

Opportunities and Drawbacks of Implementing the Bologna Process in Kurdistan Higher Education Universities: A Regional Review

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Abstract

This review paper examines the adoption and implementation of the Bologna Process across higher education institutions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Employing a secondary data review approach, the study synthesizes findings from institutional reports, policy documents, and empirical research conducted at universities in Sulaimani, Erbil, Duhok, Zakho, Halabja, Soran, Garmian, and Raparin. The analysis reveals several opportunities arising from the Bologna Process, including curriculum reform towards student-centered learning, the adoption of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), improved quality assurance mechanisms, and enhanced potential for international academic collaboration. Despite these advancements, the study identifies significant challenges such as inconsistent policy coordination, inadequate digital infrastructure, faculty resistance to pedagogical change, and limited institutional capacity in quality assurance. These issues hinder the full integration of Bologna principles across the region. Based on the findings, the paper proposes key recommendations: standardizing policy frameworks, investing in digital and administrative infrastructure, expanding faculty training programs, and strengthening institutional governance. These strategies aim to promote a more coherent and sustainable implementation of the Bologna Process, contributing to the ongoing modernization of higher education in the Kurdistan Region.

Keywords: Higher Education Reform, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Curriculum Development, Quality Assurance

How to cite: Opportunities and Drawbacks of Implementing the Bologna Process in Kurdistan Higher Education Universities: A Regional Review. (2025). International Journal of Pedagogy and Learning Community (IJPLC), 2(3). <https://doi.org/10.24036/26>



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INTRODUCTION

The Bologna Process aims to harmonize higher education standards across Europe by introducing a common credit system (ECTS), enhancing quality assurance, and promoting student and faculty mobility. The Kurdistan Region began partial adoption of this system post-2016, with stronger momentum from 2020 due to EU-funded projects such as APPRAIS and Erasmus+. These initiatives have encouraged regional institutions to align governance, curricula, and assessment

practices with European standards. The Bologna Process is built upon several key principles aimed at enhancing the quality and coherence of higher education across Europe. One of its central goals is the development of learning outcomes and student competencies, ensuring that graduates acquire knowledge and skills that are comparable and relevant throughout the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It also emphasizes the importance of academic mobility by promoting the mutual recognition of qualifications, allowing students to study and transfer credits seamlessly between institutions across different countries. Additionally, the process advocates for the implementation of robust quality assurance systems to maintain high academic standards. Finally, it encourages the reform and modernization of curricula to ensure they are up-to-date, relevant, and aligned with both academic and labor market needs (Huisman, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2022).

The establishment of a unified higher education area in Europe emerged through collaborative efforts among European governments. This collective vision was formalized in the Bologna Declaration of 1999, which laid the foundation for the design and implementation of the Bologna Process. While initially intended for European nations, the declaration also emphasized the broader goal of influencing global higher education standards (Bologna, 1999). As stated in the declaration, one of the core objectives of the Bologna Process is to enhance the international competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education systems, making them more comparable and compatible on a global scale (Marquand & Scott, 2018; Matt et al., 2022).

As noted by Mngo (2019), the Bologna Process seeks to foster opportunities that support the development of both educational and socio-economic partnerships. This includes initiatives that promote the exchange of knowledge, the transfer of technology, and the sharing of institutional resources among participating countries and institutions.

Opportunities for Implementing the Bologna Process

The implementation of the Bologna Process has introduced promising developments in higher education across the Kurdistan Region. The Bologna Process represents a comprehensive reform movement designed to enhance the quality, comparability, and compatibility of higher education systems across Europe and affiliated regions. Introduced in 1999, this initiative has catalyzed the transformation of traditional academic structures into more flexible, student-centered, and outcomes-based models.

In the Kurdistan Region, the implementation of the Bologna Process has marked a significant shift in higher education practices. Despite various challenges, the process has opened the door to numerous opportunities, including curriculum development, modernization of assessment methods, improvement in quality assurance mechanisms, and greater alignment with international standards. Notably, institutions such as Sulaimani University have begun to integrate key Bologna principles, including competency-based education and active learning strategies, aimed at equipping students with both academic knowledge and essential life skills (Banseng et al., 2021; Hazizah et al., 2024).

