

SHIFTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE  
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPEAN NAZARENE COLLEGE

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*Introduction*

Charles Handy, a London-based author and broadcaster, explains the importance of intelligence in his international bestseller, *The Age of Paradox*. Handy asserts that wealth was once measured in land and material possessions, but the new form of wealth or property is intelligence (19). Handy continues, “Singapore, which calls itself The Intelligent Island, recognizes that the traditional sources of wealth and comparative advantage—land, raw materials, money, and technology—can all be bought when and if needed, *provided* one has the people with the intelligence and the know-how to apply them” (20).

What Handy has identified is a global trend towards a knowledge-based economy within a technological age of information and communication technologies. For a long time, corporate chairmen have been saying that their real assets are their employees, but few of them really mean it. According to Handy, that may be about to change. The means of production are now literally owned by the workers, because those means exist in their heads and at their fingertips (18). The crucial key to future wealth is education (19).

Charles Handy is not the only person to recognize the importance of intelligence and education within the global passage to a new paradigm based on knowledge. The intention of this paper is to explicate how the European Union is moving to meet the challenges of this new knowledge paradigm through the Lisbon Agenda and the Bologna Process and to analyze the implications these agendas have for European Nazarene College.

*The Lisbon Strategy*

In March 2000, fifteen European Union leaders met in Lisbon, Portugal, and decided to launch a far-reaching agenda to achieve high economic, social, and environmental standards within the European Union. The EU needed to define a new strategy to tackle the challenges of the knowledge revolution, globalization, the enlargement of the Union, the rapid ageing of the population, and the massive unemployment crisis which have been undermining the very fabric of European society (Jones, 247). The Lisbon Council of 2000 set a strategic goal: “to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment” (Dion, 295). The purpose of the Lisbon Agenda is to develop a particularly European model of economic efficiency and social equity which intends to bring about stronger economic growth through higher employment and productivity rates (295).

The leaders of the Lisbon Agenda realized that investment in human capital through high quality education and training is crucial to the revitalization and long-term competitiveness of the EU economy (Dion, 296-306). They concluded that the present low rate of technological progress is essentially due to a lack of investment in human capital resulting in insufficient knowledge creation (research), diffusion (education), and application (innovation) (298).

In order for the EU to be the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, the optimal functioning of education and training systems must be achieved (Dion, 300). Educational attainment and achievement are clearly associated with productivity and employment. Research suggests that an additional year of average school attainment increases economic growth by around 5% immediately and by a further 5% in the long-term. In addition, unemployment rates drop with higher educational levels reducing the related social costs. By raising educational attainment by one year, earnings rise by 10%. For the Lisbon team, these statistics justify the role of public and private investment in education (301).

As has been demonstrated, education and training have emerged as the core of the Lisbon conclusions. At Stockholm in February 2001, the education ministers were invited to reflect on the contribution of education and training as a central engine in reaching the Lisbon goals. The education ministers agreed on three overall objectives: to improve the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems, to ensure that they are accessible to all, and to open up education and training to the wider world. (Dion, 302). These broad objectives were further developed in thirteen more concrete objectives which include increasing investment, halving the number of young people with only lower secondary education, defining basic skills for the lifelong learning agenda, creating more transparency in the recognition of qualifications and periods of study and training, and developing a common format for credits (Ertl, 14).

### *The Bologna Process*

The Lisbon Strategy can be regarded as a turning point in education. It instigated a process of unionization toward the creation of a particularly European educational space. The agenda set in Lisbon is being put into place through intergovernmental activities and agreements. For the purpose of this paper, we will focus on the Bologna process, which aims at the creation of a European higher education area and fits into the broader framework of the Lisbon objectives (Ertl, 14).

In the year 1999, the education ministers from twenty-nine European countries met in Bologna to produce a joint declaration—the Bologna Declaration—to establish a European area of higher education by 2010. The process originated from the recognition that in spite of valuable differences, European higher education systems were facing common internal and external challenges related to the growth and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, the shortage of skills in key areas, the expansion of private and transnational education, etc. The aim of the Bologna Process is to “create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European

higher education” (“The Bologna Declaration,” n.p.). The original declaration involved six objectives.

### *Transparency*

First, a common framework of readable and comparable degrees needed to be established. The intent was to improve international “transparency” and to facilitate academic and professional recognition of qualifications. In order to accomplish this, a system of academic grades, which are easy to read and compare, and the Diploma Supplement were introduced to supplement the national grades (*The Bologna Process*, n.p.).

