

Higher Education Dynamics 60

Jens Jungblut
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Comparative Higher Education Politics

Policymaking in North America and
Western Europe

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Higher Education Dynamics

Volume 60

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Editors

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*“For those committed to expanding higher
education opportunities across the globe.”*

For my parents

Jens Jungblut

*For those like me who have high expectations
of universities.*

Martin Maltais

For Kim, Ben, Kate, and Tenny

Erik C. Ness

For my family

Deanna Rexe

Foreword

Imagine an instrument that political actors could have at their disposal, an instrument that would have effect on the quality of political and administrative institutions, government ministries and agencies, and courts of law. The very same instrument could seriously affect citizens' health condition, life expectancy, social status, choice of partner, as well as party-political support and voting behavior. And even more fundamentally—an instrument that would leave footprints in people's mindsets and ways of thinking—footprints that would not be washed away for decades and mindsets that people would carry with them for the rest of their life. Imagine that this instrument can make technologies that could destroy the planet and save it too. On top of that, this instrument would identify what we can hold for truth, what are untenable falsehoods, and what we cannot be sure about.

By such a description, surely a powerful instrument like this would in democracies be handled with care. Fallen into the wrong hands or being neglected and overlooked would have grave consequences. Designed wisely such an instrument would constitute a prime tool for any political actor seeking to make a lasting effect on the way societies and economies develop.

The point is by now obvious—the instrument is already among us—mass higher education has such long-term transformative power. Research-intensive universities have the potential to be a transversal problem solvers or even (and often more importantly) have a role in *identifying* problems and challenges that societal actors, politicians, and economic life are facing. As discussed in this volume, the politics of higher education is also a question of ideational framing and relates to how political actors view universities and their primary activities (education and research) and how actors portray the need for and appropriateness of space for institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Let's also for a moment assume that adding scientific knowledge to public policymaking contributes to shaping the contents and priorities of policies. If this is the case, the cognitive, deliberative, and factual content of policymaking can be strengthened by the work happening in higher education.

The role that universities play in liberal democracies relies heavily on the primary way in which universities and higher education have societal impact. That is, through university graduates that enter different labor markets, civil society

organizations, public institutions, school systems as well as hospitals or other public health services. Skills, competencies, factual knowledge, and value sets young people acquire in higher education programs are influenced by political decisions on funding, regulation, organization, and priorities.

This leaves us with one or two puzzles. If indeed higher education and research-intensive universities have such long-term profound effects, then why does higher education not feature more frequently as a core item in the public sphere, in electoral campaigns and debates with top political salience?

A similar inattention is detectable among the mainstream academic communities that specialize in the study of political behavior and party politics. Why have there been decades of silence in research on the politics of higher education, while at the same time mass higher education has developed, research investments in most countries have increased substantially, and sophisticated knowledge regimes have been built to couple political decisions, professional/scientific knowledge, and evidence.

This volume goes all the way in addressing such questions. It is not only interesting but important to theorize and conduct systematic research on how such policies are shaped and made—and what the positions are of the various political party groups and other sets of actors. In this volume, the research team brings together unique experiences and insights into the nature and dynamics of higher education. They know what it takes to understand the politics of higher education. First, in order to make sense out of this topic, it needs all the clout that a comparative approach and method can give. North America and Europe have universities and histories of higher education that are interrelated, and they interact but represent structurally different systems and relate to different political and administrative frameworks within which they are embedded. At the same time, many universities in these regions are among the most prestigious in the world and are often used as role models also in other regional contexts. Of particular interest in understanding the policymaking dynamics is how the politics of higher education is played out in various ways at and between different governance levels, between national, state, regional, and federal levels. The same goes for the rise and fall and the specific dynamics in certain subsectors of the policy field. To fully grasp how the politics of higher education policy function, we need to unpack key aspects of higher education policy as the political dynamics of financing versus reforming governance are not necessarily identical.

As I write this foreword, national governments are turning down the temperature and issuing their budget proposals for the coming year—which could be “the winter of our discontent.” *Comparative Higher Education Politics: Policymaking in North America and Western Europe* brings new, relevant, and deep insights and comes at the right time.

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Chapter 1

The Politics of Higher Education Policy in Canada, the U.S., and Western Europe – An Introduction



Jens Jungblut , Martin Maltais, Erik C. Ness, and Deanna Rexe

Abstract Higher education policy has become a more salient issue in modern states as universities are increasingly important for societal and economic development. This leads to an increased politicisation of this policy area. At the same time, there is a lack of comparative scholarship studying the politics of higher education policy on both sides of the Atlantic. This is the gap that this volume addresses. This chapter introduces the idea behind the volume. It describes the rationale for studying the politics of higher education policy as well as the specific regional focus on Canada, the U.S., and Western Europe. Moreover, it introduces the conceptual framework underpinning the volume which combines sociological and historical institutionalism. Additionally, the chapter specifies the comparative approach applied in the volume and describes considerations regarding its research design. Finally, it introduces the structure of the volume and provides an overview over the different sections that follow.

Increasing Salience and Secluded Research Communities – Higher Education Policy on Both Sides of the Atlantic

This volume focuses on higher education policy and the political processes that shape this policy area with a regional focus on Western Europe, Canada, and the U.S. There are two main rationales behind this focus: (1) the growing importance of

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higher education policy and teaching and research activities themselves, and (2) the lack of comparative scholarship that includes cases from both sides of the Atlantic.

Regarding the first rationale, the volume is rooted in the observation that the political importance of higher education has increased over the last decades in most countries. As part of this trend, higher education policy became more relevant for different societal actors including politicians and citizens but also interest groups. Various factors play a role in this increase in salience of higher education policy. These factors interact and make higher education a central policy area for the development of modern states and societies (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2014). The first factor is that there has been continuous massification of higher education, implying that an increasing percentage of the population is participating in some form of higher education (Andres & Pechar, 2013; Garritzmann, 2016). This has led to growing public (and private) investments in the sector (Altbach et al., 2009; Garritzmann, 2016), which made both politicians and citizens more sensitive to developments in higher education.

Second, in several respects higher education has gradually become a policy area that is more relevant for other policy arenas. As societies face an increasing amount of grand challenges, such as climate change or global health crises, that are perceived to depend on policy solutions stemming from higher education, universities are more and more faced with the expectation to provide such solutions to other policy areas (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2022) and that public policies should rely on or be influenced by results of scientific research. In that sense, we see organizations emerging that aim to achieve that goal. For example, networks like the International Network for Government Science Advice¹ (INGSA) aim to facilitate exchanges between researchers and high-level policy makers to produce better policies informed by science.

Finally, the move towards knowledge economies or knowledge societies strengthened the role of higher education as a motor for research and innovation activities that support the growth and future development of national economies (Maassen & Stensaker, 2011). All these factors led to greater political relevance of higher education and an increased politicisation (Busemeyer et al., 2013). The rise of concepts linked to New Public Management (NPM) (Paradeise et al., 2009a, b) and a growing focus on the efficiency of public sectors combined with ideas about active welfare states (Gingrich, 2011, 2015), connected the development of higher education to political debates on public sector reforms (Braun, 2008). Thus, higher education became a more relevant issue in various policy arenas, and at the same time new actors became more active in policymaking for this sector, creating a multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-issue policy environment (Chou et al., 2017).

Regarding the second rationale, this volume builds on the argument that over the last 15–20 years, research on the politics of higher education policy took place in, by and large, secluded academic communities on both sides of the Atlantic (see e.g. Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2011; Gift & Wibbels, 2014). While being scholarly

¹<https://www.ingsa.org/>

active, these communities focused in their empirical work mainly on their own context using conceptual approaches which are typical for their environment, e.g. Down's median voter theorem in the U.S. (Dar, 2012), party politics approaches in Europe (Garritzmann & Seng, 2016), or institutions of Canadian federalism (Wellen et al., 2012). Moreover, they mostly refrained from comparing their findings to those from the other contexts. The few exceptions that include cases from both sides of the Atlantic (e.g. Cantwell et al., 2018) tend to lack a structured comparative approach. Thus, there is a clear gap in the literature that this volume attempts to fill by addressing the specific policy environments and research communities in the three contexts.

In doing so, this volume has three aims. First, to provide an overview of the existing literature on the politics of higher education policy structured in five key sub-themes in each of the different contexts (see below). Second, to present new and up to date empirical analyses in each context for every sub-theme. Third, to offer comparisons between the different contexts, both within each sub-theme and overall, regarding the politics of higher education policy.

Before we introduce the comparative design and the conceptual underpinning of this volume, we will provide a brief overview over the main strands of higher education policy literature in the three contexts. In the end of this introduction, we will also give a short overview over the structure of the volume.

The Main Strands of Higher Education Policy Scholarship in Canada, the U.S., and Western Europe

Each of the three contexts covered in this volume has its own traditions in higher education policy research as well as certain specificities regarding conceptual focus or key lines of inquiry. To provide an introduction into the volume, we will use this section to briefly summarize key characteristics of higher education policy research in the three contexts. This will only be a brief overview and more in-depth discussions of the literature can be found in the respective chapters.

In the beginning, it is necessary to briefly address the multi-level characteristics of each environment. On the one hand, Western Europe is a complex area as it covers many different countries with different higher education as well as political systems, most of which are members of the European Union (EU) or linked to the EU through some form of agreements. In addition, an inter-governmental or maybe even supranational policy-making level has developed in European higher education through the Bologna Process and the subsequent European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as well as the activities of the European Commission (Ravinet, 2008; Vukasovic et al., 2018). This has led to a certain level of policy convergence, while at the same time national policy differences persist leading to an ongoing debate about the degree of homogeneity in European higher education policy (Dobbins & Knill, 2014; Vukasovic, 2013b; Vukasovic et al., 2017). Thus, in the European

context there are both national as well as supra-national policymaking dynamics at play. In addition, some countries in Western Europe are themselves federal countries similar to the U.S. or Canada, Germany being one example here (Capano, 2015; Jungblut & Rexe, 2017). In these countries, one can not only observe multi-level dynamics between national and supranational policymaking but also between national and subnational policymaking (Carnoy et al., 2019). This makes direct comparison of the three contexts more difficult. However, since our main interest is in identifying policymaking dynamics in the different contexts including multi-level characteristics, this increased complexity still makes comparison feasible while demanding proper contextualisation (Chou et al., 2017). This will be discussed in the different comparative chapters as well as the conclusion.

Moreover, it is necessary to have a clear definition of what is understood as Europe in the context of this volume. As a first demarcation, this volume will focus on Western Europe. The main reason for this is that the countries of Central Eastern Europe have a significantly different heritage due to their communist past, which had an impact both on higher education and politics in these countries (Huisman et al., 2018). Therefore, to limit the variation within the countries included in the European part of the book, the chapters addressing Europe will focus on the Western part of the continent. This includes member countries of the EU but also countries that are part of the EHEA such as Norway or the UK. In addition, to ensure that the diversity among European countries is well represented, the chapters will each include multiple countries in their analysis. However, as the different political dynamics that will be studied in each of the five sections (see below) might demand differing cases to properly illustrate them, the specific case countries will vary. At the same time, each chapter will discuss in the literature review studies that focus on a broad set of countries so that the chapter is properly embedded in the wider European context.

In the U.S. and Canada, on the other hand, higher education policy is within the authority of the sub-national entities, e.g. states, provinces or territories, with only a very limited role for the federal government. In a way, this multi-level relationship is similar to the EU's limited authority for higher education policy vis-à-vis the member states or the intergovernmental nature of the EHEA: Similar to the U.S. and Canadian federal governments, the EU and the EHEA do not have top-down hierarchical competences in higher education policy but rather rely on inter-governmental coordination and steering through the provision of funding as key tools to influence policymaking on lower levels in the policymaking hierarchy. At the same time, it is obvious that federal polities like Canada or the U.S. are inherently different in their structure from Europe's supranational policymaking environment that in itself includes federally organised countries (Carnoy et al., 2019). Even if the three polities differ in their level of complexity, policymaking responsibilities, and dynamics of horizontal or vertical policy coordination, comparing how the politics of higher education policy play out is still a valuable exercise. Especially as the comparative focus of this volume is less on the empirical aspects of each context but rather on the mechanisms and dynamics that influence policymaking (Chou et al., 2017). Thus, even if the contexts are structured differently, how they solve similar challenges in

policymaking is insightful as it helps us to look beyond context-specificities and uncover whether there are more general patterns driving political processes.

There is also a multi-level dynamic and considerable variation within both North American contexts. However, due to the constitutional arrangements in both countries that specify the area of influence for the federal and sub-national entities, the relationship between the levels is less complex than in Europe. At the same time, dynamics such as policy learning or policy convergence between sub-national entities can also be observed here (Hearn et al., 2017; McLendon et al., 2005), making the three contexts more alike regarding the complexity of policymaking. Due to the diversity within the two North American contexts, the Canadian and U.S. chapters will each cover a sample of states, provinces or territories that represent typical cases for their sub-theme. Like the European context, the analysis of these cases will be contextualized through the literature review. For the Canadian chapters, special attention has been given to ensure that the linguistic divide and specific policy-making context in Anglophone and Francophone Canada will be properly addressed in each sub-theme, which is itself a rare intention in the literature.

When looking at recent debates in the higher education policy literature in Europe, one can see that research has especially focused on the one hand on policy actors, such as the ministerial bureaucracy, or on the other hand on what Clark called the “academic oligarchy” (Clark, 1983) in the context of on-going discussions on institutional autonomy of universities (see e.g. Christensen, 2011; Enders et al., 2013; Maassen, 2017). In addition, there is a growing focus on different types of interest groups or stakeholder organizations that are active in higher education (Brankovic, 2018; Vukasovic, 2017; Vukasovic & Stensaker, 2018). Moreover, the importance of existing politico-administrative structures (see e.g. Bleiklie & Michelsen, 2013, 2018; Capano, 2015), or the role of multi-level dynamics in the context of the Bologna Process (Chou et al., 2017; Elken & Vukasovic, 2014; Vukasovic et al., 2018; Vögtle et al., 2011) are increasingly topics for empirical analysis. In parallel, scholars using a political economy or party politics approach started to include higher education in their work (e.g. Ansell, 2010; Berg et al., 2023; Busemeyer, 2015; Garritzmann, 2016; Jungblut, 2016, 2017; Willemse & de Beer, 2012). They mainly focus on the redistributive effects of higher education systems including aspects such as tuition fees, student support or participation levels.

Research on the politics of higher education policy in the USA is ascendant with many studies examining the role of a complex set of actors in the political processes. Politico-administrative structures, which in the USA are primarily the state-level higher education agencies, are of particular interest to researchers analysing their influence in states due to wide variation of demographic, economic, and political contexts (Hearn & Ness, 2017; Rubin & Hearn, 2018; Tandberg, 2013). Scholars have also examined the rising influence of state governors (Tandberg et al., 2017), state agency board dynamics (Bastedo, 2005), and the individual state higher education executive officer (Tandberg et al., 2018). Interest group activity is another growing strand of research among U.S. scholars. This includes the lobbying activity at the federal government (Marsicano & Brooks, 2020) and in state governments (Ness et al., 2015). Intermediary organizations, which often work at the boundaries

of governments and higher education systems, are receiving more scholarly attention for their role in advocating for certain policies (Gándara et al., 2017; Miller & Morphew, 2017; Ness et al., 2021) and in framing policy issues (Gándara & Ness, 2019; Hammond et al., 2022; Orphan et al., 2021). Additionally, several studies also investigate interest groups' influence on higher education funding (McLendon, 2003; McLendon et al., 2009; Tandberg, 2010).

The rise of performance- or outcomes-based funding by U.S. states has generated significant scholarly attention in politics of higher education finance (Dougherty & Natow, 2015). These studies include examinations of how policies spread among states (McLendon, et al., 2006), the effectiveness of these policies in meeting their objectives (Hillman et al., 2014, 2015), and the burdens and benefits of these policies (Hagood, 2019; Umbricht et al., 2017). Many studies also examine the distinct effect of performance-based funding on community colleges (McKinney & Hagedorn, 2017; Tandberg et al., 2014), on minority-serving institutions (Boland, 2020; Jones et al., 2017), and on students under-represented in U.S. higher education (Favero & Rutherford, 2020; Gándara & Rutherford, 2018).

Perhaps the most ascendant topic in higher education policymaking in the USA is how various higher education policies and structures affect diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many policy organizations advocate for more attention to equity, such as Education Trust's call for race-conscious policy (Jones & Berger, 2019), American Council on Education's series on race in higher education (Espinosa et al., 2019), and the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce's report on higher education's role in reinforcing intergenerational privilege for white students (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Moreover, recent empirical studies report that state higher education funding is associated with state's racial composition (Taylor et al., 2020), that affirmative action bans are more likely in states with scarce access to the most prestigious public universities (Baker, 2019), and that social constructions of target populations (e.g., racially minoritized students) influence federal higher education policy (Gándara & Jones, 2020).

In Canada's decentralized federation, the ten provinces have jurisdiction over education as an enumerated power in the constitution but are influenced to varying degrees by the effects of fiscal federalism, as higher education is funded in part through transfers from the federal government. As a result, the higher education policy environment is shaped by multi-level, multi-actor characteristics including both federal and provincial governments. Canada's higher education scholarly environment is also shaped by the federation's distinctive Francophone and Anglophone contexts, including differing provincial legal and administrative structures and politico-administrative regimes. In the Anglophone tradition, higher education policy research has a well-established scholarship focussing on the changing role of the federal government in higher education, and its effects on provinces and institutions (Shanahan & Jones, 2007). In the Francophone tradition, higher education policy research is still in an early stage of development, having emerged more recently, largely in response to the increasing influence of the federal government on research and its effects on universities in Québec (Polster, 2002).

Emergent Canadian research continues to examine federal policy attention and effects, shifting from an earlier focus on public finance to other policy areas such as the origin and effects of federal research and innovation policy (Bégin-Caouette et al., 2021; Conteh, 2020; Metcalfe, 2010a, b; Sá & Litwin, 2011). A further emerging English language literature critically examines the process of transnational policy transfer and its impact on actors and institutions, including specific issues of institutional accreditation (Blanco Ramírez & Luu, 2018), degree quality assurance (Liu, 2016; Skolnik, 2016; Weinrib & Jones, 2014), and internationalization (Cover, 2016; Desai-Trilokekar & Jones, 2015; Guo & Guo, 2017; Sá & Sabzalieva, 2016, 2018; Tamtik, 2017; Williams et al., 2015). Beyond the federal focus, there is a continuing tradition of provincial-level policymaking studies, which tend toward policy histories with a political economy lens (Axelrod et al., 2011; Bégin-Caouette, 2018; Dennison & Schuetze, 2004; Fisher et al., 2009; Jones, 1991, 1997, 2004; Rexe, 2015a, b) or examinations of government steering (Eastman et al., 2022; Piché, 2015; Piche & Jones, 2016; Skolnik, 2013; Weingarten et al., 2013; Young et al., 2017); these studies typically examine institutional arrangements and the role of policy networks, non-state policy actors, and interest groups in those decision contexts.

Shifts in the political economy of higher education in English Canada has triggered critical evaluation of increasing market orientation, often focussing on implications for access (Dennison & Schuetze, 2004; Kirby, 2012; Ramdas, 2017). Lines of enquiry include examination of institutional adaptations to increased accountability and performance measurement (Maroy et al., 2017; Weingarten & Hicks, 2018a, b), governance reforms (Austin & Jones, 2018; Hall, 2017), and the increased role private higher education (McCartney & Metcalfe, 2018; Milian & Hicks, 2014; Pizarro Milian, 2018; Pizarro Milian & Quirke, 2017). In contrast, Québec has resisted increasing market orientation in higher education, and subsequently research has focussed on questions of government financing (Maltais, 2017, 2021).

Questions of equity, diversity, and inclusion have always been explored in Canadian higher education policy scholarship. One notable growing area of national attention is Indigenous education. There is increasing policy-informative research and Indigenous-oriented scholarship, including work on the creation and role of Indigenous institutions (Cole, 2011; Jenkins, 2007; Paquette & Fallon, 2014) and decolonization of institutions and institutional practices (Battiste et al., 2002; Mitchell et al., 2018; Pidgeon, 2008, 2016; Stonechild, 2006) to add to the continuing traditional policy analysis on issues of Indigenous peoples' educational inequality (Deonandan et al., 2019; Friesen & Krauth, 2012).