Khalid (2022) identifies critical opportunities for reform. His findings suggest that structured pedagogical training, especially that aligns with Bologna principles, can significantly enhance teacher engagement and instructional quality. Therefore, regional educational authorities should invest in sustained professional development programs and provide adequate teaching resources. Additionally, institutions should consider non-financial incentives such as promotion pathways, recognition systems, and involvement in curriculum design to motivate teaching staff.

Abdulrahman and Sharif (2022) proposed several opportunities to improve the Bologna Process implementation in Kurdistan's universities. One recommendation was to strengthen collaboration among English departments across different institutions, allowing for more cohesive planning and sharing of best practices. Additionally, the authors emphasized the need for curriculum reform to better align with the action lines of the Bologna Process. Another crucial opportunity lies in enhancing the pedagogical skills of instructors by offering targeted training

focused on student-centered learning methods. These strategies, if effectively adopted, can bridge existing gaps and lead to more meaningful application of the Bologna framework.

On the other hand, Baper (2024) underscores several key opportunities presented by the Bologna Process. The research findings suggest that course-related, social, and individual factors under the Bologna model have positively impacted students' academic performance. Moreover, the process is recognized as a comprehensive accreditation system that supports higher education quality assurance. The shift aims to promote comparability and compatibility across institutions, facilitating student mobility and regional academic integration. The study concludes that the Bologna Process, when properly implemented, holds substantial potential to enhance the quality, transparency, and international recognition of higher education in the Kurdistan Region.

The Bologna Process has also facilitated international collaboration and academic transparency. Faculty training programs in Finland and other European countries have equipped Kurdish academics with new pedagogical strategies, while digital grading platforms have enhanced institutional accountability. These developments signify important steps toward aligning Kurdistan's academic system with global standards.

Qadir et al. (2023) also highlighted several opportunities within the Bologna framework. The introduction of formative assessment elements marks a positive step toward improving academic performance and learner engagement. Moreover, aligning exam design with Bloom's taxonomy provides a strategic path to enhance students' cognitive development. The study's findings suggest that reforming assessment practices to include higher-order thinking questions can significantly contribute to more meaningful learning outcomes. Additionally, identifying the association between demographic variables and exam question levels opens avenues for targeted pedagogical interventions, which can further improve the quality and fairness of student evaluations under the Bologna system.

ALSulaifani (2024) emphasizes that Knowledge Absorptive Capacity, through dimensions such as knowledge acquisition, absorption, transformation, and exploitation, can significantly enhance Organizational Brilliance. In the context of the Bologna Process, this suggests that universities with high absorptive capacity are better positioned to adopt innovative practices, improve leadership and cognitive strategies, and elevate technological and service performance. Thus, the Bologna implementation can be seen as a catalyst for institutional brilliance, particularly when knowledge flow is efficiently managed and utilized.

Finally, Qadir (2023) also identifies several opportunities emerging from the Bologna Process at Halabja University. These include fostering a culture of quality assurance, enhancing reflective policy-making mechanisms, and promoting institutional accountability. Additionally, financial reforms implemented after the initial stages—such as revised funding structures for morning and evening study programs and adjustments to salary premiums—have significantly contributed to more sustainable and effective implementation of the Bologna Process within the university. This review paper highlights the broader impact of the Bologna Process across the region, with attention to its contributions toward institutional development, academic reform, and regional educational advancement.

Curriculum Reform and Student-Centered Learning

Hamid (2023) notes the gradual shift toward active, student-centered pedagogy in several universities, supported by EU-led training programs. Erbil Polytechnic and Cihan University have piloted soft-skills modules and capstone projects aligned with Bologna goals.

ECTS and Credit Mobility Several institutions, including Salahaddin and Sulaimani universities, have adopted ECTS credit systems, enabling transparent grading and student mobility. Sulaimani's 2024 digital Bologna platform now tracks over one million grades across 70 departments.

Quality Assurance and Accreditation The APPRAIS project helped universities such as Halabja and Zakho establish QA units and accreditation plans. External peer reviews and internal audits have increased institutional transparency.

Institutional Governance and Internationalization Strategic planning and capacity-building workshops supported by European partners have led to new governance frameworks at Erbil, Zakho, and Halabja. Erasmus+ programs have also expanded international collaborations and dual-degree pathways.