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System grading scale ranks students on a statistical basis according to Bell Curve grading. The top 10% of a class will receive an *A*. The next 25% receive a *B*. The next 30% receive a *C*. The next 25% receive a *D*. The final 10% receive an *E*. Students who fail will receive an *FX* meaning that some more work is required to pass (similar to an *Incomplete*), and an *F* signifies that considerable further work would be required (“ECTS,” n.p.).

A Diploma Supplement is a document attached to a higher education diploma. It provides a judgment-free description of the nature, level, context, content, and status of the studies that were successfully completed by the individual named on the diploma. A description of the national higher education system within which the individual graduated must be attached to the Diploma Supplement as well. The Diploma Supplement has several advantages. For the student, it offers greater access to opportunities of work and further study by making the diploma more readable and easily comparable abroad. It gives a precise description of academic career, competencies, and achievements. For higher education institutions, it facilitates academic and professional recognition by making the institution more transparent. It also accommodates the rapid changes in qualifications worldwide by providing a European gauge for the qualification (“The Diploma Supplement,” n.p.).

### *Three Cycle Degree System*

Second, European higher education will standardize a system based on three cycles—bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate—in all countries. The first cycle would be geared to the employment market and would last at least three years. This would be similar to a Bachelor’s degree in the United States and the French *licence*. The second cycle would be conditional upon the completion of the first cycle and should lead to the master’s in the second cycle and the doctorate at the third cycle of study (*The Bologna Process*, n.p.).

### *ECTS*

Third, a system of accumulation and transfer of credits should be widely used. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has been adopted to fulfill this objective of the Bologna Process. The ECTS is a student-centered system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a program.

Preferably, these objectives should be specified in terms of learning outcomes and sets of competencies expressing what the student will know, understand, or be able to do after completion of the learning process. ECTS facilitates the recognition of study abroad. It makes degree programs easier to compare. It facilitates mobility and academic recognition (“ECTS,” n.p.). Credits can be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, if recognized by the receiving universities. These credits can be accumulated and transferred by students as they move between institutions, between countries, and across different forms of study (Keeling, 207).

Credits are allocated to degree programs and indicate the quantity of work each component requires. ECTS is based on the measure that 60 credits is the typical workload of a full-time student during one academic year. This amounts to 1500-1800 hours per year. One credit stands for 25-30 working hours. Student workload consists of the time required to complete all planned learning activities such as attending lectures and seminars, completing independent study, and preparing for projects and examinations. Credits are only obtained after successful completion of the work required and appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes achieved (“ECTS,” n.p.).

### *Mobility*

Fourth, students, teachers, and researchers should be given greater mobility. For students, access should be given for study and training opportunities. For teachers, researchers, and administrative staff, recognition and value should be given to periods of time spent in a European context researching, teaching, and training (*The Bologna Process*, n.p.).

### *Quality Assurance*

Fifth, educational institutions and organizations should cooperate to assure high qualities of education. This accountability will focus on inner development of quality control and external evaluation of quality applying common criteria and methodologies. Since 2003, common standards have been developed for quality assurance processes, and a European network of quality assurance agencies has been established (Keeling, 207).

### *European Dimension*

Sixth, higher education within the countries participating in the Bologna Process should have a particularly European dimension. Purposeful, progressive, successful, economically beneficial, collaborative, and international higher education is seen as a benefit for Europe. Mobility and the recognition of qualifications are viewed as key to accessing the benefits of European citizenship. Investment in the modernization and quality of universities is considered a direct investment in the future of Europe and Europeans (Keeling, 211).

### *European Nazarene College*

Over the past five years, the Bologna Process has had a decisive impact on almost all aspects of higher education in Europe (Keeling, 208). European Nazarene College

(EuNC) is feeling that impact and has decided to use this time of transition as a “jumping off point” to more effectively accomplish its mission. According to the academic catalogue, “European Nazarene College is an educational institution in the Wesleyan tradition which exists to help develop healthy, growing, reproducing, local Churches of the Nazarene by training people for active involvement in pastoral and lay ministry in local, district, regional, and global contexts, addressing the corresponding needs of churches and districts at various stages of development.” EuNC has historically aimed at the education of ministers for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Holleman, n.p.).

Traditionally, students had to meet minimum English language requirements, since all campus classes are offered in English, and had to move to EuNC to be full-time residential students to attend EuNC. In recent years, EuNC has begun the process of conforming to the Bologna Process and has simultaneously transitioned to be a “school without walls,” a school in many locations across Europe and the CIS. We will explore the implications the Bologna Process has had for the “new EuNC” as the school attempts to measure up to the six objectives of the Bologna Process.