Overall, one can therefore state that, while higher education became politically more relevant for contemporary societies, the scholarly attention on the politics of higher education policy only recently started to catch up with this development (see also: Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2011; Gift & Wibbels, 2014). Additionally, this process happened mainly in scholarly communities that operate within their regional context, sometimes lacking awareness of one another, and rarely embarking on inter-regional comparisons. At the same time, already the brief overview over the

main trends of the academic literature in the three contexts shows that there is a large overlap in actors, policy processes or topics that are addressed in the different communities.

A Comparative Approach to the Study of the Politics of Higher Education Policies

To create a scholarly bridge between the research communities on both sides of the Atlantic, this volume applies a comparative research design (Lijphart, 1971). In this, there will be four comparative elements throughout the volume. First, there will be comparisons within each context in the respective chapters for each sub-theme. Here different European countries, U.S. states or Canadian provinces and territories will be compared to one another. On a second level, there will be comparisons between the three contexts within each sub-theme. To this end, a comparative chapter that brings together the main lessons from the three contexts will conclude each sub-theme. Finally, the concluding chapter will offer two types of comparisons. On the one hand, a comparison between the policy-making dynamics in the different sub-themes, and, on the other hand, a comparison between the three contexts on a general level and across the five sub-themes.

In the comparisons between contexts, the focus will be on two somewhat competing conceptualisations of organizational change processes that are applied regularly also in studies of higher education policy. Both approaches belong to the family of institutional theories, which have as a common denominator that they see local actors as being affected by institutions (Hall & Taylor, 1996; March & Olsen, 1984; Meyer, 2008). Where they differ is in the question whether these institutions are built up by the wider environment of the actors or whether institutions are constructed through historical processes and thus in the history of the actors themselves.

Regarding the former, this volume will take a starting point in an observation promoted by the phenomenological version of sociological institutionalism, which sees actors and organizations not only influenced by their wider environment but as constructed by and in it (Meyer, 2008). In this understanding, global norms and trends, like the ones that have been presented in the first section of this chapter, should lead to a situation, where one can observe common developments as actors must relate to accepted and often globalized norms. This is summarized in the rationalization assumption, which has received a prominent place in neo-institutional analyses of organizations including universities (Bromley & Meyer, 2015; Ramirez & Meyer, 2013). The key assumption in this is that the global spread of rationalized formal organizations leads to the development of similar structures in organizations that fulfil the same function in very different contexts. Thus, local organizations more and more adhere to a general, global model and thus become alike (Drori et al., 2006). If the assumptions behind the rationalization argument are valid, then one would expect that the politics of higher education policy also become more

similar as world-wide rationalization trends would call for convergence of decision-making structures and policies. Similar arguments have also been made by scholars focusing on globalization and international organizations, such as the OECD or the World Bank, as key drivers for global policy convergence (Komljenovic & Robertson, 2017; Martens & Jakobi, 2010; Martens et al., 2007; Robertson et al., 2016). Thus, following the sociological institutionalist line of argumentation, one should be able to observe policymaking dynamics in higher education that are or become more alike in the three contexts studied in this volume as globalization and rationalization create converging institutional contexts to which actors and organizations have to relate.

Regarding the latter of the two approaches, authors belonging to this school of thought focus less on globalized norms and convergence through rationalization but instead highlight the importance of habits, customs and other historically grown institutional arrangements, forming what is labelled as historical institutionalism (Thelen, 1999; Thelen & Mahoney, 2010). This approach has not only been applied when studying organizational change but also in studies examining policy changes over longer periods of time (see e.g. Garritzmann, 2016). In this understanding, decisions that have been taken in the past and that led to the formation of institutional arrangements will influence decision-making processes in the present as they affect the (political) costs of decisions and thus can create path-dependencies or policy legacies. This rests on the idea that the further away a desired change is from the status-quo, the bigger the costs associated to successfully implementing the change will be. Thus, the historically grown institutional (and policy) environment of a specific context might make certain global reform trajectories more or less costly. Therefore, there are authors (e.g. Christensen et al., 2014) who argue that global rationalization trends, as described by sociological institutionalism, are actually not directly copied from one context to another but rather undergo local translation. In this, factors such as national or regional cultures, higher education systems, political actors, or policy legacies act as filters for global rationalization trends as they influence the costs associated with the implementation of a reform. As a result, these filters contribute to path-dependence of countries or contexts and enable the existence of persisting differences regarding both higher education policies and politics around the world and thus also between the three contexts that this volume focuses on.

Based on these two somewhat contradicting conceptualisations of change processes, the chapters comprising this volume will investigate in how far each of the three contexts is experiencing convergence along the line of sociological institutionalism or whether historical institutionalism with its focus on path dependence is more helpful in understanding change processes in a given context. In addition, the comparative chapters and the conclusion will also draw on the tension between those conceptual approaches to identify in how far the politics of higher education policy on the two sides of the Atlantic are characterised by convergence or persisting divergence, and what this tells us about the nature of policymaking on higher education today.

Based on these two conceptual considerations, the comparisons in this volume will allow us to uncover if and where one can observe conversion regarding the politics of higher education policy, and where one finds persisting differences and path-dependence. Through this the comparison will not only shed more light on the commonalities and differences between the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe, but it will also contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate on the global rationalization of higher education as well as the globalization of higher education policies. Finally, the comparative approach also helps to get a better understanding of each of the individual contexts, as contextual specificities of, for example, U.S. higher education policy become more visible when comparing U.S. dynamics to the ones in the other contexts. Moreover, it is possible that specific entities in each region face similar situations, which will be highlighted through the comparison. It could be possible, for example, that Californian higher education and higher education in Ontario or higher education in France and Québec cope with similar challenges or show similar political dynamics.

Comparing the U.S., Canada, and Western Europe regarding the politics of higher education policy is not only relevant for the development of scholarship in this area because of a lack of comparative studies, but also because this inquiry could better inform policy and practice within each of these contexts. Moreover, all three contexts cover some of the most prominent higher education systems in the world, whose universities dominate international rankings and are often used as reference points for developments in other regions of the world.

As mentioned above, this volume will investigate five key sub-themes in the politics of higher education policy. Two of these take their starting point in the central tools that governments have to steer higher education. Even in times of growing institutional autonomy and global trends towards educational expansion, governments still determine the key frameworks in which higher education institutions function. For this, they mainly rely on two instruments: the governance of and public funding for higher education.

The first of these issues, focuses on the governance mode used to control higher education. Public actors in the political arena, such as governments, political parties, legislators, or state bureaucrats can be expected to have a privileged role in the formulation and design of higher education policy due to their function in the state structure. Thus, understanding their role for higher education policymaking in different contexts is central for analysing policy changes. The second theme covers the dynamics of public versus private spending for higher education, the way in which the state distributes public funding to universities and the implications of different funding arrangements. Due to the growing importance of stakeholder-based governance in higher education intermediary organizations and interest groups – including e.g. think tanks, rectors' conferences, university alliances or foundations – play an increasing role in political debates on higher education in the different contexts. Therefore, another sub-theme will focus on the role of interest groups in the three contexts.

The fourth sub-theme will address framing of higher education policy. As higher education becomes more relevant for other policy areas, policy actors start to frame

higher education policy in different ways. This allows them to generate links to specific debates in other policy areas, highlighting certain aspects of the policy field while at the same time tuning down others. Finally, as political actors are increasingly linked to one another through network-like structures (see: Paradeise, 2012; Paradeise et al., 2009b), and since there is a growing number of processes of both vertical and horizontal policy exchange, the transfer of policy from one jurisdiction to others in the form of policy diffusion becomes more frequent (McLendon et al., 2006; Ravinet, 2008; Vukasovic, 2013a, b; Vögtle et al., 2011). While in the European context these processes are often identified to take place vertically through up- and downloading between the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the national policymaking arenas, in Canada and the USA they happen more horizontally between states or provinces and territories (McLendon et al., 2005). Thus, the final sub-theme addresses policy diffusion.

The chapters in this volume will rely on different conceptual approaches, which are chosen based on the appropriateness to the respective context. The reason for this is that the polity, meaning the structure of the political systems, in the three contexts is inherently different and these differences make some conceptual approaches more or less appropriate in a given context. For example, the structure of political parties in the U.S. as catch-all organisations that are mainly focused on winning elections and that lack a strong ideological coherence is better suited for analyses employing a Downsian median voter approach (see e.g. Dar, 2012; Dar & Lee, 2014), while European party politics with its strong ideological foundation and balance between office- and policy-seeking attributes is better analysed using partisan concepts (see e.g. Berg et al., 2023; Busemeyer et al., 2013; Garritzmann & Seng, 2016; Jungblut, 2016). Thus, the different contexts in this volume affect the appropriateness of certain conceptual lenses to guide scholarly work.

Structure of the Volume

This volume is structured in six main parts following this introduction. The first five parts each address one sub-theme and consist of three chapters, with each chapter addressing one of the specific contexts. The chapters are both summarising the central literature in their area and provide, based on this comprehensive overview, a new empirical analysis that further advances our knowledge on the politics of higher education policy. Each part is complemented by a brief comparative chapter, which summarises the results from each context. Through this each part does not only present detailed studies of each context but also a reflection on similarities and differences. The final part provides an overall comparison on the different sub-themes of the politics of higher education policy across the three contexts. In addition, it presents conclusions of the volume, suggestions for avenues of future research, as well as implications for other regions. Each of the parts is now introduced in greater detail.

Part I – The Politics of Higher Education Governance Reforms

The first instrument for politics to exert influence over higher education is the governance mode, which determines the relation between higher education and the state as well as the level of direct influence that public authorities have over higher education institutions. In line with Olsen's central question of what kind of university for what kind of society (Olsen, 2007), political preferences matter concerning the governance mode that governments implement in relation to higher education. However, there are overarching trends that are identified in the literature, such as the move towards more institutional autonomy and greater use of market mechanisms (Christensen, 2011; Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000; Gornitzka et al., 2017; McLendon & Ness, 2003; Shanahan & Jones, 2007). Additionally, the existing governance regimes are often found to create path-dependencies limiting the room to manoeuvre for political actors. Thus, governance reforms are often an interaction of general trends, political preferences, and existing arrangements, which differ significantly between the three contexts.

Part II – The Politics of Higher Education Finance

The second part addresses the politics of financing higher education, which is maybe the most intensively debated issue in the literature on higher education politics. Due to the complex re-distributive capacities of higher education, the question whether public spending for higher education has a re-distributive or a reverse re-distributive effect is still not completely settled (Ansell, 2010; Garritzmann & Seng, 2016). As funding for higher education is one of the two core instruments that governments use to steer higher education, a central question concerning the politics of higher education finance is linked to the level of public funding for higher education especially in relation to its level of access. However, also the level of private spending (i.e. tuition fees) and the system of student subsidies are relevant factors when analysing the politics of higher education finance. In Europe national governments and the parties composing them are the main actors that shape politics in this area (Garritzmann, 2016; Jungblut, 2016), while in the U.S. policy-making is an interplay between a complex set of actors including, for example, governors, legislatures, or interest groups (Tandberg, 2010). Canada takes up an intermediary position and the specific dynamics are highly dependent on the province or territory.

Part III – Framing of Higher Education Policy

Higher education is a policy field that is going through a process of re-framing. While in the decades before massification, higher education was in the first place an elite issue, it transformed during the 1970s to a topic debated in the frame of the

welfare state and policies of social mobility (Jungblut, 2014; Maassen et al., 2012). In a second more recent process, the debate surrounding the knowledge economy led to a growing discussion around higher education as a tool to support economic growth, innovation and economic competitiveness (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2011). At the same time, higher education is more and more expected to function as a transversal problem solver for other policy areas (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2011), again leading to more salience in political debates. The processes of re-framing of higher education can be regarded as an opportunity for different actors to shift the debate as well as their position on issues related to it by debating it in a different policy frame (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Through such a process an actor can highlight different aspects of a policy without formally changing the core of his/her position, simply by addressing it in a different setting (Daviter, 2007). Thus, this possibility to debate higher education, in, for example, the context of welfare policy or economic policy, gives actors more room to manoeuvre in contemporary policy discussions.

Part IV – Intermediary Organisations and Interest Groups in Higher Education Policy

Intermediary organizations are a specific set of actors that receive a growing amount of attention in the literature on both sides of the Atlantic. In North America, a plurality of interest groups is active in higher education policy. Especially in the U.S. following the trend towards policy privatization, interest groups play a significant role, and a more diverse set of groups is active in higher education. These include not only higher education institutions themselves but also university alliances, Political Action Committees (PACs), classical lobby groups, or charitable foundations like the Lumina Foundation (Ness et al., 2015). In the European context, interest groups are mainly related to collective actors. Here especially the governance regime used in the EHEA that recognises a certain set of interest groups as legitimate representatives of different groups within the higher education sector is a key determinant (Elken & Vukasovic, 2014; Vukasovic, 2018; Vukasovic et al., 2017). These groups include student unions, representative bodies of universities and other higher education institutions, but also labour unions and employer representatives. In Canada, one can find a mixture of the U.S. and European dynamics.

Part V – Policy Transfer and Diffusion in Higher Education

Policy transfer is a process by which policies travel from one context to another and political actors use policy-making examples from other contexts to copy, adapt or learn something for their own policy-making (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). These processes are found to be increasingly relevant for politics of higher education

policy in the three contexts. In the U.S. and Canada, policy transfer mainly happens horizontally between states, provinces or territories, which sometimes emulate policies from their neighbours (McLendon et al., 2005). Vertical diffusion from the federal level to the sub-national entities is less common also due to the clear separation of responsibilities. Contrary to that, in Europe policy diffusion happens mainly in a vertical way. Following the growing Europeanization of higher education policy, the different nation states are increasingly involved in up- or downloading of policies to and from the European level (Ravinet, 2008; Vukasovic, 2013a). Through these processes, national-level reforms are justified through European labels.

Part VI – Comparison and Conclusion

The final part of the volume provides an overview of the politics of higher education policy in the three contexts. Referring to the opposing expectations regarding global rationalization of higher education versus local translation or path-dependence, the chapter will discuss in how far the politics of higher education policy are converging in the three contexts. In doing so, it will highlight similarities and differences between the contexts and point to the roots of these differences. Moreover, it will present some concluding thoughts on the overall topic of the book as well as highlight what the research communities in the three contexts can learn from one another and develop a research agenda to offer several suggestions for further comparative research across the different contexts.

Conclusion

In this introductory chapter, we presented the rationale behind the choice of topic for this volume. We believe that given the increasing salience of higher education policy, the somewhat secluded research communities in the three contexts, and the lack of comparative scholarship that includes cases from both sides of the Atlantic, there is a need for a structured comparison of the politics of higher education policy in the Canada, the U.S., and Western Europe. We want to address this gap in the literature with this volume. We hope that the following chapters will not only provide an overview of the state of the art of higher education policy research as well as new empirical analyses, but also serve as an entry point for increased scholarly collaboration and comparisons across the Atlantic. Moreover, with our conceptual starting point in the opposing expectations regarding global rationalization versus local translation and historical path-dependence, we hope to contribute to the discussion whether global higher education policy dynamics are characterized by conversion or diversity. Overall, we firmly believe that a comparative approach to the study of the politics of higher education policy as it is applied in this volume, can be very illustrative in highlighting contemporary policy-making dynamics and help to improve future scholarship.

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Part I
The Politics of Higher Education
Governance Reforms

Chapter 2

The Politics of Higher Education Governance Reform in Western Europe



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Abstract There has been ample reform activity regarding the governance of higher education in Europe since the late 1980s. The initial impetus behind these reforms has been linked to the introduction of concepts stemming from New Public Management (NPM) leading to somewhat similar reform rationales throughout Western Europe. At the same time, European countries have approached the issue of governance reforms from very different starting points, and still today there is significant national diversity in higher education governance.

Overall, differing starting points, a converging reform rhetoric, but also diverging interests of the involved actors characterize governance reforms in higher education in Europe. This makes for a complex political environment and it is the aim of this chapter to provide a detailed account of the state of the art of academic research on this issue and make an argument for the importance of key political actors, namely political parties, in contemporary discussions about higher education governance. To this end, we will in a first step present a structured overview of the literature on politics of higher education governance reforms in Western Europe, which is then followed by an empirical analysis focusing on one specific factor that influences reforms and national variation in higher education governance in Europe: the preferences of political parties. In this, we will analyze to what extent different party families (e.g. Social Democrats or Christian Democrats) have diverging preferences with regard to higher education governance and whether and how parties with a similar ideological background differ in their policy positions across national contexts. This is based on an analysis and comparison of party manifestos from parties from six countries to identify both inter-party and inter-country differences in policy preferences.

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Introduction

Governance reforms have been an important feature in European higher education since the late 1980s with nearly continuous reform activity since then (Goedegebuure et al., 1993; Gornitzka et al., 2017). The initial impetus behind these reforms has been linked to the introduction of governance ideas stemming from New Public Management (NPM) leading to somewhat similar reform rationales throughout Western Europe (Paradeise et al., 2009). At the same time, European countries have approached these reforms from very different starting points, and still today there is significant national diversity in the governance approaches used to steer higher education sectors (Austin & Jones, 2016).

There are several arguments why we can observe persisting differences in national approaches to higher education governance. First and in line with historical institutionalist accounts (Thelen, 1999), existing governance arrangements provide the starting point for any reform debate. They can create path-dependencies that channel national reform trajectories. Second, higher education governance is increasingly an issue of political competition between different groups of actors having varying preferences on how to steer a sector, whose political salience has greatly increased in recent decades (Chou et al., 2017; Jungblut, 2016). Finally, governance reforms have been, at the very least, a significant side-effect of Europeanization processes like the Bologna Process (Dobbins & Knill, 2014). While the concept of increased university autonomy has been the main common denominator, national higher education systems have exhibited very different interpretations on its meaning and the concrete distribution of autonomy (see e.g. Bennetot Pruvot & Estermann, 2017).

Thus, differing starting points, a converging reform rhetoric, but also diverging interests of involved actors characterize governance reforms in higher education in Europe. This makes for a complex political environment and it is the aim of this chapter to provide a detailed account of the state of the art of academic research on this issue and make an argument for the importance of political parties in contemporary discussions on higher education governance. The relevance of political actors in higher education governance reforms can be linked to the increased political salience that higher education policy received in recent decades (Jungblut, 2016). A larger percentage of people enrolling in higher education, more public and private money being spent on the sector, and the increased importance of higher education as a transversal problem-solver for other policy areas have contributed to the increased politicization of the sector (Christensen et al., 2014; Gornitzka & Maassen, 2014). Therefore, the question how to assure that higher education performs the way society wants it to, has been intensely debated among political actors, in particular parties of differing ideological backgrounds. This in turn has resulted in diverging preferences on how to best govern higher education.

This chapter will give an overview of the existing scholarship on the politics of higher education governance reforms in Western Europe. To do so, we will in a first step present a structured synopsis of the literature on politics of higher education

governance reforms in Western Europe, which is then followed by an empirical analysis focusing on one specific factor that influences reforms and national variation in higher education governance, namely the preferences of political parties. Political parties, especially if they have a majority in parliament, have a privileged role in policy formulation and agenda setting. Thus, we will analyze to what extent different party families have diverging preferences regarding higher education governance and whether and how parties with a similar ideological background differ in their preferences across national contexts. To this end, we study and compare party manifestos from parties from six countries to identify both inter-party and inter-country differences in policy preferences.

Literature Review

While accounts of higher education governance vary, most share a series of common features relating to the division of decision-making authority, processes of administration and regulation of procedural, financial and substantive issues between governments, the academic collegiate, university management and, in some cases, the student body (Austin & Jones, 2016). Another common feature of conceptualizations of higher education governance, both old and new, is the focus on a multi-level environment with an array of different stakeholders (Chou et al., 2017; Vukasovic, 2018). This has been even more the case in view of the multitude of supranational and regional platforms for the joint coordination of higher education activities both in Europe and beyond. Furthermore, many accounts of higher education governance shed light on the role of the higher education system within general national public sectors and seek to incorporate issues of personnel and the funding of higher education.