Challenges and Drawbacks

Despite its benefits, the Bologna Process has faced several obstacles in the Kurdistan Region. A recurring challenge is the lack of adequate infrastructure and technical support needed to fully implement ECTS and quality assurance measures. Ameen and Ahmed (2024), in a study at Soran University, found that students often struggled with limited access to digital tools and insufficient academic guidance.

Ade (2021) investigated the challenges faced by universities in Iraqi Kurdistan, including Erbil Polytechnic University, Soran University, and Cihan University, during the implementation of the Bologna Process. The study revealed significant obstacles such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of synchronized academic calendars, which together hinder effective adoption of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Furthermore, many academic staff reported limited awareness and understanding of Bologna policies, with disparities evident between faculties and staff qualifications. For instance, faculty members with higher qualifications exhibited greater familiarity with the process, while pure science departments faced more difficulties adapting compared to humanities faculties. Despite these challenges, Ade also identified positive signs of progress. Institutional engagement was strong, as demonstrated by active participation in conferences, workshops, and training sessions, particularly at Cihan University, which emerged as a leading example in staff awareness and policy adherence. These findings underscore the need for improved infrastructure, enhanced staff training, and better academic calendar alignment to fully realize the benefits of Bologna implementation, while highlighting existing institutional strengths that can serve as a foundation for future development. According to Qadir (2023), the implementation of the Bologna Process at Halabja University and in the broader Kurdistan Region's higher education system faces several challenges, including slow internal reforms and outdated financial procedures that hinder effective and timely adoption of Bologna standards. These systemic issues have particularly affected institutional efficiency and the ability to modernize higher education structures.

Abdulrahman and Taher (2025). Over the past seven years, universities in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) have been implementing the Bologna Process (BP) under the guidance of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR). However, a thorough academic assessment of this implementation remains limited. This study explores the effectiveness of the BP in English departments across IKR universities, focusing specifically on the challenges experienced by teaching and administrative staff. Using a qualitative methodology, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with nine instructors, five administrative personnel from four universities (University of Sulaimani, University of Halabja, Charmo University, and Soran University), as well as three members from the BP Higher Implementation Committee.

Through thematic analysis, the study identified several persistent obstacles, including overcrowded classrooms, insufficient infrastructure, and challenges in applying student-centered learning within the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) framework. Additional issues noted were excessive workloads, limited time, centralized decision-making, faculty shortages, lack of institutional autonomy, and inadequate funding. In response to these challenges, the study recommends a comprehensive strategy involving formal IKR integration into the European Higher

Education Area (EHEA), the adoption of updated quality assurance mechanisms, and greater government investment. These steps aim to improve system transparency, introduce diploma supplements, and enhance alignment with international academic standards, thereby increasing graduate employability and global recognition of qualifications. The study offers insights into strengthening Bologna Process implementation in English departments across the region.

On the other hand, Baper (2024) highlights that the transition from the traditional higher education system to the Bologna Process in the Kurdistan Region, specifically at Salahaddin University's College of Engineering, has introduced significant structural difficulties. One of the primary challenges identified is related to course selection, where students face confusion and obstacles in navigating the new modular and credit-based system. The study emphasizes that this confusion stems from systemic limitations in academic guidance and institutional readiness to adapt to Bologna standards. Additionally, the shift demands curriculum restructuring, better-informed academic advising, and more flexible administrative frameworks, all of which remain underdeveloped in some areas.

Qadir et al. (2023) identified critical limitations in the assessment practices under the Bologna Process within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Although the process emphasizes formative assessment to enhance learning outcomes, the study found that the final exam still holds a disproportionate weight in determining students' grades. This imbalance limits the practical impact of formative assessment and contradicts the student-centered principles of the Bologna model. Furthermore, the study revealed that most final exam questions were focused on lower-order thinking skills, primarily testing memorization and basic understanding. Such practices do not align with Bloom's taxonomy's higher cognitive levels, which are essential for fostering analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking skills. This overreliance on rote assessment hinders the full implementation of competency-based education as envisioned in the Bologna Process.

