase the level of cooperation among all parties, especially with diverse global group members. To begin to understand the intricacies of collaboration, it is essential that we understand why and how people work together. Much modern managerial literature focuses on what is called instrumental cooperation, the idea that people must be rewarded for their efforts; however, Tyler (2011) disagreed and said that, actually, most people work together because of their social connections to one another. These social connections are actually shaped by internal values, and when people are allowed to work in a democratic environment, social connections, thus internal values, override self-interest and people willingly,
even in the absence of authority, work toward what benefits the group (Tyler, 2011).

The idea of values being a core link between people and their communities is not a new concept. Sociologists have been writing on this concept for many years (Tyler, 2011), and in the field of English, so did Kenneth Burke. In 1950, Burke introduced the theory of identification in his book *The Rhetoric of Motives*. Burke’s theory of identification stems from his interest in understanding human motivation. Writing at a time when the world had just gone through two World Wars, he, like many philosophers, writers, scientists, and other professionals at that time, was concerned about our ability to communicate with one another. In particular, his main idea regarding identification is that if we can understand human motivation, how we affect others, and how others influence us, then we can use that knowledge to resolve conflicts. For Burke, the purpose of language is to bring us back together and not to divide us.

If one of the most important skills identified for technical communicators working in a global environment is the art of collaboration (Conklin, 2007; Melton, 2008), how can we help our students achieve such skills? One way to do this is to research current situations where global communication and collaboration are taking place, especially when that effort is deemed successful. This dissertation does just that. It explores the communication practices of a current global and collaborative event, the Bologna Process (derived from the
name of the western world’s first university founded in Bologna, Italy, in the 12th Century), an international effort where 47 countries are working together—on a purely voluntary basis—to reform higher education and improve employment opportunities across Europe. From a rhetorical perspective, and in regard to professional and technical communication, the Bologna Process is a supreme example of global communication that embodies the following characteristics that demand further study:

- **Complex and hierarchical documentation structure**: The Bologna Process has several levels and branches of documentation that have an intricate web of connection to one another. There are guiding documents, also called ministerial communiqués, but there is also a tremendous mass of working documents produced by various working groups.

- **Common or shared goals**: The Bologna Process is comprised of 47 European countries that have committed to strengthening Europe as a whole economically and technologically through necessary reforms in higher education. Thus, no one member state or set of countries will benefit over others; success can be achieved only if all members work together.

- **Diverse membership**: The 47 member countries are but a count of national diversity; this does not include the multiple cultures of each country that also must be considered in every decision.
• **Multiple stakeholders**: Higher education reform cannot be achieved at the institutional level only; the type of reform called for through the Bologna Process involves the active participation of governments, employers, higher education institutions of all kinds, faculty, students, staff, and other European organizations and agencies, such as credit and accrediting organizations.

• **Collaborative nature** (completely voluntary membership): There are no legally binding contracts for being part of the Bologna Process. Some changes in educational policy do require legislative modifications at times, but those changes are implemented at a national level.

• **Members with strong historical connections**: Because of the close proximity of European countries, there is a long history of conflict and then periods of cooperation. After World War II, there have been numerous efforts and treaties designed for Europe to cooperate and operate as one unified continent. The Bologna Process is part of that effort toward unification; however, the history the member states have with one another cannot be ignored when analyzing Bologna documentation.

This dissertation is a rhetorical analysis of a selection of Bologna documentation where I studied the role that rhetoric and documentation played in this group collaborating and cooperating toward common and sometimes shared goals.
Specifically, I studied the documentation through the theoretical lens of identification and terministic screens, cooperation theory, and activity theory. While I did not use a historical lens for this study, it was impossible to conduct this analysis without having some background knowledge of the historical ties Bologna countries have with one another, most especially, their connections and history associated with the European Union (EU). In fact, without the mini history lesson I learned during my study, I would have missed a crucial aspect of context regarding the Bologna Process and the actions of the participants as reported in the documentation.

**Theoretical Background**

The body of my dissertation is a report of the results of my rhetorical analysis and a discussion regarding the ways that rhetoric and documentation were used in the Bologna Process to create a collaborative and cooperative community among such a highly diverse membership. In order to focus on particular aspects of rhetoric, I used several theories to filter the text and understand the language of collaboration and cooperation. The crux of my analysis lies in two theories by Kenneth Burke. Burke’s theory of identification is based on the premise that rhetoric can be used to help us find common or shared values and that in doing so, we can resolve conflicts among ourselves instead of focusing on how we are different and dividing ourselves into disparate camps (Burke, 1950). Related to the theory of identification is Burke’s theory of
terministic screens. This theory is based on the nature of our observations, “in the sense that many terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another” (Burke, 1966, p. 46). In short, Burke contends that our observations about “reality” are grounded in our choice of terms (Burke, 1966). Other professional and technical communication scholars have used these same theories to explore whether or not dissimilar communities can find a common language. For instance, Herndl et al. (2011), used identification to research how farmers in the Midwest United States spoke about sustainability and whether or not they had a common language with environmental activists, and Prelli and Winters (2009) used terministic screens to determine if there was an intersection of rhetoric between Christian evangelicals and liberal environmental groups who both spoke about climate change. My project shares many traits with these earlier studies, but my focus is on the language of collaboration and cooperation in global contexts, specifically in contemporary global communication that involves a highly diverse membership with multiple stakeholders working toward developing or stated common goals.

As background into understanding the nature of cooperation, I also learned about cooperation theory in organizational contexts. Tyler (2011) examines the motivations of people to work with one another in organizational settings, in legal communities, and with political authorities. He asserted that while people will respond to instrumental motivation (rewards and incentives), cooperation is actually related more to the social connections we have with one
another, which relies on internal motivations and not external rewards. In the Bologna documentation, external motivations were often a topic of discussion, most especially when it came to funding; but, this group did not rely on the promise of funding to hold them together or keep them working throughout the years. In fact, no funding was ever promised in the documents I reviewed; therefore, there may have been other motivations that kept this group together. Rhetoric, it appears, played a major role in forming the social connections and ensuring that members internalized the values and benefits of Bologna. Once again, it is the global context in which this theory is being used that will help professional and technical communicators understand the complexities involved in inducing cooperation among culturally and nationally diverse members.

While rhetorical analysis is the mainstay of my dissertation, in the case of the Bologna Process, I could not ignore the importance of the document hierarchy and the role it played in the collaboration and cooperation among members. Activity theory is used to examine the activity within a group or organization, also called an activity system (Spinuzzi, 2007). Dorothy Winsor (2007) used activity theory to explore the way texts influence how a group will coordinate and cooperate over a period of time. Specifically, she looked at how “charter documents” define rules and behavior for groups based on the constant reinterpretation of these documents. Charter documents are texts that serve as an agreement and regulate the behavior of two or more parties. Some examples include The United States Constitution and the Bible, as well as more practical
working group documentation, such as a request for proposal (Winsor, 2007). The constant reinterpretation of charter texts is a consequence of them being guiding documents and not documents that can address every individual or situation. I borrowed the concept of charter documents from Winsor and applied it to my study of the Bologna Process document hierarchy and found similar results as she in that such documents can promote social and political activity, and even democratic practices within a group.

And lastly, but not the least important, I had to consider the rhetorical situation of the Bologna Process, most especially in light of Europe’s economic and political history, and even more narrowly, the presence of the European Union. The EU does not officially govern the Bologna Process, but the ties are obvious and create interesting dynamics between member states. Even with a limited understanding of the history of the EU and its similarities and ties with Bologna, I was able to analyze the complexities behind the various levels of participation and cooperation that became more evident in the latter years of the first phase of Bologna (1998-2012).

**Scope**

The Bologna Process officially began in 1998 with the signing of *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (see Appendix C). Since that time, over a million pages form the basis of what is considered official documentation. Due to the tremendous body of documentation, I narrowed my study to two levels:
Ministerial Communiqués: Beginning in 1999, the ministers of higher education met every two years at what they termed Ministerial Conferences. These conferences were a time for ministers to report on the progress of the Bologna Process and reflect on any new directions or necessary changes. One result of these conferences is the final report of the conference, also called the ministerial communiqué. Each communiqué is given equal weight to previous communiqués, and these documents are considered the guiding or charter documents of the Bologna Process. They form the basis for the work of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) and other working groups.

Working Group Documentation: There are many different types of working groups, but for the purposes of this study, I put all working group documentation into this one category. The documentation associated with this level of the hierarchy included trends reports, stocktaking reports, Bologna With Student Eyes reports (by European Students’ Union), BFUG reports, and the recommendation reports from seminars and other working groups.

I also narrowed my choice of documentation at the working group level to only one Bologna objective, the qualifications framework. I chose the qualifications framework topic for several reasons. The qualifications framework is complex and includes subcategories of quality assurance, international accreditation, joint degrees, and a credit system, all highly debatable issues. But even more
important, the qualifications framework of the Bologna Process is the one part that makes the rest of the Process possible. Without a common framework for the transferability and recognition of degrees, implementation, mobility, and employability would not be possible. While all aspects of the Bologna Process are vital, a common framework for degrees is absolutely essential. Due to its complex and crucial role in the success of the Bologna Process, there are many issues up for debate (i.e., acceptance of a two-cycle degree system and a system based on credits) and yet the motivation is high to reach agreement because so much is riding on this one objective. Additionally, by using only one aspect of the Bologna Process, I was able to trace how the group worked to resolve some of these issues. Not all of the working group documentation on the qualifications framework was reviewed; I chose a representative sample of documents that spanned the years from 1999 to 2011. A list of documents reviewed for this study is shown in Table 1.1.
Table 1.1

List of Documents Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorbonne Joint Declaration (see Appendix C)</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bologna Declaration, (see Appendix C)</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards the European Higher Education Area, Communiqué of the meeting of the European Ministers in charge of Higher Education</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realising the European Higher Education Area, Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Higher Education Area – Achieving the Goals, Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Communiqué, Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalized world</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area, 2010</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bologna Policy Forum Statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Reports Prepared for Ministerial Conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lourtie Report - From Bologna to Prague</td>
<td>May 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zgaga Report - From Prague to Berlin</td>
<td>September 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Report - From Berlin to Bergen</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat Report &quot;From Bergen to London&quot;</td>
<td>May 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG Board Meeting Documents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG Board meeting Lisbon, minutes</td>
<td>30-31 August 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG meeting Lisbon, outcome of proceedings</td>
<td>2-3 October 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG Board meeting Ljubljana, minutes</td>
<td>16 January 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG meeting Brdo, outcome of proceedings</td>
<td>13-14 March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG Board meeting Bled, minutes</td>
<td>9 June 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG meeting Sarajevo, outcome of proceedings</td>
<td>24-25 June 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG meeting Paris, outcome of proceedings</td>
<td>14-15 October 2008</td>
</tr>
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<td>13 January 2009</td>
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<td>BFUG meeting Prague I, outcome of proceedings</td>
<td>12-13 February 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG Board meeting Ostend, minutes</td>
<td>23 February 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG meeting Prague II, outcome of proceedings</td>
<td>26-27 March 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG meeting Leuven, outcome of proceedings</td>
<td>27 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG meeting Gödöllö, outcome of proceedings</td>
<td>17-18 March 2011</td>
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<td>Seminar and Working Group Documentation</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards accreditation schemes for HE in Europe</td>
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</tr>
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<td>12-13 March 2002</td>
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<td>From Lisboa to a European Higher Education Area: Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process</td>
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<td>30-31 May 2002</td>
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<td>Master Degrees</td>
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<td>BFUG_HU_AD_24_9.6b_QF WG ToR update</td>
<td>17-18 March 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>BFUG_HU_AD_24_9.6c_QF Network ToR</td>
<td>17-18 March 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Main Documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bologna With Student Eyes (by European Students’ Union)</td>
<td>2005, 2007, 2009</td>
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Research Questions

Using the theories of identification and terministic screens, and cooperation and activity theory, as well as a brief historical background as the basis for my rhetorical analysis of Bologna documentation, I set out to find the answers to three questions:

1. How were the common goals of the Bologna Process rhetorically developed in the ministerial communiqués, and did the language used to define those goals help this group move closer to identification?

2. In what ways was the goal of democracy or equal representation demonstrated in the documentation?

3. How did members negotiate between self-interest and the best interests of the group?

Methodology

To carry out my rhetorical analysis, I applied the four theories identified in the Theoretical Background section as my methodological tools (identification theory, terministic screens theory, cooperation theory, and activity theory). I also used my knowledge of the history of the EU as a reflection device.

I began my analysis by reading the ministerial communiqués in chronological order. Initially, I looked for evidence of identification — rhetoric that asked for or proclaimed collaboration or cooperation. This was not difficult
in that these terms seem to carry some common meaning among all members because they were used liberally and directly in both levels of documentation. Using Burke’s theory of identification, I noted places in the documents where collaboration and cooperation were mentioned and made notes regarding the context of the larger document and previous documents I read, noting any patterns that were emerging. At first, the only pattern that was obvious was the vague language. The vague language of the ministerial communiqués was evident in the way goals were described and in the verbs associated with reported progress, actions, and responsibilities. Words were considered vague when meaning was blurred by multiple interpretations or when words had no specific meaning attached to them. For instance, verbs, such as “took note of, recognized, asserted” and “strongly encouraged” appeared essentially meaningless during these initial readings because no specific action or determination could be made from the way the words were used. Initially, I developed a table and recorded the vague terminology thinking some sort of quantitative analysis might be in order, but that effort was abandoned when I began reading the working group documentation and revisited Burke’s theories and cooperation theory. Upon further analysis, it appeared that quantity did not add much, if any, meaning to understanding the documentation; much more meaning was derived from the contextual use of the vague terminology, which is what I pursued.
I also approached the working group documentation from a chronological standpoint. Once I began reading those documents, I applied the theory of terministic screens because I noticed different language in the working group documentation, specifically, language used to describe problems. In the ministerial communiqués, such problems were not evident. The theory of terministic screens gave me a basis for which to compare the language I found in the ministerial communiqués with the language in the working group documentation. For instance, the vague language of the ministerial communiqués presents a positive view of the progress of the Bologna Process. The more practical language used in the working group documentation, however, can leave readers with a different impression about the Bologna Process, one that is not as positive and recognizes the challenges of the Process in a more realistic sense. The theory of terministic screens helped me to make sense of how and why these different perspectives were formed, how they might be used by various audiences, and the implications of this type of language on the Process overall.

To understand the efforts to resolve the problems mentioned in the working group documentation, I turned to cooperation theory. In both the ministerial communiqués and working group documentation, I specifically looked for instances where instrumental motivations, such as funding or other external promises, may have been made to group members. Upon finding no external motivators, I looked for references to the benefits for the group overall.
and noted the language surrounding those conversations. I then referred back to my sources on cooperation theory in order to understand how social connections are fostered among group members. Once I had a renewed understanding of cooperation theory, I returned to my notes and the documents to see if those theoretical principals applied to the Bologna documentation.

Because this is a rhetorical analysis, as I read new documents, I had to constantly refer back to previous documents as well as the theories in order to make sense of what I was reading. As I would read new information and discovered new patterns in the language, I had to refer to previous documents to make sure I was putting the new information in the right context. I also had to reread the theories in order to help me understand the patterns that were emerging. Rereading the theories helped me to refamiliarize myself with other characteristics associated with the theories and then go back to the documentation and look for those characteristics. This type of reading and rereading was a constant back-and-forth activity that helped me move beyond literal readings and analyze the documents from a more in-depth and theoretical perspective.

Activity theory was one of the last theories I applied to my reading because once I was familiar with the content of the documents, I could then take a step back and look at how these documents all fit together and the effect this structure had on the overall cooperation of the group. By this time, I was well aware of the objectives of Bologna and the values the ministers promoted.
through the Process, such as cooperation, democracy, and the benefits of unification. By taking a step back, I then analyzed the documents for their referrals to other documents and the credit, respect, or weight certain documents were given over others. This is when I confirmed the importance of the ministerial communiqués, and I began to see what kinds of activity these documents promoted within the group.

Context is one aspect of rhetorical analysis that cannot be ignored, and for this study, I found great insight into my understanding of the language of collaboration and cooperation in this momentous global event by considering and reflecting on the historical connections members have with one another, especially the influence of the EU. Since I was not present at any of the meetings and am using only documentation for the basis of my study, I could not draw any certain conclusions about the role the EU or its controversial history played in shaping the real motives for certain actions among group members, but I used this knowledge as a contextual filter or screen for my final readings.

Outline of Chapters

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are outlined below.

Chapter 2, Literature Review, serves as background information for my project. It covers detailed information about the Bologna Process, the four theories I used for my rhetorical analysis, and a history of the EU as it relates to the Bologna Process. I also include relevant research and case studies from
previous professional and technical communication projects that used the same theories I used for this dissertation and that had some relevance to my study or use of those theories.

Chapter 3 presents the results of my rhetorical analysis of the ministerial communiqués. In particular, I cover the purpose and various audiences for the ministerial communiqués, and I break down my results and cite specific instances where patterns of language emerge in this level of documentation. I focus on instances of vague terminology and the rhetoric of unity, and then I break down the rhetorical strategies used by the education ministers to create community among members.

Chapter 4 shows the results of my rhetorical analysis of the working group documentation. Once again, I provide an overview that discusses purpose and audience, which leads into specific citations in the documentation that indicate the presence of secondary goals (secondary to the goals as cited in the ministerial communiqués) and problems encountered as the groups work to find common ground in order to implement the Bologna objectives across all countries. I note patterns of language that emerge from the perspective of implementation, especially the problems encountered regarding the vague language of the ministerial communiqués.

Chapter 5 is my discussion chapter, where I expand the conversation about the results in Chapters 3 and 4 and put those results in the larger context of professional and technical communication. This chapter also includes ideas for
future research on the Bologna Process, my specific research interests for the future, and my conclusion for this project.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

“‘Universities are not an enterprise...knowledge is not merchandise’” --Aisha Labi

In 2008, students in Spain blocked trains, invaded senate meetings, and occupied university buildings in Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, and Valencia (Warden, 2008). In 2009, students and professors in France held similar protests where thousands blocked motorways, occupied university council meetings, and removed all the chairs at many universities, erecting sculptures of protest (Mullen, 2009). What students and professors were protesting in Spain and France, and in other riots throughout Europe, were phenomenal increases in tuition and fees, greater autonomy of universities to seek private funding and deregulate salaries and teaching and scholarship responsibilities, and what students contend is “creeping privatization of state universities, in which they allege private interests...are taking precedence over common good” (Warden, 2008, para. 2). These accusations by students, faculty, and staff, as well as other economic and structural changes in higher education systems across Europe have roots in, and are associated with, globalization.

Globalization presents what seems like unlimited opportunity economically, but it also presents new challenges, responsibilities, and demands on societies, especially with regard to higher education. Of all sectors of education, globalization has most affected higher education (Bash, 2009; Brock-
Utne, 2002). The global market has opened international borders both physically and virtually, which now allows developing countries to compete with developed countries if the workforce has the right knowledge and skills.

Knowledge and skills, therefore, have become crucial in wealth creation...[since] knowledge contributes to the empowerment and development of all sectors of society....The knowledge economy has further justified the importance of ‘knowledge’ for increasing individual and national competitiveness in the global marketplace. (Jiang, 2008, p. 348-9)

As a result of globalization and the economic competition it places on countries around the world, governments are feeling pressure to ensure the general population is prepared for technological and other advancements in the workforce. Consequently, governments have put pressure on higher education institutions to graduate students in less time than traditional degrees typically take now, especially working students who may not be able to attend school full time. Thus “globalization has facilitated and quickened the pace of the internationalization of HE [higher education]” (Jiang, 2008, p. 349). Europe, in particular, has been especially active in higher education reform in order to respond competitively to the challenges and opportunities presented by the globalization of the world economy and also of higher education. And even though criticisms abound and riots have been related to the higher education reforms in Europe, the Bologna Process is still regarded as a worthwhile initiative among many European countries. In fact, many of the student criticisms and basis for protests are that Bologna objectives have not been
implemented or implemented as fully as they would like. Additionally, the Bologna Process is a unique historical event that offers professional and technical communicators a wealth of information regarding international collaboration and communication. To give a thorough context for my rhetorical analysis of Bologna documentation, in this chapter, I provide background information on the Bologna Process, the theoretical underpinnings for my rhetorical analysis of the Bologna documentation, and a brief history of the EU.

**The Bologna Process**

In 1998, four education ministers from France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Germany met during the 800th anniversary of the University of Paris to discuss the reform of higher education in Europe. That meeting is now documented as the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (see Appendix C), a prelude to the Bologna Process, and a voluntary declaration of those four education ministers to “strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent” (p. 1). The four ministers concluded the document with the following commitment:

> We hereby commit ourselves to encouraging a common frame of reference, aimed at improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility as well as employability. The anniversary of the University of Paris, today here in the Sorbonne, offers us a solemn opportunity to engage in the endeavour to create a European area of higher education, where national identities and common interests can interact and strengthen each other for the benefit of Europe, of its students, and more generally of its citizens. (p. 3)
One year later, in 1999, 30 countries met and expressed their willingness to commit to enhance the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area, emphasising the need to further the independence and autonomy of all Higher Education Institutions. All the provisions of the Bologna Declaration were set as measures of a voluntary harmonisation process, not as clauses of a binding contract. (EHEA, History, 2009, para. 5)

In 2007, 46 countries had joined this effort, and the number now stands at 47 member countries (see Figure 2.1 for a map of Bologna countries; see Appendix A for a list of Bologna countries). Note: Countries participating in the Bologna Process must subscribe to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe, which Belarus has not accepted. It has, however, made changes to its higher education system that are consistent with Bologna objectives.

The Bologna Process is the most sophisticated and diverse form of higher education reform in the 21st century. It is a voluntary initiative among European countries to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which is not a physical place, but rather a European higher education structure by which member countries have transparent and comparable degrees. The EHEA promotes three cycles of degrees (bachelor-master-PhD) and an agreed-upon qualifications network that maps to national and institutional learning objectives and the criteria by which all students receive their degrees. The Bologna Process asserts that higher education is a public good and responsibility; thus, there is
support and encouragement for lifelong learning, equal access for all citizens, and a quality education that is internationally competitive.

Bologna Objectives

In 1999, the Bologna Declaration outlined six objectives for the Bologna Process, which increased to nine objectives just two years later at the ministerial conference in Prague. The nine objectives are identified and described below.

- **Comparable degrees**: The ministers ask higher education institutions to use existing “European tools” to determine full recognition of degrees so that students can freely circulate throughout Europe without fear of losing credits or declared competencies (“Prague Communiqué,” 2001). One of the most important aspects of educational reform that the Bologna Process
Brings to the forefront is the need for “mutual recognition of qualifications” (“London Communiqué,” 2007, p. 1). Qualifications describe learning outcomes and how students can move through the system. They also ensure that students can transfer from one institution (and country) to the next without losing credits. Mutual recognition of qualifications is necessary to unite educational systems and make degrees transferrable; therefore, it is crucial that all member countries compatibly implement the structure and qualifications of the Bologna Process in order to enhance Europe’s attractiveness and competitiveness in higher education (“London Communiqué,” 2007).

- **Two main cycles:** The adoption of a two-cycle (later changed to a three-cycle) degree structure is essential for the transfer of degrees. These main cycles included bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and later, the PhD. Ministers declared that there should be a variety of ways that students can achieve these degrees at all institutions of higher learning to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs” (“Prague Communiqué,” 2001, p. 2).

- **System of credits:** Because not all countries use credits in their higher education systems, the ministers encourage members to adopt such a system to ease the transfer of student work from one institution to the next. They suggest using an existing organization called European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).
• **Mobility**: The ability for students, faculty, and staff to move about freely throughout Europe was declared as one of the main objectives of Bologna from the very beginning in 1998. Ministers ask the cooperation of governments and employers in removing obstacles to mobility, including visas and work permits.

• **Quality assurance**: Quality assurance has many different aspects to it in that it refers to the ministers’ commitment to providing a quality education where best practices are shared among higher education institutions. It also overlaps into the comparability and compatibility of degrees and the qualifications framework in that ministers encourage “mutual acceptance of evaluation and accreditation/certification mechanisms” (“Prague Communiqué,” 2001, p. 2) between higher education institutions.

• **Promotion of European dimensions in higher education**: It is stressed, especially in the *Trends I* (1999), that the model used for the Bologna Process should not adopt an “‘Anglo-Saxon’ (mainly American) model” (p. 9) but rather a framework that is suited to best meet European needs and that curriculum be populated with European content. The reporters of the *Trends I* report and the ministers at the ministerial conferences continually emphasize the importance of ensuring that the Bologna Process does not adopt characteristics typical of American higher...
education because “Europe needs to develop its own system(s) to suit its own needs” (“Trends I,” 1999, p. 10).

- **Lifelong learning**: The idea of lifelong training and education is mentioned in the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C) as one of the effects of globalization and an obligation of Europe in regard to its citizens. Lifelong learning is seen as one way of achieving a “Europe of knowledge” (“Sorbonne Joint Declaration,” 1998, para. 1) and as a means of improving “social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life” (“Prague Communiqué,” 2001, p. 2).

- **Social dimension**: This objective is related to the idea that higher education is a public good and responsibility. It encompasses accessibility for all citizens regardless of financial or social status; it refers to the responsibility of governments to ensure that the conditions for completing a degree are suitable for students; and, it even includes counseling and guidance services (“Bergen Communiqué,” 2005). The social dimension is tied closely to attractiveness of a European education in that governments should make financial and social investments and accommodations so that students want to stay and study in Europe and not go abroad.

- **Attractiveness**: This objective is related to the idea that, through the overall reform of higher education across Europe, the changes that are made to systems and individual institutions should ensure that the curriculum is internationally competitive so that a European education is
valued among European citizens and sought after by students from other parts of the world, as well.

As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, the objectives of the Bologna Process are difficult to trace because the terms and titles change from one document to the next. But while the terms may change, the concepts of each objective identified above are consistent and remain guiding principles for the Process.

**How the Process Is Managed**

The Process is a completely voluntary reform initiative that involves the cooperation of multiple stakeholders including higher education ministers, governments, employers, students, faculty, staff, European organizations, and quality assurance agencies (EHEA, 2009). The Process is also promoted as being a democratic membership that has distributed authority. What this means is that there is no one central authority governing the Bologna Process, but rather, positions of authority are rotated among members. There is, however, a hierarchy. A diagram of the basic hierarchy is shown in Figure 2.2.

Meeting structure is directly related to the organization of the Bologna Process. Ministers of higher education meet every two years to discuss progress and new directions. The geographic location and the host (secretariat) presiding over the ministerial conference are rotated among member countries. At the
ministerial conferences, work is outlined for the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG), which acts as overseers for other working groups that sort out issues needed to implement Bologna objectives. The BFUG is comprised of representatives from all signatory countries and other stakeholders, such as quality assurance organizations, government liaisons, employers, and other European organizations, such as the European Commission.