These interrelationships have been a prominent topic in the social sciences at the latest since Burton Clark's seminal work on the higher education system (1983). His analytical toolkit depicts a triangular tug-of-war between the state, academic oligarchy and the "market", historical outcomes of which are manifested in long-standing national governance models. These include, most notably, the Humboldtian model of academic self-rule, which Clark more poignantly defines as "academic oligarchy" (1983), but also the more state-centered, bureaucratic governance tradition, which can be traced back to the Napoleonic higher education reforms in France. Both Clark and other researchers drawing on his work (Clark, 1998; Dobbins et al., 2011; Olsen, 2007; Sporn, 1999) have elaborated on a more market-oriented governance tradition, which initially prevailed in the Anglo-Saxon world and has become a point of reference for national reforms elsewhere.

Starting in the 1990s, scholars have produced a myriad of highly useful, but generally descriptive and conceptual accounts of higher education governance. For example, the study by Goedegebuure et al. (1993) explored the policy dynamics in

numerous higher education systems, while elaborating on international trends and national variations. Braun and Merrien (1999) shifted the focus to the inner workings of universities and analyzed whether changes in the public sector have transformed the political and organizational management of universities. Specifically, they showed how increased state intervention had a varying impact on higher education systems.

This phase also gave rise to several seminal studies on the politics of market-making in higher education, both within institutions as well as through state impetuses. Dill's key study on higher education markets and public policy (1997) showed how market-based instruments such as academic labor markets, performance-based research funding and student support schemes became prevalent tools for governments to boost equity in mass higher education. Building on his earlier analysis (1983), Clark (1998) elaborated on the inner workings of so-called "entrepreneurial universities", which have adopted a myriad of new policy instruments aimed at channeling external demands into an increased capacity of universities to strategically respond. Following up on Clark's conceptualization, Braun (2001) elaborated on a model of corporate university governance, in which academics engage in both proactive and reactive strategic planning.

The emergence of NPM gave a strong impetus to the literature on higher education governance. Facing demands to "do more with less", national education policy-makers embraced new models of governance which saw for the partial retreat of the state as a regulator and financier and the allocation of strategic authority to university and management (see: Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000). This often went hand in hand with a strong emphasis on the economic utility of research output and brought about new policies driven by decentralization, the strategic planning of qualitative and quantitative objects as well as increased cooperation with the private sector (see e.g. Braun & Merrien, 1999). In this phase, scholars sought to grasp the new face of the state in regulating higher education. One very notable study is Neave's account of the "evaluative state" (1998). His argument is that governments have retreated from direct control over higher education, and instead shifted their regulatory activity towards evaluating the output of the sector and individual institutions. This went hand in hand with a more "steering-at-a-distance" approach to governance. Along these lines, De Boer et al. (2007), for example, showed how state-centered governance traditions in the Netherlands were replaced by new forms of steering in which the state is one of many actors in more network-based constellations. At the same time, universities have been considerably enhanced as autonomous actors. Specifically, they have gained increased financial discretion and authority over employment conditions, which according to the authors enabled them to "construct their own identities". At the same time, universities also developed more authoritative steering systems ("constructing hierarchy") and introduced new "management-by-objectives" and performance oversight approaches ("constructing rationality").

Ferlie et al. (2008) also examine the spill-over effects from the public sector into higher education and identify "signs and symptoms" of several new governance patterns in higher education. Their network governance narrative sees higher education systems as multi-level self-steering and self-organizing networks between societal

and academic actors. They jointly engage in problem-solving and the dissemination of best practices to realize collective ambitions. Thus, the state teams up with regional and local actors to ensure that higher education institutions operate with a view to the public interest. This contrasts with their so-called New Weberian narrative, whose foundations are administrative law and a highly professionalized public service, which strives to meet citizens' needs through transparent service planning and quality assurance. Ferlie et al. (2008) as well as numerous other authors (e.g. Dobbins & Knill, 2014) have also found strong evidence of a shift from ex ante to ex post state control. In other words, and in line with Neave's evaluative state, governments have shifted their regulatory activities in the sector towards evaluating performance and academic output. According to this "new public management narrative" (Ferlie et al., 2008), governments introduce new market-based features such as competition for students and research funding, student fees, performance-based funding, as well as entrepreneurially operating university management bodies.

The instructive volume *University Governance: Western European Comparative Perspectives* (Paradeise et al., 2009) also arrives at similar findings. Departing from a series of indicators for a top-down Napoleonic higher education model of France and southern Europe and a northern European Humboldtian tradition of academic self-governance, the authors show that the examined countries have moved towards more managerial, competition-oriented approaches to HE governance. This is reflected in greater university autonomy in return for increased stakeholder accountability and a diversification of funding sources.

Political Science and Higher Education Governance: Bologna as an Ice Breaker

It is safe to say that the Bologna Process and related processes of internationalization were a major ice breaker when it comes to the comparative study of higher education governance from a more theory-driven, political science perspective. Although the Bologna Process formally focuses on study structures, comparability and mobility, or quality assurance, among others, it has generated a myriad of reforms of governance structures, as policy-makers have become increasingly keen to boost the output of national higher education systems amid transnational scrutiny (Broucker et al., 2019). As a result of this, political scientists discovered the politics of higher education governance as an increasingly fruitful area of research.

A large share of this research has drawn on long-standing theoretical paradigms in policy analysis to grasp the dynamics of the politics of higher education governance. Besides partisan theory, which was mentioned in the introduction and will be further elaborated on below, scholars have applied numerous other explanatory paradigms from political science to higher education governance, in particular the "socio-economic school", the "international hypothesis", various strands of neo-institutionalism, and – increasingly also – power resource theory.

The *socio-economic school* focusses essentially on broader societal framework conditions which may affect higher education policy and, specifically, increase or decrease problem pressure. This pertains, in particular, to the relationship between the supply and demand of study places, drop-out rates, youth unemployment, the financial situation of education providers, and in particular the perceived attractiveness of national education systems (for broader accounts of these overarching factors, see Altbach, 1998; Enders & Fulton, 2002; for an account of British higher education see Fulton, 2002). The socio-economic perspective has taken on increased significance in view of ongoing debates of the global competitiveness of European higher education systems (Huisman & Van der Wende, 2004). The main hypotheses of this research approach is clear: the greater the degree of nationally perceived policy pressure, the greater the probability of national policy change (Witte, 2006).

The perception of an utter necessity to recalibrate national higher education governance has doubtlessly been boasted in the era of globalization, internationalization and the Bologna Process. The main focus of the so-called “*internationalization*” or “*globalization hypothesis*” is the extent to which increasing transnational interlinkages, in particular European integration, have transformed national institutions, policies and regulatory patterns. Europeanization research focusses, on the one hand, on how European integration impacts national political opportunity structures, thus inducing national policy change (Héritier, 2001; Knill & Lehmkuhl, 2002). On the other hand, numerous studies have explored learning processes, the exchange of information in transnational networks, and broadly transnational communication as a lever for policy change at the national level. In this regard, Europeanization or internationalization is not necessarily the result of the implementation of a particular model (=harmonization), rather often the result of emulation, lesson-drawing and policy-oriented learning (see Dobbins et al., Chap. 18 in this volume). Here, transnational policy platforms such as the Bologna Process function as a window of opportunity or “legitimacy anchor” for national policy-makers seeking to induce policy change (see: Holzinger & Knill, 2005). As a result, transnationally promoted policies and jointly defined benchmarks serve as external points of reference for domestic reforms, often resulting in policy convergence.

However, the internationalization and Europeanization paradigm arguably neglects the domestic policy context, such as historical regulatory traditions or cultural factors. Neo-institutionalism is one paradigm which bears strong potential for overcoming the deterministic nature of the internationalization and Europeanization approach. The general argument is that domestic institutions, policy-related perceptions, and political interactions differ distinctly from context to context. As a result, the transposal of transnationally promoted or emulated policies is highly contingent on the peculiarities of the national setting. The neo-institutionalist approach is generally divided into three major strands: historical institutionalism, rational institutionalism and sociological institutionalism (see: Hall & Taylor, 1996). *Historical institutionalism* emphasizes how the organizational structure, previous arrangements and the institutional legacies of a political system shape present-day policy-making, thus offering explanations for the uniqueness of national policy pathways amid similar transnational policy stimuli. Subsequently, the spread of global trends

such as higher education marketization and NPM is contingent on national cultures, demands, routines and institutional structures (Vaira, 2004). According to this understanding, higher education politics may be driven by distinct national perceptions of the role of the state and the relationship between higher education providers and their socio-economic environment (Neave, 2003).

By contrast, *rational choice institutionalism* focusses on how political and institutional settings such as veto players affect the probability of policy change (Tsebelis, 2002). Along these lines, policy change is contingent on three characteristics of veto players: the number, their ideological and/or policy-specific congruence, and their cohesion, thus the homogeneity of their positions. Thus national policy-making frameworks offer distinctly different prospects for far-reaching reforms both in higher education and beyond. *Sociological institutionalism*, by contrast, emphasizes how culturally framed ideas and the broader guiding principles of a society may shape policy reforms. This theoretical strand argues that nations may significantly vary in their culturally embedded understandings of the role and function of higher education and education in general. Contrary to the historical institutional paradigm, policy-makers are guided not so much by institutional constraints, rather by what they perceive as appropriate in terms of cultural norms. Unlike the rational choice paradigm, their actions are driven not so much by the ambition to increase their personal utility, rather by a “logic of appropriateness”. Thus, transnationally promoted policies may clash with culturally specific norms on what exact function higher education should perform (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Beyond neo-institutionalism, two additional political science paradigms have gained prominence in higher education governance research, in particular since the outset of the Bologna Process: *partisan theory* and *power-resource theory*. The fundamental argument of partisan theory, which we specifically focus on below, is that the partisan competition of a government coalition may fundamentally impact policy outcomes (Hibbs, 1977). Moreover, it assumes that leftist parties are more likely to intervene into economic processes, while right-wing and center-right parties tend to put greater faith in market forces. In other words, leftist parties have traditionally been more concerned with creating a level playing field and thus more egalitarian conditions in education, whereas conservative parties tend to use competition as a vehicle for promoting academic excellence and diversification. This may significantly impact the degree of state regulation of higher education as well as the penetration of market-oriented or market-making governance instruments into higher education, funding mechanisms, as well as the scope and depth of accountability and quality assurance in higher education.

Finally, *power-resource theory* also may lend key insights to the politics of higher education governance with its focus on organized interests in the academic system. Specifically, policy outcomes are viewed as the product of the organizational capacity, resources, and coordinative strategies of interest groups. In higher education this comprises stakeholders such as student unions (Klemenčič, 2014), business and industry, academic interest groups as well as associations of university management (see Vukasovic, 2018 and Vukasovic, Chap. 14 in this volume). Their ability to organize, collectively advocate their interests and engage in alliances with

like-minded groups and political parties are viewed as key to their impact on governmental policy.

Empirical Contributions to the Politics of Higher Education Governance

In the past 15 years a wealth of studies drawing on the above described analytical approaches have emerged, many of which have aimed to strategically combine two or more of them. The earliest political science studies on higher education governance tended to focus on the emergence of transnational policy-making platforms and thus the potential impact of Europeanization of higher education. For example Martens et al. (2007) argued that national governments strategically created “New Arenas of Educational Governance” in order to overcome collective action dilemmas at the national level due to various reform obstacles such as educational federalism and institutional veto players. These new transnational platforms eventually took on a dynamic of their own, conducting national-level actors to align themselves with transnationally promoted policies, most notably more market-oriented governance structures, but also new frameworks and benchmarks for quality assurance (Hazelkorn et al., 2018; Rosa & Amaral, 2014; Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004). Combining an Europeanization approach with a sociological institutionalist perspective, Ravinet (2008) also showed how the Bologna Process came to function as a basis for cross-country comparison, socialization and imitation. It in turn prompted national actors to adhere to the guidelines despite the lack of binding oversight mechanisms. Following up on studies which heavily stress the emergence, mode of operation and impact of Europeanization processes in higher education, Martens et al. (2010) and Dobbins and Knill (2014) introduce a stronger political science perspective on national higher education governance reforms. The edited volume by Martens et al. (2010) links a rational-institutionalist and sociological institutionalist approach to grasp the dynamics and direction of policy change subsequent to the Bologna Process. Their central argument is that the regulatory role of the state has changed tremendously, but that the reform pathways have been heavily conditioned by guiding principles of education and the blocking power of national veto players.

Also pivoting from a (rational)-institutionalist perspective, Bleiklie and Michelsen (2018) show how different public administration traditions shaped the speed and depth of higher education reforms in numerous Western European countries. They classify national political-administrative regimes as centralized-decentralized, majoritarian-consensual, strong administrative law vs. public interest-oriented governance. With its combination of a majoritarian political system, a unitary state structure and public-interest oriented administrative culture, England proved to be one of the swiftest higher education reformers. By contrast, the authors trace the low degree of reform activity of Germany and Switzerland back to their federal political regimes with many veto points. This was compacted by the very strong

position of the professorate, which had an additional decelerating effect on the reform pathway. A similar approach is taken up by Locke et al. (2011) who use survey data from the “Changing Academic Profession” project to investigate academics’ perceptions on changes in higher education governance and management. They highlight several dynamics in their cross-country study including a shifting balance away from academics as the key group in decision-making, a greater focus on accountability or an increased importance of higher education management.

Dobbins and Knill (2014) were among the first authors to combine a historical-institutionalist and sociological-institutionalist approach to higher education governance. Drawing on their previous work on Central and Eastern Europe (Dobbins & Knill, 2009), they comparatively assess changes in higher education governance in the four largest Western European higher education systems: France, Italy, Great Britain and Germany from the prism of transnational soft governance mechanisms, in particular institutional isomorphism, and historical higher education settings. After breaking down higher education governance into university decision-making, financial governance, personnel autonomy and substantive autonomy, they derive empirical indicators for three dimensions – (1) the relationship between the state and higher education providers, (2) patterns of governance within universities and (3) and the relationship between universities and external stakeholders. This enabled them to measure variations over time in the distance between these four countries’ higher education systems and three visions of the modern university as described above (the Napoleonic, Humboldtian and market-oriented model).

For Italy they show that the historically privileged academic community exploited internationalization processes to twist reforms in their preferred direction (more academic self-rule). Until some crackdowns on various excesses of the academic oligarchy with the 2010 Gelmini reform (see: Donina et al., 2015), the reform trajectory was essentially regressive, as Italian higher education governance to a large extent returned to the situation of the 1980s (see also: Capano, 2008). In France, by contrast, the Sarkozy government drew on its privileged position of strong executive leverage to largely uproot historically entrenched policies and structures and impose a more market-oriented governance framework on universities. This process was strongly driven by isomorphism, i.e. targeted efforts to align France with external governance models endowing universities much greater autonomy. Regarding Germany they argue that instruments and policies reflecting “tamed marketization” were implemented within historically pre-existing policy arrangements. Thus, Europeanization brought about a hybrid governance model in which various relatively constrained policy instruments (e.g. increased performance-based funding, increased university autonomy, quality assurance) do justice to both international competitive pressures as well as the historical sensitivities of the academic community. As for Great Britain (in particular England) they reveal a pattern of “policy doubling down” to the extent that policy makers are reinforcing already existing policies viewed as unique and successful to the British system such as multi-stakeholdership, entrepreneurial university management and funding diversification (see also: Hoareau, 2009; Tapper, 2007). Based on their “higher education governance triangles” they show for all four countries that governance has become more

multilateral and inclusive, resulting from a more complex interplay between the state, the academic community and a strengthened university management.

However, the above-discussed analyses arguably neglect the role of political parties and in general the domestic policy-making arena. Scholars working with partisan theory have made numerous contributions to our understanding of higher education governance in the past 10–15 years. One strand of research draws heavily on the political economy literature and addresses issues of funding and socio-economic redistribution as well as cost-sharing in higher education, which are broadly speaking fundamental components of higher education as well. Drawing on earlier work of Boix (1997), Busemeyer (2007), or Castles and Obinger (2007), Ansell (2010) explores variations in higher education spending over time with a focus on the transition from elite to mass higher education. Based on formal, statistical models and historical case studies, he contends that redistributive political motions, which are contingent on the electoral clientele and the openness of higher education systems impact governmental funding. Specifically, he shows that conservative governments generally fund higher education more generously in the case of relatively closed, i.e. elitist, tertiary education admissions, while social democrats tend to invest more in higher education when it is more open to broader social strata. In concrete figures, Ansell (2010: 66 et seq.) finds that right-wing parties favor public spending in higher education systems with less than 33% of gross enrollment rates and left-wing parties favor it in higher education systems with a gross enrollment rate over 50%.

Garritzmann's book (2016) takes this argument one step further with his "time-sensitive partisan theory" and shows that divergent models of student financing have emerged depending on the longevity of partisan coalitions. The study nicely accounts for the complexity of higher education funding arrangements by focusing not only on tuition fees and government spending, but also other subsidy systems for students (e.g. housing, transportation, etc.).

The work of Jungblut (2015) was perhaps the first to capture both the redistributive and administrative control dimension of higher education governance from a partisan perspective. He contends that political parties not only have preferences over different forms of (educational) redistribution, but also over how the state should steer the public sector, how much autonomy professional communities should enjoy and more specifically to what degree power over the higher education sector should be centralized. Driven by their preference for a more activist and interventionist state, he argues that leftist parties will gravitate towards centralized control over higher education, while the political right will push for more de-centralized control due to their greater emphasis on individualism over collectivism. However, in line with Kauko (2013), whose model of dynamic higher education change focuses on the institutional dynamics and policy change in situations of reform, gridlock, consensual change and friction, Jungblut (2015) also brings back in the institutional context as a crucial co-variable for the depth and direction of policy change. While policy makers hold core convictions on the nature of higher education governance, they are often constrained by the volatile positions of institutions and other actors.

In a subsequent study, Jungblut (2016) tested the above arguments in an analysis of higher education governance reforms in the Netherlands, Germany (North-Rhine Westphalia), Norway and the UK. This study also provided a clearer distinction between green and liberal parties, conservative and Christian Democratic parties, as well as other anti-establishment parties. Regarding the dimension of governmental control, Jungblut determines that green and social-democratic parties are, by and large, more supportive of central government control over university governance. In the period of analysis, the German SPD opposed most autonomy-promoting reforms on the control dimension, while the Norwegian and Dutch Labour Parties (AP and PvdA) also pushed for a stronger role of central government combined with greater stakeholder involvement. By contrast, conservative (e.g. British conservatives, Norwegian Høyre), liberal (e.g. the British Liberal Democrats and German FDP) and Christian Democratic parties (e.g. German CDU and Dutch CDA) generally voiced support for policies promoting the autonomy of higher education institutions, market mechanisms and decentralized control. In a later study, Jungblut (2017) shows how coalition negotiations with other parties mediate the influence of partisan preferences. Based on an analysis of Dutch, Norwegian and German higher education governance reforms, he distinguishes between “pre-negotiated policy-making” and “ad hoc policy-making” and shows that if a coalition has expressed a firm policy position in its agreement, the chances for reform are relatively high. If, however, a reform is put on the agenda in a more ad hoc, spontaneous fashion, parties retreat to their initial electoral position, making reforms less likely. Thus policy change is not only contingent on historical institutions and situative circumstances (see: Dobbins & Knill, 2014; Kauko, 2013), but also by the dynamics of partisan coalitions.

Analyzing the Impact of Partisan Preferences on Higher Education Governance

After providing a detailed overview of the literature, the following sections will present an empirical analysis that focuses on policy preferences of different political parties. Given the central role of political parties for policy formulation in parliamentary democracies and the importance of the political environment for change processes in higher education (Bleiklie & Michelsen, 2013), parties’ preferences are an important factor that shapes governance reforms (see also: Ansell, 2010; Garritzmann, 2016; Jungblut, 2015, 2016, 2017; McLendon & Ness, 2003). Thus, the following study aims to analyze how parties from different ideological backgrounds who are active in various national environments position themselves with regard to the governance of higher education. The analysis focuses both on differences between parties in the same country and parties with similar ideological preferences who are active in different countries. The next section will introduce the analytical framework used for the study, after which the research design, methods and data will be presented. This is followed by the presentation of the results.