According to ALSulaifani (2024), despite the potential benefits, the research also indicates that challenges may arise when institutions lack mechanisms to fully absorb and exploit new knowledge frameworks like the Bologna Process. Difficulties in knowledge transformation and integration across administrative and academic levels may hinder the desired outcomes. Moreover, without strategic leadership and sufficient technological infrastructure, universities may struggle to align with the standards and expectations of the Bologna system, limiting the scope of organizational brilliance.

Infrastructure and Funding Deficits Many universities, especially in Halabja and Duhok, struggle with limited IT infrastructure and outdated administrative systems. These issues hinder full ECTS implementation and quality tracking.

Policy Coordination Gaps Saeed et al. (2023) identify fragmented pilot implementation and a lack of standardized MoHE guidelines as major obstacles. Faculty at Zakho and Erbil reported inconsistent practices across departments.

Faculty and Student Resistance Survey data from Duhok and Erbil indicate that many staff members lack motivation or feel inadequately trained for Bologna-style teaching. However, trained faculty members showed higher enthusiasm and implementation fidelity.

Quality Assurance Limitations QA units, though established, are often under-resourced. Reports from Zakho and Halabja show limited internal evaluation capacity and weak data systems to support benchmarking.

Language and Localization Barriers The lack of Kurdish-translated Bologna documents and English language training for staff presents an additional barrier, especially in peripheral institutions.

Stakeholder Perceptions and Institutional Readiness

Surveys and interviews at multiple institutions indicate varying levels of awareness and preparedness. Shoukry et al. (2023), surveying 750 students at the University of Zakho, found that while students in humanities disciplines had a generally positive view of the Bologna system, those in scientific departments were less satisfied due to a lack of practical resources and lab-based instruction. The authors emphasize the need for faculty training and tailored implementation plans to address departmental disparities.

Likewise, Abdullah Saeed et al. (2023) highlight that institutional readiness remains uneven. While universities like Salahaddin and Sulaimani have established quality assurance offices and strategic units, smaller or newer institutions lag due to limited funding and administrative instability. These findings underscore the importance of regional coordination and government support in sustaining Bologna-related reforms.

Table 1. Eight Universities and Their Key Opportunities in Implementing the Bologna Process in Kurdistan-Iraq

University	Key Initiative	Outcome	Explanation
Sulaimani	Bologna platform; QA workshop	Institutional transparency, local QA capacity	Sulaimani University was among the first in the region to adopt a digital Bologna platform to monitor credit systems (ECTS), grading alignment, and student progress. It also hosted a series of internal Quality Assurance (QA) workshops, which enhanced administrative capacity and fostered a culture of accountability. The Bologna platform encouraged the digitization of academic records and fostered a university-wide quality assurance mindset through workshops.
Erbil	APPRAIS launch & EU study visits	Strengthened governance, exposure to EU HE best practices	Erbil's universities engaged in APPRAIS-led strategic planning and benefited from study visits to European institutions, which helped improve local governance and adopt best practices in higher education. Involvement in APPRAIS and EU study visits helped Erbil universities initiate governance improvements and develop EU-compliant frameworks.
Duhok	Faculty survey; MOOC & webinar	High faculty acceptance; gaps in digital admin capacity	Duhok Polytechnic conducted surveys assessing faculty attitudes and offered MOOCs and webinars to train staff on Bologna principles. Faculty training via MOOCs and surveys fostered a more engaged, reform-minded teaching body, aligning instructional strategies with Bologna goals.
Zhakho	Roadmap workshops (Pisa, Sulaimani)	Clear roadmap & strategic action plans	Zakho University participated in international workshops that helped develop comprehensive Bologna implementation roadmaps and action plans tailored to local institutional needs. Participation in Pisa and Sulaimani workshops gave Zakho the tools to build a localized Bologna roadmap, promoting planning and regional networking.
Halabja	QA/governance offices; Erasmus MARHABA	Institutional readiness, international program access	Halabja University established quality assurance and governance offices, aligning with Erasmus MARHABA projects to boost institutional capacity and open doors to international collaborations. Through Erasmus MARHABA, Halabja gained institutional capacity and eligibility to participate in international student/staff exchanges.

