

Handbook of Higher Education Policy and Governance

1 Introduction

The field of higher education research is rather fragmented (see e.g. Tight, 2012). This fragmentation is partly due to the multi-disciplinarity of the field: many different disciplines – from history to psychology – have contributed to its development. As a consequence, relevant papers on specific issues, in our case policy and governance, can be found in a wide array of journals, books and reports (see also Huisman, 2009). Despite the existence of a couple of core journals, like *Higher Education Policy*, *Higher Education*, *Higher Education Policy and Management*, and *Higher Education Management and Policy*, there are many other journals within the field of higher education and in other fields and disciplines, that contain important contributions on higher education policy and governance. Partly because of the multi-disciplinarity, researchers make use of a variety of conceptual and theoretical perspectives, which adds to the impression of fragmentation.

A dedicated attempt to bring together core knowledge on the study of higher education policy and governance has not (yet) been carried out, hence the proposal to prepare a handbook on Higher Education Policy and Governance. The proposal fits in with increasing attention in the higher education field for theory and methodology (see e.g. Huisman and Tight, 2013, 2014) and for the evolution of the field (see e.g. Schwarz and Teichler, 2000; Tight, 2004; and more recently Altbach, 2009; Bray and Major, 2011; Kandlbinder, 2013). Although some handbooks on governance and policy have been published, both in general and other policy domains, there is not a single handbook on governance and policy in higher education. Particularly the comprehensive approach of bringing theory, concepts, methods and higher education themes together is completely new.

A focus on policy *and* governance is deemed appropriate. There is a healthy and continuing attention to policy, conceptualized as “a choice made by a government to undertake some course of action” (Howlett & Ramesh, 1995, 5) in public administration, public policy studies and political sciences, as well as an increasing attention to the closely related issue of governance. Governance is much broader than policy, as the United Nation’s definition shows: “The exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels”. In other words, governance refers to the broader coordination architecture of a system/country. A focus on governance and policy makes sense because, for example, multi-level governance that stresses the interconnectedness of various policy levels within a system has consequences for our understanding of how policies emerge and work. The rising importance of governance is signified by the growth of specific journals in the past decades that focus on governance (e.g. *Global Governance* and the *Journal of Administration and Governance*).

2 The envisaged structure and contents of the book

The book will consist of two main parts. In the first part, attention will be paid to policy theories, frameworks, concepts and methods. The second part addresses salient themes in higher education

policy and governance. The volume closes down with an outlook. What follows is an outline of the chapters for the two parts, as we currently see it. There is scope for adding more chapters on e.g. different theories (in part one) or additional themes (part two).

It is important to stress that contributions should focus on representing the state of the art with regard to the topic of the chapter. We expect that contributions are objective and balanced (i.e. an analysis will necessarily include certain value judgments from the author, but a fair consideration of all relevant evidence as well all impacts of the policy is required and balance in argumentation is desired). Also, all contributions should be based on sound information: they are expected to cite relevant research and related evidence (e.g. documents, evaluations, statutes) to support the arguments presented. There is scope for including new empirical materials in the chapters, but we are primarily thinking of review type of contributions.

2.1 Part I: Concepts, theories and methods

2.1.1 Concepts

Chapter 1: Higher education: the nature of the beast

Some would argue that higher education is, given its objectives and activities related to the “production of knowledge” is intrinsically different from any other public sector. Others would argue that higher education is “just” another public sector and higher education institutions are “just” like many other professional organisations (like accountancy firms and hospitals). The chapter will review the literature and offer a nuanced and critical reflection on the “peculiarities” of higher education and address the question whether higher education policy can be equated to any kind of other public policy.

Chapter 2: Policy and governance approaches in public sectors

This chapter will guide the readers systematically through the key concepts used in the higher education (Neave and Van Vught, 1991; Paradeise et al., 2009; Huisman, 2009) and the general policy and governance literature (e.g. Peters and Pierre, 2001; Hood et al., 2004). Key sources will be discussed and the major differences between schools of thought explained. The terms that will be discussed include policy, governance, steering, planning, multi-level governance, markets and networks, controlling, authority, polity and politics.

Chapter 3: Actors and tools in policy and governance

Which stakeholders and interest-groups are involved in policy development, formation, and execution and what kind of policy instruments or tools (Hood and Margetts, 2007) are used? Countries have different approaches, going back to structural configurations of the domestic political situation (e.g. welfare states versus neo-liberal states) and politico-cultural background (consensus-oriented models versus one-party systems). Moreover, with the emergence and rise of knowledge societies in the Arab and South East Asia, new configurations may be visible (see e.g. Marginson, 2011a on the Confucian model). The chapter will present and compare the key models at work across the globe.