Partisan Preferences and Ideal Types of Higher Education Governance Arrangements

The idea that the preferences of political parties are relevant for policy-making in parliamentary democracies is well established in comparative politics (Volkens et al., 2014), and based on the so-called partisan hypothesis according to which differing constituencies have different preferences that are aggregated by parties and, once parties are in government, preferences are then turned into policies favoring the respective constituency (Hibbs, 1977).

When looking at partisan preferences on higher education governance, one must start by taking the governance of the public sector in general into consideration. Following the rise of NPM in the early 1980s, the relationship between the state and public sector in Europe changed significantly mainly in the direction of an increased reliance on governance instruments previously used exclusively in the private sector (Gingrich, 2011). While discursive convergence regarding NPM reforms has been high, there has also been divergence in reform practices due to actors' preferences given that NPM reforms are not ideologically neutral (Pollitt, 2001). Therefore, with NPM reforms opening up the relationship between the state and the public sector, partisan conflicts arose about how and by whom effective control over the public sector is exercised (Gingrich, 2011). This is politically relevant as the governance mode used to steer the public sector not only regulates who is involved in policy-making but also affects questions related to professional autonomy, accountability, and responsiveness to societal demands.

A central conceptualization that combines different ideological positions on higher education governance can be found in the work of Olsen (1988, 2007) as well as Gornitzka and Maassen (2000). They distinguish between four different approaches to the relationship between the state and higher education (Olsen, 2007). The first approach is based on an administrative logic and sees the *university as an instrument for national political agendas*. In this understanding, the government remains the dominant actor in governance and control over higher education remains very centralized. The second approach is based on the idea of interest representation as well as bargaining and sees the *university as a representative democracy*. This mode focuses on the involvement of a set of stakeholder groups in higher education governance similar to corporatist arrangements and leads to semi-centralized governance. The third approach derives from the professional identity and autonomy of academics, which provides the foundation to treat the *university as a rule-governed community of scholars*. This mode highlights the importance of autonomy of universities to govern themselves based on an arms-length relationship to the state and thus is a semi-decentralized form of governance. The final approach sees higher education embedded in a system of market exchanges with the duty to function efficiently for society and thus it views the *university as a service enterprise embedded in a competitive market*. This mode stresses values similar to NPM and relies on competition and markets as a way to control higher education. Therefore, this approach to governance is the most decentralized one. Table 2.1 provides an

Table 2.1 Ideal types of higher education governance arrangements

Centralized control ←		→ De-centralized control	
University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market

overview how the different approaches to governance align on a dimension between centralized and de-centralized control over higher education.

Based on the different ideological foundations, parties from differing party families can be expected to have diverging preferences when it comes to governing higher education. Parties from the *social democratic* (SD) family as well as *anti-establishment parties of the left*¹ (AEP-L) have an ideological preferences for an active state that controls the public sector and through this shapes the life of citizens (Busemeyer, 2009). Thus, they can be expected to favour a centralized control that focuses on using the university as an instrument for national political agendas. Given their strong link to labour unions and the idea of corporatism, these parties have a secondary preference for steering higher education based on stakeholder involvement and seeing the university as a representative democracy. *Green parties* (GP) should have similar preferences given that they on the one hand have some clear prescriptive ideas regarding, for example, the role of universities for solving climate change or energy-related problems, thus using them for their political agendas. On the other hand, Green parties have a diverse electorate, which should give them a secondary preference for governing universities based on the idea of a representative democracy (Rauh et al., 2011).

Christian democratic parties (CD) have a preference for subsidiarity and giving competences to local institutions (Kalyvas & van Kersbergen, 2010). This means that they should favour a de-centralized form of governance focusing especially on universities as rule-governed communities of scholars, highlighting also the importance of professional autonomy. *Conservative* (CP) and *liberal parties* (LP) can be expected to have similar preferences regarding governance of higher education. Both should prefer more de-centralized control because they advocate for smaller state structures and more streamlined public services (Boix, 1998; Kirchner, 1988). Moreover, they are also not opposed to quality heterogeneity of public services, and they favour market-based competition to assure efficiency. Thus, both types of parties should have a first-order preference for universities as service enterprises in a competitive market and a second-order preference for universities as rule-governed communities of scholars. Finally, *anti-establishment parties of the right*² (AEP-R) can be expected to prefer centralized control of higher education, and more precisely using universities as an instrument for national political agendas, such as fostering national cultural homogeneity. Given that they tend to have a limited

¹This includes for example socialist or communist parties.

²This includes for example right-wing populist or nationalist parties.

amount of their electorate represented in universities while at the same time not having historically strong ties to any of the organized interests in higher education, they should be opposed to too much autonomy of universities and rather prefer control by a national ministry (Berg et al., 2023; Jungblut, 2016). Table 2.2 provides an overview over the conceptual expectations towards different party families regarding higher education governance.

While the above preferences are based on the ideological foundation of different party families, a specific party in a given country might not always formulate a preference, which is completely in line with its ideological predisposition. The main reason for this is that partisan preferences are formulated in relation to existing higher education systems and governance arrangements. As more radical reforms of existing arrangements and policies are often more politically costly, the existing higher education system and its governance arrangements create policy legacies and path dependencies that can constrain parties in formulating their ideal preferences (Gingrich, 2011, 2015). Finally, the polarization of the party system and the number of competing parties also affect partisan competition and thus how parties formulate their preferences. Generally speaking, a higher number of active parties create greater polarization and competition along a larger set of issues (Sartori, 1976).

Research Design, Case Selection, Methods and Data

The empirical study carried out for this chapter uses a comparative case study design (Gerring, 2007). The cases are political parties in specific countries and the comparative element encompasses two dimensions: comparisons between parties within one country and comparisons of parties from the same party family (Mair & Mudde, 1998)³ in different countries. The countries selected for the analysis

Table 2.2 Expected partisan preferences regarding higher education governance

Centralized control ←		→ De-centralized control	
University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
	SD GP	CD	CP LP
AEP-L			
AEP-R			

³The concept of the party family describes a group of political parties that are active in different countries but share common ideological roots.

represent diverse environments in relation to which the different parties formulate their political preferences, and they entail higher education systems with different historical foundations (Shattock, 2014) as well as skill regimes (Busemeyer, 2015).

The data are election manifestos from recent parliamentary elections. Election manifestos are a well-recognized data source for the study of partisan positions as they represent authoritative statements by the parties to their voters about the policies that they will pursue once they are elected (Klingemann et al., 1994). Thus, parties can be expected to follow up on these promises, as they will also be the basis for the voters' assessment of their performance at the next election.

The analysis will compare parties who are represented in parliaments in six countries. While in five cases the analysis will focus on the national parliament, for the German case it is necessary to analyze one of the *Bundesländer* as higher education policy is within the constitutional responsibility of the federal states. Thus, the *Bundesland* with the largest population, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), will serve as the proxy for Germany. As some of the countries that are included have very permissive electoral rules leading to many smaller parties being represented in the parliament, only parties with more than 5 parliamentary seats will be included for Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK. In Norway, only parties with more than one seat will be included. In NRW and Austria, the aim was to include all parties in parliament, which was possible in NRW but not in Austria due to missing data.⁴

The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis with a single coder. The codebook for the analysis has been created based on the previously described analytic framework using one code for each of the four different modes of governance. Each time a manifesto included a relevant position, the position has been coded with the matching code. The party was then assessed based on the overall score for the complete document. Two months after the initial coding an intra-coder reliability test was performed using 14% of the data. Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) was calculated at 0.847, which is a strong level of intra-coder reliability. Table 2.3 provides an overview of the countries and parties included in the study.

Party Competition on the Governance of Higher Education Policy

In the presentation of results, we first explore the results grouped by party families and then provide an overview structured by country, allowing for both inter- and intra-country comparisons. The analyzed parties varied in their preferences as well as the overall number of positions taken on higher education governance, and some parties did not specify any preference on higher education governance and thus could not be included in the study. This includes the Irish Sinn Féin, the Dutch PVV and the British DUP.

⁴The "Liste Peter Pilz" is not included in the study due to missing data.

Table 2.3 Overview of countries, election years and parties included in the study

Country	Higher education tradition	Skill regime	Election year	Analyzed parties
Austria	Humboldtian	Corporatist	2017	ÖVP, SPÖ, FPÖ, NEOS
Germany (NRW)	Humboldtian	Corporatist	2017	SPD, CDU, FDP, Grüne, AfD
Ireland	Anglo-Saxon	Liberal	2016	Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Labour, Sinn Féin, AAA
Netherlands	Humboldtian	Mixed	2017	VVD, PVV, CDA, D66, GroenLinks, Socialistische Partij (SocP), PvdA, Christen Unie (CU), PvdD
Norway	Nordic	Statist	2017	AP, Høyre, FrP, Senterpartiet (SP), Venstre, SV, KrF
United Kingdom	Anglo-Saxon	Liberal	2015	Conservatives, Labour, Scottish National Party (SNP), Liberal Democrats (LibDems), Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)

Table 2.4 Preferences of Social Democratic parties

Country	Party	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Austria	SPÖ	++			(+)
Germany (NRW)	SPD	++	+		
Ireland	Labour	+			
Netherlands	PvdA	++	+		(+)
Norway	AP	++			(+)
United Kingdom	Labour			(+)	

The number of plus signs indicates the strengths of preference with ++ being strongly in favor, + being somewhat in favor, and (+) indicating a slight preference

Social Democrats

There are social democratic parties in all six countries and while they largely fulfill the expectations, there are some variations regarding the preferences (see Table 2.4). Except for Labour in the United Kingdom, all social democratic parties show as expected a clear preference for using the university as an instrument for national political agendas. This means they prefer centralized governance and a dominant role of the ministry. Some social democratic parties combine this with a focus on universities as representative democracies as well as single-issue preferences

regarding some form of market-based governance. The Labour party in the United Kingdom does not fulfill the expectations and only has a very limited number of preferences regarding higher education governance in general. This is in line with results from previous studies (e.g. Jungblut, 2016). The preference can be explained by the fact that the United Kingdom embraced market-based forms of governance early on, creating path dependencies for the relation between the state and higher education. Moreover, the party system of the United Kingdom with only a few parties and a majoritarian election system limits the number of issues parties compete on, which explains why all British parties only express a limited number of preferences on higher education governance.

Anti-establishment Parties of the Left

The three anti-establishment parties of the left that are included in the sample fulfill the expectations, as they prefer using the university as an instrument for national political agendas (see Table 2.5). Thus, they also focus on centralized governance and a dominant role of the ministry in steering higher education. Both the Dutch SP and the Norwegian SV combine this with a preference for stakeholder inclusion and universities as representative democracies. The Irish AAA only has a very limited amount of preferences on higher education governance and thus the results are not as clear as in the other two cases.

Green Parties

The Green parties show preferences that are in line with the expectations. All four of them have a strong preference for universities as an instrument for national political agendas (see Table 2.6). The German and Dutch parties also combine this with a focus on universities as representative democracies, and the PvdD even has a slight preference for more autonomous universities.

Table 2.5 Preferences of anti-establishment parties of the left

Country	Party	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Ireland	AAA	(+)			
Netherlands	SP	+	+		
Norway	SV	++	+		

Table 2.6 Preferences of Green parties

Country	Party	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Austria	Grüne	++			
Germany (NRW)	Grüne	++	+		
Netherlands	GroenLinks	++	+		
	PvdD	++	+	(+)	

Table 2.7 Preferences of Christian Democratic parties

Country	Party	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Austria	ÖVP	(+)		++	++
Germany (NRW)	CDU	(+)		++	+
Ireland	Fine Gael	(+)		+	+
Netherlands	CDA	(+)		+	
	CU	+			
Norway	KrF	+		++	++

Christian Democrats

There are six Christian democratic parties in five countries in the sample. As previously expected, most of them show a clear preference for universities as rule-governed communities of scholars, meaning de-centralized control, a focus on professional values and autonomy of higher education institutions (see Table 2.7). Some of the Christian democratic parties like the Austrian ÖVP and the Norwegian KrF combine this with strong preferences for market-based steering. In addition, all Christian democratic parties have some preferences for using the university as an instrument for national political agendas. While this to a certain extent contradicts the expectations, it is related to the strong ethical foundation of Christian democratic parties, which some parties translate into preferences that, for example, prescribe universities the amount of ethical education they should include in their study programs.

Table 2.8 Preferences of Conservative parties

Country	Party	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Ireland	Fianna Fáil	(+)		(+)	+
Norway	Høyre	(+)		+	++
United Kingdom	Conservatives			(+)	+

Conservative Parties

The three conservative parties in the study show, as expected, a focus on governing the university using market mechanisms and to a certain extent treating universities as rule-governed communities of scholars highlighting university autonomy (see Table 2.8). This is a clear preference for de-centralized governance. The British Conservatives, like the other parties from the United Kingdom, show a less pronounced profile as they have fewer preferences in their manifesto that address higher education governance. Finally, two of the Conservative parties also have at least some preferences that include using the university to reach certain political goals. However, these are singular preferences focusing on specific issues.

Liberal Parties

There are six liberal parties in the sample of the study. The liberal party family is often described as one of the most diverse ones as it encompasses both neo-liberal parties and more social liberal ones (Kirchner, 1988). This is also visible in this analysis. Two of the parties, the Austrian NEOS and the British Liberal Democrats, only have very limited preferences and those preferences focus on promoting university autonomy. While this is also a de-centralized form of governance, the initial expectation was that liberal parties should focus rather on competitive market mechanisms. This is the case for the other three parties in the sample (see Table 2.9). While the German FDP, the Dutch VVD and the Norwegian Venstre show a profile in line with the expectation, the Dutch D66 has a more diverse set of preferences focusing also on university governance based on stakeholders and representative democracy. This can be explained on the one hand by the fact that D66 is in direct electoral competition with the Dutch VVD which requires them to express somewhat different preferences. On the other hand, D66 is more on the social liberal side of the liberal party family, while the VVD is more on the neo-liberal side. Therefore, the difference between the two Dutch liberal parties shows both the diversity of the liberal party family and the importance of the party system for the development of partisan preferences.

Table 2.9 Preferences of Liberal parties

Country	Party	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Austria	NEOS			(+)	
Germany (NRW)	FDP	(+)		++	++
Netherlands	D66	(+)	+		+
	VVD	(+)		+	++
Norway	Venstre	+		+	++
United Kingdom	LibDems			(+)	

Table 2.10 Preferences of anti-establishment parties of the right

Country	Party	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Austria	FPÖ	(+)		++	+
Germany (NRW)	AfD	(+)		+	
Norway	FrP			+	++

Anti-Establishment Parties of the Right

Only three anti-establishment parties of the right in the sample provide some preferences on higher education governance. All of these parties show different preferences than expected, as they focus not on centralized governance that uses the university as an instrument for political agendas, but instead on de-centralized forms of governance highlighting university autonomy and, in the case of the Austrian FPÖ and the Norwegian FrP, also market-based forms of governance (see Table 2.10). These results are comparable to Christian democratic or Conservative parties and could be an indication of the normalization of these anti-establishment parties with regard to policy issues related to public governance (Akkerman et al., 2016; Berg et al., 2023; Jupskås, 2016).

Special Issue Parties

The final group of parties are less ideologically homogenous and there have been no expectations formulated for them. This group encompasses special issue parties, such as the Agrarian SP in Norway or the regional SNP in the United Kingdom. The focus of these parties is on specific issues that are not necessarily related to the way the public sector or higher education should be governed. Therefore, their preferences are presented here mainly for the sake of completing the overview (see Table 2.11).

Comparing Partisan Preferences Across Countries

After presenting the preferences of the different parties by party family, Table 2.12 provides a comparative overview of partisan preferences by country. Parties are positioned here along the axis between centralized and de-centralized control over higher education. When comparing the different countries, it becomes clear that except for the United Kingdom there is distinct party competition on the question how to best govern higher education.

The previous section as well as Table 2.12 clearly show that higher education governance reforms are an issue of party competition and that parties hold differing preferences on this. These preferences are in general in line with expectations derived from the parties' ideological backgrounds, but path dependencies from existing governance arrangements in national higher education systems or the existing party system can influence party competition leading to different preferences of parties from the same party family. Good examples for this are Labour in the UK or the Dutch D66.

It is interesting to note that nearly all parties, even the ones that are in favour of market mechanisms and very de-centralized governance, have single issues where they prefer a strong role of the ministry. This can include e.g. prescribing universities to have academics publish in open access journals or demanding that universities guarantee students that they can have a study period abroad. This indicates that even those parties that have a strong disposition for de-centralized governance might formulate concrete expectations towards higher education that they want to make sure are fulfilled by using the hierarchical control of a ministry.

Table 2.11 Preferences of special issue parties

Country	Party	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Norway	SP	+		(+)	+
United Kingdom	SNP				(+)

Table 2.12 Partisan preference on higher education governance in six European countries

	Centralized control ←—————→De-centralized control			
	University as an instrument for national political agendas	University as a representative democracy	University as a rule-governed community of scholars	University as a service enterprise in a competitive market
Austria	Grüne SPÖ		FPÖ NEOS	ÖVP
Germany (NRW)	Grüne SPD		CDU AfD	FDP
Ireland	Labour	AAA		Fianna Fáil Fine Gael
Netherlands	CU GroenLinks PvdA PvdD SP	D66	CDA	VVD
Norway	AP SV		SP KrF	FrP Høyre Venstre
United Kingdom			LibDems Labour SNP	Conservatives

The Irish Sinn Féin, the Dutch PVV and the British DUP do not present a position regarding higher education governance in their manifesto

The differences in partisan preferences concerning higher education governance throughout the six European countries can be seen as a new arena for party competition. This arena grew in importance following, on the one hand, the opening of the relationship between the state and the public sector in the aftermath of NPM reforms (Gingrich, 2011) and, on the other hand, the growing limitations on partisan conflicts regarding the socio-economic dimension of higher education due to path dependencies of the system (see: Garritzmann, 2016). Against this background, it is interesting to note that the inter-country differences among parties from the same party family seem to be more limited regarding preferences on higher education governance than regarding preferences on socio-economic issues, as previous studies have pointed out (see e.g. Garritzmann, 2016; Jungblut, 2016, 2017). Thus, it seems that partisan ideology is a stronger predictor for partisan preferences in

higher education governance, which further underlines the importance of party ideology for governance reforms in higher education.

However, one should keep in mind that contrary to socio-economic issues, questions related to the governance of higher education tend to be less salient in political debates especially for the electorate. In this, it is rather unlikely that higher education governance issues would be a visible issue in election campaigns as very few voters will base their electoral decision on this topic. Following Busemeyer et al. (2020) one can argue that the issue of higher education governance reforms falls into the category of quiet politics (see also: Culpepper, 2011), meaning that their electoral salience is low and thus policy-making dynamics might differ from more electorally salient issues such as socio-economic questions. This opens conceptual, methodological as well as empirical questions that demand future research and more detailed investigations of the policy-making dynamics behind governance reforms.

Conclusion

Reforms of the governance of higher education systems have been a persistent topic in policy debates throughout Europe during the last decades. While there have been several common reform features in line with ideas of NPM, there is persistent national diversity in the governance approaches used to exert control over the higher education sector. As outlined above in the literature review, political science has injected new stimuli to our understanding of the different country-specific pathways. Scholars have not only enriched our knowledge of how transnational platforms for sharing expertise have emerged at the European and international level, but also how transnational reform catalysts have been translated into domestic policies in institutions. Pre-existing institutional trajectories, culturally framed ideas on the role of education in society, and formal political institutions have proven to be key determinants of university governance reforms. As shown above in our empirical analysis, higher education researchers have more recently placed heavier emphasis on the preferences of political parties regarding how educational governance should be designed.

Approaching higher education from different ideological backgrounds, social democratic, green, and anti-establishment parties of the left have been found to prefer centralized forms of higher education governance such as the involvement of stakeholders or a strong role of the ministry. Contrary to that, Christian democrats, liberals, conservatives, and to a certain extent anti-establishment parties of the right show a preference for de-centralized governance focusing on autonomy of universities and the use of market mechanisms to steer the sector. The analysis also uncovered some national differences regarding the preferences for higher education governance between parties from the same party family. These can be explained with the help of path dependence of existing governance arrangements in national higher education systems or the existing party system (Gingrich, 2011, 2015;

Sartori, 1976). However, these national differences are more limited than those that have been found regarding partisan preferences on socio-economic issues of higher education (see e.g. Garritzmann, 2016; Jungblut, 2016, 2017). Therefore, partisan preferences and the partisan composition of a government coalition are important factors when analyzing politics of higher education governance reforms.