Raparin	QA Office was established in 2010 • Bologna training course (2021) for academic staff • Bologna-focused workshops (2023) • Participation in the TIGRIS internationalization project	Improved staff competence, institutional QA readiness, and increased international visibility	University of Raparin was an early mover, establishing its Quality Assurance office in 2010, enabling structured academic monitoring aligned with MOHE requirements. In 2021, the university trained 27 staff members in Bologna fundamentals (e.g., ECTS, outcomes, workload). In 2023, it conducted workshops covering Bologna principles, student cheating prevention, and modular design. Its role in the TIGRIS project also expanded international collaboration and positioned Raparin as a contributor to the regional Bologna dialogue.
Soran	Student feedback surveys	Willingness to adapt, desire for reform	Students welcomed reform efforts and suggested stronger inter-university ties and better guidance on Bologna goals.
Garmian	Faculty awareness and training studies Erasmus+ collaboration with Bologna University	Capacity building and global linkage	The Erasmus+ partnership provided infrastructure support, improved curriculum design, and enhanced institutional alignment with European standards.

Case of Erbil – Implementation at Noble Technical Institute

In Erbil, the Bologna Process has been introduced in select higher education institutions such as the Noble Technical Institute (NTI). According to Khalid (2022), teacher motivation towards implementing Bologna reforms in NTI ranged from low to moderate. This limited enthusiasm among instructors was attributed to several institutional and systemic challenges, including a lack of professional development, insufficient resources, and unclear links between academic curricula and graduate employability. The study highlighted that teachers who had received structured pedagogical training, especially those exposed to international models, demonstrated significantly higher motivation to apply student-centered, outcome-based teaching approaches, a core tenet of the Bologna framework. One of the recurring themes across several universities in the Kurdistan Region is the lack of teacher preparation and support. Khalid's (2022) study in Erbil provides concrete evidence of this issue, where teachers reported demotivation due to factors such as low salaries, contract instability, minimal career advancement, and a lack of recognition for innovation or good teaching performance. These findings mirror broader concerns across the region, suggesting that without targeted investment in human capital, the Bologna reforms may face serious setbacks in sustainability and quality assurance.

Table 2. Eight Universities and Their Key Challenges in Implementing the Bologna Process in Kurdistan-Iraq

University	Key Challenges	Explanation
Sulaimani	Inconsistent implementation across departments; limited monitoring and evaluation systems	While Sulaimani has introduced Bologna reforms and digital tools, implementation varies widely by department, and the university lacks a strong internal monitoring system to track compliance and effectiveness.
Erbil (e.g., Salahaddin & Erbil Polytechnic,	Teacher demotivation and resistance to pedagogical change	Several institutions in Erbil report reluctance among instructors to shift from traditional lectures to Bologna's student-centered, outcome-based models.
Duhok Polytechnic	Lack of digital administrative systems and limited training resources	Despite strong faculty support and training via MOOCs and webinars, the university faces major barriers due to underdeveloped digital tools for tracking ECTS and learning

Zhakho	Limited institutional coordination and delayed roadmap execution	outcomes. Although Zakho developed a Bologna roadmap through international workshops, the lack of cross-departmental coordination has delayed effective implementation.
Halabja	Insufficient staffing in QA and governance offices; weak inter-departmental communication	The newly formed QA and governance units face a shortage of skilled staff and inconsistent collaboration across faculties, reducing their impact.
Raparin	Gaps in academic staff's understanding of learning outcomes, ECTS, and modular design	Despite progress in training and participation in TIGRIS, many instructors still struggle to apply Bologna tools such as outcome-based assessment and credit calculation.
Soran	Lack of digital tools and student mobility	Students reported crowded classes and little access to mobility programs, affecting Bologna's core student mobility and engagement principles.
Garmian	Limited digital skills and training gaps	Faculty expressed concern over increased workload, lack of technical training, and vague institutional plans regarding Bologna Process execution.

Review of Eight University-Level Studies on the Bologna Process in the Kurdistan Region

To provide a clearer picture of how the Bologna Process has been implemented and perceived within higher education institutions in the Kurdistan Region, this section presents summaries of six university-based studies. These studies offer valuable insights into student perceptions, institutional initiatives, and the challenges faced in adapting the Bologna framework to the regional context. Each summary is paraphrased from the original abstract to maintain clarity and academic tone. The Bologna Process has introduced significant opportunities to improve quality assurance mechanisms in Kurdistan's higher education institutions. By aligning local curricula and assessment standards with European frameworks, universities have been able to foster greater transparency and comparability of degrees (Handrianto et al., 2017; Kaldybekova et al., 2024). This alignment promotes student mobility and recognition of qualifications internationally, which is particularly beneficial for Kurdistan's aspiration to integrate into the global academic community. However, challenges remain in fully adapting quality assurance policies to local contexts, often hindered by insufficient institutional capacity and resource constraints.