Management can also be seen through the documentation hierarchy of the Bologna Process. As a result of the ministerial conferences, official guiding documents, titled ministerial communiqués, are drafted. These documents serve as the basis for the BFUG by outlining what needs to be done and to what ends objectives should be met. The BFUG creates working groups that conduct seminars on various Bologna objectives that need to be worked out. The working groups create recommendation reports that they send back to the
BFUG, which in turn uses those recommendations to create their own report to the ministers prior to the next ministerial conferences. Additionally, reports by other stakeholders and members inform the BFUG and ministers prior to the ministerial conferences. Those reports include trends reports, stocktaking reports, and Bologna With Student Eyes (by European Students’ Union) reports, for instance.

The Bologna Process has now entered its second decade. In 1998, Bologna ministers envisioned that by 2010 all Bologna countries would have fully implemented the Bologna objectives; however, that did not happen. A handful of countries can claim partial implementation, but a majority of countries had no implementation at all by the launch date. Thus, the ministers realized the complexities of the Process, especially with 47 members, and the impossible timeline. Proclaiming their successes, but also acknowledging some of the difficulties and complications of the Process, they then extended the deadline for implementation to 2020.

From the inaugural document of the Bologna Process, the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C), there is evidence that the four ministers who began this Process believed in a reform that should offer students the same opportunities for the pursuit of knowledge that has been historically attached to the birth of the university, all while recognizing and respecting the cultural diversity of Europe. In this first document, the education ministers made a commitment of mutual recognition of higher education degrees through
cooperation with institutions of higher education and individual governments (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, 1998). This document shows that the ministers were open to negotiation about how to strengthen Europe through a reform in higher education that benefitted all of Europe, not just individual countries. Cooperation is key to the success of the Bologna Process and is emphasized in all ministerial communiqués and most, if not all, working documentation reviewed for this study. In order to understand the progress this group has made during the first 13 years of Bologna, it is helpful to have some background information on theories that are directly related to collaboration and cooperation and that were used in this study.

**Identification and Terministic Screens**

Burke’s (1950) theory of identification stems from his interest in understanding human motivation and how we can use that understanding to promote communication with one another. In particular, his main idea regarding identification is that if we understand what makes us unique or divides us from others, we can then see how we affect others and how others influence us, and we can use that knowledge to identify our real values and resolve conflicts. For Burke, the ultimate purpose of language is to bring us back together and not to further divide us:

> We need never deny the presence of strife, enmity, faction as a characteristic motive of rhetorical expression. We need not close our eyes to their almost tyrannous ubiquity in human relations; we
can be on the alert always to see how such temptations to strife are implicit in the institutions that condition human relationships; yet we can at the same time always look beyond this order, to the principle of identification in general, a terministic choice justified by the fact that the identifications in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression. (p. 20)

Even though the theory of identification capitalizes on what we have in common, Burke (1950) does not deny that there are divisions among us and that those divisions serve a purpose or at least need to be accounted for. In fact, he says that “identification is compensatory to division” (p. 22), and that if we did not have division, or if we all thought alike, there would be “no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (p. 22). While the subject of unity is emphasized in my own study, some researchers contend that the rhetoric of division is equally important as the rhetoric of identification, especially when used to explore national identities, a topic that very much relates to the Bologna Process. Borrowman and Kmetz (2011) used Burke to study the rhetoric of division through the political life of Jeannette Rankin. Rankin is best known for two important roles she played in the history of the United States: She was the first American woman elected to Congress, and she was the sole vote against the United States’ involvement in World War II (Borrowman & Kmetz, 2011). The latter made her wildly unpopular, and it was this unpopularity that was the basis for Borrowman and Kmetz’s study. During times of crisis, the rhetoric of identification and division carries tremendous weight. Likewise, during times of conflict, identification among citizens of a particular country is usually sought
after through the vilification of an enemy; thus, national values or identity is often found through a common enemy. Burke warns against the dangers of “unquestioning alignment” with national identifications because it is only through our own self-reflection that we know what is truly important and valuable to us. But it was this misalignment with national values that got Rankin in hot water. Before her infamous vote, Rankin asked the American people to consider the language being used to propagandize the benefits of war. Her point, as well as a central theme of Burke’s work, is that “discussion can eliminate thoughtless identification or division based on limited information or on raw emotion” (Borrowman & Kmetz, 2011, p. 288). This balance of division and identification that Burke calls us to explore is very much applicable to the Bologna Process. While no common enemy is identified in the Bologna documentation, the challenges of globalization are sometimes presented so that the unification of Europe is seen as the only viable way that Europe will survive economically; thus, pathos, or fear, may be seen as being purposefully invoked in some of the documents. The idea of a unified Europe and European citizenship is called out specifically as a means of survival; thus, the objectives of Bologna also align with this overall goal of unification. It may seem on the surface that member states are unquestionably aligned with this goal because there is certainly a great deal of cooperation reported, but there is more going on behind the scenes, showing that members may be somewhat hesitant about the idea of unification and the role of the Bologna Process in this overarching effort. Given
this hesitancy, education ministers walk a fine line in their rhetoric; thus, there is
evidence of promoting while also downplaying the role of the Bologna Process in
the unification of Europe. This back-and-forth rhetoric is discussed more fully in
the next two sections on Consubstantiality and Motive.

**Consubstantiality**

While identification focuses on commonalities, it does not negate
individuality. Burke’s (1950) concept of consubstantiality allows individuals to
identify with another person or group so that they are one, but at the same time,
the person is an individual “at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with
another” (p. 21). Consubstantial relationships are the basis for Cheney’s (1983)
study on identification and organizational communication. Our natural
divisions in society are also the very thing that brings us together in that we look
for ways to identify with other people, groups, and organizations. Specifically,
Cheney looked at how we form a corporate identity. This identity is found in the
associations we have between ourselves and the corporation we work for, our
connections with other people at work, the way we label ourselves, and even
through our common enemies. Cheney asserted that once a person has found
identification with the corporation through one of the channels mentioned
above, the organization’s communication can further shape that identification so
that the person “sees” him or herself through the eyes of the organization’s
values as communicated in corporate documentation (Cheney, 1983). Thus the
employee becomes consubstantial to the organization. What is important to understand in a consubstantial relationship is the degree to which one is susceptible to persuasion by the very thing they find identification with. In the case of the Bologna Process, members must identify themselves with a larger group. In some instances that larger group is the Bologna Process; in other instances, that larger group is a unified Europe. Since all members agree that the charter documents are the guiding documents of the Bologna Process, there is a certain amount of persuasion built into those documents regarding the unification of Europe. Thus, members that represent their nations have to negotiate the tension between being part of the Bologna Process, which is defined and guided by the ministerial communiqués, and retaining their diversity. It is a tricky business for nations to balance their identification and division with the Bologna Process, especially when their membership is determined by their compliance with the ministerial communiqués. This is somewhat like Americans having to honor The Constitution in order to proclaim their American citizenship. Consequently, the Bologna membership provides great insight into the bonds of consubstantiality.

**Motives**

Rhetoric can serve different purposes or have various motives, which Burke (1950) called proportions; but, in order to understand the “total motivation” (p. 6), we must consider context. Autonomous or specialized
activities, those activities that appear to be separate, are not free from identification. When things look separate, they still apply to broader contexts. We must look beyond a moment and recognize how what we are doing is part of a larger whole. No action is really autonomous. For instance, to fully understand the Bologna Process, the documents cannot be read in isolation, but rather, readers must consider the Process and its documentation in context of the greater European community and even the history of the EU. However in the case of Bologna, there appears to be some motive for making the Process seem like an autonomous effort, at least to some degree. On one hand, the ministers do not bring attention to the connections Bologna has with other European economic and political initiatives, such as the European Union; but, on the other hand, the larger context of the greater European community cannot be ignored. But while it is important to understand the ties that single events have with a larger reality, there is danger in allowing these connections to overshadow the one event (Burke, 1950). Burke gives the example of the absurdity in discrediting all rhetoric simply because some rhetoric may be used for disingenuous purposes. By not calling attention to Bologna’s ties to the EU and making it appear like a somewhat autonomous effort, the ministers give members “clear insight into some particular set of principles” (p. 28), which are the objectives of the Bologna Process. This separation or division from other European unification efforts can be advantageous because it allows members to differentiate what this particular initiative is intended to do for Europe without
suffering from the “historical shifts” (p. 29) that taint the goals and objectives of the Process by distilling them with other political happenings throughout Europe. The idea that we use certain rhetoric to separate ourselves from and connect to certain other ideologies is explored in the case study that follows.

**Rhetoric Goes Green**

Herndl et al. (2011) used identification to study the discourse among farmers in the Midwest United States regarding the subject of sustainability. The authors of this study begin their exploration of identification through the work of Kuhn. They interpreted Kuhn’s theory of paradigms as being

overarching theories with associated procedures, disciplinary precedents, and standards. Paradigms were said to so heavily structure people’s thoughts, work, and talk that those from different paradigms appear to live in different worlds. In this situation, communication and cooperation between members of different paradigms would indeed seem impossible. (p. 438)

However, the authors noted that while Kuhn’s message is that there would be no true “counterparts” for those from different paradigms, “incommensurability is not an irresolvable conflict between ideas, theories, concepts, and values” (p. 438) but rather between people “holding commitments to such things” (p. 438). A rhetorical approach, however, can be used to examine the communication of “both conflict and cooperation between paradigms” (p. 439). Thus, rhetoric occurs when the differences between people force them to find common ground, and persuasion involves locating or identifying one’s own beliefs and values in the midst of difference (Herndl et al., 2011).
To the farmers of the Midwest, the term sustainability was associated with extremists, activists, and “tree huggers.” Because they did not want to identify themselves with “green” organizations that advocate sustainability, people in the farming communities used alternative rhetoric that captured many of the same characteristics associated with sustainability, such as “conservation” and “respect for the land” (Herndl et al., 2011, p. 455), but they avoided the use of the specific term sustainability. What the community was doing was finding balance between identification and division, between being “environmental activists” and “active environmentalists” (p. 455). In other words, the local community did not want to be associated with environmental organizations by using the same language that such organizations do (sustainability being one of those words), but they did not reject the ideas of sustainability; they just chose different terms, which to them helped them identify with the group they wanted to be identified with. In the case of the Bologna Process, the two competing paradigms are “harmonisation” and diversity. The ministers have to be conscious of the terminology they use so that it does not directly intersect with the language of the European Union, which emphasizes harmonisation, or standards, across all member countries. For many countries, harmonisation is an effort to reduce or refuse to acknowledge the extreme diversity that is Europe; therefore, if the language of the Bologna Process too closely aligns with the language of the EU, then non-supporters of the EU may not want to be associated with the Bologna Process. In order to avoid this dissension, education ministers must find
rhetorical balance between creating community through reforms in higher education that will benefit all European citizens, but they must do so by promoting diversity, too. This is achieved through the choice of terms, which is the basis of Burke’s terministic screens and discussed in the next section.

Terministic Screens

Close reading of the Bologna documentation reveals different realities for readers and participants. Reality, Burke (1966) says, “could not exist for us, were it not for our profound and inveterate involvement in symbol systems” (p. 48). Our observations of what we consider reality to be is determined by our choice of terms in that language directs our attention “into some channels rather than others” (Burke, 1966, p. 45). In some ways this is obvious in that we expect a book about astronomy to be about bodies in outer space not a book about how to make curtains. But in other ways, Burke says these screens are not obvious because terministic screens are not just for practical matters, such as what he calls scientistic language (terms used to define and describe what something is or is not). Instead, he contends that we often transfer language from our physical realm into our moral realm, creating what Bentham calls “fictions.” Fictions are where we use language and internalize it, so to speak, in order to make moral distinctions, such as whether or not something is right or wrong. Bentham says that fictions should not be avoided, necessarily, but their existence and how they came about should be acknowledged (Burke, 1966).
Burke (1966) broke down the idea of terministic screens into terms that can either divide or unite. The distinction between the two is whether or not the terms bring about a sense of continuity or discontinuity. He also claimed that terministic screens are a necessary part of our lives and that language embodies our choices. Like Bentham says about fictions, such terms are not to be avoided, just merely acknowledged. Unification between disparate groups or diverse members can be found in adopting similar ideas, which sometimes results in a common language and is the main idea in the case study that follows.

**Jesus and Climate Change**

Christian evangelicalism is generally associated with Christians who espouse conservative values that adhere to a literal reading of the Bible, so when the Evangelical Climate Initiative released a report in 2006 that “expressed the group’s moral and spiritual commitment to addressing the problem of human-induced global warming” (Prelli & Winters, 2009, p. 224), it was a bit of a surprise. The report took a rather “liberal” stance on the issue of climate change, which deviates from traditional Christian evangelical teachings from “less environmentally involved elders” (Prelli & Winters, 2009, p. 225). Prelli and Winters have called this new discourse “green evangelicalism” (p. 225). They claim that environmental communication scholars should pay attention to this new discourse because it opens new “rhetorical possibilities for building political coalitions and alliances on issues of common concern to environmentalists and
Christian evangelicals” (p. 225). Their goal was to study the terminology used in green evangelicalism to see if there were common intersections with other environmental discourse, thus finding possibilities for identification among the two socially and sometimes philosophically disparate groups (Prelli & Winters, 2009).

Green evangelicalism clashed severely with radical environmental discourse in the political ideologies behind democratic liberalism and capitalism as it relates to political action on climate change. Both groups acknowledge the variety of motives that operate within a democratic arena, but the green evangelicals claimed their motive was distinct in that it was morally and biblically based. The two groups also diverged on the subject of nature-based spirituality in that the green evangelicals considered the environmentalists’ spirituality as “nature worship” (Prelli & Winters, 2009, p. 238). However, the two found convergence in the relationship between humanity and the environment. Both saw an “interconnectedness” between humans and their environment which resulted in the degradation of the environment as well as increasing poverty (Prelli & Winters, 2009). Prelli and Winters asserted that if the green evangelicals continue to push for capitalistic resources to take care of these problems, such conversation would clash with environmental rhetoric that blames capitalism for the crisis we are in; thus, the two groups would have to find common terms to discuss “sustainable economic development, distributive
justice…and the welfare of future generations” (p. 239) which both groups agree are goals to work toward.

The point of this study was to show the intersection or adoption of similar ideas among two diverse groups and for future conversations to begin forming a common language. This same idea can be applied to the Bologna Process and the EU. Even though the Bologna Process and the European Union have a common mission, which is to increase the quality of life for all European citizens, being a part of the Bologna Process does not automatically indicate acceptance of a unified Europe. It does appear, however, that the Bologna Process serves as a sort of “space” for EU and non-EU supporters to find common ground. Once this common ground is found through the adoption of common goals, the next natural evolution is a common language. When studying Bologna documentation, I found application of terministic screens in the different realities shaped through the language in the ministerial communiqués and the working group documentation. Although the language was problematic in many ways and created two distinct realities, there is an effort to form a common language among all members.

When considering Burke’s theories of identification and terministic screens together, they give new meaning to close readings of Bologna documentation. Professional and technical communicators must consider context, motive, and terminology when writing and analyzing texts. Often, the practical results we expect from language override our full understanding of the
actual effect language has on individuals and our relationships with one another. Burke’s theories help us to see how language connects us and affects our behavior beyond a practical interpretation of words.

**Cooperation Theory**

Since one of the unique aspects of the Bologna Process is that it is a completely voluntary initiative with no legally binding contracts, it is important to explore what would motivate such diverse countries and cultures to work together on a monumental project such as higher education reform. The extreme diversity of Bologna members and their commitment to a project that is not provided with external funding, nor benefits one country over another, begs the question: What connects people and motivates them to work together? Many say that instrumental motivators (incentives, rewards, and sanctions) and maximizing self-interest are the primary reasons people will cooperate within groups (Miller, 1992; Tyler, 2011), but Tyler argues that social connections are what motivates people most of the time. Reducing people’s motivations to merely maximizing self-interest and wealth is too simplistic (Miller, 1992). Therefore, if incentives and sanctions are not principal motivators, and social connections are, then professional and technical communicators will find value in learning more about social motivation and how to apply it to international memberships. Professional and technical communicators often play a central role or are the hub of groups; thus, they will benefit from understanding the
roles that relationships play in motivating diverse members to cooperate with one another, work toward group goals, and not focus solely on self-interest.

Cooperation, according to Tyler (2011), is defined as “a decision about how actively to involve oneself in a group, organization, or community through taking actions that will help the group to be effective and successful” (p. 21). In terms of the Bologna Process, group success is the only way that any one member will benefit. There are no individual benefactors or losers in the Process, but even so, what motivates this group to set self-interest aside and work together to make the Process a success? Tyler says that self-interest is often overestimated by organizations and that instead, people are generally motivated by two types of cooperation: “rule adherence (following organizational policies and rules) and performance (being productive and creating resources for the group)” (p. 19). Both types of cooperation help a group achieve its goals through “performance of actions that help the group and those that limit behaviors” (p. 23). While both types of cooperation may be evident within a group, performance cooperation may be more effective in dealing with group issues because it engages the group with focused activities; thus, “performance of these behaviors encourages the effectiveness and viability of the group” (p. 23). With the Bologna Process, there are no overt rules called out in the ministerial communiqués for membership, but the ministers continually and loudly ask for performance behaviors by directly asking for collaboration and cooperation among all members. Thus, Bologna documentation provides professional and
technical communicators with clues about how to enhance performance cooperation when there are no obvious restrictions or rules within a group.

Another key element in inducing cooperation that will last is to examine the governing philosophy of the group. Tyler (2011) discussed the work of Lewin, who explored effects of leadership in authoritarian and democratic environments. Lewin concludes that democratic leadership resulted in participants who were engaged internally and not dependent on external factors for participation (Tyler, 2011). Thus, Tyler argued that when people are internally motivated, rewards are not needed, and people will “do what benefits the group and do so willingly based upon their social links to the group” (p. 6). Since the Bologna Process is declared a democratic process that promotes democratic societies, this could explain one of the reasons Bologna countries are willing to work together without external motivation.

The scholarship on cooperation takes on many different approaches that include theories related to organizational communication and management. Within those two subject areas, there is predominantly a focus on how messages are given and received, verbal and non-verbal communication, effective listening, and providing appropriate feedback. While these topics have some connection to cooperation, they are not as useful for rhetorical analysis. Tyler’s (2011) studies on cooperation theory, however, proved to be much more effective because he discusses voluntary cooperation in particular. He explores models of human motivation to make the following arguments:
While people are clearly motivated by self-interest and seek to maximize their material rewards and minimize material deprivations, there is a rich set of other, more social motivations that additionally shape people’s actions. The primary implication is that there are a broader range of motivations that can be tapped to encourage desirable behaviors than is encompassed within traditional incentive and sanctioning models. (pp. 18-19)

These theories help to understand that people have mixed motivations for dealing with one another; thus, motivation can influence how well and for how long a group remains cohesive and cooperative. Tyler’s theories about cooperation overlap with Burke’s theories of identification and terministic screens and provide insight into possible reasons why Bologna countries are cooperating with one another to the degree that they are, which is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

**Activity theory**

Activity theory has roots in Vygotsky’s sociohistorical theory (Russell, 1997). Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who studied learning from the standpoint that we cannot fully understand an individual’s learning without taking into consideration the embedded social, cultural, and historical contexts in which that person lives and learns (Oguz, 2007). Activity theory also is similar to social constructivism in that it is intended to analyze the social dimensions that occur between an individual and texts; however, it does not analyze the individual or the text themselves. Thus the system metaphor is often used in
activity theory because the analysis focuses on the interactions between individuals and tools, as described by Russell:

> An activity system is an ongoing object-directed, historically conditioned, dialectically-structured, tool-mediated human interaction...the activity system is the basic unit of analysis...in that it analyzes the way concrete tools are used to mediate the motive...and the object...of behavior and changes in it.” (Russell, 1997, pp. 4-5)

Russell shows this connection between the individual (the subject), tool (objects used by individuals to accomplish a task), and outcome (the “raw material” and/or objective in a study) in Figure 2.3 below. The three aspects of an activity system have social connections and they change over time, which means they have socio-historical underpinnings, which form the basis for this theory.

![Activity System Diagram](image)

*Figure 2.3. An activity system. Adapted from Russell, D. R. (1997). Rethinking genre in school and society: An activity theory analysis. Written Communication, 14(4), 504-554.*

Winsor (2007) used activity theory to discuss how texts are used as tools to manage the actions of individuals in a group so that they will collaborate and cooperate with one another. Winsor uses the sociohistorical dimensions of
activity theory to explore “how a heterogeneous assembly of people can agree upon a common object and act in concert over time” (p. 4). Like cooperation theorists, she was interested in studying how people “regulate their behavior to invite at least temporary cooperation and coordination” (p. 4). She argued that “charter documents,” a term she borrows from McCarthy, are tools that help stimulate and coordinate activity within a group.

Charter documents are intended to be guides, such as the Bible, The Constitution, or an organization’s mission statement or philosophy. They have two common characteristics in that they are communally written and they are continually reinterpreted, resulting in subsequent documentation. The communal authorship is a way for a group to “calibrate their perceptions and actions” (Winsor, 2007, p. 5) so that they “define what group members can expect from one another” (Winsor, 2007, p. 5). Charter documents are not comprehensive, which is why they must be continually reinterpreted. They can never cover every situation a group will encounter, so members must continually negotiate between the somewhat generic reality crafted in the charter document and new situations that arise but must still reflect the best interests of the group. This is where the subsequent documentation comes in (Winsor, 2007).

Winsor (2007) asserted that charter documents actually help stabilize a community even in the midst of change. Her version of activity theory, where it is used to study an activity system that is extremely diverse and managed by charter documents, is directly applicable to the Bologna Process. The ministerial
communiqués are the charter documents of the Bologna Process, which are constantly reinterpreted, and this reinterpretation results in subsequent documentation by the various working groups. The role the charter documents play in the management of the Bologna membership, the reasons the communiqués must constantly be reinterpreted, and the results of such activity from a social and historical standpoint have important implications for the field of professional and technical communication, especially with regard to global communication. But like the other theories used in this study, even the document hierarchy of the Bologna Process cannot be understood with much depth without a background in the history of the European Union.

**History of the European Union As It Relates to the Bologna Process**

The European Union is a political and economic partnership between 27 European countries with a population of over 450 million. The EU was created after World War II as an economic pact between six countries in an effort to avoid future conflicts among nations. The idea behind the EU was that if countries were dependent on each other economically then they would be less likely to engage in war (European Union, 2010).

The EU began when six founding countries (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Netherlands) pooled the two most important resources at the time, coal and steel production, and created the European Coal and Steel Commission (ECSC). Taking the coal and steel treaty further, Robert
Schuman, France’s foreign minister, proposed that the ESCS be placed under a “High Authority,” an organization that would be open to other European countries and eventually integrate Europe as a whole. Thus, the ESCS was the first step in creating what was known as the European Common Market and later became the European Union (European Union, 2010).

Economic development cannot be achieved unless there is social development as well. Europe has had a long and brutal history of conflict between nationalities. To aid in the unification of Europe from a humanitarian point of view, the Council of Europe was created in 1949. The Council of Europe is an organization devoted to developing democratic principles based on human rights and the protection of individuals (European Union, 2010). Originally, ten countries signed into this organization, and it has now grown to 47 (European Council, 2011).

The original six EU countries continued to push economic unification policies among their own countries and invited others to join during the 1950s and 1960s. These economic initiatives included opening their borders, lifting customs fees, and creating a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1962. The CAP was another economic initiative that directly addressed food production in war-torn Europe. Food production is solely for European markets; thus, this policy was intended to ensure that all of Europe was being fed without relying on foreign markets; this would also ensure that farmers and farms in Europe would be economically stabilized as well (European Union, 2010).
In 1973, three more countries signed into the European Union: Denmark, Ireland, and reluctantly, the United Kingdom. In the 1980s, Greece, Spain, and Portugal joined, and with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, more countries were expected to join in the 1990s (European Union, 2010). During these decades, the EU continued to expand by creating new economic and political treaties, including creating organizations associated with higher education, such as the Erasmus Programme, which funds and supports students, faculty, and staff who want to teach and study abroad; they also support cooperative initiatives between higher education institutions (European Commission, Education & Training, 2010). In 1992, The Treaty on European Union was signed, which set out plans for a common currency among EU countries, as well as policies related to security and laws, and in 1995, three more countries joined (Austria, Finland, and Sweden). In the first decade of the 21st century, 12 countries from Central and Eastern Europe joined the EU; and in 2008, a financial crisis bore down on Europe, which created a stronger case for unifying Europe. Currently, six countries are in the candidacy phase of admittance into the European Union (European Union, 2010).

Being admitted into the European Union is reported as being somewhat simplistic; however, there are criteria that countries must meet. These criteria are also known as the Copenhagen Criteria (1993), which state that “Any European country which respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law may become a member of
the Union” (European Union, “Conditions for Enlargement,” 2010, para. 1).

Three specific criteria are called out where (1) countries must agree to uphold the ideas of democracy and human rights, (2) have a stable economy that supports the European market, and (3) abide by the policies and obligations set forth by the Union (European Union, 2010).

Professional and technical communicators need to be aware of the history of the formation of the EU when studying or engaging in global communication of any kind that involves European countries; but, equally important, they need to know about the support and criticisms of the European Union as well. The economic motivation and the politics behind the unification of Europe are highly debatable topics that could very well influence group dynamics when working with citizens of Europe.

They key arguments for the formation and continuation of the EU are politically and economically based. The official website of the EU opens its homepage with text regarding benefits of stability, peace, prosperity, a single currency, and raising the standard of living in Europe (European Union, 2010). The unification of Europe is seen as a way to improve the lives of all Europeans. Some of the practical changes that have occurred or are currently in the works are increasing confidence in European markets by helping countries recover financially from the financial crisis caused by failing banks back in 2008. The EU claims economic protection for members, and they endorse policies that reduce economic risks and increase employment. Other practical policies include
offering compensation for travelers when their travel is interrupted by
cancellations or other problems, as well as new legislation that guarantees that
citizens of EU countries will receive fair trials, no matter where they are located
(European Union, 2011). The EU also promotes policies of human rights and
protection of the environment (European Union, 2010).

Civitas, the Institute for the Study of Civil Society, is a web-based resource
on facts regarding the EU. They claim to be a non-partisan think tank that
publishes balanced information on the EU. According to their website, criticisms
of the EU include:

- **The EU is too expensive and doesn’t work**: Countries must dedicate part
  of their national budgets to fund the EU, which many countries feel
  cripples them more economically than if they were not part of the
  unification (Civitas, 2011).

- **The EU is too powerful**: The EU originated as an economic treaty, but
  over the years its policies have expanded into other areas (Civitas, 2011).
  Currently, there are 32 policy areas posted on the official EU website,
  ranging from agriculture to transportation (European Union, 2010).

- **The EU is undemocratic**: The European Commission, which is populated
  by unelected officials, is the governing body of the EU and “run by an
  appointed bureaucracy” (Civitas, “Arguments Against the EU,” 2011,
  para. 5.).
• **The EU undermines the nation states:** The idea of supranationalism is where the betterment of Europe as a whole takes precedence over individual nation states; therefore, member states have to relinquish power and decisions to the EU that normally would be determined by individual nations, such as currency and taxes (Civitas, 2011).

In addition, management issues of the EU are often criticized, as is the idea of “harmonisation” where standards are applied across the board without regard to individual nations and cultures.