Higher education governance in Europe witnessed nearly constant reform activity in most countries in the last decades. While most of these reforms have been limited in scope, their addition over time has led to more radical shifts in some countries. Moreover, some scholars have pointed out that while reforms might be incremental in their scope, they have been perceived in some higher education systems as more radical (see e.g. for Germany Hüther & Krücken, 2018). This period of reform activity clearly invites for further research on the politics of governance changes in higher education. Some questions that arise from this chapter might be relevant in this regard:

On a conceptual level, one could ask whether the four ideal models proposed by Olsen (2007) are too parsimonious to uncover relevant dynamics as they do not distinguish between what Berdahl (1990) called substantive versus procedural autonomy. In this distinction, the latter refers to the means by which the higher education sector reaches its goals, i.e. the more administrative aspects, while the former refers to the way how the goals themselves are determined, i.e. those aspects that address the more fundamental content of higher education. One could argue that these two aspects lead to very different political dynamics in governance reforms and might even have differing levels of political salience. A good example for this are recent debates about the role of gender studies (e.g. in Hungary) or critical race theory (in the U.S.) in study programs. In these debates, the question of political interference in substantive academic questions receives a lot of attention leading to a high political salience, which discussions of more procedural aspects do not tend to reach (see also: Berg et al., 2023).

Given that governance reforms usually have a low political salience with voters, further studies could unpack how easy parties deviate from their preferences given that voters can be expected to not put a strong emphasis on this issue. Here one could trace positions from manifestos over coalition agreements to policy proposals to see how especially in multi-party governments the interplay between parties plays out throughout the course of policymaking (see also: Jungblut, 2017). Moreover, one could expect that in the case of quiet politics (Busemeyer et al., 2020) interest groups, bureaucrats or expert advice have a stronger influence on the way reforms are shaped. Here the interplay between political preferences of parties in government, ministers responsible for higher education, interest groups, and ministerial bureaucracy in governance reforms seems to be an important factor that demands further studies. Additionally, public governance reforms can also have an impact on the capacity of state bureaucracy potentially limiting its capability to exert control over higher education in the first place (Friedrich, 2019).

The role that the European model of governance used in governing the European Higher Education Area, with its focus on the involvement of different stakeholder groups, plays in the development of national governance approaches is also

understudied. Similarly, we do not know much about whether support for more Europeanization in higher education has a partisan dimension and if so, whether Europeanization debates in higher education are different from similar debates in other policy areas. Finally, there is no agreed set of clear indicators that could be used to study governance changes cross-nationally. The autonomy scorecard developed by the European Association of Universities (EUA) presents a first attempt of measuring governance regimes in greater detail.⁵ While this offers a good starting point, the scope of the indicators is still somewhat limited. Therefore, developing a wider set of clearly measurable indicators would be a valuable addition to the scholarship on the politics of higher education governance reforms.

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⁵ See: <https://www.university-autonomy.eu/>

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Chapter 3

Politics of Higher Education Governance Reform in the United States



Paul G. Rubin

Abstract The United States established its government system based in federalism, where power and decision-making is shared between the federal government and the individual governments of the fifty states. To this end, oversight of public higher education is reserved as primarily a state-level matter. Consequently, when considering higher education governance and governance reform in the U.S., state-level efforts for change reflect the politics of a specific state at that specific time. This chapter provides an overview of empirical research examining governance of the public higher education sector in the U.S. and the influence of politics in reform efforts. The second half of the chapter presents a case study analysis of higher education governance in the state of Nevada and a statewide bill seeking organizational reforms, guided by a stakeholder salience framework. The chapter is concluded with a discussion of lessons learned from the current literature and areas for future research.

Introduction

The United States established its government system based in federalism, where power and decision-making is shared between the federal government and the individual governments of the fifty states. Although some researchers note the existence and influence of an informal national system of higher education, specifically through the establishment of standards around rules and regulations for the sector (Clark, 1983; Trow, 1993), public higher education, is primarily reserved as a state-level policy area. Consequently, U.S. higher education institutions and institutional systems report to state-level higher education agencies (henceforth “state governing agencies”) instead of a nationwide agency, which exists in many other countries (Berdahl, 1971; Berdahl & Millett, 1991; de Rudder, 1992; Glenny & Schmidlein, 1983; McGuinness, 2016a, b; Rubin & Ness, 2021; Schmidlein & Berdahl, 1992).

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While the federal government offers supplementary support to the sector through research funding, student financial aid oversight, policies and programs targeting specific populations (e.g., individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, and veteran populations) and specific areas of accountability, such as accreditation (Hearn & McLendon, 2012; Kelchen, 2018; Mumper et al., 2016), the U.S. public higher education sector is structurally decentralized regarding formal governance arrangements.

The decentralized oversight structure for higher education was informally established by the U.S. Constitution through its silence on the subject. Specifically, the 10th Amendment, referred colloquially as the “Reserve Clause,” delegates all powers and oversight responsibilities *not* explicitly mentioned to the states, which includes higher education. In turn, state constitutions delegated oversight responsibilities of the sector to their respective legislature (Brubacher, 1967; Hobbs, 1978; McLendon, 2003a, b). As the U.S. higher education sector expanded and states became more invested in the development and longevity of their public postsecondary institutions, states began establishing state governing agencies as an intermediary to the state government to oversee the colleges and universities (Morgan et al., 2021; Rubin & Ness, 2021; Schmittlein & Berdahl, 1992; Tandberg, 2013).

While the U.S. higher education system is organized uniquely when compared internationally, there likewise exists dissimilarities in governance across state higher education systems within the country. For example, previous research underscores variation in state governing agency structure regarding centralization of authority and areas of oversight, which ultimately impacts how the higher education sector operates between the fifty states (Hearn & Griswold, 1994; Hearn & McLendon, 2012; Kerr & Gade, 1989; Lowry & Fryar, 2012; McGuinness, 2016a, b; Richardson et al., 1999; Rubin & Hearn, 2018; Rubin & Ness, 2021). In evaluating causes for the variety in governance structures across the country, McGuinness (2016a, b) suggests a state’s size and population, broader state government structure and distribution of responsibilities among officials, political culture, and history can all factor into the organization of a state’s higher education governing agency. Consequently, when there are shifts in state higher education priorities or transitions in state political leadership, there are opportunities for state higher education governance change that potentially further diversify oversight structures across the sector (Hanna & Guilbeau, 2018; Leslie & Novak, 2003; McLendon, 2003b; McLendon et al., 2007; McLendon & Ness, 2003; Richardson et al., 1999).

Researchers note patterns of state-level governance reform began in earnest in the late 1980s, following decades of more uniform change in response to federal policies and other common external forces (Hearn & McLendon, 2012; Marcus, 1997; McGuinness, 2016a; McLendon, 2003b; Mills, 2007). For instance, McLendon (2003b) notes, between 1985 and 2000, “state governments debated in excess of 100 proposals to reform the structural, functional, and authority patterns of their higher education systems” (p. 58). He continues by explaining that, although these proposals varied in scope of change, the majority aimed to create a more centralized decision-making authority (McLendon, 2003b). Some researchers suggest that the shift towards centralization during this time was in response to declining

state support and the goal of ensuring responsible use of limited resources (MacTaggart, 1996, 1998; Marcus, 1997; Mills, 2007), though the focus on centralization was not necessarily uniform as other states focused on decentralization and deregulation (McLendon & Ness, 2003).

Although higher education governance reform in the U.S. has not occurred in such volume since the turn of the century, there have still been efforts by individual states to change how administration and oversight of the sector occurs. Specifically, rather than drastically reorganizing the state structures that govern higher education, states have focused on smaller scale changes that shift responsibilities and associations between the state governing agency and the state government. This chapter examines the most recent body of research on higher education governance and the influence of politics in reform efforts across the U.S. I will specifically focus on the governance of the public higher education sector as it maintains a majority share of the diverse U.S. higher education market, which also includes private nonprofit and for-profit institutions that operate in comparatively unique ways (Lowry & Fryar, 2012). Maintaining this narrower definition of governance will allow for a more focused body of research on the U.S. higher education sector and provides a more common opportunity and evidence of political influence. The second half of the chapter will present a new case study analysis of the unique governing structure in Nevada and a statewide bill seeking organizational reforms. I conclude with a discussion of lessons learned from the current literature and areas for future research.

An Overview of U.S. State Higher Education Governance

The 1950s through 1970s saw a significant growth in size and complexity of the public higher education sector in the country, which buttressed policy decisions from the federal government that expanded access to postsecondary education for war veterans and mandated that states establish mechanisms for long-term planning and oversight of institutions (Kerr & Gade, 1989; McLendon, 2003b; Trow, 1983). Accordingly, states adjusted their organizational structures to accommodate the burgeoning higher education sector in primarily two ways. First, some states expanded regulatory control of state executive and legislative government branches over various agencies, including higher education, which aligned with a broader trend during this time for greater centralization of state oversight (Glenny & Schmidlein, 1983; McLendon, 2003b). Alternatively, some states opted to consolidate institutional-level boards into newly-created centralized agencies or developed coordinating agencies to oversee the higher education sector (Kerr & Gade, 1989; McGuinness, 2016b).

Although governing agencies were established to oversee their state's public higher education sector, there was notable variation regarding structure, association with the state government, and areas of responsibility, particularly regarding issues of finance and funding, that led to the development of common categorizations. For example, citing Kerr and Gade (1989), McGuinness (2016b) established a typology

of state governing agency structures based on centralization of authority and level of autonomy from the state: (1) *consolidated governance systems*, where a single board governs all public institutions; (2) *segmental systems*, where separate boards govern distinct types of institutions (research universities, community colleges, etc.); and (3) *campus-level governing boards*, which maintain governing authority over a single campus and is not associated with a broader governing body. He continues by noting states operating segmental systems or campus-level governing boards may establish a separate coordinating board to maintain the state's oversight role of the sector, though these structures often do not have direct governing responsibilities (McGuinness, 2016a, b).

In fact, responsibilities across these agencies vary by state as widely as the structure itself. Agencies operating within consolidated governing systems are most often charged with the largest range of responsibilities including hiring and firing of institution personnel, allocation of resources across institutions, setting tuition and fee policies, adoption and implementation of statewide postsecondary initiatives, and serving as an advocate of the sector to the state government, though these responsibilities can be more dispersed within segmental systems (Berdahl, 1971; Hearn & Griswold, 1994; McGuinness, 2016a, b; McLendon, 2003b; McLendon et al., 2007). Among agencies operating within coordinating board systems, rather than having unilateral oversight of the postsecondary sector, they often are responsible for only specific aspects of the higher education sector, such as managing programmatic reviews, holding budgetary and fiduciary responsibilities, or administration of student assistance and data collection and analysis (McGuinness, 2016a; McLendon, 2003b; McLendon et al., 2007). Although some have noted shortcomings with this governance typology (Lacy, 2011; Richardson et al., 1999), the influence of state governing agency structure on policy adoption and decision-making has been theoretically and empirically investigated extensively.

For example, Toma (1986, 1990) and Lowry (2001) found that states with centralized boards act more akin to private organizations and will generally charge more to students than those institutions with decentralized boards. Furthering Lowry's findings, Nicholson-Crotty and Meier (2003) investigated if structure variation shields institutions from the influence of politics in decision-making; however, their findings are inconclusive regarding the extent of political influence in regards to governance structure. Nevertheless, all four studies argued the desires of taxpayers are more influential in states with coordinating boards because this structure is less autonomous and taxpayers can use their support as a means to affect change. On the other hand, consolidated governing boards function more autonomously and have greater flexibility to act as independent organizations.

These differences notwithstanding, all state governing agencies maintain some similarities in their organization. For example, governing agencies have been characterized as "buffers" (Schmidtlein & Berdahl, 1992, pp. 32–33), "boundary-spanning organizations" (Tandberg, 2013, p. 507), and "multi-facing organizations" (Rubin & Ness, 2021, p. 657) based on their positioning between the state government and higher education sector. As Tandberg (2013) explains, this unique placement "conditions the impact [of] other actors and forces" (p. 529) on agency

decision-making including the influence of interest groups, the governor, and the state legislature, which aligns with the original goal of these organizations “to eliminate corruption, to modernize – and often centralize – state government and to counter the centrifugal forces of local and regional politics” (McGuinness, 2016a, p. 6). In order to further limit political interference, governing agencies traditionally report to lay oversight boards whose membership guides decision-making and strategic planning for the agency and, therefore, the higher education sector.

Nevertheless, avenues for political interference remain. State governing agency board members are often tied to state political officials through appointment powers of the state’s governor and state legislature (Hanna & Guilbeau, 2018; Longanecker, 2006; Pusser, 2003; Rubin, 2021). Research notes that political appointment can influence the characteristics of individuals selected for higher education board membership as well as perspectives driving decision-making among oversight boards and governing agency officials (Christakis, 2009; Longanecker, 2006; Morgan et al., 2021; Pusser, 2003; Rubin, 2021; Rubin et al., 2020; Rubin & Ness, 2021; Tandberg, 2013; Tandberg et al., 2016). All of this suggests that despite higher education remaining in the domain of individual states, and state governing agencies original charge to remain apolitical, local politics maintains mechanisms to influence the sector and decision-making and can ultimately drive governance reform efforts.

U.S. Higher Education Governance Reform Efforts

Unlike the decades following the end of World War II, which saw a national movement towards the consolidation of oversight of state higher education and establishment of formal state governance agencies, subsequent decades were varied in governance reform efforts. For example, 26 states “seriously debated” changing their higher education governance structure between 1985 and 1989 with an additional 49 governance reform proposals filed from 1989 through 1994 (Marcus, 1997; McGuinness, 1997). In fact, McLendon (2003b) found that state governments across the U.S. considered well over 100 proposals to reform higher education governance between 1985 and 2000. Notably, these proposals aimed to pursue change in various ways, including further centralization, decentralization, and incorporating increasing numbers and types of institutions (McLendon & Ness, 2003). This included expanding and strengthening oversight responsibilities of state governing agencies, adopting policies aimed to improve accountability of public postsecondary institutions to the state, and offering institutions avenues to take greater authority over certain areas of decision-making (Kelchen, 2018; Li, 2021; McLendon & Ness, 2003; Rubin & Hagood, 2018).

Researchers have suggested several factors influencing the interest and divergent focus on higher education governance reform during this time. States were facing significant fiscal pressures internal and external to the higher education sector, extreme tuition increases by public institutions in light of a stagnant levels of state

financial support, and growing competition within and across the sector (MacTaggart, 1996, 1998; Marcus, 1997; Martinez, 2019; McLendon, 2003b; McLendon & Ness, 2003). Consequently, states turned to governance reform as a mechanism to maintain oversight and keep institutions accountable within these constraints but, due to the variation in priorities, issues, and state politics, reform efforts differed between states (Hanna & Guilbeau, 2018; Leslie & Novak, 2003; McLendon & Ness, 2003).

For example, Leslie and Novak (2003) conducted a comparative case analysis of governance reform in Minnesota, Kentucky, New Jersey, Maryland, and Florida. While the higher education restructuring efforts differed considerably between cases—from consolidating multiple institutions and systems in Minnesota to abolishing a centralized governing agency in New Jersey and offering greater institutional autonomy—these researchers paid particular focus to the political antecedents and decision-making that led to each of these reform efforts. Although Leslie and Novak (2003) suggested the cases examined were too unique to be generalizable, they explained that in “none of the cases did we find political factors to be merely residual. Instead, they were usually central to the story of reform” (pp. 116–117). In other words, despite differences in precursors to reform efforts and outcomes, political aims and goals often served as a catalyst that drove states to consider and ultimately implement higher education governance change.

Additional studies have reiterated the role of politics around governance reform by emphasizing the influence of policy actors, such as a state governor or legislator, and institutional leaders (Hanna & Guilbeau, 2018; Olivas, 1984; McLendon, 2003a; McLendon & Ness, 2003). Despite examining the development of state governing agencies in different states, Olivas (1984) and McLendon (2003a) highlight the role of legislative insiders in shaping the development and ultimately decision-making around change efforts. More recently, Hanna and Guilbeau (2018) offer a comparative analysis of governance reform in Florida, Tennessee, and Alabama and argue that such efforts are driven by powerful political leaders, often without representation and insight by permanent officials from the state governing agencies. They ultimately conclude their study by noting that public higher education and state governing agencies are inherently political organizations, and that reform efforts will often align with the political goals and perspectives of those officials in power.

Research examining the influence of politics on state governance reform in the U.S. tend to focus on larger-scale redesign efforts that result in drastic shifts in centralization and autonomy (McLendon, 2003b; McLendon & Ness, 2003). More recently, however, state conversations and actions around higher education governance have focused on smaller changes that have large impact than massive restructuring efforts. For example, in 2012, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, who was discussed as a higher education-focused political official, signed legislation that granted the appointment power of the state governing agency’s executive officer to the Tennessee governor (Rubin & Ness, 2021). Although the state legislature returned this authority to the state governing agency’s board in 2018, this seemingly small change allowed Governor Haslam to maintain influence over the state governing agency’s direction and indirectly oversee the organization during his tenure as the state executive.

Similarly, in 2016, North Carolina Republican lawmakers sought to remove gubernatorial appointment power of the University of North Carolina system (UNC) Board of Governors and shift that responsibility to the Speaker of the state House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the state Senate (Seltzer, 2016). Considering the state legislature already selected the majority of UNC board members and would effectively gain control over all non-student board appointments, many viewed this change as entirely politically-driven (Bowles & Vinroot, 2019; Seltzer, 2016). Although this change in appointment could make the UNC Board of Governors a “purely political organization doing the bidding of our legislative leaders” (Bowles & Vinroot, 2019), it is a notable departure from the significant and large-scale shifts in organizational structure that previous research has considered. To this end, the remainder of this chapter will offer a new analysis of a similar smaller scale reform effort sought in Nevada and discuss the underlying political perspectives guiding this process.

Conceptual Framework: Stakeholder Saliency

The new analysis of Nevada is grounded by the theoretical framework of stakeholder saliency. Developed in organizational management and ethics, this framework seeks to understand the conditions that influence stakeholder involvement in various processes and decision-making (Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014; Mitchell et al., 1997; Phillips, 2003). Aiming to extend Freeman’s (1984) work defining stakeholders and their involvement in organizational management, Mitchell et al. (1997) examined why managers of an organization prioritize the opinions of certain groups over others. They argued that three criteria determine the “stakeholder saliency” of a group: “(1) the stakeholder’s *power* to influence the firm, (2) the *legitimacy* of the stakeholder’s relationship with the firm, and (3) the *urgency* of the stakeholder’s claim on the firm” (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 854). Based on these measures, Mitchell et al. (1997) created a typology of stakeholders ranging from *latent stakeholders*, who may only possess one of these attributes, to *expectant stakeholders*, who exhibit two attributes, to *definitive stakeholders*, who are the highest category and have all three attributes. It is expected that as a party develops more of these attributes that their interests are more likely to be considered by the organization, increasing the likelihood for influence by those stakeholders. Although Mitchell et al. (1997) focused primarily on for-profit firms in their examination of saliency, its utility has also been considered in the higher education context.

In particular, because many parties internal (students, staff, faculty, and administrators) and external (government entities, associations, and foundations) to the higher education sector are impacted by decisions (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010; Burrows, 1999; Jongbloed et al., 2008; Kivisto, 2005, 2008; Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014; Rubin, 2021), stakeholder saliency can provide insights into how an entity navigates multiple, and potentially competing, perspectives. For example, Leisyte and Westerheijden (2014) considered the implementation of the European Standards

and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) across 28 institutions in seven countries regarding the extent of involvement of students and employers in decision-making. Despite these groups being “explicitly... emphasised in the ESG” (Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014, p. 85), the authors concluded that employers are rarely considered to be definitive stakeholders in the process thus limiting their impact on decision-making.