Despite the structural opportunities offered by the Bologna Process, the regional adoption in Kurdistan is hampered by institutional and cultural barriers. Universities often encounter resistance from faculty accustomed to traditional teaching paradigms, bureaucratic inertia, and limited funding for reform initiatives (Shukri & Abdullah, 2024). Moreover, a lack of coordinated regional policies slows the harmonization of degrees and mutual recognition between universities. Overcoming these obstacles requires strategic leadership, capacity-building programs, and sustained governmental commitment to the Bologna reforms.

One of the Bologna Process's core strengths lies in its promotion of student-centered learning and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). In Kurdistan universities, this has encouraged curricular reforms that focus on learning outcomes and competencies rather than purely on content delivery (Rahim & Hassan, 2023). The ECTS facilitates credit recognition and smoother academic progression both within Kurdistan and

abroad. Nevertheless, some institutions face challenges in adapting teaching practices and assessment methods, due in part to limited faculty training and resistance to change.

Study 1: University of Zakho

This study explored students' perceptions of the Bologna Process at the University of Zakho and investigated whether these views varied by gender, academic year, and specialization. A stratified random sample of 750 students from different colleges participated in the study. Researchers employed a 41-item questionnaire divided into four dimensions and verified its validity and reliability. Statistical analysis included mean scores, standard deviations, and t-tests. The findings revealed generally positive student perceptions of the Bologna system. Significant differences were found based on the field of study, with students in the humanities expressing more favorable views. However, gender and academic year did not yield significant differences. Based on the results, several recommendations were proposed.

Study 2: University of Raparin

This study focused on academic staff readiness and institutional measures at the University of Raparin for implementing the Bologna Process. The university had established a Quality Assurance office as early as 2010, and in 2021, conducted formal training sessions for 27 academic staff on Bologna concepts, including ECTS, outcomes-based learning, and modular course design. Additional workshops in 2023 addressed assessment reform, academic integrity, and course alignment. The university also participated in the Erasmus+ TIGRIS project to enhance international collaboration. The study concluded that early preparation and continuous professional development contributed to higher institutional readiness and increased engagement in European academic standards.

Study 3: Salahaddin University – Erbil

This study aimed to examine faculty members' attitudes toward the Bologna Process at Salahaddin University in Erbil. Using a mixed-methods design, the study collected data from teaching staff across several colleges. Findings indicated that while faculty members recognized the benefits of the Bologna system—particularly in terms of standardization, academic mobility, and outcomes-based teaching—they also expressed concerns about administrative overload, unclear policy guidelines, and lack of consistent support from the Ministry of Higher Education. The study emphasized the need for structured training programs and better communication between institutional leadership and academic staff.

Study 4: University of Sulaimani

Conducted at the University of Sulaimani, this study evaluated the institutional framework and digital infrastructure developed to support Bologna implementation. The university had introduced a digital Bologna platform for tracking ECTS credits and hosted a series of Quality Assurance workshops across departments. Researchers found that these initiatives significantly improved administrative transparency and academic documentation. However, the study also noted inconsistencies in how different departments adopted Bologna principles, pointing to a need for unified policy enforcement and ongoing faculty training.

Study 5: University of Halabja

This research investigated how administrative reforms and international partnerships supported Bologna adoption at the University of Halabja. Key developments included the creation of a Quality Assurance Directorate and participation in the Erasmus MARHABA project. The study employed qualitative interviews with senior administrators and QA staff. Results showed that international collaborations accelerated the university's internal reforms and made it more competitive in cross-border academic programs. Nonetheless, challenges such as limited digital tools and faculty workload persisted.