The Bologna Process is a data mine for multiple disciplines, but it is especially rich for studies of global communication. Globalization has forced expansion in one way or another on all countries, indeed, on every person. While challenging, globalization is not necessarily a bad thing. Globalization forces us to work with people we would not normally have thought of, chosen to, or could have practically worked with before. In a lot of ways, the expansion that globalization forces on us in every way is also something that can ultimately bring us closer together. Successful relationships begin with good communication. As professional and technical communicators, we have a responsibility to understand global communication from as many different angles as we can. This dissertation is one attempt at understanding how communication practices can facilitate better and closer cooperation between nationally and culturally diverse members. It is a first step in the direction of
having closer, more collaborative and cooperative relationships. The next two chapters present the results of my study.
CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS RESULTS OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMUNIQUÉS

“There will be as many different world views in human history as there are people.” –Kenneth Burke

In professional and technical communication, there is heavy reliance on the specificity of language similar to what Burke (1966) would term “scientistic” language. Such language relies on definition or naming and tells us what something is or is not (Burke, 1966). Likewise, American textbooks stress clear, concise, direct, and specific language, free of qualifiers, redundancies, trite phrases, and ambiguities as desired characteristics of professional communication (Boveé & Thill, 2006; Britt Roebuck, 2006; Goodall & Goodall, 2006; O’Rourke, 2007). These ideas contrast with the communication found in the Bologna Process documentation. In the Bologna Process, vague and interpretive language dominates the ministerial communiqués, which manifests as a double-edged sword. This type of language causes problems for working groups where it impedes the progress education ministers would like members to make because working groups have to constantly interpret complex abstract and ambiguous terms. This same language, however, can also be seen as a rhetorical strategy to empower group members, dispel fears or concerns of politics and power associated with the Bologna Process, and promote the ideas of a European community and democracy among group members. The Bologna Process, therefore, gives professional and technical communication scholars and
teachers reasons to consider when vague language is needed, possible inevitable, and actually quite effective in professional, and, most especially, global communication. In this chapter, I report the results of my analysis on the ministerial communiqués where I found rhetorical patterns related to vague terminology and evidence for considering different perspectives regarding its effectiveness.

**Overview of the Ministerial Communiqués**

I divided the documents of the Bologna Process into two categories for this study: the ministerial communiqués and working group documentation. The reason I did this was due to the superior distinction the ministerial communiqués were given over all of the other documentation of the Process; however, at the working group level, no particular report appeared to carry precedence over another. The top level of documentation, the ministerial communiqués, can be viewed as the guiding documents or “charter documents” for this effort. Charter documents, according to Winsor (2007), are texts that act as agreements between parties. They usually define the rules by which the group will agree to proceed or general principles that they will adhere to (Winsor, 2007). The status of the ministerial communiqués is also evidenced on the official web sites where they are the first documents listed under “Main documents.” Additionally, they are consistently referred to as guiding documents in the working group documentation. The ministerial communiqués
can also be seen as political documents because they are the face of the Bologna Process, and they are intended to be read by the rest of the world. The second level is the working group documentation, which consists of several different types of reports (trends, stocktaking, student, and working group recommendation reports), minutes, presentations, and other documents associated with working group activities. Working group documentation is used to inform education ministers about the progress working groups are making toward implementing Bologna objectives. This level of documentation is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

The ministerial communiqués begin with the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (see Appendix C) signed 25 May 1998 by ministers of higher education from France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Germany. The *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) is the first official document of the Bologna Process that outlines its main goals and invites “other Member States of the Union and other European countries to…consolidate Europe’s standing in the world through continuously improved and updated education for its citizens” (para. 14). The following year, the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) (see Appendix C) was drafted and signed by 31 European countries. From that point on, the ministers have met every two years, and the document that results from each ministerial conference is added to the list of ministerial communiqués and is considered a guiding document for the Bologna Process. A list of the ministerial communiqués is shown in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1

List of the Ministerial Communiqués

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference/Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sorbonne Joint Declaration (see Appendix C)</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint declaration on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bologna Declaration (see Appendix C)</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint declaration of the European ministers of education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praque Communiqué</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards the European Higher Education Area: Communiqué of the meeting of European ministers in charge of higher education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Communiqué</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realizing the European Higher Education Area: Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for higher education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergen Communiqué</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Higher Education Area: Achieving the goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Communiqué (see Appendix C)</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards the European Higher Education Area: Responding to the challenges in a globalized world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leuven/Louvain-la-Nueve Communiqué</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears that there are two primary audiences for the ministerial communiqués. The first is the member states, and the second is the rest of the world. For Bologna members, the ministerial communiqués reflect the goals and expectations of the Bologna Process as determined by the ministers of higher education from each signatory country. For non-European countries, the ministerial communiqués can be considered progress reports and even public relations documents. The political aspect of these documents is even acknowledged in some of the BFUG board meeting minutes where members are debating and crafting just the right language and omission of certain details.
While the main purpose of the ministerial communiqués is to set forth the overarching goals of the Bologna Process, they are also the face of the Process to the rest of the world in that they present a particular image of Europe and of progress toward the goals identified in them.

**Rhetorical Patterns**

Considering the dual primary audience and purpose of these documents, certain rhetorical patterns emerge. The first noticeable pattern is the imprecise words used to identify Bologna objectives. The goals or objectives of the Bologna Process are incredibly difficult to trace. This vagueness in the identification and description of the objectives may have been a consequence of the ministers working out ideas as they went along, but there are two other consequences of this rhetoric to consider. The first is that it creates confusion, and, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, impedes progress on the working groups’ path toward implementation. The second is that this same language, however, could be a diplomatic strategy on the part of the ministers to encourage ownership of the objectives among members. Goodall and Goodall (2006) stated that “team members feel more ownership of the team’s goals and objectives when they participate in defining them” (p. 265). By somewhat forcing members to interpret the objectives of the Process, the ministers may have been intentionally or unintentionally giving power to the group and creating a democratic
Democratic processes benefit an organization because the consultation that results from members negotiating a group’s policies allows them to insert their own values (Tyler, 2011). Along these same lines, Winsor (2007) asserted that because charter documents are intended to be guides, they cannot cover all situations or aspects of a situation; therefore, they continually have to be reinterpreted for changing situations and the self-interests of members. This reinterpretation is an invitation for further collaboration and cooperation among members and result in subsequent documentation (Winsor, 2007). These follow up documents are not independent texts and they create a document hierarchy. This hierarchy is analyzed in light of Winsor’s use of activity theory and Burke’s (1950) theory of consubstantiality. Consequently, vaguely-worded objectives can lead to increased interaction and a group democracy where members can negotiate self-interests and work toward consensus.

The second pattern I noticed was vague verbs. Ambiguous verb phrases are consistently and continuously used throughout the ministerial communiqués; readers would be hard-pressed to find any concrete verbs in any of the documents at this level. While this style of reporting results in frustration as evidenced in the working group documentation, a highly interpretive accounting of the actions, agreements, and accountability for the Process can be seen as a strategy for creating a particular “reality” that ministers want all readers to buy into—a reality of positive progress and of strong voluntary
cooperation. Burke (1966) has said that “terminology is a reflection of reality, [and] by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality” (p. 45). Furthermore, he says that we choose certain terms to direct attention into one area and away from something else. Bologna Process member nations have a history of fighting with each other, and they are leery of any hint of dominance of one country or group of countries over others. Since direct and concrete language is more confrontational and domineering than vague language, the ministers may have chosen their terms purposefully to direct the attention of members, and possibly even the rest of the world, toward the intended cooperation and progress of the Bologna Process. Thus, imprecise verbs that deal with actions, agreements, and progress emphasize the strengths this group could have if they worked in cooperation with one another instead of concrete terminology which would most likely draw attention to their extreme differences. This also relates directly to Burke’s (1950) theory of identification because the terministic choices of the ministers appear to have the goal of unification instead of division.

The vague terminology of the Bologna documentation may also be a deliberate communication strategy called strategic ambiguity. Strategic ambiguity is where “individuals use ambiguity purposefully to accomplish their goals” (Eisenberg, 1984, p. 7). The use of vague language to define organizational goals, especially, has been found useful in cultivating creativity and flexibility because it allows for multiple interpretations, which can be useful
especially among diverse groups. And while vague language certainly can create problems in communication, it also can have a positive effect on strained relationships and reduce conflict (Eisenberg, 1984).

While my study cannot claim any type of certainty behind the motivations or intentions of the ministers, the language of the ministerial communiqués may very well be the result of the delicate relationship the ministers have to negotiate with members due to their historical connections. Considering the historical and political tensions among Bologna countries, the ministers may very well be using strategic ambiguity to foster agreement without mandating specific actions or standards among a membership that would most likely resist such an approach. Likewise, another pattern emerges that indicates the ministers may be using certain rhetorical strategies to strengthen the group overall by establishing social connections. Those strategies include:

- Recognizing existing strengths
- Recruiting through a show of strength
- Creating a common identity
- Demonstrating confidence and minimizing problems.

Tyler (2011) argued that while people are motivated by self-interest, social motivations, which are linked to people’s discretionary behaviors, lead to voluntary cooperation. Discretionary behaviors are not rewarded or punished; they “develop from attitudes and values” (p. 26). If a group relies on voluntary cooperation, then leaders have to focus “on the needs and concerns of those at
the lower levels of the social hierarchy…and emphasize the value of participatory decision making” (p. 165). Social connections can also be associated to Burke’s (1966) theory of terministic screens where he contends that terminology can be used to either unite or divide. Furthermore, when individuals identify with an organization, a consubstantial relationship forms (Burke, 1950). This type of relationship has been shown by Tyler and also by Cheney (1983) to increase motivation for participation. The rhetoric and strategies above found in the ministerial communiqués may be seen as attempts by the ministers to unite and build a sense of community among members through social connections that induce voluntary cooperation.

In this chapter, I focus only on the rhetorical patterns found in the ministerial communiqués, which include:

- difficulty of identifying the goals of the Bologna Process
- complexity of the objectives based on the abstract and ambiguous wording of them and how this opens the door for further conversation
- vague verbiage used throughout the communiqués that may ward off assumptions of alliances among certain stakeholders and calm concerns regarding particular actions that might meet with confrontation or disagreement
- rhetorical strategies that appear to be used to build community and/or create a spirit of unity among member states.
In reporting my results in this chapter and in the discussion of my results in Chapter 5, it is not my intention to comment on the Bologna Process as being either successful or unsuccessful, but rather, to report my findings of how the language in the Bologna Process documents creates two realities depending on the level of documentation reviewed. Those realities can be interpreted by some as being false/true or successful/unsuccessful, but I will refrain from that type of interpretation, as well.

**Vaguely Worded Objectives**

In this section, I describe the complexity and problems of identifying and tracking the Bologna objectives in the ministerial communiqués. In the section that follows, Benefits of Abstraction and Ambiguity, I explain how the vague terminology associated with the Bologna objectives may be seen as a way of promoting group interaction and democracy.

The goals of the Bologna Process are first identified in the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C) and the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) (see Appendix C). The vocabulary used to define the values and goals of the Bologna Process, however, vary from one conference to the next throughout the years, which makes them difficult to track. In fact, the word goal or goals is not specifically used to define the overarching aim(s) of the Bologna Process. Words, such as “dimensions,” “objectives,” and “points” are used, which make it problematic in tracing an overarching goal versus a way to achieve that goal.
Words used to identify and describe objectives also take on multiple meanings or they are associated with different concepts from one document to the next. For instance, in the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) (see Appendix C), autonomy, greater comparability and compatibility, and international competitiveness are mentioned, but they are not given any status, so to speak, as to their hierarchy in the Process, meaning it is unclear if these are goals, objectives, key concepts, or exactly what role they play in the Process overall. Likewise, the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) reports that “general principles” were “laid down in the Sorbonne declaration” (para. 13), although no specifics are provided as to what those general principles are; but now, this document identifies, through the use of indentation and bold, six “objectives” of the Bologna Process. Those six objectives are given “titles” as indicated by their bolded text, but those titles are not retained in subsequent documentation. Furthermore, the objectives are loosely defined or associated with other terms or objectives, but those definitions and associations are not consistent in later documentation either. The titles of the six objectives identified in the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) (see Appendix C) and their somewhat loose associations include the following:

- **Easily readable and comparable degrees**: This is not defined, but it is associated with the Diploma Supplement.\(^1\) It is also declared that such

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\(^1\) Diploma Supplement: This is a document similar to what Americans call a transcript, but it is a detailed document intended to account for every class and skill students acquire at any institution where they study.
a system would promote employability and the competitiveness of a European education.

- **Two main cycles:** The definition of these two cycles of degrees is somewhat confusing. They are identified as merely undergraduate and graduate. European higher education systems are quite complex and diverse, and they are not broken out like American degrees, so the adoption of this two-cycle system is not as concrete as it sounds (which comes out in the working group documentation). And there is a timeline of one of the degrees lasting a minimum of three years, which is assumed to be the undergraduate degree, but it is not entirely clear.

- **System of credits:** The adoption of a system of credits, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, is somewhat confusing, too, because many European universities, especially vocational schools, do not use credits. The term credits is basically an unknown for such institutions. All that is mentioned in this document, however, is that credits are seen as a “proper means for promoting the most widespread student mobility” (para. 16) and that members should consider the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

- **Mobility:** The only way mobility is referred to in this document as an objective is as “free movement” for students, teachers, and staff.

- **European cooperation in quality assurance:** There is only one sentence for this objective and these bolded words are associated with
“developing comparable criteria and methodologies” (para. 14). What criteria and methodologies refer to specifically is unknown.

- **Necessary European dimensions in higher education**: It is stated that promotion of this dimension is related to “curricular development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research” (para. 15). There is really no other context for this objective from which to draw more meaning in the document.

In 1999, these are the “objectives” of the Bologna Process, but more are identified at the next ministerial communiqué.

In the Prague Communiqué (2001), the six objectives are once again identified as “objectives,” but then three “points” are “emphasized” by the ministers of education: lifelong learning, involvement of higher education institutions and students, and promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (the EHEA is now reworded from European area of higher education and capitalized). At the ministerial conference in Berlin in 2003, the three “points” mentioned in the previous communiqué are now, indeed, new objectives as mentioned in the first paragraph: “In the first follow-up conference held in Prague...they [the ministers] increased the number of the objectives and reaffirmed their commitment to establish the European Higher Education Area by 2010” (“Berline Communiqué,” 2003, p. 1). So now there are nine objectives to track in the remaining communiqués, but this does not make
things any easier because the terms to describe these objectives as well as other “points” constantly change.

Even when reading the communiqués in chronological order, there is constant confusion over what objectives or points or aims take precedence and remain a “goal.” For instance, in the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) and *Bologna Declaration* (1999) (see Appendix C), there are four dimensions mentioned, one being social. In the Prague Communiqué (2001), the term “social dimension” is used for the first time as a noun and as being one aspect of the Bologna Process. What this social dimension is, precisely, is not known, even though it is used three times in the Prague document, and it has something to do with mobility. By the time we get to the communiqué from the Berlin conference in 2003, the second paragraph calls special attention to the social dimension of the Bologna Process as something that the ministers consider of great importance. But in this paragraph, social dimension is now mixed with talk about education being a public responsibility, strengthening the social cohesion of Europe, and academic values. Mobility is not mentioned at all in that paragraph, and social dimension is not mentioned under the entire section that discusses mobility.

Furthermore, the communiqué from the Berlin conference (2003) has different subheadings for the nine objectives and the order in which they are addressed changes from the last communiqué. For example, quality assurance is mentioned first. In the previous two communiqués, the subheading for that objective was titled “Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance”;
whereas, in the Berlin Communiqué (2003) it is now “Quality Assurance.” While this does not seem like a big deal, the order of the words now brings about new meaning and emphasizes all new points. In the previous two documents where this objective was mentioned, comparability and cooperation were key concerns; however, in the Berlin Communiqué (2003) the quality of European higher education is stressed, which without doing a side-by-side comparison of the nine objectives, may seem like quality assurance is now a new objective.

In the next communiqué from the Bergen conference in 2005, not all nine objectives are given their own section in the document, and familiar, but still ambiguous, terms are used for some of the previously identified objectives. For instance, “Degree structure” is now “Degree system,” and there is a subheading titled “Recognition of degrees and study periods,” which one might connect to the original objective of easily readable and comparable degrees, but the entire section is about the importance of members ratifying the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997), as well as some connection to lifelong learning. Other subheadings match up with previous objectives, such as mobility, quality assurance, and attractiveness; but, there are also subheadings of the same weight on “Higher education and research,” and “The social dimension” which are entirely new, and their status is not known, either. The same problem with subheadings holds true for the London Communiqué (2007) (see Appendix C) and the Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009).
Furthermore, the language that identifies, defines, or describes the goals of the Process is highly interpretive. For example, in the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C), mobility is identified as a problem and as something to be achieved; equality is described but never named; lifelong learning, access, and multidisciplinary studies are described as what students “should have” or “should be able to enter” but there is nothing definite mentioned as these being actual goals until one to three years later in the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) and the *Prague Communiqué* (2001). But even when these terms are identified as actual objectives of the Bologna Process, the terms themselves are highly interpretive because they are abstract to begin with and they carry associations with so many other issues, too, which are never really cleared up. For instance, mobility is most likely interpreted to mean being able to move freely from one country or university to the next, but it also involves issues of funding, such as the transfer of student loans or scholarships, work permits, visas, housing, immigration, etc., associations that are brought up only minimally in subsequent communiqués, but in much more detail (and as problematic) in working group documentation. Furthermore, “lifelong learning” is a nebulous term that has various denotations and connotations, especially with regard to higher education, and the terms “access” and “multidisciplinary” are just as problematic in their vagueness. These terms, as well as many other similar terms associated with Bologna objectives, which are addressed below, are never given concrete definitions in any of the ministerial communiqués.
One of the more vague terms used to describe a goal of the Bologna Process is the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This “area” was identified first in the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C) as “an open European area” that “carries a wealth of positive perspectives,” which would respect the values of diversity, “remove barriers...for teaching and learning,” and “enhance mobility” (“Sorbonne Joint Declaration,” 1998, para. 4). This area, therefore, is an agreed upon structure of higher education, but the structure or framework itself is never defined or described in any of the ministerial communiqués. What the ministers do, instead, is give it an official name, the EHEA, and they include characteristics this area should have or embody such as diversity, open access, quality education, and comparable and compatible degrees” (“Bologna Declaration,” 1999, para. 4). Furthermore, the EHEA should allow for lifelong learning, and promote employability, mobility, and “the Continent’s overall development” (“Bologna Declaration,” 1999, para. 4). Characteristics are not the same thing as a definition, and this “area” lacks definition throughout the documents reviewed for this study. The lack of definitions and even the abstract and ambiguous terms of the Bologna objectives could actually benefit this group, though.

**Benefits of Abstraction and Ambiguity**

Abstractions are words connected to concepts or characteristics (Boveé & Thill, 2006), and one advantage of abstractions is they “permit us to rise above
the common and tangible” (Boveé & Thill, 2006, p. 88). Abstractions allow us to consider concepts in a holistic way instead of being restricted to specifics by concrete language. While the abstractions and ambiguities make it difficult to trace the objectives of the Bologna Process, Winsor’s (2007) application of activity theory to charter documents helps explain why this difficulty takes place, and how it is beneficial to the group. One of the characteristics of charter documents is that they are communally written, which allows “people to calibrate their perceptions and actions so that they are in harmony” (Winsor, 2007, p. 5). This negotiation implies a shared partnership where one group cannot impose standards onto another (Winsor, 2007). In the case of Bologna, the ministers, who write the ministerial communiqués, are not in a position to impose the Bologna objectives onto member states because successful implementation of the objectives can only be achieved by cooperation from multiple stakeholders, many whom the ministers have no control over, such as governments, employers, and independent organizations. Furthermore, Winsor says that charter documents are intended only to regulate behavior; they cannot possibly address all aspects of a situation or any changes that may occur. This does not make them flawed texts; however, they must be continually reinterpreted for meaning based on new situations, which actually promotes collaboration and further cooperation within the group (Winsor, 2007). With the Bologna Process, this reinterpretation comes in the form of working group documentation where members debate and discuss the meaning of terms in the ministerial communiqué, but also each ministerial
communiqué builds on the previous one, all of which help the group “craft the vision of reality” (Winsor, 2007, p. 6) that makes the objectives relevant for each of the 47 countries involved.

Through the constant reinterpretation and creation of subsequent texts, a consubstantial relationship takes shape between the overall Process and individual stakeholders. Consubstantiality is a way of “acting together” to have “common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, and attitudes” (Burke, 1950, p. 21); however, members can be consubstantial and separate at the same time (Burke, 1950), which is an important factor for Bologna members. The fact that the objectives are so vaguely worded and need to be debated allows members to consider the goals of Bologna for what they mean for the group, but also in specific ways that relate to their unique country and higher education systems.

As shown above, it is difficult to identify and track the goals of the Bologna Process, which presents problems for the working groups as discussed in Chapter 4. Vague language, however, is not just associated with goals; ministers use ambiguous phrases to describe actions as well.

Vague Verbs

The second pattern regarding vague language in the ministerial communiqués is that action reported or agreed upon is really unknown because the verbs used throughout the communiqués are incredibly ambiguous. Subjective verbs leave actions, responsibilities, and even progress unclear.
Instances of when these verbs are used in regard to actions, agreements, and responsibilities are as long as the combination of the ministerial communiqués because ambiguous verbs are used almost exclusively throughout the communiqués. A few representative examples are shown below:

- Ministers **welcomed and reviewed** the report "Furthering the Bologna Process" commissioned by the follow-up group and found that the goals laid down in the Bologna Declaration have been widely accepted and used as a base for the development of higher education by most signatories as well as by universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers reaffirmed that efforts to promote mobility must be continued ("Prague Communiqué," 2001, para. 2).
- Ministers **took note of** the Convention of European higher education institutions held in Salamanca on 29-30 March and the recommendations of the Convention of European Students, held in Göteborg on 24-25 March, and **appreciated** the active involvement of the European University Association (EUA) and the National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB) in the Bologna process ("Prague Communiqué," 2001, para. 3).
- They **further noted and appreciated** the many other initiatives to take the process further. Ministers also **took note** of the constructive assistance of the European Commission ("Prague Communiqué," 2001, para. 3).
- Aware of the contribution strong institutions can make to economic and societal development, **Ministers accept** that institutions need to be empowered to take decisions on their internal organisation and administration. **Ministers further call upon institutions** to ensure that the reforms become fully integrated into core institutional functions and processes ("Berlin Communiqué," 2003, p. 5).
- **Ministers agree to engage at the national level** to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees ("Berlin Communiqué," 2003, p. 6).
- **We confirm our commitment** to coordinating our policies through the Bologna Process to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010, and **we commit ourselves** to assisting the new participating countries to implement the goals of the Process ("Bergen Communiqué," 2005, p. 1).
- **We underline the importance** of ensuring complementarity between the overarching framework for the EHEA and the proposed broader framework for qualifications for lifelong learning encompassing general
education as well as vocational education and training as now being developed within the European Union as well as among participating countries. We ask the European Commission fully to consult all parties to the Bologna Process as work progresses. ("Bergen Communiqué," 2005, p. 2)

- Developments over the last two years have brought us a significant step closer to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Building on our rich and diverse European cultural heritage, we are developing an EHEA based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles that will facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe’s attractiveness and competitiveness. As we look ahead, we recognise that, in a changing world, there will be a continuing need to adapt our higher education systems, to ensure that the EHEA remains competitive and can respond effectively to the challenges of globalisation. In the short term, we appreciate that implementing the Bologna reforms is a significant task, and appreciate the continuing support and commitment of all partners in the process. We welcome the contribution of the working groups and seminars in helping to drive forward progress. We agree to continue to work together in partnership, assisting one another in our efforts and promoting the exchange of good practice. ("London Communiqué," 2007, p. 1)

- Some progress has been made since 1999, but many challenges remain. Among the obstacles to mobility, issues relating to immigration, recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements feature prominently. We recognise the responsibility of individual Governments to facilitate the delivery of visas, residence and work permits, as appropriate. Where these measures are outside our competence as Ministers for Higher Education, we undertake to work within our respective Governments for decisive progress in this area. At national level, we will work to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students. This includes encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula, as well as urging our institutions to take greater responsibility for staff and student mobility, more equitably balanced between countries across the EHEA. ("London Communiqué," 2007, p. 2)

While leaving actions, agreements, and progress unaccounted for rhetorically, the vague verbs may be a way for ministers to accommodate their mixed audience (members and non-members and supporters and non-supporters) by
crafting an image of steady progress and cooperation that they intend or would like to see; but, this does not mean the ministers are portraying a false image of the Process. “The nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations”; therefore, our “observations about ‘reality’ may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms” (Burke, 1966, p. 46). In other words, the terms we choose to describe our observations are not without reference to the larger vision of our world (Burke, 1966). In this case, the ministers may be choosing to describe their observations and actions in relation to the larger picture of the delicate relationships among members. Consequently, the vague language may allow ministers to push forward with minimal resistance because there is nothing definite about the meaning of “took note of,” “appreciated,” “called upon,” “underline,” or “engage.”

An even stronger point of debate would be how the Process influences politics or laws within particular countries. For instance, in the statement “Ministers agree to engage at the national level to remove obstacles” (“Berlin Communiqué,” 2003, p. 6), there are no specifics as to the action the ministers plan to take. This may be that they are not sure of what they can actually do at that time, but it may also be a way of avoiding public confrontation because there are no details or specific plans regarding their action. This is important because one of the criticisms of the European Union is that the Union sometimes makes policies that trump national legislation on a particular issue; thus, the Union is accused of undermining national governments (Civitas, 2011). The
Bologna ministers have to work with governments to change national laws associated with higher education in order to make degrees transferrable; however, the way this working relationship is worded in the communiqués shows sensitivity or maybe even respect for national governments because no definite plans or actions are declared. There is certainly room for negotiation.

The ambiguous and abstract terms can cause problems for a reader to follow any concrete progress of the Process through these documents, but they do not appear to hinder the ministers who are said to “reaffirm,” “agree,” and “commit” to the principles of the Bologna Process in every ministerial communiqué. Additionally, new members are added at most conferences as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
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<td>45</td>
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<td>18 May 2007</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-29 April 2009</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 March 2010</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Building Unity**

One consequence of the vague terminology, in regard to both goals and verbs, is that a particularly positive “reality” is created. The subjectively worded objectives and verbiage in the ministerial communiqués create a particular reality
as described by Burke (1966) in his theory on terministic screens. He classifies terms as rhetoric intended to either unify or to divide, and in the case of the education ministers, it can be said that the rhetoric is intended to unify members because it calls for continuity and community; even diversity is seen as a unifying theme for Bologna. Additionally, Tyler (2011) concluded that “people are motivated by the desire to support groups with which they have identity-based and emotional ties” (p. 162). One of the main concepts repeatedly demonstrated in the Bologna Process documents is the idea of unifying Europe. Even if all members do not agree with or want to be part of the European Union, the Bologna Process will not succeed unless all members agree to be part of a larger higher education structure at the very least. The benefits of this structure are often connected to the idea of a unified Europe that offers a quality and internationally competitive education, as well as a better quality of life for all European citizens. It appears, therefore, that one of ministers’ main responsibilities in the communiqués is to build a sense of community, or create a reality, that members can envision themselves and feel they are, or ought to be, a part of.