For purposes of this analysis, stakeholder salience can explain underlying goals driving calls for governance reform by considering the positioning of actors who ultimately gain the power to influence the higher education sector. Specifically, considering the number of stakeholders associated with postsecondary education in the U.S. (e.g., state government, federal government, institutional administrators, faculty, students, local citizenry), there is the potential for competing interests to clash when determining how the sector operates. To this end, as any of these groups of actors rise to the status of *definitive stakeholders*, they can effectively control decision-making. Reforming governance structures within a state can, therefore, offer an opportunity for any party to realign who possess the *power, legitimacy, and urgency* to impact oversight.

Research Design

The analysis in this chapter considers Nevada’s state governing agency—the Nevada System for Higher Education (NSHE)—that remains the only state higher education governing agency where board members, referred to at NSHE as “Regents,” are selected via public election as outlined by the Nevada Constitution. Specifically, through discussions with NSHE regents and agency officials, I examine how this distinctive appointment mechanism influences the governance of higher education in the state as well as attempts by the state legislature to change this feature. Given the unique nature and setting of Nevada, I opt for a single case study design (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2017).

The data for this case study includes nine interviews with state education officers, including governing agency officials (chancellor, vice chancellors, and associate vice chancellors) and state education officials that serve outside of NSHE, and governing agency board members that were conducted between September 2016 and March 2017. The interviews followed a semi-structured protocol with relevant probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2011), including questions about the role of state governing agency board members, perceptions of having a publicly appointed state governing agency board, and the relationship between board members and various stakeholder groups. Interview data was supplemented with the analysis of 176 documents, including state governing agency board meeting agenda and meeting minutes, strategic plans, intermediary organization reports, and local and national media articles, creating a corpus of data totaling over 500 pages. These documents provided background information, names of potential informants for the study, and served as a

Table 3.1 Distribution of data collected

State Education Officers	4
State Governing Agency Board Members	5
Total Interviews Conducted	9
Documents Reviewed	176

resource to understand the overarching timeline and major events influencing the case at hand. Table 3.1 provides a distribution of the data collected.

Data analysis included inductive and deductive approaches. I coded the interview and archival data using the qualitative data analysis program Dedoose with *a priori* codes based on an analytical framework that included: the role of state higher education governing board members, the involvement of several stakeholder groups (state officials, students, faculty, campus administration), characteristics of the state's education sector (higher education attainment, higher education financing, higher education governance, K-12 education sector), and state characteristics (political ideology, state economy and workforce, demographics of citizenry). I also induced emergent themes from the data collected by capturing *in vivo*, local language (Saldaña, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Finally, I employed various techniques to maximize trustworthiness throughout the analysis including triangulation of data sources, member checking by conducting multiple interviews and discussing preliminary findings with respondents, and rival explanations analysis (Yin, 2017).

Nevada's AJR5: Efforts to Shift Governance Oversight

In order to discuss the influence of politics on governance reform in Nevada, I will draw on interview data and archival document analysis to first provide context around the government, politics, and public higher education sector of the state. I will follow these background sections by presenting the proposed higher education governance reform efforts in the state, highlighted most recently with Assembly Joint Resolution 5 (AJR5) and the underlying perspectives guiding these proposed changes.

State Government and Politics of Nevada

Nevada is a political swing state in the U.S., with similar levels of support for both Republican and Democratic parties. Some respondents for this study suggested that contributing to this characteristic are demographic and ideological differences that align geographically with Northern Nevada's tendency to vote Republican and Southern Nevada leaning Democratic. Highlighting this stance, Virginia Gray's (2013) policy liberalism index ranked Nevada as the 31st most liberal state

regarding policy decisions. Gray's rating suggests the state is comparatively moderate but leans conservative in comparison to the rest of the nation. In fact, Republicans and Democrats have held majorities in both houses of the Nevada State Legislature in the past ten years, though the majority party tended to hold less than ten additional seats (Council of State Governments, 2016). Former Governor Brian Sandoval was the third consecutive Republican to hold that position since 1999 but, between 1970 and 2000, Nevada had a Democratic governor 24 out of 30 years and elected a Democrat, Steve Sisolak, in 2018 as Governor when Sandoval was term limited.

Besides political ideology, additional characteristics of the state can be gleaned from the powers of the executive branch. When Sandoval first took office in 2011, Ferguson (2013) rated their position as holding a 4.50 out of 5.00 on personal power¹ and the governorship generally 3.00 out of 5.00 on institutional power² for a total 7.50 out of 10.00. In comparison to other states, this ranked Nevada as the 18th most powerful governor's office in the country when considering all aspects of their authority. Christakis (2009) created an alternative measure of governor's power, specifically considering the higher education context. Factors included the governor's "formal authority" over the postsecondary budget, appointment responsibilities across the sector, and influence over statewide higher education policy decisions, based on the state constitution and other legislative mandates. He also included "informal authority," which considered how institution and system-level leadership perceived the influence of the governor on the budget, and appointment and policy decisions. According to his measurement, which compared 33 states, Nevada was 32nd and 29th in formal and informal authority, respectively. The Christakis (2009) ranking suggests the governor has a low influence on the public higher education overall and, as will be discussed, is explained by various characteristics of the Nevada higher education system.

A final component of the state government is the legislative branch. In regards to higher education, their primary responsibility centers on allocating the state appropriations to the state postsecondary system. Hamm and Moncrief (2013) categorize Nevada's General Assembly as a citizen legislature that meets for 120 days every odd year. In 2011, 29% of Nevada's state legislators were women and, in 2009, Black and Hispanic legislators constituted 11% and 8% respectively (Hamm & Moncrief, 2013). Although these proportions were above the national average at the time, and continue to be today, respondents from the study mentioned that representation of underrepresented populations in the legislature remains stagnant, which is notable given shifts in the demographics of the state. As a Nevada state official

¹The personal power index considers attributes of the individual, including: margin of victory when they won their seat; political ambition of the individual, based on their position immediately prior to governor; where the individual is in their term and if they are term-limited; and performance ratings.

²The institutional power index considers the powers given to the governor by the state constitution, statutes, and voters, including: the extent voters can elect state-level officials; the governor's ability to appoint state officials; tenure potential for governors; control over the executive budget; veto power; and party control over other government branches.

explained, “Over the course of 50 years, we went from predominantly White and predominantly affluent... to a majority minority population in a state that’s increasingly poor.” They continued by suggesting the Nevada population is shifting towards a majority minority more rapidly than most other regions of the nation, which further complicates their limited representation in the state legislature.

Nevada’s Public Higher Education Sector and Current Governance Arrangement

Public higher education was constitutionally-established in Nevada with the opening of the State University of Nevada (what is now the University of Nevada, Reno) in 1874, about 10 years after the state joined the U.S. Currently, there are a total of eight public postsecondary institutions in Nevada, including 34-year institutions, 42-year community colleges, and the Desert Research Institute, which is a graduate-only institution focused on atmospheric and hydrologic sciences. Of the four-year institutions, two are research universities – the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and University of Nevada, Reno. The third four-year institution is Nevada State College, which was established in 2002 (Knight, 2002). As discussed at an NSHE Board of Regents meeting, one goal in creating Nevada State College was to “relieve the pressure on the research universities, especially in regards to students transferring from community college, by serving as the sole public postsecondary institution in the state focused primarily on awarding undergraduate degrees.”

All eight institutions report to a single state agency – the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) – that is mandated by the state constitution to serve independently from the state government. Originally called the University of Nevada System, it was renamed in 1992 as the University and Community College System of Nevada to acknowledge the “growing importance of community colleges” to the state (Hulse, 2002a, p. 1), and was changed to its current name in 2004. Established by the Nevada State Constitution (Article XI, Sections 4–8), a thirteen-member board of regents manages NSHE and is responsible to set statewide postsecondary policy, maintain the system’s budget, and, as of 2011, set tuition over for Nevada’s entire public system of higher education. The board of regents also selects a chancellor, who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the system. A regent’s term lasts 6 years, but there are no term limits to serve on the board. Terms for regents are also staggered in order to maintain organizational knowledge.

A unique characteristic to NSHE is the means of appointment by which individuals join the board of regents. As outlined by the Nevada State Constitution (Article XI, Section 7):

The Governor, Secretary of State, and Superintendent of Public Instruction, shall for the first four years and until their successors are elected and qualified constitute a board of regents to control and manage the affairs of the University and the funds of the same under such regulations as may be provided by law. But the Legislature shall at its regular session

next preceding the expiration of the term of office of said board of regents provide for the election of a new board of regents and define their duties.

Nevada is one of only four states that elect higher education board members by popular vote, and the only state to do so in a system where a single board is responsible for all of public higher education (Hulse, 2002b). Due to this unique means of appointment, interview respondents suggested NSHE regents are often more diverse in background and perspective than a politically appointed board. As one regent explained:

There's no real commonality among the elected boards, like there would be among individuals appointed by a person. And you have some states where you've had governors in office for quite a few years so maybe they elect or appoint the entire board so boy, they're all Republican or Democrat or whatever and they all tend to think conservative or liberal or whatever the bend is of the governor. So I think when you have an elected board, and we're elected regionally, so you have differences in the region... So I think in that respect you do get a big variety of opinions.

While this regent previously emphasized the “steep learning curve” for first-time elected officials, they suggested that the current appointment mechanism aligns with the culture and philosophy of the state, where judges, school board members, and even the local bug catcher are publicly-elected.

Nevertheless, several respondents suggested that the board chair and vice chair, in their role as board leadership, often serve as spokespersons and primary decision-makers for all NSHE regents and disproportionately impact how higher education is governed. For example, one respondent highlighted that the board chair is primarily responsible for creating the board agenda, which allows them to “shape [the agenda] in the way they see fit.” Although respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of the board chair’s leadership, this reality highlighted what several respondents referred to as a “top heavy” structure that limits individual board member’s influence NSHE’s policy direction and decision-making. Further, because NSHE is structurally an independent organization from the state government, colloquially referred to as the “fourth branch of the state government” (Seelmeyer, 2019), there is limited opportunity to establish checks and balances on power and decision-making within the agency. This organizational characteristic, in particular, has led to a strained relationship between NSHE and the Nevada Legislature and, ultimately, calls for reform.

Calls to Change Higher Education Governance in Nevada via AJR5/Ballot Question 1

Interview respondents suggested there have historically been “waves” of support for higher education governance reform in Nevada, but few changes ultimately take place (Martinez, 2019). Contributing to the limited successful reforms is the establishment and powers granted to NSHE are outlined in the state constitution, which

necessitates a more time intensive process to change. As an NSHE official described, “In order to change the [state] Constitution it has to go through two consecutive sessions of the legislature and a vote of the people.” A different respondent suggested that, due to this lengthy process, legislators will often “lose interest” or “shift their priorities” to other issues between the two legislative sessions. This respondent suggested that the citizenry would also often vote to maintain the status quo of the state constitution when they are uninterested or not interested in an issue, which is common regarding NSHE and its board. One regent explained:

Stop somebody on the street and ask them what the trustee of the board of education, the state board of education does.... One out of 10 will be able to answer that question, if you're lucky. The same thing with regents. People don't understand what the regents do. People don't understand... Those that are involved with higher education... the 15 percent that are always engaged [in local politics], they understand what a regent does but the population in general doesn't.

In fact, despite multiple attempts to change the oversight of NSHE, on few occasions have such legislative efforts reached the final stage—a popular vote. Nevertheless, soon after interviews were conducted for this study, the Nevada state legislature proposed AJR5 in 2017, which sought to shift oversight of public higher education more directly to the state legislature (Carroll, 2017; Corbin, 2018; Cosgrove, 2017; Dornan, 2019; Johnson, 2023; Seelmeyer, 2019).

AJR5 was a constitutional amendment co-sponsored by Assemblyman Elliot Anderson and state Senator Joyce Woodhouse, both members of the Democratic Party, that sought to reorganize higher education governance in Nevada by removing the constitutional authority of the NSHE Board of Regents (Carroll, 2017; Cosgrove, 2017; Seelmeyer, 2019). Specifically, the resolution proposed to:

Amend the Nevada Constitution to remove the constitutional provisions governing the election and duties of the Board of Regents of the State University and to authorize the Legislature to provide by statute for the governance, control and management of the State University and for the reasonable protection of individual academic freedom (AJR 5, 2019).

In other words, this bill aimed to amend the Nevada Constitution to remove the NSHE Board of Regents as the primary overseeing body for higher education in the state and replace that role with the Nevada Legislature. NSHE would effectively lose its position as an independent entity and become a more traditional part to the state government, allowing for greater oversight by and responsibility to other branches of the government (Carroll, 2017; Corbin, 2018; Cosgrove, 2017; Dornan, 2019; Seelmeyer, 2019).

Proponents of AJR5 argued that its primary goal was to improve accountability of the NSHE Regents to both the legislature and to taxpayers, as well as ensure that higher education is serving the entirety of the state and aligned with other state goals. Interest in governance reform and the proposal of AJR5 also served as a solution to a growing number of instances that concerned the Nevada Legislature. For example, an investigation by a local newspaper—the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*—found the NSHE-established funding formula for higher education disproportionately supported certain institutions over others and that the NSHE Chancellor at that

time, Dan Klaich, purposefully misled legislators about the model's fairness to the sector by providing falsified documents (Barnes, 2016a, b; Christiansen, 2020; Corbin, 2018). Ultimately, this incident led to Chancellor Klaich's ouster, but also revealed concerns from the legislature with the regents' decision to support the Chancellor and agency over conducting a more critical examination to support the state. While the resolution maintained the status quo regarding the public election of regents and kept the day-to-day operations of the higher education sector under the administration of the regents and a board-selected chancellor (Christiansen, 2020; Corbin, 2018), the adoption of AJR5 would offer the state legislature greater oversight of the governance and finances of the higher education sector overall, which critics suggested could lead to greater political interference.

AJR5 was first approved by both chambers of the Nevada Legislature during the 2017 legislative session (38-4 in the Assembly and 18-2 in the state Senate) and passed for a second time during the 2019 session (36-5 in the Assembly and 20-0 in the state Senate), each vote by significant majorities (Voting yes, 2020). These decisions set up a final vote on the measure by the Nevada citizens as Ballot Question 1 (or Question 1) officially titled "The Nevada Higher Education Reform, Accountability and Oversight Amendment" on the November 3, 2020 election ballot (Alonzo, 2020; Corbin, 2018; Dornan, 2019; Seelmeyer, 2019). Although political officials from the Democratic Party originally sponsored Question 1 in the Nevada Legislature, there was growing support across Nevada from members of both parties as the final vote approached (Anderson & Hardy, 2020; Thompson, 2020; Voting yes, 2020). There was additional marketing in favor of the change via a statewide "Yes on 1" campaign, and a pro-Question 1 super PAC named "Nevadans for a Higher Quality Education" was organized and raised over \$470,000 in the third quarter of the year leading up to the election alone, with support from the Nevada business community, political non-profits, and Nevada policy-makers (Solis, 2020; Voting yes, 2020). In fact, the support in favor of higher education governance reform was so widely discussed in the media that an editorial in the *Las Vegas Sun* newspaper stated:

The only voices opposing the question are coming from the Nevada Board of Regents – the very board that would be reformed under the measure. In other words, the only people who are pushing to maintain the status quo are the ones with a personal, vested interest in protecting it (Voting yes, 2020).

To this end, there was an expectation that Nevada citizens would similarly vote in favor of Question 1.

The U.S. election on November 3, 2020 was notable for two reasons nationally. First, it was a presidential election year, which historically results in increased voter turnout across the country. This election also occurred amid the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to increased numbers of mail-in ballots that ultimately delayed official election results for the presidential election and statewide votes (Saul & Hakim, 2021). Given Nevada's position as a political swing state, there was a lot of attention given to its delayed results for the presidential race; however, votes were also too close to call regarding Question 1. When all votes were counted, however, Question

1 failed 49.85–50.15% (Alonzo, 2020), thus keeping the current organization of Nevada’s higher education governance system intact. Notably, this narrow defeat also marked the only constitutional amendment to fail on the ballot with four others passing decisively (Metz, 2020). Although this result means that any new higher education governance reform effort in Nevada must start at the beginning of the lengthy process once again, the close public final vote suggests that changes to the current organization in the future are increasingly a possibility.

Discussion and Implications

Although the reform efforts to Nevada’s higher education governance structure was a smaller-scale change when compared to some of the efforts discussed in previous research aimed to reorganize and restructure state oversight (Hanna & Guilbeau, 2018; Leslie & Novak, 2003; Olivas, 1984; McLendon, 2003a; McLendon & Ness, 2003), there remain several political commonalities with the extant literature that warrant discussion. For example, in line with Hanna and Guilbeau (2018), underlying the proposed change in Nevada were the desires and actions of policy actors—in this case, the Nevada Legislature. Considering NSHE’s constitutionally-established independence from the government, changes in associations with the state government can lead to greater influence from state policymakers and underscores the reality that state governing agencies are inherently political organizations. While increased political oversight is not inherently negative, given the explicit aims of the legislature—to increase their involvement and influence on public higher education—it is possible that the adoption of AJR5/Question 1 could have shifted the political influence on and politicization of NSHE and its decision-making.

Considering the Nevada case through a stakeholder salience framework offers additional insights into the motivating rationales guiding reform efforts. Specifically, underlying the state legislators’ goals in amending the state constitution and removing the constitutional authority of the board of regents is to raise their status to become *definitive stakeholders*. Although the state legislature maintains some levels of power, legitimacy, and urgency in the governance arrangement, AJR5/Question 1 would effectively increase their standing in all three areas. Based on the criteria discussed by Mitchell et al. (1997), under the proposed organization, the state legislature would gain power through improved opportunities to influence NSHE decision-making. This is an essential component to AJR5/Question 1, given NSHE’s independence from the state government overall. Relatedly, by removing NSHE’s status as a “fourth branch of government” (Seelmeyer, 2019), the state legislature would improve its legitimacy as an influential actor to the state governing agency. Finally, the state legislature improves the urgency of its claims through establishing a direct association and reporting structure to NSHE and keeping the agency accountable for its decision-making. Ultimately, AJR5/Question 1 would have offered an opportunity for the legislature to establish itself as the definitive

stakeholder to NSHE and ensure higher education maintained greater culpability to the state and citizenry.

Relatedly, it is important to recognize the broader observation that there is an increased interest by state governments in the United States to be involved in higher education decision-making overall. Similar to underlying causes of governance reform efforts between 1985 and 2000 (MacTaggart, 1996, 1998; Marcus, 1997; McLendon, 2003b; McLendon & Ness, 2003), states are facing significant pressure and accountability for the success of their public higher education sector. In particular, growing concerns continue to mount around creating an educated workforce to meet economic needs (Carnevale et al., 2010; Rubin & Hearn, 2018), and states continue to turn to their public higher education sector as the primary mechanism to improve the economic future of the community. To this end, despite continued stagnant or declining levels of state financial support to the higher education sector (Weeden, 2019), states are seeking avenues to become more involved in how higher education operates and reforming governance arrangements may serve as one useful mechanism. Consequently, there are several areas for future research to further our understanding of higher education governance reform and the influence of politics on these efforts.

For example, most of the existing literature on this topic has focused primarily on state governing agencies; however, that is only one of several governance arrangements in U.S. higher education. Politics are playing a role in how U.S. private non-profit and for-profit postsecondary institutions are operating with institutional closures and mergers occurring at a rapid rate. Researchers should consider examining how these types of institutions are responding to these shifts in governance, and determine whether and how sectoral differences potentially shield the influence of politics on reform efforts. Future research on U.S. governance reform should also consider increased analytical rigor with the potential goal of generalizability. The majority of research on this topic in the U.S. has utilized single or comparative case studies—occasionally using the same or similar examples—to understand underlying causes and factors, with several additional studies using survey methods (e.g., Marcus, 1997; McLendon & Ness, 2003) to gauge the extent of governance reform nationally. While this has led to varied theoretical perspectives and insights on the process and outcomes of change efforts, researchers could expand on this body of work by examining longitudinally and developing predictive models around how certain reforms may influence the operation of higher education. In other words, do smaller-scale reforms, such as changing constitutional authority or board appointment, have similar influences as more significant organizational restructuring, and how does that ultimately impact the delivery and decision-making of higher education?