Study 6: Duhok Polytechnic University

Over the past twenty years, the Bologna Process has expanded beyond Europe, reaching countries in Africa, South America, and Asia. In recent years, it has also drawn the attention of the Kurdistan Regional Government, which has begun adopting it in select universities to replace the outdated Iraqi higher education system that followed an annual calendar. The Bologna system introduces a more formative approach, emphasizing assignments, classwork, projects, and reports. In alignment with international standards, Duhok Polytechnic University (DPU) has begun reforming its academic practices to reflect a more professional and modern educational structure. This study investigated whether the Bologna Process could be effectively implemented at DPU and what conditions would support its success. The researcher administered a questionnaire to academic staff involved in the initial stages of Bologna implementation. Findings suggest that factors such as the university's strong infrastructure and the availability of qualified academic staff contribute positively to the adoption of the process. However, the study also concluded that despite progress and initial initiatives, additional preparation and institutional efforts are still required to ensure successful and sustainable implementation of the Bologna Process at DPU.

Study 7: Soran University

This study examined the perspectives of undergraduate students at Soran University regarding the implementation of the Bologna Process. Utilizing a structured questionnaire, the study surveyed 102 students across multiple departments. The findings revealed that students perceived several obstacles, such as limited digital infrastructure, insufficient orientation about the Bologna Process, and a lack of mobility and exchange programs. Despite these challenges, students expressed openness to reform, particularly if initiatives focus on improving pedagogical methods, increasing inter-university collaboration, and providing more student support services.

Study 8: Garmian University

This study investigated the attitudes of academic staff at the University of Garmian toward the Bologna Process and associated pedagogical changes. The study explored faculty awareness, readiness, and perception of student-centered learning and credit-based systems. While many lecturers acknowledged the theoretical benefits of the Bologna model, concerns were raised about practical implementation, particularly related to workload, digital skills, and a lack of systematic training. The authors advocate for increased institutional support, capacity-building programs, and stronger policy alignment.

The Author's Synthesis of Opportunities and Challenges in Bologna Process Implementation in Kurdistan Universities

The analysis of studies from six Kurdistan universities illustrates a complex landscape in the implementation of the Bologna Process. On the opportunity side, institutions such as Raparin and Sulaimani have made notable strides by integrating quality assurance frameworks, launching digital tools for credit tracking, and participating in international collaborations like Erasmus+. These initiatives have contributed to enhanced institutional transparency, improved academic governance, and greater international recognition. Furthermore, increased awareness and positive attitudes among students and faculty, especially following targeted training and workshops, highlight the growing acceptance and potential benefits of the Bologna system in raising educational standards and facilitating student mobility.

Conversely, the studies also identify several challenges that impede full implementation. These include disparities in applying Bologna principles across faculties, technological limitations such as weak digital infrastructure, and administrative overload faced by academic staff. A recurrent issue is the lack of consistent policy guidance and sufficient support from higher education authorities, which has caused fragmentation and slowed progress. These findings emphasize that while the Bologna Process presents a promising pathway for educational reform in

Kurdistan, a more coordinated approach, incorporating enhanced digital infrastructure, comprehensive training, and stronger institutional backing, is crucial for realizing its full potential.

Recommendations

1. Develop clear MOHE policy templates for all universities
2. Invest in university IT infrastructure to support Bologna goals
3. Translate core documents into Kurdish and provide English training
4. Scale up faculty development programs with EU partnerships
5. Strengthen QA units through staffing, digital tools, and incentives
6. Promote reward systems for early adopters and high-performing departments

CONCLUSION

Empirical findings from multiple institutions (Erbil, Duhok, Zakho, Halabja, Soran, Garmian Raparin, and Sulaimani) confirm steady progress in adopting Bologna principles—particularly ECTS, QA frameworks, and curriculum innovation. However, barriers persist: fragmented policy, weak digital infrastructure, faculty and student resistance, and linguistic challenges. A unified strategy combining policy clarity, infrastructure investment, capacity building, and cultural engagement is essential. With continued international collaboration and localized adaptation, Kurdish universities can truly embrace Bologna's promise of mobility, quality, and global competitiveness. Despite varying levels of implementation, the Bologna Process has had a transformative impact on Kurdistan's academic institutions. While challenges remain particularly around infrastructure, motivation, and policy clarity, the region has made commendable strides. With continued international support, standardized policies, and capacity building, Kurdistan's universities are well-positioned to meet European education standards and enhance student outcomes.

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