The careful wording of the communiqués can also be viewed as a means of inducing cooperation by creating social connections. The Bologna Process is almost absent of overt external motivations in that no funding or other external promises are made to members; it is only the spirit of cooperation and the betterment of all of Europe that is consistently stressed. By emphasizing that the
Bologna Process can succeed only if all members cooperate, cooperation theory tells us that these social connections create a sense of responsibility or tap into the internal values of the group, which in turn bring about stronger motivations for members to work together (Tyler, 2011). Through my readings of the ministerial communiqués, I found certain rhetorical strategies that appear to create a sense of unity and social connections among group members, which are identified and discussed below. The names I gave to these strategies are:

- Recognize existing strengths
- Recruit through a show of strength
- Create an identity
- Demonstrate confidence and minimize problems

**Recognize existing strengths.** One way to make the Bologna Process appear attainable to all members is to capitalize on what already exists that can help members more easily move toward the goals of the Process. This is especially important in the early years of the Process so that the objectives do not appear overwhelming or impossible. For example, in the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C) and the *Bologna Declaration* (1999) (see Appendix C), the achievements of the “European process” are mentioned, as well as the idea that the Bologna Process is a way to “strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent” (“Sorbonne Joint Declaration,” 1998, para. 1). This statement appears to reassure readers that those four dimensions already exist throughout Europe, and the
Bologna Process will only strengthen them and make them more prominent to the rest of the world. Similarly, the more complex concepts, such as making degrees transparent and transferable from one country to the next, seem easier if there are already existing organizations and partnerships in place. In the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (1998) (see Appendix C), it appears as if such partnerships already exist: “Progressive harmonisation of the overall framework of our degrees and cycles can be achieved through strengthening of already existing experience, joint diplomas, pilot initiatives, and dialogue with all concerned” (para. 13), although no specific diplomas, programs, or initiatives are identified. There is, however, one existing organization identified in the communiqués: The ECTS. In the Prague Communiqué (2001), ministers “called upon” existing organizations, such as those related to quality assurance and a credit system, to promote themselves at all levels with member countries and that members should be open to working with such organizations, as shown in the passage below.

Ministers emphasized that for greater flexibility in learning and qualification processes the adoption of common cornerstones of qualifications, supported by a credit system such as the ECTS or one that is ECTS-compatible, providing both transferability and accumulation functions, is necessary. ("Prague Communiqué," 2001, para. 9)

Likewise, in the Berlin Communiqué (2003), ministers call out specific achievements of the ECTS and encourage the use of this system for the EHEA. This call to work with ECTS is never weakened or given up, and ministers
repeatedly ask for countries to cooperate with this existing organization. In the
working group documentation, however, implementing the ECTS system
involves collecting data from all members regarding their current degree
structures and credit systems (some do not even have credit systems), resolving
issues of credits vs. hours, and translating credits across university and
vocational systems to name just a few of the difficulties. These specific issues are
not brought up in the ministerial communiqués; instead, the rhetoric of the
ministers is only that all stakeholders should cooperate in this endeavor and seek
out the help of organizations which already exist. The call to build on existing
organizations may help build a sense of community among members because
starting from scratch may seem daunting, especially for such a diverse and large
group. The ministers’ rhetoric may be seen as a way to comfort members and
show confidence that what they are asking already exists in some places;
members just need to find and build on whatever is there already. Building a
community amongst existing members is one thing, but it appears as if the
ministers want to use the ministerial communiqués to attract as many European
members as they can, as well.

Recruit through a show of strength. The ministerial communiqués can be
seen as a form of recruitment. The invitation to join the Bologna Process was
extended in the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C), and
subsequent communiqués remark on the acquisition of new members as the
Process continues, as well as the widely accepted objectives, as mentioned in the passage below.

Ministers welcomed and reviewed the report "Furthering the Bologna Process" commissioned by the follow-up group and found that the goals laid down in the Bologna Declaration have been widely accepted and used as a base for the development of higher education by most signatories as well as by universities and other higher education institutions. ("Prague Communiqué," 2001, para. 2)

To further entice members, the communiqués emphasize the necessity of Europe to unite in order to remain competitive with the rest of the world, economically and in higher education. In fact, higher education is linked to the appeal of European culture when ministers in the Bologna Declaration (1999) state:

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. (para. 8)

Here, competition is tied to the objective of recognition. The Bologna objective of recognition is important not just for countries outside of Europe to recognize the Process, but it is also necessary that member states and non-member European countries see the benefit of collaboration and cooperation amongst all European countries. No one country can stand alone in this globalized world; they need each other in order to succeed as a group and individually, and this idea is especially shaped in the early communiqués, such as the Bologna Declaration (1999) (see Appendix C) where unification is seen 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” (para. 2).

Furthermore, the ministers are committed to providing all members the support they need to make the necessary changes called for in the Bologna Process as stated in the Berlin Communiqué (2003):

> Ministers recognise that membership of the Bologna Process implies substantial change and reform for all signatory countries. They agree to support the new signatory countries in those changes and reforms, incorporating them within the mutual discussions and assistance, which the Bologna Process involves. (p. 8)

Another important concept to get across to all European countries and encourage membership is that the Process is truly one of equal representation and that it will not be controlled by the big four countries (France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom) that originally signed the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (see Appendix C). This point is made directly in the Prague Communiqué in 2001. The opening paragraph of that communiqué states that the very fact that the conference is being held in Prague shows that the ministers have indeed made good on the promise that the Process will not be centrally controlled. Equal representation is also evidenced in the formation of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) where ministers ask for involvement from all countries and stakeholders (governments, students, staff, institutions, employers, etc.): “Ministers…confirmed the need for a…follow-up group… composed of representatives of all signatories, new participants and the European Commission, and should be chaired by the EU Presidency at the time” (“Prague
Communiqué,” 2001, p. 3). Additionally, the European University Association, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the National Unions of Students in Europe and the Council of Europe are asked to be consultants in this follow up group, as well.

Furthermore, the more support the Bologna Process has from all stakeholders, the more presence it has throughout Europe; thus, the stronger it appears to both members and non-members. A couple more examples of this show of strength are provided below:

- 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. (“Bologna Declaration,” 1999, para. 5)

- We welcome the support of organisations representing business and the social partners and look forward to intensified cooperation in reaching the goals of the Bologna process. We further welcome the contributions of the international institutions and organisations that are partners to the Process. (“Bergen Communiqué,” 2005, p. 1)

Focusing on the unification of Europe is not just a way to promote recognition of European degrees and recruit new members; it can also be a way for members to cooperate because they identify with the values of the Bologna Process, which will be discussed next.

Create an identity. The idea of identity serves as a strong motivational factor for people to cooperate. Tyler (2011) claims that organizations can “serve as the social function of providing people with an identity” (p. 38). This is
similar to the results Cheney (1983) found with corporate identities as mentioned in Chapter 2. Tyler further explains that people use organizations to find their own identity, especially in a group, thus this identity provides them with further investment in the group and “they become motivated to work on behalf of the group as a way of bolstering their own identity” (p. 39).

References in the ministerial communiqués to European citizenship appear to be a rhetorical strategy that allows members to identify with the Bologna Process on a personal, as well as a cultural, level. By using the Bologna Process as a way for members to identify, or see, themselves as European citizens, they are more apt to continue working together because they see their identity through the benefits of this group. The Bologna Process is a way for members to identify themselves with larger societal responsibilities that will result in a better life for all Europeans as seen in this passage from the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998):

> We are heading for a period of major change in education and working conditions, to a diversification of courses of professional careers with education and training throughout life becoming a clear obligation. We owe our students, and our society at large, a higher education system in which they are given the best opportunities to seek and find their own area of excellence. (para. 3)

In all of the ministerial communiqués, citizenship is not designated nationally, but regionally—people are citizens of Europe—not of one particular country. Tyler claims that “to the degree that people think of themselves in terms of group membership, they are drawing their identity from the group” (p. 39); thus, the
more members identify with the notion that they are indeed part of a larger community—a European community—the more they will work to make that group succeed so that they, in essence, are seen as succeeding, too. This is just what is needed for a group that will either succeed or fail without total cooperation.

**Demonstrate confidence.** Confidence in the communiqués is seen most by the way progress is reported with vague terminology. Minimizing problems helps increase confidence, too. Such strategies can be found throughout the communiqués, and in the example below:

Ministers observed that the activities recommended in the Declaration concerning degree structure have been intensely and widely dealt with in most countries. They especially appreciated how the work on quality assurance is moving forward. Ministers recognized the need to cooperate to address the challenges brought about by transnational education. They also recognized the need for a lifelong learning perspective on education. (“Prague Communiqué,” 2001, para. 4)

It appears through the language in the passage above that the degree structure previously mentioned in the *Bologna Declaration* has been possibly “accepted” (an interpretation of “dealt with”) in most countries. Even the word “most” is impressive since at this time there are 32 signatory countries. In the working group documentation, at this time in the Process, the issue of transnational education is highly debated, but it appears through the expression “Ministers recognized the need to cooperate,” that they are just reiterating their intent to work together. The working group documentation does not indicate any
outward hostility between members on this issue, but it certainly reflects the complexity of transnational education, which this document does not address.

Other progress of the Process is presented in equally ambiguous terms as shown in the examples below.

- Ministers welcomed and reviewed the report "Furthering the Bologna Process" commissioned by the follow-up group and found that the goals laid down in the Bologna Declaration have been widely accepted and used as a base for the development of higher education by most signatories as well as by universities and other higher education institutions. ("Prague Communiqué," 2001, para. 2)
- Ministers welcome the various initiatives undertaken since the Prague Higher Education Summit to move towards more comparability and compatibility, to make higher education systems more transparent and to enhance the quality of European higher education at institutional and national levels. They appreciate the co-operation and commitment of all partners - Higher Education Institutions, students and other stakeholders - to this effect. ("Berlin Communiqué," 2003, p. 3)
- We note with satisfaction that the two-cycle degree system is being implemented on a large scale, with more than half of the students being enrolled in it in most countries. However, there are still some obstacles to access between cycles. Furthermore, there is a need for greater dialogue, involving Governments, institutions and social partners, to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications, including in appropriate posts within the public service. ("Bergen Communiqué," 2005, p. 2)

In 2001, it is quite the claim to state that the Bologna objectives “have been widely accepted” much less that they are the basis for the development of “most” member higher education institutions. The key terms here are “accepted” and “base.” As will be discussed in Chapter 4, accepted does not mean implemented. And the claim of “most” is an unknown. Furthermore, the
“initiatives undertaken” since the Prague Summit have been working group
meetings, but there is no significant progress noted in the working group
documentation reviewed for this study. In the working group documentation, it
appears as if members are doing the best they can to recognize the complexity of
the process of making degrees comparable and compatible, but there is still
much work reported that needs to be done. And in 2005, there is some disparity
between what looks like implementation of the two-cycle degree structure for
“more than half of the students being enrolled in most countries” (Bergen
Communiqué, 2005, p. 2) and the reality of true implementation as reported in
the working group documentation.

Vague language and rhetorical avoidance of problems run throughout the
ministerial communiqués. Even the most recent Vienna Bologna Policy Forum
(2010) states somewhat optimistically that “Today, the European Higher
Education Area has officially been launched” (p. 1). Without having read
working group documentation, it may seem like the whole Process has been
completed, accepted, adopted, and is ready to put into use; however, that is not
the case at all, as only a few countries have been able to implement Bologna
objectives, and only at some levels, not universally throughout their higher
education systems.

When doing a side-by-side comparison of the ministerial communiqués
and the working group documentation, it appears as if the confidence the
ministers show can be somewhat misleading. But as mentioned in several places
throughout this chapter, terminology that indicates indeterminate progress and the seeming absence of problems can be viewed as encouraging rather than deceptive, possibly even necessary. Burke (1950) has said that “‘identification’ is…to confront the implications of divisions” (p. 22). Might it be that the ministers are confronting the implications of division among Bologna countries given the historical and political climate, but through their vague, and possibly hopeful rhetoric, they strive to bring about unity? Therefore, the elusive language of the Bologna Process may be a result of the ministers navigating the landmines of fragile relationships that exist for this particular group, and the language may very well serve this group in a variety of ways as I discussed in this chapter and elaborate on more in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS RESULTS OF THE WORKING GROUP DOCUMENTATION

*Paradise is not created out of conference reports and Ministerial communiqués… nor can qualifications frameworks be all things to all people… an egg laying pig that produces wool and milk.*

–Sjur Bergan, Chair, Qualifications Framework Group

The goal of the working groups of the Bologna Process is to put forth recommendations to the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) on how to best implement the objectives of Bologna as outlined in the ministerial communiqués. This involves understanding the current state of higher education systems across Europe and how the Bologna objectives would affect those systems. Working groups are comprised of representatives from member countries and other stakeholders, including governments, employers, and European agencies. Representatives hold various positions within the higher education systems and related agencies across Europe. And as with all other aspects of the Bologna Process, participation is voluntary.

Figure 4.1 shows the Bologna Process document hierarchy, but it also illustrates the basic structure of the various working groups. The BFUG is the main follow up group that reports directly to the ministers. Other working groups are assigned according to the nine overarching objectives of the Bologna Process; however, there is a great deal of overlap from one area to the other and many subgroups are part of this hierarchy, too.
Nine objectives of the Bologna Process that form the basis of the seminar and working groups.

Figure 4.1. Hierarchy of the Bologna Process documentation.

For this study, I narrowed the selection of working group documentation I reviewed to one particular area, the qualifications framework. The qualifications framework is a set of common criteria that offer a framework or map for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), national, and institutional learning objectives. This framework defines the criteria by which all students receive their degrees, and determines the qualifications needed to proceed from one
degree cycle to the next. It is the structure that will enable degrees to be transferrable from one country and institution to the next. Without this objective, the Bologna Process would not succeed.

**Overview of the Working Group Documentation**

Working group documentation is much more diverse than the ministerial communiqués. The communiqués can be considered just one type of document; however, working group documentation includes many types of documents. The types of working group documentation reviewed in this study include the following:

- **Trends reports**: These reports provide information and analysis on trends in higher education systems throughout Europe in order to identify areas of convergence and divergence among member states. Reports were issued in 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2010.

- **Stocktaking reports**: These reports are where countries are given a “scorecard” that indicates their progress in certain areas regarding the Bologna Process, such as quality assurance, two-cycle degree system, recognition, and social dimension. There are reports for 2005, 2007, and 2009.

- **General reports prepared for the ministerial conferences**: These are official reports from the BFUG, and they are written specifically
for the ministers to inform them about progress and new
developments that have taken place in between ministerial
conferences. They precede the ministerial conferences and were

- **BFUG board meeting minutes**: These are the minutes of official
  BFUG meetings that take place between ministerial conferences.
  There does not appear to be a strict schedule for when these
  meetings occur. The minutes from 2007 to 2011 are available on the
  official Bologna Process web sites, but not in a comprehensive
  fashion.

- **Bologna With Student Eyes (by European Students’ Union)**: Like
  the general reports prepared for the ministerial conferences, the
  student reports have the same purpose, which is to report on the
  progress and developments of the Process between ministerial
  conferences but from the perspective of students. There are reports
  available on the two official Bologna Process web sites.

- **Seminar Reports**: These are the reports and sometimes
  recommendations from various conferences and working groups
  associated with the qualifications framework. Authorship is
  rotated among stakeholders. The official web sites provide
  working group documentation from 2001 to 2011.
The working group conferences and seminars are seen as opportunities for members to share experiences and ideas, collect and share data, build trust and confidence amongst each other, and cooperate for the sole purpose of making concrete progress toward the goals of the Bologna Process as outlined by the ministers in the ministerial communiqués. The documentation associated with this work differs from the ministerial communiqués in a number of important ways which will be discussed below; but most especially, it reflects the efforts of various committees working toward implementation of the Bologna objectives.

The primary audiences for the working group documentation are the BFUG and seminar participants. Secondary audiences might include the ministers, countries that are not part of the Process, and anyone else who has an interest in the Bologna Process since these documents are posted on the official Bologna web sites. As with the ministerial communiqués, certain rhetorical patterns emerge in these documents; however, it appears as if outside audiences play a secondary role to purpose, as the language in these documents is more reflective of the challenges and struggles members face while working toward Bologna objectives. These groups have to make recommendations on how to achieve the goals of Bologna, which is quite different than developing new goals and progress reporting. The groups still have some say in the development of goals within a particular area and they have to report progress in those areas, as well, but their main purpose is reporting on their efforts toward implementation.
Given this, a completely different rhetorical reality is created when reading through these documents—a reality that is not always consistent with the harmony that is suggested in the ministerial communiqués. For instance, problems are rhetorically more prominent and described in somewhat more concrete terms. That is not to say that these documents are raw and more realistic than the ministerial communiqués; they simply reflect a different reality regarding the Bologna Process.

An example of this different reality is seen in a report by Chantal Kaufmann (see Appendix C), the deputy general director for higher education and research, Ministry of French Community—Belgium, and vice president of the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC).

When Kaufmann was asked to give a presentation to a Bologna working group on transnational education, she reports that she originally wanted to say no because French Belgium does not recognize transnational education qualifications. Belgium has many reasons for not honoring such qualifications, such as the state does not recognize diplomas from private institutions, only diplomas that are from state funded institutions and recognized by the state are given any credit, and for its population, Belgium has numerous higher education institutions that offer a quality education and low tuition (Kaufmann, 2001). Consequently, Belgium’s concern with transnational education is minimal. Kaufmann states that this is similar to what most other countries experience as well, so transnational education does not seem to be a priority for many
countries. But going back to the request for her to give a presentation, she also states that “listing problems can appear as very unpopular, when TE development is seen more and more as a ‘challenge’ for traditional education systems and a way to ‘make [E]uropean education more competitive’” (Kaufmann, 2001, p. 1). Thus it does appear that Ms. Kaufmann relented and not only gave a presentation but also acted as the reporter of the Seminar on Transnational Education in Malmö on 2-3 March 2001. While not the first report from a Bologna working group, Ms. Kaufman’s report is an eye-opening introduction into the world of Bologna Process working groups. This particular report captures many of the issues that Bologna working groups must address and resolve, such as:

- identifying the various higher education systems among members,
- the problem of recognition between these systems because recognition is a “very complex subject involving conflicting interests at several levels” (Kaufmann, 2001, p. 7),
- the confusion over definitions,
- a lack of accurate information from all countries involved,
- the voluntary nature of the working groups and members,
- and a lack of quality control over the implementation of agreed upon actions.

Winsor (2007) stated that charter documents often present the image of a stable environment; however, it is unlikely that such stability will be maintained
unless groups constantly work together to maintain it. The subsequent texts that result from the constant reinterpretation of charter documents are an effort to “try to control what the original document meant” (p. 12). The specificity of the language in the working group documents, especially in regard to the problems mentioned above, presents a different reality than the ministerial communiqués regarding the progress of the Process overall and the level of cooperation among members. This reality, however, may not necessarily be a divergence from the ministerial communiqués. The working group documentation may possibly be texts used to sustain the agreed-upon reality presented in the communiqués.

Furthermore, problems are to be expected at the working group level, because this is the level where all stakeholders come to the table with their specific concerns, needs, and interests. The documentation at this level reflects the problems these groups encounter; however, it also demonstrates a willingness to continue conversations or pursue other strategies until they find an agreeable solution. Problems certainly stalled progress, but there was no evidence of problems causing an impasse. Therefore, it might be said that the more descriptive language of the working groups actually presented opportunities for: (1) the groups to maintain the reality of the Bologna Process as portrayed in the ministerial communiqués, and (2) the groups to use their division or differences to actually work toward identification.
Rhetorical Patterns

When talking about the working groups, it is important to remember that these groups are comprised of representatives from all 47 member countries and other stakeholders that include higher education institutions, government, European organizations, and employers. Implementing Bologna objectives, therefore, is not easy. And the rhetoric of the ministerial communiqués is one aspect of the Bologna Process that impedes progress. The issues regarding the vague language in the ministerial communiqués that were brought up in the previous chapter become points of discussion, debate, and negotiation for the working groups, which is time consuming to say the least. For instance, the abstract language used to identify and describe the goals forces working group members to think conceptually about the goals, interpret what the ministers want, and then figure out how to turn those concepts into concrete action items that can be implemented at national and institutional levels—and in accordance with every other nation and stakeholder within the group.

It is also important to remember that working groups are not crafting a particular reality for anyone to necessarily buy into; they are doing the work as set forth by the ministers in the ministerial communiqués. They are not the creators of an image; they are the ones who must uphold the image portrayed in the ministerial communiqués. For instance, many of the reports reiterate the purpose of the working groups with rhetoric that fully supports the ministers
and the goals as set forth in the ministerial communiqués, and members constantly encourage one another to participate by sharing information.

In my analysis, the rhetorical patterns I found in the working group documentation were associated with problems the working groups faced as they worked out the language of the ministerial communiqués, the directives, and their own trust and confidence in one another. I classified these findings into three areas where I identified a specific goal the working group was working toward and then a problem they encountered while working to achieve that goal. These goals, but mostly the problems, present a different perspective or reality about Bologna than one might discern from reading only the ministerial communiqués. In the working group documentation, it is clear that members are determined to work toward Bologna goals, but there are certainly obstacles to overcome and a great deal of frustration is expressed in the documents. The goals and problems identified include:

- **Goal:** Maintain the Bologna memory and use the ministerial communiqués as guiding documents for implementation of Bologna objectives.
  - **Problem:** Vague language and multiple interpretations of Bologna objectives and ministerial communiqués slow and, sometimes, stall progress.

- **Goal:** Encourage democracy through equal and shared representation.
• **Problem:** Lack of participation.

• **Goal:** Build trust and confidence.

  • **Problem:** Acceptance does not equal action and material incentives are needed.

These three goals and problems were the most prominent in the documents reviewed for this study. The one thing that ties them together, however, is that in each instance, further conversation and action is expected. In some cases, the needs and concerns voiced in the working groups filter up into the ministerial communiqués. At other times, the problems are a source of frustration, but they also pose new challenges for the group to figure out how to get what they want.

In analyzing the working group documents, there was one common rhetorical strategy that posed some speculation on my part as a reader. In some cases, the seminar reports use personal narrative, which makes it difficult to sometimes distinguish the reporter’s comments from the group’s commentaries. Many of the reports state in the beginning that the intent of the report is to synthesize the main discussions and suggestions of the working seminar; however, because some reports are written in first person and reflect a particularly strong position on a topic, it is often unclear if that position is the consensus of the group or that of the reporter. There are varying degrees of personal reflection in these documents so some are more problematic than others. On the whole, however, I made the general assumption that the reporters
were conveying accurate highlights of the conferences or seminars they reported on because these reports are reviewed and accepted by the groups, as well.

In this chapter, I present the results of my analysis of the working group documentation. The results are broken out according to the three goals and problems as mentioned above.

Results

The following is a reporting of the results of my analysis on the working group documentation associated with the qualifications framework of the Bologna Process. This section is organized by presenting a goal and then the problem associated with that goal.

Goal: Maintain the Bologna memory and use the ministerial communiqués as guiding documents for implementation of Bologna objectives

Tradition is a cornerstone of European history, as it is also in the Bologna Process. The very title of the Process denotes the tradition of the university with the name of Bologna being the historical site of the world’s first university. The history of Bologna, also referred to as the “memory” in many documents, is continually referred to in the working group documentation through references to the ministerial communiqués. There is no working group report or presentation that was reviewed for this study that contradicts the idea that the ministerial communiqués are the guiding documents of the Process and that their contents should be adhered to. This adherence is also one of the most
frustrating aspects of the Process for the groups. The desire to meet the
objectives of the Process and follow through on the ministers’ directives in the
ministerial communiqués is evident in all documents reviewed; however,
difficulties with defining terms and interpreting the language of the ministerial
communiqués is one of the most commonly cited problems in the
documentation, as well.

Problem: Vague language and multiple interpretations of Bologna objectives
and ministerial communiqués slow and sometimes stall progress

The issue of wording, a lack of definitions and vague terminology, is
consistently called out as a major stumbling block for making progress on the
qualifications framework. Wording is even cited as being a major inhibitor for
understanding and achieving Bologna objectives overall (“Furthering the
Bologna Process,” 2001; BFUG meeting minutes, Sarajevo, 2008 (see Appendix
C); BFUG meeting minutes, Prague, 2009).

In 1999, the Trends I report was a working group document used to inform
the ministers about the trends in higher education in Europe and as background
information for the 1999 Bologna Forum where the Bologna Declaration (see
Appendix C) was signed. Only in their first year of the Process, members are
already grappling with the vague language of the Sorbonne Joint Declaration
(1998) (see Appendix C) as indicated in the Trends I (1999) report that has a
doesn’t.” This section of the report discusses specific instances where the
language of the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C) is unclear and causes confusion, such as with the 3-5-8 model of years for degrees, the use of the word “harmonisation” and its many interpretations, Europe’s competitiveness in higher education and world markets, and issues surrounding the word “qualifications.” The wording of the ministerial communiqués does not get any more concrete in the years following *Trends I*, and in 2003, *Trends III* calls for more concrete meanings for employability, two-tier system, workload-based credits, lifelong learning, qualifications, mobility, and quality assurance.