2.1.2 Theory

Chapter 4-10: Theoretical approaches

These chapters will present (often-used) theoretical perspectives in higher education. These perspectives could focus on specific subthemes of policy and governance, such as policy formation, policy implementation, and policy effects, but also focus on concepts like multi-level governance or state models. Our approach (as explained at the top of page 2) will likely lead to a considerable diversity of proposals. The editors will use selection criteria of quality, novelty and representativeness, the latter implying that we will take care that salient theories are well-represented, and that e.g. both positivistic and interpretative approaches are included. Obviously, we will try to bring on board key authors and given that the editors are well-connected in the field and to various learned societies we are confident to select and present high-quality contributions. The following list serves as a guideline (with key authors that contributed to the development of these theories or concepts between brackets).

Theories

- Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier)
- Multiple Streams (Kingdon)
- Punctuated Equilibrium (Jones and Baumgartner)
- World systems and world polity (Wallerstein, Boli and Thomas, Meyer)
- Institutionalism, institutional change (e.g. Mahoney and Thelen)
- Policy networks (Rhodes, Peterson)
- Rational choice policy-making (Dowding and King, Elster, Coleman)
- Governmentality (Foucault)
- Resource dependence theory (Pfeffer and Salancik)
- Principal Agency theory (Eisenhardt, Jensen & Meckling)

Conceptual approaches

- New Public Management (e.g. Hood; Pollitt and Bouckaert)
- States, markets and hierarchies (Williamson, Powell)
- Multi-level governance (e.g. Marks)
- The welfare state (Heclø; Esping-Anderson; Busemeyer)
- Good governance
- Actor centered institutionalism (Scharpf, E. Ostrom)
- Models of decision-making (e.g. Birnbaum, March & Olsen)
- Theory of policy instruments (Klok & Bressers, O'Toole, Hood)

2.1.3 Methods

The closing chapters of part I reflect on design and methodological issues and offers an outlook for future of higher education policy and governance. There is very limited insight in how higher education research is carried out (see for exceptions, Tight, 2012; Huisman & Tight, 2013, 2014).

Chapter 11: Research designs and levels of analysis

Chapter 12: Research methods

In addition to these two chapters, we could imagine there would be an interest in writing a chapter on the history and development of higher education research. There may also be scope for particular disciplinary perspectives on higher education (see e.g. Clark, 1984), for instance political sciences, economics, sociology and law.

2.2 Part II: Themes

In this section we present analyses of how governments (and other stakeholders) have shaped the roles of higher education and have designed policies and implemented policy tools for specific elements of the higher education fabric. These elements can be analysed at the level of the system, the level of the higher education institution, and/or the individual level. Contributors are free to focus on either of these three levels. The list of themes – with one or two sentences as further guidance – below are in our view representative of the key themes addressed in the field of higher education (we have checked our list against entries in some HE encyclopedia and against e.g. *Higher Education Abstracts*). We have also organized these themes under five six headings. We will be looking for an equal representations of the three levels.

Chapters 13-29

HIGHER EDUCATION, SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY

Chapter 13 The role of higher education in society: Governments have changed their views on the role of higher education. Views in the 18th and 19th century on higher education as key preparation for the state bureaucracy (see e.g. Neave, 2001) differ from current post-massification perspectives that appear to focus on the contribution of higher education to the knowledge economy. This can be contrasted to conceptions of the University as a ‘public good’ (Marginson 2011b).

Chapter 14 Research, development and innovation: Like governments’ views on the role of higher education, perceptions re research and innovation has changed as well and governance architectures differ considerably (e.g. Dill and Van Vught, 2010)

Chapter 15 Graduate employment: An increasing stress on employability and the knowledge economy has made higher education institutions aware of providing a good fit between education and training and the workplace. This pertains both to the disciplinary skills and knowledge and to transferable skills.

Chapter 16 Internationalisation, international mobility: Internationalisation has been on the rise in the past decades, with many positive impacts on students and staff, although there are downsides as well (accusations of neo-colonialism, etc.). Internationalisation has developed from supporting mobility to a broader set of internationalization activities, including internationalization at home and setting up international branch campuses.