### *Transparency*

The first objective is the establishment of a common framework of readable and comparable degrees. A common grading scale and the Diploma Supplement are the preferred solutions. EuNC does have a school-wide grading scale, which is based on percentage points, in place. EuNC is considering adoption of the use of Bell Curve grades in addition to their percentage-based grading rubric in the future. EuNC has not yet begun to use the Diploma Supplement but has intentions of doing so (Holleman, n.p.). The Diploma Supplement is formatted in a template that can be easily adapted for use in the school (“The Diploma Supplement,” n.p.).

### *Three Cycle Degree System*

The second objective is a move to a system based on three cycles—undergraduate and postgraduate—in all countries. EuNC does not offer a Master’s program, nor does it intend to offer a Master’s level program in the future. The curriculum is designed as a foundation for life-long learning. Students must attend another theological school or seminary for their Master’s degree. Therefore, EuNC does conform to the three cycle system, but it only offers the first cycle (Holleman, n.p.).

EuNC offers three programmes. The Level One Programme grants the Spiritual Formation Certificate. The programme includes a set of introductory courses and various electives and is equivalent to one full year of classes (60 ECTS). It is offered on campus and in the various learning centres. “It intends to deepen the knowledge of students in the Bible and the Christian faith and is designed to help them grow spiritually and to encourage greater involvement in the local church” (Academic Catalogue).

The Level Two Programme (120 ECTS) grants the Christian Ministry Certificate. This program meets the minimum ordination requirements in the Church of the Nazarene

as established by the International and the Regional Course of Study Advisory Committee and is offered on campus or in the learning centres. It consists of a second full year of classes built on the First Level Programme and intends to prepare students for ministry in the local church.

The third programme (240 ECTS) offered is a BA in Religion through MidAmerica Nazarene University (MNU) in Olathe, KS. It is a Liberal Arts degree and builds upon the first two levels. The affiliation with MidAmerica Nazarene University was established in 1977. Accreditation gave EuNC academic recognition and allows students to receive an accredited degree, so they can continue their studies at a postgraduate level. “This programme . . . intends to prepare students for full time ministry. It introduces them to theology as an academic discipline, allowing them to continue their studies at a Masters level. The General Education requirements needed for a Bachelor of Arts degree are integrated into this programme and applied to theology and ministry” (Academic Catalogue). EuNC offers a wide variety of emphases in preaching, pastoral care and counseling, church leadership, children, youth, and family in order to meet the needs of a maturing European Church of the Nazarene and in order to keep pace with the changes in ministry itself. The third and fourth levels of this programme are offered on campus only (Holleman, n.p.).

### *ECTS*

The third objective of Bologna is the adoption of a system of accumulation and transfer of credits. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has been adopted at EuNC. The Level One Programme is 60 ECTS, the Level Two Programme is 120 ECTS, and the BA is 240 ECTS. Moving to ECTS increased the number of work hours required for the programs. The BA has an additional 1330-1530 hours required depending on the specific emphasis. Extra-curricular activities such as mentoring, internships, and senior review are now given credit, since ECTS student workload includes all learning activities required to complete a degree (Holleman, n.p.). The campus year was extended three weeks to be able to fit in the 60 ECTS annually. This extension has enabled the school to offer what would typically be three years of full-time study for ordination as defined by the Church of the Nazarene Manual and the Eurasia Regional Course of Study Advisory Committee (RCOSAC) in just two years with one year of study equalling 1000 learning hours.

### *Mobility*

The fourth objective gives greater mobility to students, teachers, and researchers. Greater mobility *is* being offered to students and teachers at EuNC. Beginning in August 2007, the school moved to a modular system. All courses offered at the campus are in blocks of two, three, or four weeks. Students are able to take one or two classes at a time. Since the entire Level One and Two Programmes are offered on campus and at several learning centres across Europe and the CIS, resources available at the campus are being reduced and redistributed over the various learning centres so that more personnel are available to teach at the various teaching sites. Both students and teachers will have

mobility to move back and forth between the campus and the learning centres (Holleman, n.p.).

Antonie Holleman, Academic Dean of EuNC, writes,

Reasons for introducing these two [the Diploma Supplement and ECTS] have to do with supporting a greater mobility of our students to European schools or to have Nazarene European students who study at another school come to us for a semester or a year. Up to this point, it was almost impossible for EuNC students to transfer to another European school, because we were so different from all other European schools.