Likewise, Table 4.1 illustrates a number of terms that members working on the qualifications framework working group debate from 2001 to 2009. What is interesting to note in these examples is that even into 2009, working groups are still struggling to define and interpret terms used in the ministerial communiqués back in 1998 and 1999. In fact, the ministerial communiqués do not always use the same terms; sometimes it is just similar terms, from one communiqué to the next. But even more frustrating for members is that the definitions appear to be expanding in ways that are not entirely understood by the BFUG and other members. The table below provides just a sampling of the terms that are the subject of debate and negotiation among group members.
### Table 4.1

**Problems with Definitions and Vague Terminology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term or Concept</th>
<th>Document and Year</th>
<th>Issue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accreditation</strong></td>
<td>Furthering the Bologna Process, 2001</td>
<td>The word accreditation is called out as having different meanings and translations and is being used to convey very different concepts.</td>
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<td>Working on the European Dimension of Quality, 2002</td>
<td>Reporter mentions that during the meeting there was a comparison of the concepts regarding accreditation as it is experienced across Europe.</td>
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<td>Methodological Common Instruments for Assessment and Accreditation in the European Framework, 2004</td>
<td>This document is a list of recommendations. The third recommendation is that a glossary of terms is needed to make it easier to find common points of reference at each institution.</td>
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<td><strong>Degrees</strong></td>
<td>Masters Degrees, 2003</td>
<td>Reporter mentions that the term “two-tier structure” is perceived differently by the various member countries, and even the terms bachelor’s and master’s degrees carry different meanings depending on the country. Later in the document, the reporter mentions that “common criteria for the structural definition of master’s degrees – in their various national names – are needed” (p. 4). It is also mentioned that although references to the various ways this term is used in different countries should be considered, a solid definition is still needed.</td>
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<td>Section 1 quotes the Prague Communiqué regarding degree structures and its claim that this task “has been tackled and...”</td>
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<td><strong>Qualification</strong></td>
<td>Structures in Higher Education in Europe,</td>
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<td><strong>Structures</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>European Dimension</td>
<td>BFUG Meeting Minutes, Paris, 2008</td>
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<td>2003 discussed” (p. 3). The reporter mentions that this is a “bold statement” and that there is really little agreement or understanding about the difference between the two tiers of degrees in higher education across Europe. It is suggested that the discussion continue and even widen to include these tiers in relation to vocational education.</td>
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<th>European Dimension</th>
<th>BFUG Meeting Minutes, Paris, 2008</th>
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<td></td>
<td>When the group is discussing how to prepare the 2009 report on Bologna and Beyond, several issues arise including the definition of European dimension: “This concept was already included in the Bologna Declaration. However, it has not been properly defined. Is the European dimension the distinguishing characteristic(s) of European higher education? If so, what is this characteristic? Is it multilingualism, is it the collaborative system of the Bologna Process, is it the broad research basis of most HEIs, or is it a system of values? Are we therefore talking about the “identity” of European higher education?” (p. 4).</td>
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<th>BFUG Meeting Minutes, Paris, 2008</th>
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<td>Further on in the document, some members are reported as saying the term does not need to be defined because it can be seen as “raison d’être” [reason for existence], and that to define the term would be limiting instead of promoting cooperation.</td>
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<th>BFUG Meeting Minutes, Paris, 2008</th>
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<td><em>This also illustrates that members have different ideas about what this term can mean and without a concrete definition, it is unclear what the group should focus on, put their efforts towards, and even work towards.</em></td>
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<th>Joint Degrees</th>
<th>Joint Degrees, Further Development, 2004</th>
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<td>The reporter says that joint degrees is an obscure theme and tells the story of how this term has evolved from one ministerial communiqué to the next. Later in the document, the reporter says that joint degrees have to be made important in the formation of the EHEA, and one way to do that is to have “careful definitions to prevent potential ambiguity” (p. 4). This point is</td>
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again emphasized further in the document when the reporter mentions what joint
degrees are and are not. He says that the
working group is making some progress;
however, it’s become clear that “precise
definitions” are needed and that many
problems emerge simply because of
inaccurate use of everyday language. He
gives the example that the term “joint
activities” is not the same as “joint degrees,”
neither is “double degrees” or “joint study
programs.”

Joint Degrees
Hallmark for EHEA, 2006

The definitions in the previous document do
not hold up. The reporter says that several
definitions for joint degrees exist in different
documents and on different websites, but
that some of the definitions are contradictory
even though they were all agreed upon
officially. Later in the document, another
definition of joint degrees is provided as
being “the most desirable.”

Lifelong Learning
Recognition and Credit Systems
General Report, 2003

The reporter mentions that lifelong learning
is not something that has a definite meaning
and that many terms have different
meanings as brought up in the Trends III
report. The reporter gives the definition of
lifelong learning as defined by a few of the
presenters and then one of the members
brings up the point that a working definition
is needed and not necessarily a political one.

Mobility
BGUG Meeting in Lisbon, 2007

Mobility is described as a “multidimensional
topic that includes financial arrangements,
student provisions, visa issues, recognition,
staff conditions…data collection…and
contextual differences among countries” (p.
2).

National Qualifications
Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, 2005

Definitions for a national framework of
qualifications and the qualifications
framework of the EHEA are given. The
definition is expanded into a working
description about what each of these
frameworks should do. “Years of study”
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<tr>
<td>European Conference on Qualifications Framework, 2008</td>
<td>When discussing challenges to national and European frameworks, the reporter mentions that it is difficult to ensure that issues are understood by all stakeholders in the same way and that a glossary should be developed. In their recommendations section of the report, the working group says that further attention needs to be given to make sure that all stakeholders know what a national qualifications framework is and what it can do. What is important to note here is that the date is now 2008 and some members still are unsure what a national qualifications framework is and how it works.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Bologna Objectives</strong></td>
<td>The reporter mentions that while there has been a general acceptance of the Bologna Process, there are still issues in understanding what the Bologna Declaration means and what it implies for the future.</td>
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<td>BFUG Meeting Minutes, Sarajevo, 2008 (see Appendix C)</td>
<td>When the group is discussing how to finalize the Bologna agenda and meet new challenges, the reporter summarizes the discussions with a remark that “The Bologna Process needs to move from structure to content...It exists both as an objective and a tool but a lot of work still needs to be done to clarify what exactly is meant, and how it should work” (p. 4). And one of the last bullets under that discussion says “Finally, the Bologna Process should use a language that is easily and commonly understood” (p. 5). In October of 2008, during a Paris meeting of the BFUG, one section is dedicated to the question of what it means “by moving from structure to practice, to content, to substance” (p. 4). Discussion and questions are posed in the reporters notes, but no</td>
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<td>BFUG Meeting Minutes, Prague, 2009</td>
<td>Consensus or decision about the original question is mentioned. When the BFUG is discussing the structure of the communiqué for the next ministerial conference, there is much debate over how to define goals or challenges for the next decade when it still is unclear what the Bologna Process is supposed to accomplish by 2010. Discussion continues among members about what should be emphasized or de-emphasized in the next conference given the financial crisis Europe is facing, that governments need more of a push to invest in higher education, and that there should be a less optimistic tone about certain achievements, such as social dimension because many countries are not showing much “ambition.” It is then mentioned that these reports are read by the rest of the world. The discussion continues about what rhetoric is appropriate for the vision and image the reports want to relay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Dimension BGUG Meeting Minutes, Paris, 2008</td>
<td>The working group says the definition of social dimension is about having equitable access and completing a degree in higher education; however, they want to make a decision on how much emphasis should be placed on “successful completion.” Some members say that the group has an obligation to follow the definition of social dimension as defined in the most recent communiqué, the London Communiqué, which in vague terms, says that social dimension is a “societal goal” that reflects diversity and equal opportunity. The interesting point about the table above is not the number of times a particular term is debated, but the dates of the example. For instance, mobility, which is only one part of the qualifications framework, and an objective all by itself, is still being debated as to its meaning and all that it encompasses in 2007.</td>
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</table>
And even the overall objectives of the Bologna Process are still not understood completely in 2009.

The issue of interpreting language has yet to be resolved. Even at the BFUG meeting in Gödöllő, Hungary in October 2011, members were still debating the meaning behind the “Bologna Process” and the “EHEA.” The group is concerned about being consistent in their own understanding of the two terms as well as how these terms are used by others. It was agreed that the Bologna Process was indeed the process that led to the EHEA, the result, and that’s how the two should be distinguished and defined. The issue of definitions also arises at the National Qualifications Framework Conference in Ireland on 15 April 2010, where reasons for why different Bologna countries were using various approaches to implement the qualifications framework were stated as being “the historical and political circumstances of individual countries…and differing definitions and understanding of learning outcomes” (p. 7). These reasons, however, were not seen as “problematic,” because there should be freedom in different countries to implement the qualifications in a way that best fits their citizens. But later in that same document, it was brought up that the titles of qualifications do not provide “sufficient information to identify what might be expected of the holder” (p. 11). In other words, the definitions for the qualifications in the national qualifications framework are still abstract, which brings about different approaches toward and rates of implementation.
Apparently, even today, vague language is still an issue working groups must work to resolve.

This section outlines the problems that the vague language has caused for the working groups. Most noticeably, it has stalled progress because some reports indicate that decisions cannot be made until the common language agreed upon is also understood by and carries the same meaning for all stakeholders ("Masters Degrees," 2003; BFUG meeting minutes, Paris, 2008; "Joint Degrees, Further Development," 2004). The comments in the report from the 2010 conference in Ireland, however, can lead us to different conclusions regarding the vague language of the communiqués. The general language is now seen as an opportunity for options in implementation. In other words, the fear of "harmonisation," may actually be dispelled by the vague language because each country is free to interpret the language in a way that best fits their country’s needs. In essence, vagueness does not equal standardization, but rather individualization based on interpretation, similar to the concept of strategic ambiguity. This may or may not become problematic as time goes on, but for now, it appears as if the arguments over coming up with concrete definitions may be evolving toward a more individualistic approach that allows some freedom in interpretation.

This new “freedom” is consistent with Winsor’s (2007) argument about the role charter documents play in helping an organization maintain a particular reality. Charter documents are written in order to craft a particular vision;
however, this vision is not stable because there is constant change within an organization. The way group members negotiate self-interest is through their reinterpretation of the charter documents where they try to link subsequent documents (new documents) to the original documents. Working group members of Bologna do just that. If anything, the long list of vague terms in Table 4-1 shows the groups’ efforts to make their reports consistent with the ministerial communiqués.

This continued activity among working groups based on the challenges they are presented with by the general language of the communiqués also demonstrates increased activity among group members, a desire to work toward democracy since they are debating and negotiating definitions and descriptions, and a way of using their differences to move toward identification (Burke, 1950). “Identification is affirmed…because there is division” (Burke, 1950, p. 22). It is natural for Bologna members to have differences due to the large multinational makeup of the member countries alone, but when you also add in the multiple international stakeholders, and you have what might be the largest multicultural and multinational group on the planet. But this group’s identification with the values of Bologna (their consubstantiality) is apparently so strong that they are willing to spend years working out their differences. And it is their willingness to confront their divisions that demonstrates the strength of this group as individuals, but also as a whole. The goal of working together as a whole is also demonstrated in their attempts to maintain a democracy, as discussed below.
Goal: Encourage democracy through equal and shared representation

From the beginning of the Bologna Process, with the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations, the idea of a unified Europe is promoted as a key factor that will make the Bologna Process a success and help Europe achieve worldwide recognition in higher education and competitiveness in the global market. The ministers’ intent to make Bologna a democratic Process is implied in the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations, and it is directly stated in the 2001 Prague Communiqué. The idea that there is no one central position of power for the Process is shown by the way the Process is managed. First, there is a rotation of authority where different countries and their respective ministers prepare for and host the biennial ministerial conference. Additionally, administrative support through a Bologna secretariat is rotated among member countries. And the formation of the BFUG encourages equal and shared participation of all members at the working group level. Along with the involvement of all member countries, the location of working group meetings, especially the BFUG board meetings, is managed so that there is equal geographic representation as well.

At the working group level, equal representation is demonstrated in the documentation by asking for information to be submitted to the groups and providing that data when it is collected. For the qualifications framework working groups, these surveys and calls for information serve as a way to show that no one country or region is dominating discussions or making decisions about the way degrees should be structured. In fact, it is mentioned in many
documents, but especially in those during the early years (before 2005), that in order to come to a common approach, it is necessary to share information. Shared information or experiences is evident in most, if not all, of the working group documents. Table 4.2 lists examples where information from surveys or questionnaires was emphasized or even listed out country by country (this is not an exhaustive list).

Equal representation and sharing information is not taken lightly in the Bologna Process. It is easy to say that an overwhelming majority, if not all of the documentation, have direct statements about the importance of giving, sharing, or soliciting information among all members for the sake of equal representation and ensuring that implementation of agreed-upon solutions is equitable across all member countries, as well. It is also brought up in several documents (i.e., Trends III and the BFUG board meeting minutes) that the input from other Bologna stakeholders like governments, employers, and students is needed as well. However, even though equal representation is emphasized and constantly called for in the working group documentation, that does not mean that all members are willing or do provide the information asked for.
### Table 4.2

**Documents that Emphasize Survey or Questionnaire Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document and Year</th>
<th>Solicited Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trends I, 1999</td>
<td>Main trends in higher education among EU/EEA countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends II, 2001</td>
<td>Main trends in higher education for six non-signatory countries not represented in Trends I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends III, 2003</td>
<td>Synthesizes feedback about implementation, problems, and challenges of Bologna from different Bologna stakeholders including governments, national rectors, higher education institutions, and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends IV, 2005</td>
<td>Results from 62 site visits of individual universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends V, 2007</td>
<td>Results from over 900 institutions across Europe who responded to questionnaires, had site visits, or provided input at previous meetings regarding the state of higher education in Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends VI, 2010</td>
<td>Reports the achievements of Bologna-type reforms in member countries since 2002.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of Transnational Education [Q]ualifications, 2001 (Kaufmann Report)</td>
<td>Reporter provides a bulleted list of transnational education characteristics for member countries at the time, and he even includes the United States in this list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Degrees Within the Framework of the Bologna Process, 2002</td>
<td>Members are asked to report to the BFUG at regular intervals about any joint degrees programs their countries are participating in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification Structures in Higher Education Across Europe, 2003</td>
<td>Information about the degree structures from many member countries is included and discussed in light of coming to a common understanding of what a two-tier system will mean for all members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Degrees—Further Development, 2004</td>
<td>This conference used case studies and information from a project where 11 joint master programs were studied. It was mentioned in the report that these programs represented a wide range geographically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Degrees—A Hallmark for EHEA, 2006</td>
<td>This conference focused on the results of a questionnaire that was sent to all BFUG members regarding joint degrees in their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the BFUG board meeting minutes from 2007 to 2009</td>
<td>All of these documents called for or used information from all member countries from particular issues of discussion to conversations surrounding the importance of having a dedicated Bologna representative in each country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the Bologna With Student Eyes reports (European Students’ Union reports)</td>
<td>Student surveys were conducted for the purpose of receiving feedback on the implementation of Bologna objectives from the perspective of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Problem: Lack of participation**

The issue of a lack of participation is brought up often enough in the working group documentation to be worth mentioning here. Lack of participation is evidenced most especially by stakeholders not submitting information from questionnaires, surveys, or detailed reports that are requested by either the working groups or even the ministers. This issue is especially noticeable in many of the BFUG meeting minutes because those are the meetings that are used to synthesize all of the working group seminar reports before the ministerial conferences. A partial list of the BFUG minutes where lack of participation is mentioned is shown in Table 4.3. In fact, in the BFUG meeting minutes from Ljubljana in 2008, one point of discussion is why compulsory involvement of certain stakeholders is not demanded. The president at the time decides that participation cannot be made compulsory. This same discussion precedes and follows in other BFUG meeting minutes as well. The idea of developing stronger ties for cooperation through active participation is a theme
Table 4.3

**Partial List of BFUG Minutes Mentioning Lack of Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and date</th>
<th>Note on lack of participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BFUG, Ljubljana, 16 January 2008</td>
<td>Regarding national action plans for recognition, it is reported that “very few countries provided a document that could be considered a real action plan” (p. 5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG, Bled, 9 June 2008</td>
<td>Limited input on the national level is reported and if more responses are not received, then this point will be brought up at the next BFUG meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG, Paris, 14-15 October 2008</td>
<td>Some countries do not have a person dedicated to the qualifications framework and action plans are still lacking in the information they provide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFUG, Prague, 13-14 February 2009a</td>
<td>Difficulties in compiling a stocktaking report are due to missing or late national reports.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

that becomes especially important and more prominent in the later years of Bologna because it impedes progress. For instance, in the 2009 *Stocktaking Report*, the varying level of participation from Bologna countries reporting on their national strategies in regard to the social dimension is mentioned specifically. Some countries provided that group with detailed reports, some provided only overviews, and some countries did not provide any information at all; thus, it was impossible for this group to evaluate the effectiveness of national policies in regard to that subject matter.

When considering the lack of participation, it is helpful to reflect on the rhetorical situation of the Bologna Process, most especially the political and historical ties between the countries. The Bologna Process is also an outgrowth of what the authors of the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* (1998) (see Appendix C) refer
to as the “European process,” also known as the European Union, which has a history that dates back to 1945 and the end of the Second World War. The European Union was set up to end the frequent wars between neighbors across Europe; thus, the goals of the EU were to foster, among European countries, economic cooperation, economic stability with a common currency, and human rights and democracy (European Union, 2012). The thinking behind the formation of the EU is that if countries are dependent on each other economically, they are less likely to engage in conflict with one another. The EU has no direct authority over the Bologna Process; however, it is worth noting that the four authors of the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (1998) (see Appendix C) and the many subsequent members of Bologna are also members of the EU (Gaston, 2011). Consequently, EU countries have been working together to bring about economic stability and global competitiveness across Europe for over 65 years. Education has not been overlooked as a means of achieving this economic stability. While the Bologna Process is not under the jurisdiction of the EU, it was born out of an economic treaty usually referred to as the Lisbon Treaty or the Lisbon Convention in 1997, which recognized education as a human right, a necessity in promoting democracy, and the need for transparent and transferrable degrees (“Lisbon Recognition Convention,” 1997). In fact, Bologna members are continually encouraged to ratify the Lisbon Convention as a show of their commitment to the Process. It is worth noting that in 2007, only 38 of the 46 Bologna countries at that time had ratified the Lisbon Convention.
Lack of participation may also be the result of more practical issues, such as having the money to dedicate people and resources to the Process, which could be why a number of countries do not respond to the solicitations for national reports and other information. But whether it is one of these practical reasons or something that has to do with the politics of certain members, it seems as if this is all the more reason for ministers to be somewhat “political” or vague in their directives in the ministerial communiqués. In order to put this issue into more perspective, it is also important to consider the difference between the language of acceptance in the documentation and the actual actions on the part of Bologna members.

**Goal: Build trust and confidence**

From the beginning of the Bologna Process, the ministerial communiqués and even the working group documentation state explicitly and continually that the Process will not work without the cooperation and trust of all member countries, as well as that of the rest of the world. In order to instill trust internationally, members must cooperate with one another. It is reiterated many times that one country or institution cannot compete on a global level all by itself, and that the benefits that all countries get from the Process are for everyone, not just for one country or institution. The working group documentation makes mention of the importance of shared values, working together, and building trust among each other by developing shared resolutions.
and submitting concrete action plans. The following is a partial list where these ideas are discussed:

- *Joint Degrees Within the Framework*, 2002
- *Master’s Degrees*, 2003
- *Joint Degrees – Further Development*, 2004
- *Methodological Common Instruments*, 2004
- *Improving the Recognition System*, 2004
- *Bologna Conference on the Qualifications Framework*, 2005
- *Furthering the Bologna Process*, 2001
- *Bologna 2020 Seminar*, 2008

But as the years go on and members do not respond or participate in the many calls for information, the issue of trust and confidence comes to the forefront and becomes an issue of debate and even frustration.

**Problem:** Acceptance does not equal action and material incentives are needed

In the early years of Bologna, there appears to be goodwill on the part of the members where acceptance of Bologna objectives comes easily and the tone of the documentation is optimistic and echoes the positive nature of the ministerial communiqués. For example, in 2001, in one of the working group documents where members discuss accreditation, they acknowledge and repeat the same principles regarding accreditation as the ministerial communiqués that precede it. The reporter mentions that the group has consensus on the ideas that
transferrable and transparent degrees are necessary across Europe, that there are many systems already in place that they can pull from and not have to start from scratch, that a qualifications framework is needed, and that quality assurance is extremely important. Of eight paragraphs in that early document, six of them reiterate the same ideas as the ministerial communiqués; the other two introduce ideas that need further exploration. The areas that need to be further discussed, however, mirror the vague wording of the ministerial communiqués as shown below:

The higher education leaders present in Lisbon/Oeiras wished to advance the discussion on the design of viable schemes of quality assurance for Europe, including validation of accreditation procedures, along the following lines:

- **add value** for institutions of higher education to existing schemes, especially in terms of an "International dimension", with a view to the emerging European higher education area,
- **base new** developments on voluntary participation and on the self-regulation of the higher education community,
- **co-operate closely** with partners such as students and academics, quality assurance and accreditation agencies and networks, professional organisations, recognition centres, as well as with national and regional higher education authorities,
- **give due regard** to academic values, to diversity and to institutional autonomy,
- **build, as far as possible**, on existing mechanisms and experiences, and illuminate examples of good practise,
- **stress the supportive elements** of evaluation and accreditation,
- **cover all modes and types** of higher education,
- **keep to reasonable deadlines** in moving forward towards operational models. (“Towards accreditation schemes,” 2001, pp. 1-2)
The reason this is important to point out is that the verbs associated with work that needs to be done in this group are vague and easy to agree to, but not as easy to put into action because no concrete terms define the action needed. Thus agreement and acceptance come easily, but not action.

In the later years of the Process, from about 2007 on, the BFUG board meeting minutes, most especially, but some other working documentation, express concern and frustration over members agreeing to objectives, but not submitting concrete action plans about how they are working toward implementation (i.e., Paris 2008 and Prague 2009a BFUG board meeting minutes). But there is probably no louder voice than that of the students when it comes to declaring a call for concrete action of Bologna objectives and material incentives. In the *Bologna With Student Eyes* 2003 report, students identify several “weaknesses and threats” from the Bologna Process, such as those identified below.

- General knowledge about the Bologna Process is limited and too little is being done to inform students about the Process; students feel even the ministers appear to know very little about the Process.

- The differences in implementation in the various member countries lead to what students call an a lá carte method where countries pick and choose what they want to put into practice and what they don’t.

Differences in implementation are also blamed on the “lack of rules or
concrete definitions and too little regulation from the governmental level and too much freedom for the HEIs” (p. 8)

- Some countries are reported as moving too fast and causing “improper implementation” (p. 8), while other countries are accused of moving too slowly.

- The objective of social dimension is strongly criticized for the raise in tuition and no concrete steps being taken to increase mobility.

The issue of implementation, most especially the a lá carte method mentioned in 2003, remains a concern for students in later years as well. Students see Bologna as a “comprehensive package” (European Students’ Union, 2007) and not one where members should be able to pick and choose which objectives to implement. The uneven implementation, and the uneven pace at which countries are implementing Bologna reforms, are seen as causing a worrying gap. Students are also vocal in all of their reports regarding necessary incentives for implementation, such as financial support. Financial support is mentioned in some of the other working group documentation, where “financial promotion” is considered “scarce” (“Joint Degrees: A Hallmark for EHEA,” 2006), for instance, but this kind of language is in stark contrast to the concrete issues and incentives students want to see put in place, such as lowered tuition, governments taking care of their living expenses, and having more grants available (European Students’ Union, 2007). Thus, the working group documentation, especially from the perspective of students, leaves readers with a different “reality” regarding
the progress of the Process and the cooperation taking place because for
students, at least, cooperation appears to mean total implementation. This may
or may not be a beneficial way to measure participation.

Overall, the working group documentation demonstrates support for the
Bologna Process philosophically. In the early years, especially, there is a great
deal of enthusiasm and positive reporting regarding the progress of the Bologna
Process. In fact, in the 2005 Stocktaking Report, the Process is declared a success in
the following highlighted passage: “The collective and voluntary inter-
governmental process is a success” (p. 5). In the documents reviewed for this
study, it appears that all members agree with the guiding principles of Bologna;
but, when it comes to implementation, there is a different story to tell. Members
experience numerous difficulties caused by the vague wording of the ministerial
communiqués, there is possible fear of the consequences of the Process within
individual countries, and there is a lack of material incentives needed to
participate.

The working group documents certainly portray a different reality of the
progress of the Bologna Process; however, this documentation may also be
helping to stabilize the Process overall. Winsor (2007) claimed that the reality
portrayed in charter documents is actually quite “precarious” and that it is
“unlikely to continue without the people involved exerting constant effort to
maintain it” (p. 12). This makes sense in light of the complexity of Bologna
Process and the number of stakeholders involved. Even though the experiences
in the working groups differs sometimes quite a bit from the harmony suggested in the charter documents, the groups are still working toward common goals—goals outlined in the ministerial communiqués. Thus, the working group documentation serves as a way to stabilize the Bologna Process as members try to “fit contingent events into the world the charter document had described” (Winsor, 2007, p. 12). This further supports the ideas brought up in the last chapter that the vague terminology of the ministerial communiqués could be a way of inducing cooperation among group members, and that such language can also be a means of the groups negotiating between self-interest and the best interests of the group.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The individual person, striving to form himself in accordance with the communicative norms that match the cooperative ways of his society, is by the same token concerned with the rhetoric of identification. –Kenneth Burke

I began this dissertation by asking what the language of collaboration and cooperation looks like. In Chapter 1, I argued that skills in international collaboration were paramount for professional communicators today and in the future. Students acquire such skills by what we teach and what they read; thus, it is important for professional communication teachers and scholars to study contemporary global communication for information regarding effective communication strategies in professional and global contexts. I chose to study the Bologna Process for this very purpose. Bologna documentation demonstrates the communication practices of an extremely large and diverse global group that is comprised of 47 countries and multiple international stakeholders who are all working to achieve common goals associated with higher education reform across Europe. The results of my study are profitable to the field of professional and technical communication as they provide insight into how rhetoric can be used to encourage collaboration and cooperation beginning with the development of organizational goals to the implementation of those objectives.
In this final chapter, I do three things. First, I discuss the findings of my research for each of the three research questions that guided this study, which are the following:

1. How were the common goals of the Bologna Process rhetorically developed in the ministerial communiqués, and did the language used to define those goals help this group move closer to identification?

2. In what ways was the goal of democracy or equal representation demonstrated in the documentation?

3. How did members negotiate between self-interest and the best interests of the group?

I also explain the applicability of those findings to the field of professional and technical communication. The questions and results are intricately connected, so there is noticeable overlap in my discussions. Next, I identify and discuss several additional takeaways from this research study in regards to the language of collaboration and cooperation in professional communication. And finally, I identify and briefly discuss further areas of research on the Bologna Process and projects that are of specific interest to me. First, though, I will address the current state of the Bologna Process and the accomplishments this group has achieved so far.
The Power of Abstract and Ambiguous Language

In Vienna, on 12 March 2010, the ministers of higher education in Europe declared that the EHEA had been “launched,” and that the Bologna Process had reshaped higher education in Europe (“Bologna Policy Forum Statement,” 2010). A few months earlier, at Leuven and Louvain-la-Nuve, the ministers admitted that while not all of the Bologna objectives had been achieved, they were still valid; thus, the Bologna Process would extend for another decade with a new implementation date of 2020 (“Bologna 2020 Seminar” 2008). Despite the fact that full implementation was not met in 2010, the Bologna Process still has a legacy during the first 13 years where members can claim:

- more comparability and compatibility between degrees
- increased mobility for students
- increased international recognition
- a more “modern” higher education system that includes a three-cycle framework
- advancements in quality assurance and accountability (Gaston, 2011).

In terms of being declared a success or failure, there are many criticisms and concerns in secondary literature about the Process, but it cannot be disputed that by 2010, Europe has, indeed, made momentous progress toward the original Bologna objectives as outlined in 1998 and 1999. Thus, for the extremely diverse and complex membership of the Bologna Process, the documentation of the
Process shows that the group capitalized on their similarities and their commitment to the Process in order to achieve common goals. It also can be said that the mass of Bologna documents that resulted from the first 13 years of this Process demonstrate that rhetoric played a significant role in accomplishing these achievements. In light of this progress, I discuss my findings to my first research question about how the goals of Bologna were developed using vague terminology and how this language actually helped the group move toward identification.

Surprisingly, the common goals or objectives of the Bologna Process were developed through the use of vague terminology as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. When identifying the goals, the education ministers had to carefully consider delicate political and historical relationships among member states, especially in regard to the European Union. Consequently, the ministers had to find balance between setting forth the goals of Bologna and allowing members to negotiate the terms of implementation, both literally and figuratively.