As U.S. higher education increasingly becomes a critical area for states to improve their economy and status nationally, it is understood that political actors will equally seek avenues to influence how the sector is governed. Considering state governing agencies were established as apolitical entities with the explicit goal of stifling the influence of governmental interests in decision-making, governance reform in the United States serves as an important mechanism for these stakeholders

to improve their ability to effect higher education. Therefore, examining the political dynamics motivating reform efforts in the U.S. can offer insights into the growing politicization of public higher education governance and decision-making.

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Chapter 4

The Politics of Higher Education Governance Reforms in Canada



Theresa Shanahan

Abstract Since 1995 Canadian federal and provincial governments' higher education policies have altered governance arrangements in Canada's higher education sector, intruding on university governance in some areas and retreating in other areas. A variety of structural, legal, treasury and information-based policy mechanisms have been employed by governments in new ways to achieve governance reform. Neo-institutionalism captures the impact of Canadian federalism and the unique features of the legislative framework for higher education on the politics of the reforms. While the reforms have been embraced by some policy actors in higher education, they have been resisted by others. The politics associated with the reforms have intensified intergovernmental relations in higher education and presented challenges to institutional autonomy, leadership, and collegial decision-making.

Introduction

This chapter examines the politics of Canadian higher education governance reforms identifying the trajectory of changes and the factors that have influenced policymaking in this sector. The analysis employs a neo-institutional framework and draws upon findings from three research studies of: the development of postsecondary education systems in Canada; Canadian higher education policymaking; and the legislative framework of higher education in Canada. A central objective of the chapter is to set out the Canadian higher education legislative and policy context, and to identify relationships between government and higher education institutions. The chapter provides a critical analysis of the changing role of the state in Canadian higher education governance. The focus and analysis are primarily on the publicly funded system that dominates higher education policy in Canada. Specific attention will be given to the university sector in Canadian higher education. The chapter will

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conclude with implications for university level academic decision-making, institutional autonomy, and the role of the academic profession in governance.

Conceptual Framing

This chapter employs neo-institutionalism as its analytical framework. This approach argues that individual and collective actions in policy making are influenced by structural and organizational features within the policy context (Howlett et al., 2009; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Within this framework “institutions” are broadly conceived as including formal organizations and bureaucracies but also comprise markets, laws, legislative frameworks, cultural codes, traditions, and rules that may enable or constrain decision-making. Macro level, social, cultural, economic, and political contexts are assumed to influence individual behaviour, interpretations of policy problems and policy solutions. Power dynamics, ideologies, pressures, networks, within institutions and between actors contribute to policy-making. In this respect identifying the contextual features of the policy-making arena that influence decision-making are central to a neo-institutional understanding of governance. This analytical lens offers an understanding of convergence and divergence in higher education. Historical approaches capture the political consequences of decisions that influence subsequent paths taken by policymakers. Such path dependence can lead to divergence in higher education systems (Hall & Taylor, 1996; March & Olsen, 1996; Searle, 2005; Thelen, 1999; Thelen & Mahoney, 2010). Sociological approaches offer a cultural explanation for the blurring of traditional sectors and views higher education as a homogenizing, organizing, rationalizing force in society that leads to the convergence of structures and processes (Meyer et al., 2007; Bromley & Meyer, 2014).

Neo-institutionalism is a good starting point in examining Canadian higher education governance which has been shaped by federalism and Canada’s constitutional division of powers. The parliamentary system and the unique dynamics of federal-provincial relations in Canada affect policymaking. Higher education in Canada is embedded in a broader political, economic, social, bureaucratic, and historical context. It has evolved in response to unique legislative, structural features and diverse identities and values, that are reflected in language, culture, and religion within the country. Regional differences and disparities across a vast geography, enable and constrain higher education policymaking. Publicly funded universities and colleges in Canada are creations of provincial legislatures. Provincial histories, laws and cultural environments have influenced the development of provincial systems of higher education which each have unique regulatory environments. That is to say – history, context, and structure matter in understanding Canadian higher education governance (Axelrod et al., 2011; Jones & Noumi, 2018; Shanahan, 2015a).

Method

This chapter draws from the findings of three separate studies of Canadian higher education policy and governance. Using fundamental legal analysis and descriptive critical policy analysis, in a new meta-analysis across data collected during these three projects, this chapter identifies the political and legislative framework with a view to illustrating the political dimensions of higher education governance. These findings are brought together with scholarly literature, government reports and statistical data on Canadian higher education to illustrate the politics involved in Canadian higher education reform, and to analyze the implications for higher education in Canada. Together the data from these three projects provide a rich profile of governance in Canadian higher education and identify the shifts that have occurred in the last three decades.

The first project *The Development of Postsecondary Education systems in Canada* was a comparative, multiple case study of the evolution of postsecondary systems in British Columbia, Ontario, and Québec between 1980 and 2010 (see Fisher et al., 2006, 2009, 2014; Shanahan et al., 2014). Set in a policy sociology tradition the purpose of the first study was to compare the impact of postsecondary policies on system outcomes across the three Canadian provinces. Data was collected between 2002 and 2010 and included indicator and secondary statistical data, documentary and policy analysis data, and qualitative interviews. The documentary data was combined with thirty-one qualitative interviews of key policy makers across the three provinces.

The second project *Making Policy in Canadian Postsecondary Education since 1990* analyzed the development of Canadian post-secondary policy between 1990 and 2010, both at the federal and Ontario provincial levels (see Axelrod et al., 2011, 2012; Trilokekar et al., 2013; Shanahan et al., 2016; Wellen et al., 2012). This project drew from policy sociology as well as historical and neo-institutional framings and focused on four areas of higher education policy in Canada: funding; research and development; accessibility and student assistance; and internationalisation. Data was collected between 2008 and 2013. Data sources included documentary evidence and over 60 interviews with federal and provincial (Ontario) government and education stakeholders. This data was augmented by policy documents and reports (government and non-governmental) that fleshed out the case context.

The third project *Canadian Higher Education Law* was a legal study of key features and issues in Canadian higher education (see Shanahan et al., 2015; Shanahan, 2019). The study employed a legal framework and doctrinal research methods combined with higher education policy analysis. Central foci included: state governance arrangements; the legislative framework; the legal role of the federal and provincial governments; institutional governance; the rights and freedoms of faculty and students; legal issues associated with research ventures, knowledge mobilization, commercial activities, partnerships with industry, and land development projects. A

wide range of documentary sources and legal analysis of case law, legislation, regulation, and policy governing the higher education policy sector across Canada was utilized. Data collection took place between 2010 and 2015.

Canadian Context

Canadian Federalism and Higher Education Governance

Canada's federal legislative framework, constitutional division of powers and parliamentary system of governance have played important roles in shaping the politics of higher education governance. A central feature of Canadian federalism is the autonomy of each level of government (federal and provincial). Governance over all levels of education is decentralized across the country according to the constitutional division of powers that gives the provinces exclusive law-making authority over education. Federally, in Canada, there is no dedicated national department/ministry with executive decision-making authority over higher education across the country. As a result, each provincial higher education system is unique and, historically, has developed in response to the needs of their respective regions (Shanahan, 2015a).

Although governance arrangements for higher education vary across the ten provinces and three territories, there are some common features across Canada. Higher education is largely state-regulated, secular, and dominated by publicly funded institutions in two primary sectors: universities and colleges. Provincial higher education systems are relatively homogenous and un-stratified. Universities in Canada enjoy high institutional autonomy relative to other jurisdictions (Eastman et al., 2019; Shanahan & Jones, 2007) a feature enshrined in Canadian case law (Shanahan, 2019). University professors are not civil servants but are treated as employees of universities and, also, as constituents of the academic collegium (Gilligan-Hackett & Murray, 2015). Professors have academic freedom protected by collective agreements, university governing statutes, and case law (Gilligan-Hackett & Murray, 2015; Shanahan, 2015c).

While the federal government has no legal authority to make laws in education, it does have legitimate areas of jurisdiction that intersect with higher education. For example, the federal government has constitutional authority over the country's economic development, national defense (crime and prisons), external affairs, Indigenous affairs, and anything that falls under the broad category of "national interest." Through these constitutional areas, the federal government supports and funds: research in universities and colleges; apprenticeship and vocational training; higher education infrastructure projects; student financial assistance programs; graduate student scholarship programs; and international higher education initiatives. The federal government also educates military personnel and operates two institutions: the "Royal Military College of Canada," which offers university level

degrees and the “Collège militaire royal St-Jean,” which offers college degrees and one university degree. Additionally, the federal government plays a role in higher education systems in the three northern territories in Canada: the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut (Fisher et al., 2014, 2006; Paquette & Fallon, 2010; Shanahan, 2015a, b).

The Politics of Intergovernmental Relations

Canada’s system of decentralized federalism shapes the politics of intergovernmental relationships which are fraught with tensions and contradictions. It has been described as “collaborative federalism” (Bakvis & Skogstad, 2008, p. 9) because there are multiple overlapping areas with the provincial governments in higher education where both levels of government have legitimate authority (for example, in international higher education). However, in the case of higher education reforms, the federal government has proceeded, on occasion, unilaterally without consulting with the provinces in a manner more akin to “executive federalism” (Bakvis, 2008, p. 218). The federal government’s fiscal treatment of the provinces has been characterized as unequal and “asymmetrical” in that it does not treat all provinces alike in its support and funding and does not have a set of principles to do so (Stevenson, 2006). Cameron has argued in the higher education sector Canadian federalism is a “chequerboard” (1991) or “schizophrenic” (1997, p. 9 & 27) because the federal policy approach is not a cohesive strategy but rather consists of activities and spending in disparate areas intersecting with higher education. Cameron suggests the federal government’s approach in higher education has involved making “bold proposals” in one area then “backtracking” in another area (Cameron, 1997, p. 27). He argues this has left a historical legacy of incrementalism in the federal government’s approach to higher education policy, advances and retreats, a patchwork of programs but no overarching national vision of higher education and no clear structural, legal or policy mechanism to achieve such a vision.

Nevertheless, the federal government has exerted enormous influence over Canadian higher education through spending in areas of legitimate constitutional jurisdiction that intersect with higher education, without having any direct constitutional legal authority over higher education. This governance approach has been characterized as “fiscal federalism” (Brown, 2008, p. 6; Shanahan, 2015b, at p. 33; Stevenson, 2006, at p. 63). It has been distinguished as “soft federalism” when the federal government uses its spending powers to induce change, rather than employing law-making authority and/or sanctions (Eastman et al., 2019, p. 334 citing Watts, 1992, p. 18; Fisher & Rubenson, 1998, at p. 77).

Intergovernmental relations in Canada are generally managed directly between federal and provincial leaders, facilitated by a federal Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and guided by principles within a series of accords and agreements (Lazar, 2006; Simeon & Nugent, 2008). The Canadian system of parliament concentrates decision-making power in the hands of a few and has made the policymaking

process a restricted and elitist affair (Bakvis & Skogstad, 2008). At the federal level without direct constitutional authority and no department of education, the role of the prime minister's office in directing higher education policymaking is heightened. Higher education governance in Canada tends to happen in a top-down approach from the First Ministers office. The leaders of government (both federal and provincial) accompanied by their financial and treasury ministers form a powerful inner circle and are key decision-makers (Axelrod et al., 2011; Simeon & Nugent, 2008; Savoie, 2010).

Higher education policy implementation at the federal level is diffuse and opaque, spread over numerous federal departments rolling out from the prime minister's office. For example, at the federal level responsibility for postsecondary education can be divided between several departments including: Industry Canada (which oversees the research granting councils); Health Canada; Human Resources and Skills, Development Canada (which develops student's assistance policy); Foreign Affairs and International Trade (responsible for international education). Governance co-ordination, and policy direction can be haphazard without an anchor department that has resources to lead federal higher education policy development. Shared responsibilities across and within two levels of government is difficult to discern and navigate for policy actors and stakeholders who have narrow access to a handful of political leaders and decision-makers. Relationships and understanding the government's priorities are key for lobbyists, networks, and advocacy groups to exert influence in the Canadian political landscape (Axelrod et al., 2011; Savoie, 2010; Shanahan et al., 2016; Trilokekar et al., 2013).

Intergovernmental relations and higher education governance in Canada are often a messy, politically charged process between the federal and provincial government (Axelrod et al., 2011; Lindquist, 1999). In this context, the lack of a national co-ordinating structure or office is a significant feature shaping Canadian higher education governance and policymaking. There are various views in the literature as to whether this is a benefit or impediment to higher education governance. Some scholars have suggested these features have hindered national higher education dialogue and planning, the development of a national research data collection system, and the creation of a national quality assurance system (Jones, 2014).

By contrast others have observed that these features have protected provincial autonomy over higher education, preserving distinct regional higher education characteristics, and ensuring that provincial higher education systems are responsive to the needs of local populations. This latter view may be most pronounced in the province of Québec, whereby Québec, "exceptionalism" is a defining feature of the federal-provincial relationship and tensions between the two levels of government play out prominently in higher education governance (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014, p. 17). Jurisdictional issues over higher education has been identified as "one of the most sensitive issues facing the federal government in its relations with Québec" (Trottier et al., 2014, p. 201). In Québec, higher education, and its associated role in scientific research has been seen by the political elite as a mechanism of nationalism to achieve [Québec] emancipation (Gingras, 1996) and a cultural affair (Umbriaco et al., 2007). Consequently, Fisher and Rubenson have observed that in the higher

education realm “Québec has played the most significant role in both protecting its own autonomy and, by extension, pushing the federal government to observe at least the relative autonomy of other provinces” (2014, p. 13). A dramatic example of Québec’s position can be observed at the end of the 1950s, when the Québec government of Maurice Duplessis refused subsidies from the federal government aimed to support university research (Racine-St-Jacques, 2020).

The Changing Approach of the Federal Government in Higher Education

Important shifts in the federal government approach to higher education governance and policymaking began in 1995 amid a recession. They are best discernible in the areas of transfer payments to the provinces, student financial assistance and research funding. The period following 1995 has been referred to as the “Quiet Revolution” whereby the federal government exerted stronger influence on higher education, through fiscal policy by directly investing in students, faculty and institutions at the same time withdrawing from transfer payments to the provincial government (Eastman et al., 2019; Shanahan, 2015b; Shanahan & Jones, 2007; Tupper, 2003 as cited in Bakvis, 2008 p. 205).

Changing Transfer Payments

Transfer payments from the federal government to the provinces have evolved over time into unconditional block funding nominally earmarked for health, education, and social welfare. Between 1995 and 2000 the federal government began to dramatically reduce and restructure payments to the provinces. A second restructuring and reduction of the transfer payments occurred in 2003–2004. The transfer cuts dramatically and negatively impacted provincial general revenues. Provincial governments responded in a variety of ways to the reductions in transfer payments including cutting their province’s postsecondary institutions operating budgets. Some provinces allowed postsecondary institutions to increase tuition fees to make up for the loss of revenue (for example Ontario), while other provinces froze tuition fees (for example British Columbia) (Bakvis, 2008; Fisher et al., 2006, 2009, 2014; Rexe, 2015; Shanahan, 2015b; Shanahan & Jones, 2007). The federal government actions demonstrated a greater desire for control and accountability from the provinces for federal funds. It signalled the federal government’s retreat from providing operating support to the province for higher education. Instead, it would employ other mechanisms to invest directly in higher education institutions that bypassed provincial coffers.

Federal Financial Aid and Tax Incentives for Students

The effect of the federal transfer reductions was ultimately felt by university students across Canada whose tuition fees, on average, doubled in five years across programs. The trend of students carrying more of the direct cost of their postsecondary education continued through the decades to follow 1995 and raised concerns about access and affordability of Canadian postsecondary education as student debt levels rose. In response the federal government enhanced some of their financial student aid programs expanding eligibility criteria, alleviating repayment provisions, providing additional support for underrepresented groups in higher education, and establishing private sector student loans mechanisms. The federal government also introduced several tax credits and incentives for tuition, books, and other associated education costs. At the same time the federal government created an educational savings program to encourage families to save for their children's postsecondary education that matched family contributions with government funds and provided a tax shelter program from interest on contributions (Bakvis, 2008; Fisher et al., 2006, 2009, 2014; Shanahan, 2015b; Shanahan & Jones, 2007).

The politics of exercising their spending powers can be seen in 1998 when the federal government took advantage of a budgetary surplus and created the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (CMSF), an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit, corporation that provided needs-based grants and merit-based scholarships. The CMSF was endowed for 10 years and became a major source of student grants in the student financial assistance program. From a neo-institutional perspective, the creation of the CMSF illustrates the importance of individuals working within decision-making structures. This was a case of a leader (the then Prime Minister Jean Chretien) seeking to create a legacy project, driving policy direction, and bypassing formal decision-making processes, cabinet, and caucus in the process (Axelrod et al., 2011). Rather than reverse the transfer funding cuts and provide the provinces with more funds, the federal government sought to control the budget surplus spending and receive direct credit for the reinvestments in higher education. The CMSF also initially had major stakeholder support within higher education across Canada from student organizations, university and college advocacy bodies, and the university teachers' association, who had come together in 1996 to produce a position paper on student assistance in a united front to government which helped to get it off the ground (Axelrod et al., 2011).

Unfortunately, the CMSF was not well received by the provinces and caused political tensions, particularly in Québec. Notwithstanding its independent, arms-length status, it overlapped provincial student financial assistance plans. Québec Premier Lucien Bouchard wanted the funds channelled through the provincial student assistance plans (Axelrod et al., 2011). The provinces argued that the CMSF constituted unilateral federal spending, contravening the principles of the (federal-provincial) *Social Union Framework Agreement* (SUFA) which required consultation and collaboration when the federal government spent funds in areas of provincial jurisdiction (Lazar, 2006). It was viewed by the provinces as a blatant federal

intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. The provinces pushed back. They threatened to reduce the provincial contributions to student aid in proportion to the CMSF funding to thwart the federal government objectives of putting additional funding in the hands of students instead of giving it to the provinces through transfer payments. When its endowment ran out after 10 years in 2008, the CSMF was not renewed by the federal government. It was ultimately replaced by the federal government-controlled Canada Students Grants Program (CSGP) which consolidated all federal student grants into one single program and introduced a loan forgiveness program. At this point the government had changed and the new Prime Minister, of a different political party, had no desire to continue his predecessor's legacy (Axelrod et al., 2011, 2012; Fisher et al., 2006, 2014; Shanahan, 2015b; Shanahan et al., 2016; Trilokekar et al., 2013).

The Federal Government's Investment in Higher Education Research Funding

Historically the federal government has been the primary external investor in university research through three granting councils that support investigator-initiated research: the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC); the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC); and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The federal government's withdrawal in providing indirect operating support for higher education institutions through transfer payments to the provinces was accompanied by massive investment in higher education research. This action put funds directly into the hands of faculty, students, and institutions in various ways. With the budget surplus in 1995 the federal government reorganized the research councils and expanded funding to higher education research (Polster, 2007). In the decade between 1998 and 2008 the federal government investment in postsecondary research peaked with a flurry of initiatives being announced almost annually, in an amount comparable to the total received by the provinces in the block transfer payment for education and social welfare under the Canada Social Transfer (Bakvis, 2008). The decade from 2008 to 2018 culminated with the largest ever increase in funding for fundamental research through Canada's granting councils—more than \$1.7 billion over five years (Government of Canada, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2018).

With federal investment came steering, as conditions and eligibility requirements were attached to the new research funding. Collaborative research networks, partnerships, and matching funding requirements reorganized how federally funded research was being conducted by faculty at universities and colleges. The federal government expanded and then consolidated the *National Centers of Excellence* program that linked government, academic, and industry researchers across Canada in strategic, virtual, applied science networks. By 2018 this initiative evolved into five research superclusters, called the *Global Innovation Cluster Program*

supported by matching industry funding up to \$1 billion over 5 years (Govt of Canada, 2017). In 1997 the federal government created the *Canada Foundation for Innovation*, an independent arms-length foundation, to fund research infrastructure leveraging matching funds through public-private-government partnerships to support research in universities, colleges, hospitals, and other not-for-profit institutions (Shanahan, 2015b).