### *Quality Assurance*

The fifth objective is the establishment of procedures to assure a high quality of education. EuNC remains in an educational partnership with MidAmerica Nazarene (MNU) located in Olathe, Kansas. MNU is accredited through the North Central Association of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). EuNC is held accountable by MNU and this organization to meet all of the standards required for accreditation. For example, all faculty members must meet the academic qualifications of MNU. EuNC must prove that the school accomplishes the objectives of each course as stated in the syllabus. This requirement affects the writing of syllabi and the developing and grading of class assignments (Holleman, n.p.).

Learning centre curriculum and campus curriculum are academically compatible, since all learning centres are accredited. In an attempt to assure quality, the school is developing standardized syllabi that will be contextualized and used in all learning centres. Each course has one common assignment that will be exactly the same in every learning centre and on the campus. Teachers turn in common assignment data sheets to the central administration allowing the school to do comparisons between students from various learning centres and the campus. Each course is evaluated both by students and the teacher. All of this information is assessed annually at an all-faculty meeting where adjustments are made together. As a result, uniformity is being established between classes offered on campus and in the learning centres. Despite the high level of education in each learning centre, the NCA mandates that 51% of all BA credit needs to be residential. Therefore, learning centre students must transfer to the campus for the final two levels of the BA (Holleman, n.p.)

EuNC has a solid quality control mechanism in place at all times so that it will have sufficient evidence/proof of its educational claims. Such quality control from the center campus requires more paperwork. Therefore, EuNC bought new educational software and brought in additional administrative personnel to aid in efficiency and effectiveness and to further connect all students to their one “school without walls.”

Every ten years the HLC reviews each school. MNU and EuNC will be reviewed in February 2009. In preparation for this, EuNC submitted a Self-Study Report dealing with mission and integrity; preparing for the future; student learning and effective

teaching; acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge; and engagement and service. The report reflected both the campus and the learning centres. Such assessment helps to raise the quality of education and operation (Holleman, n.p.).

### *European Dimension*

The sixth objective is that higher education would have a particularly European dimension. EuNC continues to be highly associated with America. The school is associated with a denomination which originated in the United States. Also, its BA degree is accredited through a school and organization within the U.S. Presently, the financial resources of the Church of the Nazarene within Europe are not sufficient to fully support EuNC. However, the measures being taken to conform to the Bologna Process are major steps toward becoming a more European school. In addition to the measures already described, the school intends to increase the European input in the board of trustees. The school rector and academic dean are currently Europeans. Also, EuNC aims to prepare students for graduate studies with the hope of building an indigenous faculty in the various learning centres and on campus. At least half of the current faculty members are Europeans (Holleman, n.p.).

Despite its American ties, EuNC *is* a European school and not a German, Swiss, or American school, because it serves students from all parts of Europe. According to the academic catalogue, this international college consistently has a campus community formed of students from an average of 15 different countries and learning centres in more than 15 European countries.

### *Conclusion*

European Nazarene College is well on its way to full conformity with the Bologna Process which fits within the wider Lisbon Agenda. Adapting to the Bologna Process has addressed many needs that EuNC was already facing in this age of globalization and technology. Within the last decade, off-campus education has grown tremendously, and more and more non-traditional students have attended classes on campus. EuNC has adopted the slogan “One School, Many Locations” as a summary of its strategy to build a school that is not confined by walls but is a network of relationship that crosses cultural and national boundaries (Holleman, n.p.). Many of the objectives of the Bologna Process will aid in this type of “school without walls” by providing greater mobility, adaptability, and academic validity to EuNC. The process has provided incentive for evaluation and improvement of the education being offered. The steps taken in recent years will help to aid EuNC as it endeavors to be a dynamic, outward-looking European institution with the capacity to respond to and to engage with the world of today.

I, personally, serve as the theological education coordinator for the Church of the Nazarene’s Western Mediterranean Field (Portugal, Spain, France, and Italy). In 2008, we launched EuNC’s new curriculum in Portugal (Coimbra) and Spain (Madrid and Barcelona) beginning with “Introduction to College Studies” where students are introduced and connected to the wider school and continuing into beginning theology courses. Each learning centre has 3-5 courses planned for 2009, which will be taught by

professors working within the European context. This new expansion of EuNC into learning centres has opened the doors of opportunity for many called and passionate people to pursue theological education and ministry, because they can now study in their own languages and can study part-time without quitting their jobs or moving their families. In fact, there were over eighty students participating in EuNC classes in the learning centre located in Spain this past year! The quality assurance that EuNC provides has also considerably raised the level of education that students are receiving when compared to former programs of ministerial study. Not only is EuNC's adaptation to the Bologna Process making it a more European school, but it is also allowing the school to more effectively accomplish its mission of training people for active involvement in ministry.

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