The abstraction and ambiguity in the wording of the Bologna objectives were among the most common criticisms of participants regarding the ministerial communiqués. This vagueness led to what students claimed was overstated accomplishments in implementation (European Students’ Union, 2007), as well as “sometimes optimistic and sometimes self-flattering tone of national reporters” (European Students’ Union, 2009, p. 6). Results in Chapter 4 demonstrate, too, that the abstract and ambiguous terminology used to describe
Bologna objectives caused a great deal of frustration and debate among working group members that continued well into 2009; thus, progress in some areas concerning the qualifications framework, as well as other Bologna objectives, was negatively affected. According to Burke (1950), a lack of explicitness where indirect rhetoric is used to “protect an interest” (p. 36) may be a strategy for misanthropic purposes or for being cunning. Certainly, when one views the ministerial communiqués in light of their role in the global image of the Bologna Process, the vague rhetoric may serve the purpose of protecting ministers and other Bologna participants from being held accountable for the progress reported. But when one views the purpose of the ministerial communiqués as being guiding documents of participants, the vague language serves a couple of different purposes that result in positive outcomes for the group, most especially in terms of promoting democracy. In this respect, the cunningness of the rhetoric serves the purpose of protecting the interests of members as a whole, which further results in stronger unification of and closer cooperation of group members; thus, it cannot be classified solely, or even primarily, as being deceptive.

Promoting Democracy

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the lack of definitions in the communiqués led to long debates over various interpretations of certain words and then to continual discussions over how to define those terms. Those discussions and
debates, however, can be seen as a strategy for encouraging democracy within the Bologna Process. Democracy was an intentional outcome of the Bologna Process, and the point of my second research question, which was how the goal of democracy and equal representation were demonstrated in the Bologna documentation.

From the *Bologna Declaration* (see Appendix C) in 1999 to the Leuven-Louvain-la-Nuve Communique in 2009, education is said to be a means toward establishing peaceful and democratic societies. Furthermore, there is a commitment from the beginning, most explicitly stated in the Prague Communiqué (2001), that all of Europe will be involved in the Bologna Process and not governed by one central authority. To that end, there are revolving/shared responsibilities and positions of authority for the Process, as well as geographic representation regarding the physical location of where meetings are held.

Tyler (2011) stated that using a democratic system can be a powerful motivator in terms of inducing cooperation, especially voluntary cooperation. He says that there are two sources for motivations. One is external, where the environment shapes motivation; the other is internal and is shaped by people’s values, such as their beliefs, attitudes, identity, and trust. In terms of external contingencies for motivations, democratic leadership, which implies participation by all members, has been found to be more effective in getting groups to participate and for longer periods of time, even without the presence
of an authority figure. Internal motivations are linked to social connections in that people will generally invest in groups that are based on similar internal values (Tyler, 2011). What this means in terms of the Bologna Process is that the ministers had to shape both external and internal motivations of group members. They had to create a democratic environment where group members felt a certain sense of responsibility to work together. The democratic part of the Bologna Process was put in motion by its management, but it was also reinforced by the rhetoric of the ministerial communiqués and the document hierarchy (discussed in the next section). The vague terminology in the communiqués can be viewed as a strategy to involve all members in shaping Bologna objectives by encouraging or rather setting up members to debate and define abstract and ambiguous concepts. In the same spirit that Wikipedia was created and is managed by volunteers who are empowered through their ability to participate freely in defining terms, the vague terminology of the communiqués could also be seen as a move toward empowering Bologna members, as well, because they were given the opportunity to define the objectives of Bologna. The internal values within the group may have been tapped into by ministers constantly emphasizing the importance of a unified higher education system that will benefit all European citizens. Higher education as a social responsibility is a somewhat European tradition, and one that all Bologna members would most likely find connection with. That idea coupled with the desire to improve the
quality of life for all European citizens are powerful internal motivators for this particular group.

It is also possible that due to the historical connections among group members, the general language of the ministerial communiqués actually empowers members. While the working documents indicate frustration and sometimes criticism of the language of the ministers, one has to wonder what their reaction would be to a top-down approach where ministers tightly controlled the Process to the degree that they did not leave room for the development of objectives by allowing members to define certain terms. This is an especially important consideration given the large national and multicultural makeup of Bologna members. Instead, the fact that the vague language led to working groups debating and negotiating the terms of Bologna can be seen as a bottom-up approach, where members are given a sense of power and ownership.

Historical connections may also be one very important consideration for choosing a bottom-up approach versus a top-down approach. From the beginning of the Process and well into 2009, members are often aloof and still wary of the “harmonisation” called for in the Bologna Declaration (see Appendix C), which to many represented a reduction in and lack of respect for diversity. Europe is grounded in its diversity, as is the Bologna Process with its equally diverse membership. In the working group documentation, the complex diversity of Europe is demonstrated when seemingly simple terms like degrees, accreditation, and joint degrees are defined according to culture and country. It
is doubtful that the ministers alone would have been able to capture such
diversity in their own definitions. But more important is how would members
interpret that type of direction when they are already concerned about standards
being imposed on them? Instead, it was a far more democratic gesture to allow
these discussions to take place among working group members for the sake of
ensuring and reassuring members that the group was indeed democratic and
that they owned the Bologna Process.

Initial readings of the ministerial communiqués may give the impression
that these documents are simply political documents meant to persuade readers
that the Bologna Process was moving along just fine and making the necessary
progress, even when it was clear in the working group documentation that this
was not always the case. However, such a raw reading of the documents does
not take historical context and other factors of the rhetorical situation of the
Bologna Process into account. Further analysis of these documents confirms that
writing and rhetorical analysis cannot be about language alone; it must include
all elements of the rhetorical situation, just as a group cannot be formed and
work together without contextual considerations as well. Writing and rhetorical
analysis relies on understanding relationships as well as language. It involves
knowing the environment as documents are being written or as they are being
analyzed. By paying attention to and shaping an environment, we may actually
be able to avert crisis, sometimes even years in advance. Understanding
environment is key to building relationships, and this is especially important
when collaborating internationally (Cooper Ramo, 2011). It could be that the ministers actually diverted a crisis of the Bologna group falling apart or revolting to a top-down approach by purposely crafting language that needed interpretation and definitions. They certainly appear to have understood the delicate relationship that was hanging in the balance of their direction to members through the ministerial communiqués.

As professional communicators, we can be agents of change (for good and for bad) just by the way we use language in the documents we write; therefore, we must analyze the use of language beyond its practical purposes, especially when we are dealing with multicultural and multinational group members. But we also have to understand how language affects group members. The Bologna documentation indicates that language can sometimes tap into internal values and motivate groups; thus, professional and technical communicators will benefit from understanding social motivation because it is likely to produce more cooperative behavior than incentives, especially when there is a need for voluntary cooperation (Tyler, 2011). As the Bologna documentation shows, language can be a powerful motivator, but another interesting point is that document hierarchy is also a social and political motivator.
The Power of Charter Documents

Just as the vague terminology of the ministerial communiqués can be seen as a way of promoting democracy, the Bologna document hierarchy can be viewed as contributing to this overall sense of community as well as a means by which members can negotiate self-interest. In this section, I address my third research question about how Bologna members used the document hierarchy to negotiate self-interest and the interests of the group.

Activity theory is a “triangular approach that emphasizes the multidirectional interconnections among subjects” (Clark, 2007, p. 163). The theory is often used to examine organizational activity, the interaction among people within a group, but also to examine the activity itself, which is referred to as the object (Spinuzzi, 2007). Winsor (2007) invites us to consider activity theory in light of how it might help explain how “members of disparate communities regulate their behavior to invite at least temporary cooperation and coordination” (p. 4). In particular, she views texts as the “tools used both to create common objects and to coordinate activity over time” (p. 4). Winsor borrows from McCarthy in describing how certain texts, called “charter documents,” generally have two common characteristics and they are used to “stabiliz[e] a particular reality and set the terms for future discussions’” (p. 4). According to Winsor, the two defining characteristics of charter documents are that they are communally written and that they are continually interpreted; thus,
they are the basis for subsequent documentation. In terms of communal authorship, Winsor says that charter documents “define what group members can expect from one another and the rules by which they will operate” (p. 5); however, charter documents can never fully describe or address all aspects of a situation, especially one that involves a diverse group, which is why they must be continually interpreted. This reinterpretation, however, is seen as a way of sharing power among participants (Winsor, 2007).

The ministerial communiqués are indeed the guiding or charter documents of the Bologna Process. They are deemed as such by the ministers, and even though they provoke frustration on behalf of the working groups, they are revered as such in the working group documentation. All of the documentation reviewed for this study confirmed that the ministerial communiqués were to be used in this way. Even when the participants voice frustration over having to interpret and define the terms of the Bologna Process as outlined in the ministerial communiqués, the document hierarchy of the Process is respected and honored. Due to this respect, the hierarchy can be seen as serving as social and political motivators to keep the group focused and engaged. By forcing participants to struggle with the language of the communiqués as explained in the section on vague terminology, the group is continually interacting, soliciting information from each other in democratic ways that involve all members, and negotiating self-interest and the best interest of the group. Thus, the subsequent documentation that results from the
communiqués, the working group documentation, is a way for Bologna participants to work toward stabilizing “an agreed-upon version of reality” (Winsor, 2007, p. 12). In other words, the working group documentation is a way for participants to work through issues that allow ministers to portray a particular reality in the ministerial communiqués. So even though the working group documentation portrays a reality different from the ministerial communiqués, in the end, all ministers and participants agree on the reality that the ministerial communiqués portray for the rest of the world because they are honored and used as charter documents.

One interesting aspect of the document hierarchy is to consider how this respect came about. There are many organizations that may have mission statements or other charter documents, but they are not always respected as guidance or referred to by employees or members. To analyze the respect that the Bologna hierarchy is shown by participants is to once again refer to the historical connections members have with one another. Because there is a history of fighting among European countries, the democratic process for the Bologna Process has to be emphasized. Democracy is illustrated in the Bologna documentation by requests for all countries to participate in sharing information and then working through issues of implementation that take into account the unique situations of all members. These requests are a way for members to work together to achieve common goals, which is one of the most important aspects of democracy. But even though the Bologna Process has its own set of goals that
are outlined in the charter documents, those goals are not brand new; they have a
history, and they very much align with the goals of the EU. In fact, as a
demonstration of their commitment, Bologna countries are repeatedly asked to
ratify the Lisbon Convention, an EU event, which emphasized the economic and
political welfare of all of Europe by creating a European higher education
qualifications framework that includes transparent and transferrable degrees.
The Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations (see Appendix C) directly and indirectly
refer to the Lisbon Convention for the guiding principles that led up to the
Bologna Process, and all of the ministerial communiqués emphasize European
citizenship and the idea that a united Europe is a stronger Europe as a whole and
for individual countries. Thus, the charter documents are building off other
historical events that have already been given support by at least a majority of
Bologna participants, EU members, in this case. Therefore, effective
communication can depend greatly on the document hierarchy of an
organization; but, while a hierarchy may be declared, a successful hierarchy, one
that retains the respect and honor of members over a long period of time, may
have to be built on the foundation of other related historical events that are
considered important by members.

**Agreement Versus Action**

In doing any type of rhetorical analysis, the language of a document can
be put into clearer perspective the more the researcher is aware of the rhetorical
situation surrounding the documents. The history of the EU sheds light on many aspects of Bologna, but it is also a creature that appears to have two heads. On one side, the history of the EU illuminates possible notions about why members are collaborating as discussed in the charter documents section, but historical context also provides possible reasons for why members may not be cooperating to the degree that the ministers, and most especially the students, would like.

Practical reasons, such as finances, cannot be ignored when addressing a lack of participation. Funding is one major roadblock because the Process is not funded from the top-down but from the bottom-up. People and resources at the national level must be dedicated to Bologna working groups, and liaisons for higher education institutions, governments, and European organizations and employers must be established. Furthermore, students are the most frustrated with the lack of funding because it affects the tuition structure of higher education in Europe. Funding is certainly called out specifically in several documents as a reason for being unable to move forward in some countries; but when a historical lens is applied to these documents, there may be other reasons that go beyond current financial situations for some countries to not be as active as others in implementing Bologna objectives. In other words, funding may be used as an obvious reason for not participating fully, but it may also be a way of covering up some historical tensions, too.

Relationships are indeed an important aspect of all collaborative ventures. For the Bologna Process, the ministerial communiqués emphasize the European
relationship in that members should see themselves as part of a larger “nationality,” so to speak, a European nationality. The rhetoric of the ministers in the communiqués appears to be intentional in order to create community among members by endearing them to the idea of a unified Europe that will make each individual country stronger and globally competitive, which aligns with EU goals, as well. In that same vein, readers and members cannot ignore the similarities of the Bologna Process and the EU. In fact, students are the most active in voicing their concern over the economic connection between the EU and the Bologna Process, saying that the original motivations behind the Bologna Process are economic, which makes higher education a commodity and not an education for the sake of knowledge. Furthermore, they see globalization as a way of reducing national identity. The commodification of higher education and lack of funding, which has raised tuition fees for students in many Bologna countries, are two of the reasons students have formed protests and riots in 2008 in Spain and in 2009 in France (Gaston, 2011).

The EU is a hotly debated topic among Europeans. It is highly political and has the power of turning a casual conversation hostile because there are such strong divergent views. One problem with Bologna is that many of the countries that are part of the EU (see Appendix B) are also members of Bologna (see Figure 5.1), and the criticisms of the EU spill over into Bologna because of its ties to the Lisbon Convention, which is an EU initiative. Higher education institutions and individual governments are expected to fund the Bologna Process, and the idea
of “harmonisation,” which to many members means the same thing as
standardization, of qualifications for higher education is particularly resonate
with other policies of the EU. It could be that countries want to go on record as
committing to the Bologna Process, especially those that are part of the EU, but
full implementation can be feigned because of costs, although it is clear that the
financial crisis in Europe cannot be denied and will affect any new initiatives.

Figure 5.1. Map of the countries that have current joined the European Union. Adapted from Nationonline.org/oneworld

The Bologna Process mirrors and has ties to the EU in many ways, ways
that may be too political for some members. There may be fear that if the
Bologna Process takes on a political dimension, such as alliance with the EU,
then any shifts in the political landscape of Europe will affect, and could potentially erase, all the efforts made through the Process (Gaston, 2011). A more thorough study using the historical background of the EU in terms of analyzing the Bologna Process would reveal more possibilities about the lack of participation that plagued the Process, especially in the latter years.

According to Burke (1950), “in pure identification there would be no strife” (p. 25). While the Bologna documentation certainly indicates challenges, the progress members have made, given the enormous undertakings with such a large and complex membership, shows definite movement toward achieving the Bologna objectives—definite movement towards identification. The ways this movement has been achieved are of tremendous worth to professional and technical communicators as we move into an era where global communication is becoming more of a regular occurrence. We have a great deal left to study regarding Bologna documentation, but there is still plenty to take away from this one study.

**Additional Takeaways**

The Bologna Process documentation is like a mother-lode of global communication; it is rich with insight into the global dimensions of professional and technical communication, especially international communication. There are still numerous areas of professional and technical communication that can be studied using Bologna documentation, which are mentioned in the Further
Research section below, but some significant takeaways from this particular study have to do with how collaboration and cooperation were solicited and demonstrated. What I present below are not prescriptive strategies for international collaboration and cooperation, but rather, they are considerations based on my analysis of the Bologna documentation and what I learned from this particular study.

**Challenge of Convergence**

The Sorbonne Declaration was signed in 1998 by four higher education ministers, and while there was an open invitation for all of Europe to unite by joining the Bologna Process, one has to wonder if more members than originally anticipated joined, which then complicated the Process. To ask for transparent and transferrable degrees among EU countries is a challenge within itself, but it is still workable because most have or are working to have the same monetary system. They have also agreed upon other economic and political policies that affect higher education, such as open borders for their citizens to travel freely. When, however, 32 countries signed on within three years, the Process became much more complicated because then there was a mix of EU and non-EU countries with extremely diverse higher education and monetary systems and governments. This complication is reflected by a statement called out in the *Trends I* report when the reporter writes that in regards to higher education systems, there are “even more systems than countries in Europe” (p. 5).
Convergence among a highly diverse membership that may grow beyond expected capacity is an important consideration for professional and technical communicators. In the case of the Bologna Process, it is likely that most EU countries would have been interested in joining, but when non-EU countries joined, this complicated the Process even more. When a group attracts members that may have competing agendas, it can become more difficult to find common goals or ways to achieve those goals and satisfy the interests of all group members. For instance, the long-standing tension that exists between academics and practitioners in professional and technical communication demonstrates how both have a common goal of wanting to provide the best education for students who will eventually go into the workplace; however, what that education consists of is often a topic where members diverge. Consequently, convergence among diverse members, especially a large membership, may have to be manufactured and managed, even if one of the goals of the group is to be a democratic group. Such situations beg the question: Can democracy be spontaneous? This question is highly debatable, but as professional and technical communicators, we can look to certain communication theories, such as identification, terministic screens, social motivations, and activity theory for ways to further convergence and possibly even democracy. As noted in previous sections of this chapter, what, on the surface, appear to be poor communication (the use of vague terminology) and a somewhat typical document hierarchy, may, in fact, be purposeful strategies that could be employed to produce the
same results as what has happened with the Bologna Process (democracy and member participation). Of course, such strategies cannot be implemented equally or across the board; historical context and other factors of the rhetorical situation surrounding membership (previous relations, funding, existing systems) must be considered.

Top-down and Bottom-up Rhetorical Approaches

Language that is substantive, clear, descriptive, and direct is often desired in professional communication because it makes expectations clear, especially when a power hierarchy is in place. However, in more democratic settings, language must take on a more diplomatic tone. Position of power played an important role in the Bologna Process. The ministers may be the leaders of higher education within their own countries, but they have no authority over the other stakeholders of the Bologna Process, nor any entity in other countries. If the European ministers had chosen direct and highly descriptive language for Bologna objectives, actions, agreements, and responsibilities, they would have most likely met with either a lack of countries willing to join the Process or dissension among members who might hotly contest the ministers’ directives. If the language of the communiqués had been more direct, it could have had negative consequences for the Bologna Process and for the EU since the two initiatives are so closely related and similar. In order not to jeopardize existing economic treaties and efforts throughout Europe, the Bologna ministers had to
anticipate the same resistance or arguments about the Bologna Process that are made about the EU. Thus, the ideas of democracy and cooperation were continually and directly stated in the Bologna documentation and, possibly, included to subdue those who might already be in opposition or uncertain about the EU. But one important point that Bologna has showed us as professional and technical communicators is that vague and indirect language can open up avenues for further discussion and debate among members. Because the Bologna Process is completely voluntary, the language of the ministers could not be direct or commanding—it had to be diplomatic, thus vague and interpretive. Whether this was intentional or not is unknown, but when analyzing the rhetorical situation of the Bologna Process, the language of the ministerial communiqués appears to be appropriate for the situation and the delicate relationships among members.

Rhetoric Influences Reality

The Bologna Process documentation demonstrates the way rhetoric can be used to shape reality. Reality, for purposes of this study, is defined by two particular ideas: what others perceive as happening and what others are experiencing, and the two may not necessarily be the same. As shown in Chapters 3 and 4, the ministerial communiqués presented an image of the impacts and progress of the Bologna Process in ways that were not always consistent with what was being experienced at the working group level. If read
in isolation from working group documents, the ministerial communiqués, with their vague and indirect language, create an image of a much more unified Europe than what readers of working group documentation might perceive upon initial readings. Vague and indirect language relies on the perceptions it can create for readers, which is what it appears that the ministers may have been hoping to achieve with the ministerial communiqués. Attempts at direct and more concrete language, such as the language in the working group documentation, however, seem to be more focused on achieving specific goals. In the case of Bologna, the ministerial communiqués created an illusion of a unified and highly cooperative Europe that has made tremendous progress toward achieving Bologna objectives, especially during the first five years, but the working group documentation demonstrated a break from the perceived image of Bologna to the reality of what it meant to actually achieve the goals of Bologna, which show a long and difficult struggle not at all evident in the ministerial communiqués. There are, however, possible benefits to creating such an illusion. The imprecise language of the ministerial communiqués could very well have been an attempt for ministers to portray the intended cooperation and progress they would like to see in the Bologna Process; thus, this illusion may be a way to illustrate what could be attained if all of the stakeholders worked together as they are being asked to in the communiqués.

As professional and technical communicators, we rely heavily on our reading of audience and purpose to determine how and what we write.
Audience and purpose most certainly play into what was included in the ministerial communiqués and how it was worded, but this study shows that, especially when a series of documents are grouped together, language, be it vague and indirect or direct and more concrete, can create either a perception or an experience. When a certain perception is desired, then vague and indirect language may help create that illusion. For instance, when writing a mission statement, it may be more advantageous to use strategic ambiguity because it allows flexibility or multiple interpretations of a particular message (Eisenberg, 1984); however, as evidenced through Bologna, this vagueness can also work against writers in that it is called out as a strategy used for purposeful deception, as students noted in all of their formal reports. On the other hand, direct and concrete language, which is what the Bologna working groups struggled to achieve in their own documents, is more experiential because its purpose is to dispel perceptions or multiple interpretations and create a reality that is highly defined, stable, and set. Concrete language is more desirable when the intention is to minimize interpretation, such as in a set of instructions. It should be noted, however, that direct language is also more confrontational than vague language, and depending on the situation, clarity may actually work against leadership precisely because it does not allow for any input from other members. Neither strategy is being called out here as being better or more desirable than the other, but context definitely should be considered when choosing how to communicate a particular message.
Identity and Commitment

One area of the Bologna Process that may be considered a “failure” in some way is the lack of active participation that led to implementation. In Chapter 3, I discussed several strategies employed by the ministers to create a sense of identity by stressing the importance of Bologna members working together, but the documentation in 2008 and 2009 shows a lack of participation in surveys, questionnaires, and other solicitations for information. This lack of commitment and implementation may be explained in several ways.

The constant reference to European citizenship in the ministerial communiqués is a double-edged sword for many Europeans. On one side, there is the advantage of joining together to become a unified force in the global economy. It is doubtful that many European governments would deny this is a powerful incentive to unite Europe so that each country does not have to struggle in a global economy all by itself; however, the other side is that Europe has a long history of tribalism. Tribalism is defined by Sennett (2012) as “people adverse to getting along with those who differ” (p. 3), and according to Sennett, “tribalism, in the form of nationalism, destroyed Europe during the first half of the twentieth century” (p. 3). To combat tribalism in the Bologna Process, it appears that the ministers stress European citizenship and place importance on the idea of a unified Europe, but they also equally emphasize diversity. In the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (1998), their pledge in creating the EHEA is that this will be a place “where national identities and common interests can interact and
strengthen each other for the benefit of Europe” (para. 14), and the objectives of the Bologna Process will fully respect “the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and University autonomy” (Bologna Declaration, 1999, para. 16).

Through this language where ministers call out the importance of diversity in the Bologna Process, it appears as if they are employing another strategy used to motivate diverse members to voluntarily cooperate by showing their dependence on one another. When reading the ministerial communiqués through the lens of cooperation theory, it appears as if the ministers are working to create a sense of internal values among members that will lead to what Tyler (2011) referred to as discretionary cooperation. Discretionary cooperation is when people rely on internal motivations that make them cooperative for personal reasons; they do not rely on instrumental motivations (incentives or sanctions). The Bologna Process cannot reward those who cooperate, most especially through direct funding. The only rewards that are going to come from the Bologna Process are rewards that will be experienced by everyone, but only if everyone cooperates. If the Bologna Process is not accepted across Europe and it is not accepted worldwide, then everyone loses. Thus, cooperation from all members is the only thing that will make this group successful, and it appears as if the ministers are trying to create internal motivations.

The ministers cannot motivate by what Tyler (2011) called rule adherence either. Rule adherence is cooperation that occurs when people limit their
behaviors based on rules. Each country has to see the benefit of being part of the Process, and they cannot do that if they have to limit their self-interest due to rules. Instead, limiting self-interest has to be voluntary. This can come about through what Tyler calls performance motivations. Performance motivations are when individuals act on behalf of the group to create resources and perform tasks that will benefit everyone. Tyler says that the best way to win support is to make sure that all individuals see the benefits for themselves. And, the greater the dependence on the group, the more loyalty members will show. Tyler also states that voluntary cooperation lasts longer than instrumental cooperation because sanctions are costly to implement and self-interest is assessed according to the success of the group.

What professional and technical communicators can take away from this aspect of the Bologna Process is that rhetoric can create community, but alone, it cannot sustain community without other factors like participation. Participation is one measurement by which identity can be assessed. And in the case of Bologna, participation, by some stakeholders, such as students, is defined and measured according to the level of implementation. From another perspective, especially through the lens of activity theory, participation can also be evidenced by the mountains of documents that result from the working groups. Documentation that results from reinterpretation of charter documents is very much an indicator of participation and engagement of a group. For professional
and technical communicators, it is worth considering what participation and success really mean.

**Further Study of the Bologna Process**

With over a million pages already amassed from the Bologna Process, this research project is just one example of what can be studied and learned from this extraordinary global event. If anything, this study shows the depth and diversity of the documentation and stimulates conversation about what else can be achieved by studying the Process rhetorically. There are numerous possibilities for research on the Bologna Process in terms of professional and technical communication, a few of which I will briefly discuss below. I also will describe future studies that are of particular interest to me.

In Chapter 1, I outlined certain characteristics of the Bologna Process that make it a unique site for research in professional and technical communication. I recap those characteristics below:

- Complex and hierarchical documentation structure
- Common or shared goals
- Diverse membership
- Collaborative nature (completely voluntary membership)
- Multiple stakeholders
- Members with strong historical connections
Using these characteristics as a starting point for studying the communication practices within particular activity systems, possible research projects involving the Bologna Process include the following.

- **Multicultural dimensions and languages.** English is the lingua franca of the Bologna Process, which poses challenges for all countries where English is not the native or official language. It would be interesting and worthwhile to explore in what ways translation poses difficulties for non-English speaking countries to participate in meetings, provide information asked for, and even follow through on agreements. In regard to professional and technical communication, such a study could provide insight into the discussion regarding plain English or even scientific English.

- **Study of different Bologna objectives.** It was necessary to narrow this study to only one Bologna objective, the one associated with the qualifications framework. Even with that focus, the number of documents was overwhelming to analyze and map to one another. All of the Bologna objectives are connected and overlap with one another, and a more thorough study about the overall progress of the Bologna Process can be achieved by studying other areas. Many avenues regarding communication could be taken when studying more than one of the Bologna objectives, but specifically it would be interesting to ask if all working groups experience the same difficulty with the vague language of
the ministerial communiqués and how the groups progress through the process of interpretation.

- **Implementation of comparable and compatible degrees.** The purpose of the EHEA is to increase comparability and compatibility of degrees across Europe. In what ways are comparability and compatibility expressed? What does implementation mean? From a rhetorical standpoint, “success” of the Bologna Process depends on full implementation, and so it would be helpful for professional and technical communicators to analyze the rhetoric of success, or full implementation, in this case. In other words, at what point can a project be declared complete or successful?

