

USA denkt na over Bologna

De invoering van BaMa blijft niet onbesproken in de USA. Na de Londense conferentie en de vooraankondiging van de post-Bologna congres in Leuven 2009 voert men ook daar het debat over de erkenning van de driejarige wo-bachelorsopleidingen.

'What if you plan to do a Master's degree in the US, after your European three-year bachelor?'zo analyseert Eric Beerkens van de universiteit van Sydney. 'According to Daniel Denecke of the US Council of Graduate Studies, resistance to recognizing three-year degrees at American graduate schools is rampant, although there were some trends toward acceptance of the new European model:

-29 percent said they did not accept three- year undergraduate year degrees in 2005; that number dropped to 18 percent in 2006.

-in 2005, 9 percent said they'd offer provisional acceptance to applicants with three-year degrees, a number that fell to 4 percent in 2006.

-the percentage of universities that indicated they'd evaluate the degree for its equivalence rose from 40 to 49 percent in the year, while the percentage of institutions that consider a student's competency on an individual basis increased from 22 to 29 percent.

But in Europe academics are also debating the preparatory value of the three-year degree in itself. David Crosier, program director for the European University Association: "Although things are changing quickly, there's still a sense among many, that everyone in a university who gets a bachelor's should go on and get a master's as well. This is maybe a problematic issue, given that the master's was developed to be a specific cycle with its own goals, and that those goals should be built around the labor market so that people will have sufficient skills to move out of higher education if they want to"

It touches a few fundamental issue. First of all, is three years of higher education enough to enter the labor market? Like Crosier said and other surveys have shown, both employers and students in Europe still see the four (3+1) year master's degree as the standard. This actually reduces the Bologna reform to some extra flexibility in the last year. On the other hand, such changes need time...

The other question it brings forward: is a three year European Bachelor's degree equivalent to a four year US Bachelor's degree? European programmes are usually specialised from the beginning, while the US degrees provide more general education. It is true that US students receive more general education in their university studies.

Whether that is necessary to 'catch up' or whether this means that US students will have a broader body of knowledge, I don't know. Most probably it depends very much on the college that they attend (and the high school they attended before that). At the same time, it is an illusion to think that with the harmonisation of degrees, the degrees in all European countries and all European universities will be of the same standard.

Beerkens' weblog over ontwikkeling in het HO in de Pacific, Azië en wereldwijd is de lezers van ScienceGuide aanbevolen!