ORGANISING HIGHER EDUCATION

Chapter 17 System configuration (stratification, diversity, structure of systems): governments have dealt with challenges of how to organize and structure their higher education systems either as e.g. comprehensive systems, stratified systems or binary systems, and dynamics internal to those systems – like academic drift – have challenged government-induced architectures (Teichler, 1988).

Chapter 18 Information and communication technology: technological advancements have changed higher education, but maybe in a less revolutionary way than anticipated in the 1980s (Daniel, 1996). That said, technology continues to impact education (e.g. MOOCs) and research (e.g. “big” data).

GOVERNING HIGHER EDUCATION

Chapter 19 Supranational and regional forces: higher education institutions were in the past largely steered through the concept of the nation-state (Neave, 2001), suggesting a clearly compartmentalized unit responsible for the higher education system. In the past decades this notion started to overlap with regional and supra-national coordination and agreements (European Union, NAFSA, OECD, World Bank, WTO/GATS – see for instance Verger, 2010).

Chapter 20 Institutional governance structures: Governance structures have changed from “democratic” and shared governance structures (in which staff and students are well-presented) towards a more managerial approach, with external stakeholders increasingly playing an important role (Amaral et al., 2002).

Chapter 21 Rankings and classifications: Large controversies arise around the reliability of university rankings and also about its use and abuse (see e.g. Hazelkorn 2011). Whatever their shortcomings (some of these being addressed by alternative rankings and classifications), they are real and impact higher education institutions, systems and affect governments.

FUNDING HIGHER EDUCATION

Chapter 22 Funding (the economics of higher education): Governmental funding for higher education is not a given anymore and in fact was never a given in many systems across the globe (Levy, 2013). Current challenges involve governmental prioritization regarding the extent to which higher education should be funded from public sources and which aspects of the fabric (research, education, students) should be funded and how (Barr 2012).

Chapter 23 Student support and private contributions: In light of increasing participation rates, and important private returns to higher education, governments have started to ask financial contributions from students, either by setting (higher) fees, lowering the grants for students, or conditionally award grants (make these dependent on performance).

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Chapter 24 Institutional autonomy and accountability: Governments argue that they have granted more institutional autonomy to higher education institutions, but evidence points at some countertrends and contradictions (e.g. Estermann and Nokkola, 2009). Accountability is often seen as part of the deal that governments struck – in exchange for greater autonomy, but also in this respects voices are raised re a counterproductive stress on accounting and audits (Power, 1997). The

notions of autonomy and accountability are surrounded by the concepts of trust (Trow, 1996) and academic freedom (e.g. Karran, 2007).

Chapter 25 Quality assurance: Bearing in mind the different conceptualisations of quality (Harvey and Green, 1993), governments and higher education institutions have developed internal and external mechanisms to assure and improve quality. It is not evident that quality assurance and improvement can be reconciled within one framework.

Chapter 26 Academic profession and work: The nature of the academic profession has changed considerably. This is visible in e.g. changing tenure arrangements, in the contents of the job (portfolio of research, teaching and administrative activities), but as well in normative underpinnings of the profession (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997).

INEQUALITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Chapter 27 Access, (widening) participation and inclusion: Equality is a lofty objective, but statistics confirm that there continues to exist a gap (in access and participation) between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Policies may be ineffective, but access may also be a “wicked problem”, very difficult to solve (see e.g. Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010).

Chapter 28 Selection: In situations where demand is larger than supply, choices need to be made. In higher education, various policies and tools are in use to select students when they register for higher education, but also once they are initially accepted.

Chapter 29 Gender: Gender imbalances continue to exist in higher education (both at staff and student levels), despite institutional and system-level initiatives. A relatively recent phenomenon is that females (in terms of enrolling student numbers at the system level) start to outnumber males, although they continue to be underrepresented in some subjects and levels of higher education.

Chapter 30: Outlook

The editors reflect on the contributions by summarizing the key findings, by presenting gaps in our knowledge and possible ways forward in researching higher education policy and governance.

3 The editors

The editorial team consists of prof. Jeroen Huisman (Ghent University, Belgium), dr. Harry de Boer (University of Twente, the Netherlands), em. prof. David Dill (University of North Carolina, US) and dr. Manuel Souto-Otero (University of Bath, UK). The overall coordination of the book project will be in the hands of prof. Jeroen Huisman. Each editor will be responsible for managing 7-8 chapters.

4 References

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