Even after working on this project for over a year, I am still intrigued by the Bologna Process. In my conversations with other academics, especially in professional and technical communication, it is amazing to me how many Americans have not heard of it (and I was a latecomer myself not having heard of it until 2009). I am convinced this is a problem for two reasons:

- All academics should be aware of this effort as it very well may impact American higher education in the near future. These impacts already have been felt economically where there are signs of an increased foreign student population studying in Europe and a drop in foreign students studying in America, most likely due to the Bologna Process and its three-year bachelor degrees. But the Bologna Process may also
have curricular implications for American higher education because of the economics behind losing foreign students to Europe, and quite possibly a loss of American students in the future. The debate over a “focused” education, such as the types of degrees most commonly associated with European universities versus the liberal arts education of the American higher education system (which includes general education requirements) is still highly controversial, especially as the effects of globalization continue to place demands on society for a specialized workforce.

- As mentioned several times throughout this dissertation, collaboration, especially in global contexts, is the number one skill needed by professional and technical communicators now and in the future. Scholars, teachers, and practicing professional and technical communicators should be aware of the Bologna Process because it is a contemporary global event. They should actively study it for insight into building stronger curricula, workplace practices, and scholarly knowledge in global communication. Too often studies are conducted after a crisis, such as with the Challenger disaster, but it would be much more productive to study a contemporary event that might be able to avert disaster in the future if we took the time to understand its challenges and successes as it was evolving.
Given my strong opinions on the importance of studying the Bologna Process, the first thing I plan on doing regarding future research in this area is to become actively involved in the Bologna Process. During this past year, I learned that American academics throughout the country are actively involved in the Process by doing comparisons of degree programs, for instance. I was told by one academic to contact the Lumina Foundation. The Lumina Foundation is a private organization committed to improving the quality of higher education and increasing the number of Americans who pursue and graduate from college (Lumina Foundation, n.d.). This organization is also actively involved in the Bologna Process. My first goal is to contact the Lumina Foundation to find out more information about their role in the Bologna Process and my possible involvement. I also plan to continue my research on the documentation of the Bologna Process in the following ways:

- **Historical context.** It was noted in several places throughout this dissertation that I could not have understood the Bologna documentation in the way I did without having researched the history of the EU. Because there are such close ties between the EU and the Bologna Process, using an historical context as a primary lens would give an even more enriching and thorough understanding of the history of Bologna, the challenges the membership faces, and the future of the Process as well. From the standpoint of professional communication, such a project could provide insight into the influences that external factors, such as politics and
history, have on the rhetoric of the ministerial communiqués and the outcomes of this particular effort.

- **Economic context.** Because the Bologna Process is motivated by economics, understanding economic theories and then using those theories as a lens for analysis would be a great collaborative opportunity. This could even be tied with the previously mentioned historical study, which could result in an even more comprehensive understanding of the Bologna Process from economic, historical, and rhetorical perspectives.

I also do not feel like I am finished with researching the language of collaboration and cooperation. After careful reflection on this study, I would like to explore ways that I can deepen my research in this area by exploring other communication theories and/or restructuring the document hierarchy or selection of documents used for analysis.

**Conclusion**

Kenneth Burke (1966) stated that “man is the symbol-using animal” (p. 3) and that rhetoric “is an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (Burke, 1950, p. 43). In a world where we encounter difference on a global scale there seems to be no better reason to study language than from the standpoint of
how we can more effectively work together. It is my hope that this study is just one of many that uses the Bologna Process documentation for such purposes.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A. Members of the Bologna Process
## Appendix A: Members of the Bologna Process

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Spain                               Turkey
Sweden                              Ukraine
Switzerland                         United Kingdom

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Consultative Members

Council of Europe

UNESCO

European University Association

European Association of Institutions in Higher Education

European Students' Union

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Education International Pan-European Structure

Business Europe
Appendix B. Countries of the European Union and year of entry
### Appendix B: Countries of the European Union and year of entry (European Union, 2012)

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Appendix C. Documents of the Bologna Process
Appendix C: Documents of the Bologna Process

- Sorbonne Joint Declaration
- Bologna Declaration
- London Communiqué
- Kaufmann Report
- BFUG minutes from Sarajevo
Sorbonne Joint Declaration

Joint declaration on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system

by the four Ministers in charge for France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom

Paris, the Sorbonne, May 25 1998

The European process has very recently moved some extremely important steps ahead. Relevant as they are, they should not make one forget that Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge as well. We must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent. These have to a large extent been shaped by its universities, which continue to play a pivotal role for their development.

Universities were born in Europe, some three-quarters of a millenium ago. Our four countries boast some of the oldest, who are celebrating important anniversaries around now, as the University of Paris is doing today. In those times, students and academics would freely circulate and rapidly disseminate knowledge throughout the continent. Nowadays, too many of our students still graduate without having had the benefit of a study period outside of national boundaries.

We are heading for a period of major change in education and working conditions, to a diversification of courses of professional careers with education and training throughout life becoming a clear obligation. We owe our students, and our society at large, a higher education system in which they are given the best opportunities to seek and find their own area of excellence.

An open European area for higher learning carries a wealth of positive perspectives, of course respecting our diversities, but requires on the other hand continuous efforts to remove barriers and to develop a framework for teaching and learning, which would enhance mobility and an ever closer cooperation.

The international recognition and attractive potential of our systems are directly related to their external and internal readabilities. A system, in which two main
cycles, undergraduate and graduate, should be recognized for international comparison and equivalence, seems to emerge.

Much of the originality and flexibility in this system will be achieved through the use of credits (such as in the ECTS scheme) and semesters. This will allow for validation of these acquired credits for those who choose initial or continued education in different European universities and wish to be able to acquire degrees in due time throughout life. Indeed, students should be able to enter the academic world at any time in their professional life and from diverse backgrounds.

Undergraduates should have access to a diversity of programmes, including opportunities for multidisciplinary studies, development of a proficiency in languages and the ability to use new information technologies.

International recognition of the first cycle degree as an appropriate level of qualification is important for the success of this endeavour, in which we wish to make our higher education schemes clear to all.

In the graduate cycle there would be a choice between a shorter master's degree and a longer doctor’s degree, with possibilities to transfer from one to the other. In both graduate degrees, appropriate emphasis would be placed on research and autonomous work.

At both undergraduate and graduate level, students would be encouraged to spend at least one semester in universities outside their own country. At the same time, more teaching and research staff should be working in European countries other than their own. The fast growing support of the European Union, for the mobility of students and teachers should be employed to the full.

Most countries, not only within Europe, have become fully conscious of the need to foster such evolution. The conferences of European rectors, University presidents, and groups of experts and academics in our respective countries have engaged in widespread thinking along these lines.

A convention, recognising higher education qualifications in the academic field within Europe, was agreed on last year in Lisbon. The convention set a number of basic requirements and acknowledged that individual countries could engage in an even more constructive scheme. Standing by these conclusions, one can build on them and go further. There is already much common ground for the
mutual recognition of higher education degrees for professional purposes through the respective directives of the European Union.

Our governments, nevertheless, continue to have a significant role to play to these ends, by encouraging ways in which acquired knowledge can be validated and respective degrees can be better recognised. We expect this to promote further inter-university agreements. Progressive harmonisation of the overall framework of our degrees and cycles can be achieved through strengthening of already existing experience, joint diplomas, pilot initiatives, and dialogue with all concerned.

We hereby commit ourselves to encouraging a common frame of reference, aimed at improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility as well as employability. The anniversary of the University of Paris, today here in the Sorbonne, offers us a solemn opportunity to engage in the endeavour to create a European area of higher education, where national identities and common interests can interact and strengthen each other for the benefit of Europe, of its students, and more generally of its citizens. We call on other Member States of the Union and other European countries to join us in this objective and on all European Universities to consolidate Europe's standing in the world through continuously improved and updated education for its citizens.

Claude ALLEGRE
Minister for National Education, Research and Technology
(France)

Luigi BERLINGUER
Minister for Public Instruction, University and Research (Italy)

Tessa BLACKSTONE
Minister for Higher Education (United Kingdom)

Jürgen RÜTTGERS
Minister for Education, Sciences, Research and Technology (Germany)
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 competences 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
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
THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA
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:

Adoption 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.

Adoption 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 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 competences 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.

**Signatories:**
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<td>Charles KLEIBER</td>
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18 May 2007

London Communiqué

Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world

1. Introduction

1.1 We, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process, have met in London to review progress made since we convened in Bergen in 2005.

1.2 Based on our agreed criteria for country membership, we welcome the Republic of Montenegro as a member of the Bologna Process.

1.3 Developments over the last two years have brought us a significant step closer to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Building on our rich and diverse European cultural heritage, we are developing an EHEA based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles that will facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe’s attractiveness and competitiveness. As we look ahead, we recognise that, in a changing world, there will be a continuing need to adapt our higher education systems, to ensure that the EHEA remains competitive and can respond effectively to the challenges of globalisation. In the short term, we appreciate that implementing the Bologna reforms is a significant task, and appreciate the continuing support and commitment of all partners in the process. We welcome the contribution of the working groups and seminars in helping to drive forward progress. We agree to continue to work together in partnership, assisting one another in our efforts and promoting the exchange of good practice.

1.4 We reaffirm our commitment to increasing the compatibility and comparability of our higher education systems, whilst at the same time respecting their diversity. We recognise the important influence higher education institutions (HEIs) exert on developing our societies, based on their traditions as centres of learning, research, creativity and knowledge transfer as well as their key role in defining and transmitting the values on which our societies are built. Our aim is to ensure that our HEIs have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. Those purposes include: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal
development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and stimulating research and innovation.

1.5 We therefore underline the importance of strong institutions, which are diverse, adequately funded, autonomous and accountable. The principles of non-discrimination and equitable access should be respected and promoted throughout the EHEA. We commit to upholding these principles and to ensuring that neither students nor staff suffer discrimination of any kind.

2. Progress towards the EHEA

2.1 Our stocktaking report, along with EUA’s *Trends V* report, ESIB’s *Bologna With Student Eyes* and Eurydice’s *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe*, confirms that there has been good overall progress in the last two years. There is an increasing awareness that a significant outcome of the process will be a move towards student-centred higher education and away from teacher driven provision. We will continue to support this important development.

Mobility

2.2 Mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension.

2.3 Some progress has been made since 1999, but many challenges remain. Among the obstacles to mobility, issues relating to immigration, recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements feature prominently. We recognise the responsibility of individual Governments to facilitate the delivery of visas, residence and work permits, as appropriate. Where these measures are outside our competence as Ministers for Higher Education, we undertake to work within our respective Governments for decisive progress in this area. At national level, we will work to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students. This includes encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula, as well as urging our institutions to take greater responsibility for staff and student mobility, more equitably balanced between countries across the EHEA.

Degree structure

2.4 Good progress is being made at national and institutional levels towards our goal of an EHEA based on a three-cycle degree system. The number of students enrolled on courses in the first two-cycles has increased significantly and there has been a reduction in structural barriers between cycles. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of structured doctoral programmes. We underline the importance of curricula reform leading to qualifications better suited both to the needs of the labour market and to further study. Efforts should concentrate in future on removing barriers to access and progression between cycles and on proper implementation of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload. We underline the importance of improving graduate employability, whilst noting that data gathering on this issue needs to be developed further.
Recognition
2.5 Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components of the EHEA, both internally and in a global context. Easily readable and comparable degrees and accessible information on educational systems and qualifications frameworks are prerequisites for citizens’ mobility and ensuring the continuing attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. While we are pleased that 38 members of the Bologna Process, including Montenegro, have now ratified the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European region (Lisbon Recognition Convention), we urge the remaining members to do so as a matter of priority.

2.6 There has been progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), ECTS and diploma supplements, but the range of national and institutional approaches to recognition needs to be more coherent. To improve recognition practices, we therefore ask the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) to arrange for the ENIC/NARIC networks to analyse our national action plans and spread good practice.

Qualifications Frameworks
2.7 Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.

2.8 We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.

2.9 We are satisfied that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA will also be compatible with the proposal from the European Commission on a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

2.10 We see the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, which we agreed in Bergen, as a central element of the promotion of European higher education in a global context.

Lifelong Learning
2.11 The stocktaking report shows that some elements of flexible learning exist in most countries, but a more systematic development of flexible learning paths to support lifelong learning is at an early stage. We therefore ask BFUG to increase the
sharing of good practice and to work towards a common understanding of the role of higher education in lifelong learning. Only in a small number of EHEA countries could the recognition of prior learning for access and credits be said to be well developed. Working in cooperation with ENIC/NARIC, we invite BFUG to develop proposals for improving the recognition of prior learning.

Quality Assurance and a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies

2.12 The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA adopted in Bergen (ESG) have been a powerful driver of change in relation to quality assurance. All countries have started to implement them and some have made substantial progress. External quality assurance in particular is much better developed than before. The extent of student involvement at all levels has increased since 2005, although improvement is still necessary. Since the main responsibility for quality lies with HEIs, they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance. We acknowledge the progress made with regard to mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions, and encourage continued international cooperation amongst quality assurance agencies.

2.13 The first European Quality Assurance Forum, jointly organised by EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESIB (the E4 Group) in 2006 provided an opportunity to discuss European developments in quality assurance. We encourage the four organisations to continue to organise European Quality Assurance Fora on an annual basis, to facilitate the sharing of good practice and ensure that quality in the EHEA continues to improve.

2.14 We thank the E4 Group for responding to our request to further develop the practicalities of setting up a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies. The purpose of the register is to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the ESG. It will therefore enhance confidence in higher education in the EHEA and beyond, and facilitate the mutual recognition of quality assurance and accreditation decisions. We welcome the establishment of a register by the E4 group, working in partnership, based on their proposed operational model. The register will be voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent. Applications for inclusion on the register should be evaluated on the basis of substantial compliance with the ESG, evidenced through an independent review process endorsed by national authorities, where this endorsement is required by those authorities. We ask the E4 group to report progress to us regularly through BFUG, and to ensure that after two years of operation, the register is evaluated externally, taking account of the views of all stakeholders.

Doctoral candidates

2.15 Closer alignment of the EHEA with the European Research Area (ERA) remains an important objective. We recognise the value of developing and maintaining a wide variety of doctoral programmes linked to the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA, whilst avoiding overregulation. At the same time, we appreciate that enhancing provision in the third cycle and improving the status, career prospects and funding for early stage researchers are essential
preconditions for meeting Europe’s objectives of strengthening research capacity and improving the quality and competitiveness of European higher education.

2.16 We therefore invite our HEIs to reinforce their efforts to embed doctoral programmes in institutional strategies and policies, and to develop appropriate career paths and opportunities for doctoral candidates and early stage researchers.

2.17 We invite EUA to continue to support the sharing of experience among HEIs on the range of innovative doctoral programmes that are emerging across Europe as well as on other crucial issues such as transparent access arrangements, supervision and assessment procedures, the development of transferable skills and ways of enhancing employability. We will look for appropriate opportunities to encourage greater exchange of information on funding and other issues between our Governments as well as with other research funding bodies.

Social dimension

2.18 Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. Policy should therefore aim to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.

The European Higher Education Area in a global context

2.19 We are pleased that in many parts of the world, the Bologna reforms have created considerable interest and stimulated discussion between European and international partners on a range of issues. These include the recognition of qualifications, the benefits of cooperation based upon partnership, mutual trust and understanding, and the underlying values of the Bologna Process. Moreover, we acknowledge that efforts have been made in some countries in other parts of the world to bring their higher education systems more closely into line with the Bologna framework.

2.20 We adopt the strategy "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting" and will take forward work in the core policy areas: improving information on, and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition. This work ought to be seen in relation to the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education.
3. Priorities for 2009

3.1 Over the next two years, we agree to concentrate on completing agreed Action Lines, including the ongoing priorities of the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods. We will focus in particular on the following areas for action.

Mobility
3.2 In our national reports for 2009, we will report on action taken at national level to promote the mobility of students and staff, including measures for future evaluation. We will focus on the main national challenges identified in paragraph 2.3 above. We also agree to set up a network of national experts to share information, and help to identify and overcome obstacles to the portability of grants and loans.

Social Dimension
3.3 Similarly, we will report on our national strategies and policies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness. We will invite all stakeholders to participate in, and support this work, at the national level.

Data collection
3.4 We recognise the need to improve the availability of data on both mobility and the social dimension across all the countries participating in the Bologna Process. We therefore ask the European Commission (Eurostat), in conjunction with Eurostudent, to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries. Data in this field should cover participative equity in higher education as well as employability for graduates. This task should be carried out in conjunction with BFUG and a report should be submitted to our 2009 Ministerial conference.

Employability
3.5 Following up on the introduction of the three-cycle degree system, we ask BFUG to consider in more detail how to improve employability in relation to each of these cycles as well as in the context of lifelong learning. This will involve the responsibilities of all stakeholders. Governments and HEIs will need to communicate more with employers and other stakeholders on the rationale for their reforms. We will work, as appropriate, within our governments to ensure that employment and career structures within the public service are fully compatible with the new degree system. We urge institutions to further develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes.

The European Higher Education Area in a global context
3.6 We ask BFUG to report back to us on overall developments in this area at the European, national and institutional levels by 2009. All stakeholders have a role here within their spheres of responsibility. In reporting on the implementation of the strategy for the EHEA in a global context, BFUG should in particular give consideration to two priorities. First, to improve the information available about the EHEA, by developing the Bologna Secretariat website and building on EUA’s
Bologna Handbook; and second, to improve recognition. We call on HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities within the EHEA to assess qualifications from other parts of the world with the same open mind with which they would expect European qualifications to be assessed elsewhere, and to base this recognition on the principles of the LRC.

Stocktaking
3.7 We ask BFUG to continue the stocktaking process, based on national reports, in time for our 2009 Ministerial conference. We expect further development of the qualitative analysis in stocktaking, particularly in relation to mobility, the Bologna Process in a global context and the social dimension. The fields covered by stocktaking should continue to include the degree system and employability of graduates, recognition of degrees and study periods and implementation of all aspects of quality assurance in line with the ESG. With a view to the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning, the next exercise should also address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.

4. Looking forward to 2010 and beyond

4.1 As the EHEA continues to develop and respond to the challenges of globalisation, we anticipate that the need for collaboration will continue beyond 2010.

4.2 We are determined to seize 2010, which will mark the passage from the Bologna Process to the EHEA, as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to higher education as a key element in making our societies sustainable, at national as well as at European level. We will take 2010 as an opportunity to reformulate the vision that motivated us in setting the Bologna Process in motion in 1999 and to make the case for an EHEA underpinned by values and visions that go beyond issues of structures and tools. We undertake to make 2010 an opportunity to reset our higher education systems on a course that looks beyond the immediate issues and makes them fit to take up the challenges that will determine our future.

4.3 We ask BFUG as a whole to consider further how the EHEA might develop after 2010 and to report back to the next ministerial meeting in 2009. This should include proposals for appropriate support structures, bearing in mind that the current informal collaborative arrangements are working well and have brought about unprecedented change.

4.4 Building on previous stocktaking exercises, Trends, and Bologna With Student Eyes, we invite BFUG to consider for 2010 the preparation of a report including an independent assessment, in partnership with the consultative members, evaluating the overall progress of the Bologna Process across the EHEA since 1999.

4.5 We delegate the decision on the nature, content and place of any Ministerial meeting in 2010 to BFUG, to be taken within the first half of 2008.

4.6 Our next meeting will be hosted by the Benelux countries in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve on 28-29 April 2009.
The recognition of Transnational Education qualifications

Seminar on Transnational Education. Malmö - 2/3 March 2001

Chantal Kaufmann
Deputy General Director . Higher Education and research. Ministry of French Community - Belgium
Vice-president of the Enic network

When Ulf Ohlund asked me, as a member of the steering group, to make a presentation on TE from a recognition’s body point of view, my first reaction was to say « no », because, in the French Community of Belgium, until now, we don’t recognize TE qualifications.

In addition, listing problems can appear as very unpopular, when TE development is seen more and more as a « challenge » for traditional education systems and a way to « make european education more competitive ».

But he did insist, pretending that there was at least a good reason to do it, which was to explain why we did not recognize TE.

So, here I am and my work could be extremely quickly done, if I did only explain the reason why we do not recognize TE qualifications, which is extremely simple : the law regulating academic recognition specifies that to be taken into consideration for recognition the foreign diplomas must have been delivered in a recognized institution belonging to the system of higher education of a specific state and located is that state.

There are at least two criteria in this : the diploma must be a foreign diploma, and it must be part of a national system.

This is connected to the fact that we do not recognize or give any official value to the diplomas awarded by private institutions.

The diplomas awarded by Belgian higher education institutions must be delivered by a university or a polytechnic which is run by the state or funded and recognized by the state. All the higher education institutions having that status are listed in the law and receive a « habilitation » to organize specific fields of studies and deliver specific degrees.
In that context it looks coherent that we don’t give more right to an institution working on TE basis than to any other private institution.

In addition to this, as a part of the Ministry of Education, the recognition centre in the French Community of Belgium does not only give advice on academic recognition but we deliver official decisions that give foreign qualifications the same value, for academic and professional purposes, as that of the national qualifications (in the latter, under provision of specific conditions imposed by the professional body).

In that context, it might be understandable that, as far as the TE phenomenon will not be more « transparent », we don’t consider qualifications awarded by TE provision for recognition.

Until now, we haven’t really bothered about recognition of TE qualifications, as TE is still a marginal phenomenon in Belgium.

First of all, the offer of higher education in Belgium is sufficient and important: in the sole French Community, there are 9 universities and 30 «Hautes Ecoles» (polytechnics).

Moreover, the tuition fees are very low and almost all the fields of studies are accessible without numerus clausus.

In that context, the potential attraction of Transnational Education is probably less important than what it can be in other countries with a less open access to higher education.

In order to have a broader idea of the situation regarding recognition of TE qualifications, I think that it is necessary to give a short overview of the situation in some countries:

Looking the situation of TE’s qualifications recognition in several countries makes clear that, so far, most of the countries haven’t really consider as a priority the setting up of specific procedures to assess them.

Very often, there is no official regulation or control of TE qualifications. In some countries, they can be recognized if they are awarded by TE providers belonging to a national system of higher education. In other countries, they are treated as « private » institutions which can receive an accreditation or, at the contrary, which are not allowed to deliver diplomas with official value.

The lack of quality control is seen as one of the most important problem.

**Austria**

- no specific regulation or control of TE;
- possibility for private institutions to receive an accreditation;

- Good practice could be to regard TE in term of their status in the country of origin: the qualifications should be considered as belonging to the country of origin.

**Belgium (Flemish Community)**

- the law is very restrictive concerning recognition: only institutions listed by law are allowed to deliver recognized diplomas;

- for recognition there is a distinct advantage if the award comes from an institution which belong to a national system of higher education.

**Czech Republic**

- if the institution providing TE doesn’t want to award Czech degrees it has no duty to ask for an approval to operate as educational institution;

- the diplomas awarded by TE providers will be evaluated with regards to the status of the institution (is it a branch of some foreign recognized institution?) and with regard to the length and content of study;

- the institution providing TE has the possibility to act as private higher education institution in the frame of Czech higher education system if it is legal entity with domicile in the Czech Republic and if granted the state permission by the Ministry of education. The state permission is issued on the base of the recommendation of Accreditation Commission of the Czech Republic.

**Denmark**

- no legal regulation for TE but the national quality assurance agency has the right of initiative to take action;

- TE is still a marginal phenomenon.

**Finland**

- no specific regulation for TE;

- the awarded diplomas can be recognized if the originating institution is appropriately recognized in its home country;

- the main problem is the quality.

**France**
- no distinction made about the origins and nature of TE;
- academic recognition is the competence of each institution of higher education;
- the laws allows anyone suitably qualified to open a higher education institution;
- the main problem is the evaluation of quality.

Germany

- TE is not legally regulated and there is no national quality agency dealing with the accreditation of those institutions. The Länder are responsible;
- the main problem is the «degree mills» and the recognition problems.

Greece

- the Greek Constitution does not allow private institutions to organize higher education;
- only a change of regulation which seems quite difficult could modify the situation.

Iceland

- marginal phenomenon;
- no specific law regulating TE but the Ministry of Education must approve all university level education;
- TE must be regulated at a European level to have a positive impact: it could make the national/regional European education programmes more varied.

Ireland

- the national Council for Educational awards has validated programmes offered by some transnational providers.

Italy

- the treatment of imported TE varies according to the nature and information available on the originating educational system: state or state recognized providers are looked upon favourably. Distance learning degrees are only recognized if they have similar admission requirements to traditional degrees in the country of their origin;
- foreign higher education degrees can only be recognized if they are delivered by foreign institutions located outside Italy.

**Latvia**

- the law provides possibility to foreign institutions to receive a permit to operate;
- for the moment, Branches of Russian institutions are operating and don’t try to obtain accreditation: no recognition is given because there is no information allowing to judge quality.

**Netherlands**

- marginal phenomenon;
- the recognition of TE is not affected in terms of the originating country or its nature providing the awards are from institutions recognized in the country of origin;
- no regulation or control over imported or exported TE.

**Norway**

- no legal regulation on TE;
- to be recognized, TE qualifications should have been awarded by an institution which is recognized in the home country.

**Portugal**

- no regulation concerning TE, except for doctoral degrees where recognition cannot be granted;
- marginal phenomenon;
- the main problem is quality control as no assurance mechanisms exist.

**Russia**

- no specific regulation regarding TE;
- the providers are requested to respect the Code of good practice for the provision of TE.

**Slovakia**
- legal basis set up in 1996 to allow TE to operate;

- TE providers operating in Slovakia before 96 can submit an application for establishing a higher education institution. If the demand is rejected, the provider is obliged to dissolve the TE institution;

- the terms « higher education institution » and « university » are protected by law and the institutions which are not allowed by law to use the name are illegal. A new law is in preparation, probably more liberal for TE.

Spain

- no effective regulation of TE and no specialised quality control mechanisms;

- distinction made between public and private providers;

- the main problem is the lack of quality assurance.

Sweden

- the main principle for the recognition of TE qualifications is that, in general, they should have been awarded by an institution which is officially recognized in the home country or otherwise accredited by a recognized authority (for example, a US regional accrediting body);

- TE is not regulated as such but the national quality assurance agency deals with the recognition of US branche university to enable students to use their state loans to attend the university.

Switzerland

- when TE is state recognized in the provider country, recognition by universities is normally granted;

- legal regulation on TE is insufficient, there is almost no quality control;

- there is a need of quality control.

United Kingdom

- important exporter of TE;

- recognition of imported TE qualifications is the concern of individual academic institutions;
- For exported TE, there is no regulation but the Quality assurance agency is considering a certification process.

**United States**

- USA is exposed to all of the various types of TE and there is no national framework law to regulate it;
- It is impossible to take any legal action against providers of TE for the sole reason that the academic standards of the diplomas that they award are poor.

According to that short overview, we can draw up some common problems which require common measures.

**What are the main problems encountered by recognition bodies with TE qualifications?**

As Professor Sergio Machado wrote in his document on TE for the meeting of General Directors of Higher Education in EU (Aveiro April 2000), the recognition of institutions and programmes for academic and/or professional purposes is a very complex subject involving conflicting interests at several levels, between the protection of traditional diplomas and professions and the needs in relation to mobility and market.

This is even more true with the recognition of TE qualifications.

It is clear that, from a recognition body point of view, the problems are especially those connected to imported TE, on which this presentation will be focused.

This is normal because as recognition bodies we need to assess foreign diplomas.

But we should also pay attention on exported TE especially in the European area, because, the exported TE qualifications of one country will have to be assessed by the other European countries.

So, as recognition bodies, the Enic/Naric centres have to cooperate and work at both sides of the TE «phenomenon».

**1. Confusion on definitions**

There is much confusion concerning exactly what constitutes TE and how to classify different sorts of TE education providers.
There is no agreement about what to include in it, although it seems clear that TE should be clearly distinguished from mobility and cooperation.

The Enic network produced a set of definitions, listed as: « all types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the educational system of a state different from the state in which it operates or may operate independently of any national system ».

TE can vary according to the institutional or organizational arrangements resulting from the specific delivery mechanisms chosen and from the qualifications awarded (academic or professional) and their quality.

Examples of TE can be classified in 3 main groups according to the fact that the qualifications awarded may have some chances, or no chances, to be recognized:

a. recognition almost always granted:

- **programme articulations**: inter-institutional arrangements whereby two or more institutions agree to define jointly a study programme in terms of study credits and credits transfers, so that students pursuing their studies in one institution have their credits recognized by the other and accepted for transfer in order to continue their studies.

  In general, that kind of arrangements does not cause recognition problems, as far as they are concluded between recognized institutions belonging to national systems.

b. recognition sometimes granted:

- **franchising**: the process whereby a higher education institution from a certain country grants another institution from another country the right to provide its programmes/qualifications in the host country.

  Sometimes the franchised institution provides the first part of the educational programme which can be recognized as partial credits towards a qualification at the « mother » institution.

  The franchised institution is not always recognized in the host country even if the mother institution is recognized in that country.

- **Branch campus**: campus established by a higher education institution from one country in another country to offer its own educational programmes/qualifications irrespective of the students’ provenience.

  The diplomas awarded may not be recognized in the host country even if the mother institution is recognized in that country.
- **off-shore institution**: autonomous institution established in a host country but belonging, in terms of its organisation and contents to the educational system of another country without having a campus in the country to which it belongs.

That kind of TE is seldom recognized in the host country. It may be accredited by regional or national accrediting commissions in the U.S.

Some may have articulation agreements with other educational institutions in the country to which they belong.

- **distance-learning**: wide range of learning activities characterised by the separation of the learner from the teacher. They may or may not belong to the higher education system of a given country.

  c. **recognition almost never granted**:

  - **non-official higher education**: higher education activities operating in parallel to and outside the official higher education system of the host country.

The qualifications are very seldom recognized because the provider operates outside any official education system.

- **international institution**: institution offering « international » programmes/qualifications that are not part of a specific educational system.

They may have branch campuses in several countries, are seldom recognized in host countries but may be accredited by a national body in the US or have articulation agreements with American or British universities.

- **corporate universities**: organise their own higher education institutions or study programmes offering qualifications not belonging to any national system of higher education.

- **virtual universities**: the only contact with the student is by remote means.

  Very often, there is no diploma as such delivered by virtual universities: in that case, there is no problem of recognition!

Even when a diploma is awarded, recognition will generally be refused on the basis of recognition criteria which often refer to regular class attendance and compliance with ordinary academic regulations.

2. **Lack of accurate information**
Almost no country maintains statistical data on TE.

It remains very difficult to obtain accurate information that can be trusted, first because, until recently, TE was considered as a « marginal » phenomenon by the European governments and higher education institutions. Today, it seems that the increasing number and variety of providers create another kind of difficulty, especially when the providers do entertain confusion about their status.

The main information that recognition bodies need to obtain in case of TE qualifications are:

- can the recognition/accreditation of the mother institution be transferred to the franchised institution or the branch campus?
- in what ways is it ensured that quality is the same as in the mother institution?
- are the programmes really identical to the ones in the mother institution?
- are the admission requirements comparable to those of the mother institution?
- what guarantee can be given on the quality of the teaching staff?

3. Lack of specific regulation

As Stephen Adam wrote in his report « current national and international regulation on transnational education takes many forms and is, in consequence, fragmented, disorganised, uncoordinated, often voluntary and ineffective. (...) »

Where such controls are present, their strength is dependent on the particular nature of transnational education in question (… )

So it is important to distinguish different types and facets of transnational education in terms of their amenability to control.

As far as recognition is concerned, 3 main possibilities do exist:

- no legal/normative instruments exist and no « good practice » has been developed in dealing with TE,
- legal/normative acts do exist but no « good practice » in their implementation has been developed,
- attempts to institute appropriate practices have been made but without any legal basis.
The first situation, probably the most conservative one, just denies any possibility of recognition for TE qualifications.

This situation is very often the case where the state or a public authority deals with recognition and adopts a protectionist attitude against all « non-traditional » education.

It will be less and less possible to maintain this attitude with the increase of the phenomenon and the globalization of education which will force governments to, at least, establish transparent rules on recognition of TE degrees.

In addition to that it can be counterproductive not to have a specific regulation for the recognition of TE, because, as our colleague, Steven Hunt, from the US Enic says, « in law, without a rule, there can be no violation. ».

Unless a country has laws that regulate non-state and private or non-traditional education practices and services, there seems to be no way to deal with TE.

National authorities should recognize that the best way to control the TE phenomenon is to have the legal capacity to regulate it, which allows them to demand transparency as a condition of recognition.

The second situation creates, at least, a legal framework, but which is relatively restrictive.

In that context, recognition will often be granted as far as the TE provider belongs to the national system of higher education of the home country.

In the third case, recognition of TE will be treated case by case, with the general principle that recognition will be granted if the provider is recognized or accredited in the country of origin. Recognition, however, can also be granted without that requirement. It is probably the most flexible attitude but it can lead to unfair treatment and arbitrary decisions.

When TE qualifications are only recognized under provision that the provider is recognized in the country where it operates, it may create rather ambiguous situations.

For example, in Norway, the so-called « European University » is not recognized.

However, as it is recognized in Spain, degrees awarded by the European university in Spain can be considered for recognition.

4. Lack of quality assurance control mechanisms applying to TE qualifications and programmes:

This seems to be one of the most important reason for the non-recognition of TE.
Where there is no guarantee or traditional system of reference or control, such education is seen as problematic and therefore, suspect.

The problem seems to be less important when the programmes/qualifications offered by TE are integrated in the official system of the awarding institution’s country.

But the franchising agreement may not guarantee a sufficient control of the awarding institution on the supervision of teaching and examinations, the quality of staff and resources or the protection of students.

In that case, it seems that a European type of quality assurance mechanism would be a good thing, because the TE providers are able to operate in all countries. So, having common rules seems to be a good idea to protect the students against bad quality TE providers.

Listing the main problems makes it easy to know, if not which measures, at least, in which areas, measures need to be taken to cope with the problem of recognition of TE’s qualifications.

●●What do we need:

Whatever the point of view one can have on it, it must be recognized that TE is not a temporary phenomenon and that it will, probably, develop more and more in the future.

TE can be compare with ET: both are extra-territorial or extra-terrestrial phenomena, but, ET, at least, wants to go back home!

A refusal to recognize Transnational Education and find ways of dealing with it, would, in the short or medium terms, lead to problems even more difficult to solve.

The different types of TE present different characteristics. Some are acceptable for recognition, some not. The problem is to distinguish the good TE products from the bad ones in term of quality. This means to find reliable information and to adopt common measures.

1. Reliable Information
The sharing of information and experience is seen as one of the easiest measures that can be adopted in a short term period.

In that context, the Enic/Naric centres can have a important role, although their capacity to play a key role in information is sometimes subject to some criticism, partly due to their different status in the different member states.

A possible action could be for the individual centres to collect accurate information on institutions operating in their countries and on the kind of degrees they offer.

Some see in the use of Diploma Supplement by TE providers a way to enhance the transparency of the awarded qualifications.

This is probably, in principle, a good idea, but which body will control the accuracy of the information given by TE providers?

Here, again, it seems that existing networks such as Enic and ENQA can play a major role.

2. Convergence of the policies of member states.

The recognition of a provider of transnational education in one country, especially in the framework of EU, may entail consequences for other countries as well: it may entail the obligation to recognize certain qualifications awarded by the provider, either on the basis of recognition directives (it seems that TE qualifications are not excluded from the Professional recognition Directives) or through inter-institutional or inter-governmental agreements.

For example, when a « private » TE provider, operating in a country where its qualifications cannot be recognized, concludes an agreement with a recognized institution from another country, its qualifications might obtain, through the « validation » of the recognized institution, a recognition in the country of origin!

That kind of drifts reinforce the need of a concerted answer at the European level.

Concerted mechanisms need to be found to deal with good TE qualifications but even more to protect the students against bad TE providers or against extra-European
providers for which not sufficient information is available: going after the diploma mills will require better international cooperation.

As written in Stephen Adam’s report « concerted national and international actions could be taken to prohibit degree mills bogus and fraudulent transnational institutions and their associated awards. Steps should be taken to make all bogus institutions illegal and thus protect consumers and the interests of legitimate education providers ».

Information and implementation of good practice at a European level need to be reinforced in addition to national regulations which are important but will become less relevant due to the rapid development of Information Technology.

3. Coordinated action by European quality agencies.

The link between recognition and quality assessment must be strengthened.

The difficulties encountered in the recognition of TE qualifications are due partly to the lack of specific national regulations but, also to the absence of common guidelines and approaches to quality control aspects.

Purely national accreditation of TE may lead to a kind of chaos with different countries producing different and sometimes conflicting decisions about the same qualification delivered by a given provider of TE.

As Guy Haug said in his presentation on TE during the meeting of the General Directors of Higher Education from EU (Aveiro, April 2000), « as a consequence, in the absence of a trustworthy accreditation system, structure or body at the European level, institutions would in all likelihood seek solutions from three different directions:

- through the creation of private, possibly self-serving accreditation bodies for private universities and other providers;

- through « international » accreditation agencies/procedures independent from national systems, (…),

- or through US accreditation agencies (…) ».

And that could lead to bad practices related to the assessment of the quality of qualifications awarded through TE provision arrangements.

The European network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education can play an important role in elaborating good practices.

Coordination in that matter is necessary, which does not imply at all to create any kind of European quality assessment agency.
4. Action of the Enic network

The Enic network started to work on TE by establishing a working group in June 1997, during the annual meeting in Helsinki.

The working group produced the « Code of good practice in the provision of TE » that has been approved by the Enic network at its 2000 meeting and will be submitted for adoption to the Lisboa Recognition Convention Committee at its next meeting in Riga next June.

The Code provides a set of principles in the form of statements with a normative value, with the objective « to be a source of reference to the quality assurance and evaluation of TE programmes, to contribute to consumer protection for students, employers and other stakeholders and to facilitate the recognition of qualifications ».

To summarize those principles, TE arrangements :

- should comply with the national legislation regarding higher education in both receiving and sending countries,
- academic quality and standards should be at least comparable to those of the awarding institution as well as to those of the receiving country,
- the policy and the mission statements of TE institutions should be published,
- information given by the awarding institution should be appropriate, consistent and reliable,
- staff members should be proficient in terms of qualification, teaching, research and other professional experience,
- the awarding institution should be responsible for issuing the qualifications and should provide clear and transparent information, through the Diploma Supplement,
- the admission of students should be equivalent to those of the same or comparable programmes delivered by awarding institution,
- the academic workload should be that of comparable programmes in the awarding institution, any difference in this respect requiring a clear statement on its rationale and its consequences for the recognition of qualifications.

One of the intentions with the Code of good practice in the Provision of TE is that education programmes which do not comply with the Code will generally not be given recognition.
It is obvious that, as good as it is, the Code is not sufficient as such to solve the problems in the field of TE qualifications recognition, first because a lot of countries still do not use it and secondly because some TE providers might never respect the guidelines that it contains.

In addition to the necessity to encourage the implementation and the use of the Code of «good practice», there is still need for action for the Enic network, such as:

- continue the reflection and analysis in order to keep up with major new developments in TE,

- share information and improve existing knowledge,

- make recommendations for dealing with practical recognitions problems posed by qualifications awarded by TE higher educations/programmes.

Apart from the «Code of good practice» the Enic/Naric networks have taken part in the elaboration of other legal framework and «tools» to facilitate academic recognition.

Even if those tools were not set up to deal with TE qualifications, they can serve as guidelines.


Although the Convention mentions that only the qualifications delivered by institutions belonging to the system of a Party have to be taken into consideration, it provides a procedural and methodological framework which can be applied to the recognition of any higher education qualification.

The draft «recommendation on criteria and procedures for the assessment of foreign qualifications and periods of study» (which will be submitted to the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee for adoption in June 2001) constitutes also a set of guidelines for credential evaluators whose principles could apply for recognition of TE qualifications.

Malmö - 2 March 2001
MEETING OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP ON “BOLOGNA BEYOND 2010”

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 24 – 25 June 2008

Outcome of proceedings

OPENING AND WELCOME

The representative of the host country Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zenan Šabanac, and the Chair of the BFUG, Darinka Vrečko (Slovenia), welcomed the participants to the extraordinary BFUG meeting in Sarajevo and opened the meeting. Apologies had been received from Armenia and Spain.

The meeting started with a speech by Sredoje Nović, Minister for Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He briefly explained the complex higher education system of Bosnia and Herzegovina and informed BFUG about the ongoing higher education reforms to implement the Bologna Process objectives. Those reforms include a national action plan for recognition, the development of a national qualifications framework and the establishment of a national quality assurance agency (for details see the Minister’s PowerPoint presentation in annex). The Minister concluded by encouraging BFUG to develop a new European vision in response to new challenges (such as globalisation, diversity of systems and institutions, demographic changes, and the need to secure adequate financing) and to do so in partnership with all stakeholders.

INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT

Voting on the 6 remaining places in the advisory board for the selection and monitoring of the independent assessment of the Bologna Process

At the BFUG meeting in Brdo it had been agreed that the European Commission would be assisted by an advisory board in the selection and monitoring of the independent assessment and that this advisory board would consist of ten members (seven country representatives, plus one representative each from ESU, EUA and EURASHE). At least one of the country representatives was to come from a country that joined the Bologna Process in or after 2003. Since Russia was the only one of the ten candidates to meet this criterion, Victor Chistokhvalov (Russia) was automatically elected and a vote was organised to designate the six remaining country representatives to join the advisory board.

Outcome of the vote

Austria (Gottfried Bacher) 63 votes
Bulgaria (Svetomira Apostolova--Kaloyanova) 20 votes
Croatia (Luka Juroš) 53 votes
Czech Republic (Věra Šťastná) 62 votes
Denmark (Helle Otte) 48 votes
France (Elie Cohen, substitute Hélène Lagier) 44 votes
Germany (Peter Greisler) 68 votes
Romania (Mihai Korka) 48 votes
Spain (José-Ginés Mora) 30 votes

As a result, the advisory board will be composed as follows:

The Chair encouraged the participants to use the opportunity of the Sarajevo meeting for an open discussion and to do so in an objective, critical and open-minded way. She explained that the purpose of the Sarajevo meeting was precisely to give all BFUG members the chance to express their ideas. Agreement on the (draft) report and ultimately also the resulting communiqué would follow at later BFUG meetings.

The Vice-Chair Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg) then explained the way the working group discussions would be organised and reminded BFUG to focus on issues to be taken up jointly at European level to advance higher education to make a meaningful contribution to society.

For the parallel sessions, the participants of the BFUG meeting were divided into three groups, chaired by Věra Štastná (Czech Republic), Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe) and Torben Kornbech Rasmussen (Denmark) respectively. The discussions took place in three stages:

1. finalising the initial agenda
2. new challenges
3. support structure

**Working group sessions on finalising the agenda and new challenges**

The brainstorming sessions on existing action lines and new challenges used the same methodology to reach a prioritisation of action lines and challenges and to identify the corresponding key measures. At the beginning of the first session, participants were asked to write down the major challenge they see on the way to realising the EHEA within the existing Bologna action lines, as well as the measures they propose to tackle this challenge. On the basis of the input given by the participants, each working group identified three priorities among the challenges related to the existing action lines (finalising the initial agenda), and for each of them proposed adequate solutions and measures. In the same way, the second and third sessions identified and prioritised new challenges for the EHEA in the next decade as well as the solutions and key measures required.

The three working groups identified the following priorities and measures (for details see the presentations of the working group chairs, which are annexed to this report):

**Finalising the initial agenda: priorities and measures proposed**

1) **Mobility of students and staff** (3 groups)
   - “Mobility windows” in every curriculum (3x)
   - Portable grants and loans (2x)
   - Better data collection (2x)
   - Erasmus-type funding at EHEA level
   - Institutional partnerships and joint degrees
   - Visas and work permits
   - Recognition
   - Political commitment to mobility for all, e.g. setting a benchmark or adopting a Mobility Code for the EHEA

2) **Social dimension, aiming at equity in access, progress and completion** (3 groups)
   - Benchmarks for participation in higher education
Data collection
Sharing of experiences
Developing lifelong learning paths
Providing a high quality learning environment and good social and working conditions
Establishing a link to secondary education (access policy)
Developing a sound social dimension policy for the EHEA

3) Qualifications frameworks (2 groups)
- Developing a common understanding and vision (2x)
- Developing learning outcomes (2x)
- Cultural change required
- Training of and communication with practitioners
- Developing NQFs with stakeholder involvement
- Link to quality and quality assurance
- Moving from structure to practice

4) Recognition (linked to quality assurance as a basis for trust) (1 group)
- Coherence in recognition procedures and decisions (full implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention)
- Automatic recognition if a degree is related to a certified QF level

5) Curriculum reform / student-centred learning were identified by two groups as "transitional issues", belonging partly to finalising the initial agenda and partly also being a new challenge. As we will see below, both were also mentioned several times as measures to address some of the other new challenges.
- The real implementation of “Bologna” at ground level
- Focus on subject areas
- Tuning methodology
- Thematic networks
- Key challenge: move from structures to practice

All three working groups called for interaction with other policy areas to address issues outside the competences of education ministers (e.g. mobility-related issues like visas, work permits, pension arrangements).

New challenges and measures proposed

1) Global competitiveness/role of European HE in the global context (3 groups)
- Finalising the Bologna agenda
- Implementing the Strategy on European Higher Education in a Global Setting
- Balancing cooperation and competition; strengthening North-South cooperation; Working towards a globally engaged European higher education
- Improving conditions for quality research in HEIs and connecting EHEA and ERA
- Innovating curricula to adapt them to new challenges
- Furthering the role of higher education in developing intercultural awareness
- Addressing issues of new forms of provision
- Defining the characteristics of European higher education / the EHEA

2) Demography / lifelong learning (2 groups)
- Widening access and diversifying the body of learners
- Student-centred learning
- Flexible learning paths connected to QFs at European and national level
- Mainstreaming lifelong learning in universities, which may require changes in the legislative framework as well as changes in society more generally
- Fair recognition of prior learning

3) Educate creative graduates able to function in the knowledge society (1 group)
- Student-centred learning
- Lifelong learning pathways
- Generic skills / interdisciplinarity
Better match between demand for graduates per discipline and study choices
Research methodology as part of the curriculum from early on
Skills to deal with continuously changing technologies
Mobility

4) Redefine the roles and responsibility of actors (2 groups) (with particular emphasis on public authorities) with regard to:
- Quality development and assurance
- Funding framework
- Governance / structures
- Institutional autonomy and accountability
- Diversity of missions and institutions

It was proposed to work towards a policy statement of Ministers on this issue.

5) Resources to finalise the Bologna agenda and to meet the new challenges (1 group)
- Complementing public funding with other and diversified sources of funding
- Performance-based funding mechanisms
- There was no consensus whether or not a benchmark for investment in higher education should be introduced and whether or not funding would be an issue to be addressed by Ministers of Education in their next communiqué.

The Vice-Chair Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg) summarised the discussion as follows:
- The instruments are multipurpose instruments and can address various challenges.
- The Bologna Process needs to move from structure to content - to curriculum reform, including student-centred learning, which emerged as one of the key messages of the debate in Sarajevo. It exists as both an objective and a tool but a lot of work still needs to be done to clarify what exactly is meant, and how it should work.
- The issue of research needs to be taken up further in the Bologna Process but this also requires further work.
- Benchmarking and sharing experience were proposed as two methods for future cooperation within the Bologna Process. At the Paris meeting BFUG will have to decide in which areas to opt for benchmarking and in which areas to opt for sharing experience.
- The interaction of higher education policy with other areas of public policy also needs to be addressed. This also has important consequences for the way countries and organisations work together in the Bologna Process.
- BFUG needs to ensure that the collective memory of the Bologna Process does not get lost.
- Finally, the Bologna Process should use a language that is easily and commonly understood.

Support structures
Following the discussions on the content of future Bologna cooperation, BFUG discussed the structures required to support the envisaged cooperation – first in the three working groups and then again in the plenary. The Vice-Chair summarised the discussion as follows:

- There was a general consensus that by and large the existing support structures worked well and only small modifications were necessary.
- BFUG agreed that Ministers should continue to meet on a regular basis to monitor progress and to maintain the momentum of the process, with the first of such meetings after 2010 to take place in 2012. No agreement was reached yet whether the meetings should then take place every two or every three years. (A possible compromise solution was suggested by working group 3, see annex)
- BFUG agreed that non-EU countries should be involved in the chairmanship of the Bologna Process. BFUG should explore further the modalities for such involvement, whilst maintaining the link with the EU Presidency.
- There also appeared to be agreement on the desirability of a permanent website with a neutral name but the practicalities still need to be worked out.
- The need for a Secretariat was confirmed. BFUG agreed that there should be a link to the next host country/countries and that the Secretariat should by preference be internationally composed. It should continue to work on the basis of rotation but
issues of continuity also have to be addressed. Again, further work is needed to clarify the details.

- The Board should be kept with updated terms of reference and possibly a new name.
- The question of how the need to interact with other policy areas would be reflected in the follow-up structures had not been discussed in the working groups. A proposal will be prepared for the Paris meeting.

**Next steps**

On the basis of the outcomes of the Sarajevo BFUG meeting, Vice-Chair and Secretariat will prepare a draft of the 2009 report on Bologna Beyond 2010 for discussion at the BFUG meeting in Paris, including a chapter with draft conclusions drawn from the discussions held so far. Eventually, BFUG should agree on conclusions on the Bologna Beyond 2010 issue so that they can be integrated into the next ministerial communiqué.

The document to be discussed at the Paris meeting will be circulated by the end of July to give all BFUG members sufficient time for the necessary consultations. In preparation of the Paris meeting, BFUG members are expected to initiate comprehensive consultations and discussions within their countries and organisations, involving all stakeholders, to make sure they come to Paris with an explicit mandate reflecting the agreed position of their country or organisation.

**PROVISIONS FOR THE BOLOGNA SECRETARIAT 2009 - 2010**

Austria and Hungary as hosts of the celebration conference of 2010 had indicated that they did not intend to provide a Bologna Secretariat. Instead they suggested that the country/the countries hosting the next regular ministerial conference take over the Secretariat after the 2009 conference and indicated their willingness to send two national experts to this Secretariat.

For budgetary reasons, the preparations for hosting the Secretariat from 1 July 2009 onwards have to start in summer 2008 but the decision on the host country/countries of the next regular ministerial conference in 2012 will only be taken later. Since the Chair felt responsible for continuation of the process, she therefore proposed that the present Secretariat stay on until 1 July 2010. She asked if her proposal was acceptable to BFUG or if there were any other proposals.

In the discussion that followed, the BFUG agreed with the Chair’s proposal. The Benelux countries were formally asked to provide the Bologna Secretariat until 1 July 2010, with national experts from Austria and Hungary. The Secretariat promised to transmit the request to their respective authorities.

**MEMBERSHIP/CONSULTATIVE MEMBERSHIP/PARTNERSHIPS**

At its meeting in Brdo, on 13-14 March 2008, with a view to applications from countries outside the geographical scope of the EHEA, BFUG had asked the working group on European higher education in a global setting to prepare a proposal on the issue of cooperation based on partnership, including partnership arrangements, for the extraordinary meeting in Sarajevo. The conclusions and recommendations of the working group were annexed to the Bologna 2020 background paper.

The chair of the working group, Barbara Weitgruber (Austria), explained that the working group had come to the conclusion that it was not possible to come up with objective criteria for granting countries the status of “partner countries” or “associated countries”. The working group therefore recommended to maintain the existing criteria for membership and to find cooperation mechanisms that could offer something to those not eligible for membership. These mechanisms should be of mutual benefit and could include policy dialogue on specific issues or on the concept of the EHEA; invitations to Bologna seminars; the use of existing fora etc. The Secretariat could play a role in providing information and site visits but also in setting up a database of experts, which could be invited as speakers by interested countries.

The European Commission, which is also represented in the working group, agreed with most of the conclusions and recommendations but would like to offer countries that are not eligible
to join the Bologna Process but that nevertheless introduce the Bologna reforms some kind of acknowledgement for their efforts. Before the meeting, the Commission had circulated the proposal to do so by granting those countries the status of “associated country”. During the meeting, the Commission acknowledged that a different term would have to be found as associated membership would give a wrong signal that associated membership could be a preparatory status that ultimately could lead to full membership.

The discussion that followed made clear that agreement existed on the following points:
- The existing criteria for membership should be maintained.
- The decision-making structures of the Bologna Process (both ministerial conferences and BFUG) should not be opened up to countries that are not members of the Process.
- It should be avoided to raise false expectations among countries.
- Cooperation with countries outside the EHEA is more important than ever. The question that needs to be addressed is not whether to cooperate but how to best cooperate.
- Cooperation should be open to all countries that are interested and should be cooperation among equal partners.
- Implementation of the Strategy on European Higher Education in a Global Setting and information to other countries how they could cooperate with Bologna countries and the EHEA as a whole.

Proposals that need to be explored further:
- A forum for cooperation could be set up with experts from Bologna countries as well as from countries outside the EHEA.
- The Bologna Process should be represented in events worldwide. For this purpose, the Secretariat should keep track of relevant events and BFUG should mandate people to represent Bologna at such events, if possible as speakers.

It was agreed that the issue of cooperation with countries outside the EHEA would be taken further by the next Presidency and that a proposal would be prepared for the BFUG meeting in Paris.

**INFORMATION BY THE INCOMING PRESIDENCY**

BFUG was informed that the three main priorities of the incoming French Presidency in the field of higher education would be lifelong learning, mobility and quality assurance. The meeting of Directors General on 8 September 2008 would focus on lifelong learning, in connection with the LLL charter which is being prepared by EUA. The conference on quality assurance on 9-10 September 2008 (Strasbourg) would focus on aspects like the link between institutional policy and quality of programmes and on linking evaluation of education with evaluation of research. Invitations will be sent in the early weeks of July. A seminar on student mobility will take place on 4-5 November 2008 (Nancy).
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