In 2000 the federal government announced the *Canada Research Chair (CRC)* program that created university research professorships, providing universities with salaries and the awarded professors with research funds. This program has been renewed annually and expanded since 2000. In 2001 the federal government announced funding for the indirect cost (overhead) of research in higher education institutions that supports operating costs including maintaining research laboratories and managing intellectual property. Between 2008 and 2019, the federal government has increased its investment in graduate student research creating substantial, new masters, doctoral and postdoctoral scholarships (Canada, 2016; Govt of Canada, 2018; 2019). Between 2019 and 2022 as the global context shifted with a global pandemic, war, rising inflation and recession, neo-nationalism and populism, the federal government became focussed on security, recovery and economic growth targeting its investment in higher education research on commercialization and innovation, support of health and biomedical research in hospitals and higher education institutions, enhancing artificial intelligence and protecting research at Canadian universities creating a new cyber security research centre to advise higher education institutions (Douglass, 2021; Govt of Canada, 2021, 2022). Overall, this enormous injection of funds into the higher education system was a substantial catalyst for change in Canadian higher education.

Implications of Federal Funding Reforms for Higher Education Governance

The reforms in higher education research funding reflect a shift in support of purely curiosity-based basic research towards strategic support of applied science research and innovation that could be commercialized or mobilized to advance the government economic and social objectives. New structures to increase research capacity have been created such as independent corporations that operate as arms-length foundations. Private sector funds have been leveraged through private-public funding mechanisms to achieve the federal government goals. Using arms-length foundations to channel research funding to higher education institutions allowed the federal government to avoid criticism from the provinces around federal interference in provincial domain. It also allowed the government to devote large, strategic, one-time endowments, in times of budgetary surplus without long-term, on-going, financial commitment. Although the new structures are insulated from political pressure, they also are beyond government control and oversight. Some of the new

structures operate outside the federal granting research councils which typically are charged with the task of organizing university-based peer review of potential award candidates. Instead, the new organizations convene their own independent panels of experts to select and award funds. This arrangement creates uncertain accountability, transparency, and reporting lines.

Findings across the three projects suggest federal research funding to universities has had a huge gravitational pull, on higher education institutions' behavior, activity, planning, organizational units, and human resource research infrastructure. There is evidence of the federal government's penetration of the university itself, for example influencing university hiring of research chairs and in what area. In its proffering salaries for professorial research chairs in universities (who would also teach, thus saving the university money spent on salaries) the federal government is reaching into universities in new ways that lie outside its constitutional jurisdiction. The offer of funds in selected disciplinary areas, along with conditions and eligibility requirements for awards all steer and constrain institutional behaviour and individual research activities. The federal government's process for awarding research funding in some cases also required universities to submit institutional strategic plans showing how the research chair would support and align with the university mission (Axelrod et al., 2011, 2012; Eastman et al., 2019; Fisher et al., 2006; Shanahan, 2015b; Trilokekar et al., 2013).

The impact of the change in the nature and scope of research being done by higher education institutions during this period has had implications for internal institutional governance. Research capacity increased as did the complexity of the arrangements with virtual networks and partnerships across the country complicating the organization and co-ordination of research activities. Ethics protocols, risk management, academic freedom, intellectual property, and project management to name a few key issues, emerged as governance and administrative priorities requiring new layers of management within universities. The working conditions of faculty researchers significantly intensified necessitating the need for managers with expertise to help with the complexity. University institutional culture tilted towards their research missions and away from their teaching missions. The massive amount of money came at a time when universities were starving for resources after years of recession-based cutbacks and austerity measures from both levels of governments, amplifying the effects on institutional behaviour, cultures, working environments and institutional missions (Bakvis, 2008; Cameron, 2002; Eastman et al., 2019; Maltais, 2016).

The re-organization was not just within institutions, it also impacted the higher education systems across Canada. The nature and scope of the federal government's policy had the beginning effect of introducing stratification and differentiation into a relatively flat and homogenous postsecondary system. The new resources and award processes favoured the research-intensive universities, compounding existing regional resource disparities. The Presidents of the top research-intensive universities began meeting and lobbying federal and provincial governments as a group, based on their mutual interests, and have branded themselves as the *U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities* to fully capitalize on the opportunity the funding

presents. Diversity and competition in Canadian higher education emerged based on research intensity, productivity, and outputs. At the same time academic drift began to take place as both university and college sectors began competing for the research funds. Colleges sought to expand their research missions and mandates into university territory. Funding requirements for collaboration resulted in new partnerships between universities and colleges with hybrid governance arrangements. With this the traditional binary structure of Canadian higher education began to change. Arguably the federal government's funding reforms contributed to concomitant convergence and divergence in higher education.

Significantly, the mechanisms employed by the federal government, have focussed on putting funds in the hands of higher education institutions and individual researchers effectively going around provincial governments. The reforms were implemented top-down by the federal government with very little consultation of constituents within the higher education community across Canada. The decision-making circle was very tight. Only a few elite policy actors within the university community, who had power, networks, and the political acumen to recognize the opportunity, were part of the process (Axelrod et al., 2011, 2012; Shanahan et al., 2016; Trilokekar et al., 2013).

These federal policies were resented by the provincial governments, particularly in Québec where they triggered separatist anger as an intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. Historically the Québec government has been "far more inclined than the governments of other provinces to resist federal government intervention" (Trottier et al., 2014, p. 284; Axelrod et al., 2011). However, Bakvis argues that during this time most of the provincial governments largely acquiesced in the face of the federal government research initiatives calling it "an excellent example of uncontested independent action by the federal government" (2008, p. 205). Pragmatically, the provinces were in a quandary. Withholding provincial support to universities who accepted the federal funds would prove costly and the provinces were not in a financial position to make up the differences (Axelrod et al., 2011).

While the provinces resented the intrusions, the university Presidents welcomed them. Findings from the three studies show that some of the university presidents had a significant role in lobbying the government for increased research funding, targeting key decision-makers such as the federal Finance Minister and Deputy Minister, and the Minister and Deputy Minister for the Department of Industry who were responsible for the research granting councils. The university presidents recognized the open policy window and the possibilities it presented. They knew who to approach. Presidents, including Martha Piper of UBC, Robert Pritchard of University of Toronto and Robert Lacroix of the University of Montreal and Paul Davenport of the University of Western Ontario, all emerged as key influential figures. These presidents were able to capitalize on their own good relationships with government officials at both levels to bridge any gaps between the provincial and federal governments in harnessing the funds. They engaged the broader higher education community enlisting the help of Robert Giroux, leader of the Association of Universities and College of Canada (AUCC) a former, well-respected veteran of public service who had access to the federal finance department. They also brought

the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) on board, in a united front, to make the case to the federal government for more postsecondary support. They had their own private sector, corporate and industry networks to fundraise and leverage matching funding to take advantage of the new initiatives (Axelrod et al., 2011; Bakvis, 2008; Cameron, 2002; Fisher et al., 2006; Trilokekar et al., 2013).

The federal government's willingness to invest in higher education research may be attributed to the confluence of several factors: the federal fiscal situation; the funding was invested in endowed initiatives that were "one-time only", and there was public concern about Canada losing their best researchers to other jurisdictions because of the lack of research support (i.e., 'brain drain'). External forces of globalization, internationalization, new technologies, and more recently pandemics, and cyber security threats have catalyzed federal government research and innovation policy. Politically, these factors aligned with the government's belief that higher education research would drive the knowledge economy which was central to their economic objectives. Politicians, civil servants, and the public were all receptive to the policy direction. The federal government's investment also circumvented the provincial government. In rolling out the policy, federal government used powerful treasury tools in a manner that were within its spending power jurisdiction and within its constitutional authority over the economy (Axelrod et al., 2011, 2012; Shanahan et al., 2016)

Provincial Higher Education Governance Arrangements, University Institutional Autonomy, and the Politics of Higher Education

In Canada higher education governance arrangements, the regulatory framework, policy mechanisms and institutional structures have evolved distinctly in each province. Each province has various statutes that organize higher education, constitute institutions giving them the power to operate and grant degrees, and each province has arrangements for quality assurance and accountability. In addition, there are numerous education and non-education statutes, at the provincial and federal level that intersect with higher education governance (Fisher et al., 2014; Shanahan, 2015c, d). Provincial governments tightly regulate the establishment of publicly funded universities, which dominate the higher education policy field. Publicly funded universities in Canada are typically created by an Act of the (provincial or federal) Legislature or less typically by royal charter. They are legally constituted as not-for-profit, charitable, corporations. As charities, publicly funded universities in Canada are subject to the laws of trusts and charities, and their board of governors owe the highest fiduciary duties as trustees to the university (Shanahan, 2019). As independent corporate entities, Canadian universities are subject to the laws of the land in the same way as a private person. The government gives the university the power to internally govern themselves in their constituting statute which serves as

an institutional “constitution” and sets out governance arrangements within the university. In this respect universities are creatures of provincial legislatures and only the legislature has the power to withdraw or amend their governing statute. The powers of provincial ministers of higher education to intervene in university governance varies across Canada and depends on the specific wording of the provincial legislation setting out the governance arrangements in each province.

As a practical matter this self-governance arrangement means university internal decision-making is protected from external interference. Once established, Canadian universities enjoy considerable operational independence from the government in the management of their day-to-day affairs. Legally, this institutional autonomy means that provincial governments and Canadian courts have been reluctant to interfere with internal university decisions and disputes with their internal constituent members (faculty, students, staff). Case law and major government commissions have enshrined this principle of institutional autonomy and non-intervention (Cutt, & Dobell, 1992; Davis, 2015; Shanahan, 2019).

Historically, Canadian universities have not experienced heavy government regulation, nor has the market or private sector played a large role in their evolution in the past. Traditionally institutional autonomy has been associated with four fundamental freedoms for Canadian universities: freedom to set curriculum and evaluations standards; freedom to hire faculty of their choice; freedom to set admission for students; and freedom to pursue research (Arthurs, 1987; Winchester, 1985). Consequently, government intrusion into universities in Canada has generally been limited to the passing of originating statutes setting out the university constitution and its powers; accounting for government funding; and regulating the system including tuition fee frameworks and quality assurance around degree programs. The government does not direct programming or teaching. Universities have considerable control over their academic standards, admissions, degree requirements, program offerings, and staff appointments and promotion (the latter subject to employment contracts and collective bargaining agreements). Formal institutional accreditation is not a feature of Canadian higher education because of the relative homogeneity of universities across Canada. However, professional accreditation occurs at the programmatic level for professional degrees leading to licensure (such as law, education, engineering, medicine, nursing etc.) presenting minimal intrusions that are tolerated by universities. Therefore, the politics of programmatic accreditation play out at the Faculty level and not at the institutional level (Shanahan, 2015c).

Since the passage of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982, there is a heightened sensitivity to individual rights and freedoms in disputes between government and citizens that has spilled into the university context and penetrated university self-governance. Although Canadian universities are independent, autonomous, corporate entities, they nevertheless “exist uncertainly on the line between a public and a private institution” in Canada (Davis, 2015, p. 61.) They are “quasi-public institutions” (Lucier, 2018; Farrington & Palfreyman, 2006, p. 92) in that they receive public funds, they are created and regulated by the provincial government, and they deliver public education at the post-secondary level which is

within the constitutional authority of the provincial governments. Developing *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* case law has contributed to a changing understanding of the legal nature of the university which has implications for governance. This case law suggests that in their daily operations Canadian public-funded universities are not creatures of government; however, when they are carrying out government policy or acting pursuant to government legislation, they may be considered government agents and therefore their actions will attract Charter scrutiny. For example, in delivering public postsecondary education curriculum universities may be considered government actors (hence public entities), but in employment, collective bargaining and internal labours relations universities are not government actors but rather are private employers (Davis, 2015; *Pridgeon v. University of Calgary*, 2010; Shanahan, 2015a). Similarly, courts have found that university presidents in Canada may be considered “public” officials (*Freeman-Maloy v. Marsden*, 2006; Shanahan, 2019).

The uncertain public-private nature of the Canadian university can confuse institutional governance and decision-making, especially in terms of the legal duties of university leadership. For example, across Canadian provinces we are seeing legal challenges of institutional autonomy in disputes between universities and their constituent members (students, faculty, and other university employees) seeking judicial review of the actions of senior leadership/management representing the university and asking for the intervention of courts to review and redress university decisions (Davis, 2015; Gilligan-Hackett & Murray, 2015; Shanahan, 2015a). In response, some provinces have revised their higher education legislation and removed any doubt about the public-private nature of the university explicitly stipulating in the enacting university statutes that the universities are carrying out governmental activities *on delegated government authority* making universities government agents which allows for government intrusion (for example, Alberta’s *Post Secondary Act*, 2003). This trend clearly diminishes institutional autonomy.

Internal Institutional University Governance

Bicameralism

Given the public nature of postsecondary education in Canada coupled with institutional autonomy of universities, the politics around university governance has typically been expressed at the institutional level. In Canada, institutional university governance is a shared proposition between parallel governing boards or decision-making bodies. Universities in Canada have a dual governance structure: a hierarchical, managerial, corporate structure and a democratic, representative, collegial structure, a “community of scholars.” Both structures are legally recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada case law (see: *Harelkin v. University of Regina*, 1979); in law neither is paramount, neither structure negates the other. However, this is not

always the case in practice, causing role confusion and scope of authority issues between the two bodies. The competing aspects of the managerial and collegial governance structures makes university governance a complicated endeavour, fraught with politics and tensions, and fashioned by history, custom, usage, statutes, and old and new case law (Davis, 2015; Shanahan, 2019).

Institutional governance structures of Canadian universities vary by province and by institution but the dominant model across Canada is bicameralism as recommended by the *Flavelle Commission* of 1906. Bicameralism distinguishes management issues from academic and educational policy issues and allocates responsibility for each to reside in two specialized governing boards made up of and reflecting the interests of various constituents of the university and government. In this model, academic policy and educational matters are the authority of a senior decision-making body made up of members internal to the university, the majority of which are faculty. This body is typically referred to as the academic senate. The daily financial management and administration of the university is the responsibility of board of governors/trustees made up of members primarily appointed by government, external to the university, but also includes elected members from constituents within the university. The Canadian university governance model is democratic and constituency-based, in that constituent members of the university (faculty, students and administrators) may elect representatives to serve on the senate and board of governors (Duff Berdahl, 1966; Jones et al., 2004; Jones & Skolnik, 1997; Shanahan, 2019).

Role of Custom

Davis reminds us that the governance of the Canadian university is also shaped by “academic policies, custom and usage” (Davis, 2015, p. 64). These may include historical or unwritten ways of operating over a significant period, that have become the established conduct of the university. The notion of academic customs and usage as part of governance is protected by the courts (see: *Kulchyski v. Trent University*, 2001) and extends to many sacred governing principles defended within Canadian universities including academic freedom and the ownership of academic work. This means that history matters in Canadian university governance. Past governance practices within an institution establishes legal precedent and policy interpretation for that institution going forward. This feature of university governance in Canada contributes to path dependence and divergence in institutional governance.

The Role of the Academic Profession in Governance

Statutes and internal governance by-laws vary across provinces and across universities in setting out the precise relationship between the academic profession and the university. The governance role of the academic profession is preserved in Canadian universities most prominently in the form of the senate. The historical trend in Canadian university governance has been towards the democratization of university boards (senates and governing boards) to include more faculty and students, following a national study which concluded that faculty were inadequately represented on university boards and students inadequately represented on senates and called for increased cooperation between boards and senates (Duff-Berdaahl, 1966). Structurally, university boards are designed for democratic representation and collective decision-making. Inevitably conflict in decision-making is a natural part of the democratic process, making governance messy and slow. In general, academic professors who participate in university governance have dual, sometimes conflicting, responsibilities: they are elected to their role by their constituency and answerable to them, but they also have a duty to the “university” as a whole and must protect its best interests.

These democratic features of Canadian university governance have presented challenges for university leadership. Contemporary corporate management approaches to university governance are more hierarchal, eschew conflict and view collective decision-making as inefficient. Moreover, since the mid-1990s governments have exerted more pressure on universities, intensifying strategic planning. In times of constrained resources and increasing accountability reporting, institutions must manage resources and be responsive to government demands in ways that the university governance structure was not built for. In this political-economic context the collegial versus the corporate governance cultures have clashed and caused tensions in decision-making between various university constituencies—managers, faculty, and students (Davis, 2015; Farrington & Palfreyman, 2006; Shanahan, 2019). In Canada studies show that the perception of faculty on their influence over decision-making decreasing with institutional size and the associated styles of top-down management typical of large institutions. This scholarship suggests that faculty perceive their role in governance eroding at the institutional and faculty/school level while retaining most of their influence in areas of core academic activities (Metcalf et al., 2011).

The increasing trend toward unionization of Canadian university employees, including the academic profession, has also affected institutional governance. Between 1971 and 2004 almost 80% of Canada’s university faculty associations had been certified as bargaining agents under the applicable labour relations statutes. The development of the legal framework and case law around faculty employment in Canada has diminished the autonomy of postsecondary institutions over faculty employment (Gilligan-Hackett & Murray, 2015; Metcalf et al., 2011). Moreover, academic faculty (in publicly funded institutions) are now typically both unionized employees as well as self-governing professionals. There are inevitably tensions between these two roles that play out in the politics of governance. Unionized

faculty participating in governance are often dismissed as an “interest group” and are constrained in their representation of their constituency within the university collegium due to university conflict-of-interest policies.

The politics of unionization are activated on campus around issues of academic freedom, shared collegial governance, the terms, and conditions of employment (including tenure and promotion, discipline, and termination), collective bargaining and strike action. Some scholars have suggested that the disempowerment of the university senate may be the inevitable result of the unionization of the academic profession in Canada (Bruneau, 2009; Cameron, 2002; Gilligan-Hackett & Murray, 2015; Jones et al., 2002; Metcalfe et al., 2011). Cameron argues that unionization has introduced adversarial style politics and relationships into the governance environment which has subsumed collegial relationships and decision-making (2002). Employee-employer collective agreements between faculty organizations and the university, setting out terms of employment and working conditions, are set within a framework of collective bargaining and labour legislation within the province. These legal instruments are primarily grounded in contract and employment law that have been utilized to protect principles of self-governance and collegiality. In this respect unionization may have overtaken traditional governance structures in defining the relationship between the university and the academic professions.

Trends in System Level University Governance Arrangements

Post-World War II massification and the federal government’s decision to provide free tuition for returning veterans began a trajectory of dramatic expansion and demand for higher education in Canada. System expansion brought funding, system co-ordination, system planning, and quality assurance to the forefront of policy priorities for successive provincial governments in the decades to follow. This context was complicated by the changing political economy of the 1990s which included an economic recession, globalization, advances in internet and technology, internationalization and the mobility of students and labour markets, and the rise of neo-liberal political ideology which positioned higher education as a private good and shifted its costs to students away from government. These conditions set the stage for major shifts in federal and provincial governance in higher education (Austen & Jones, 2016; Fisher & Rubenson, 1998).

Embedded in regional and cultural contexts provincial higher education systems in Canada have responded idiosyncratically to these political-economic challenges. For example, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia have experienced greater pressures to align higher education with the labour market and government economic priorities (Fisher et al., 2014; Shanahan & Jones, 2007). Whereas Québec’s higher education system’s governance is infused with a nationalist ideology and a role for civil society. Higher education is perceived as a lever for developing a distinct society, as part of the building of Québec as a nation not merely a province within the

Canadian federation. As a result, Trottier et al. (2014) suggest that Québec's system evolution has been less influenced by marketization than other provinces.

Common features of Canadian higher education began to change as provinces moved in different directions in their governance of provincial higher education systems in response to the political-economic environment. One evident trend is that provincial governments are reaching for institutional differentiation as a possible mechanism to manage and respond to increasing demands for higher education (Shanahan, 2015c; Shanahan & Jones, 2007). As higher education expanded across Canada a new range of postsecondary institutions, structures and programs emerged increasing the diversity within Canada's provincial systems blurring a pure binary divide and complicating government regulation. The non-university sector is evolving, varying by province in form, function, structure, and programming. Degree granting is expanding to the non-university sector dismantling the university monopoly that previously characterized Canadian higher education. Canadian universities grant academic baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral and professional degrees; while colleges and non-university institutions now offer broad programming including applied, associate and bachelor's degrees, in addition to certificates and diplomas in technical and vocational programming as well as trade licensure. The Canadian higher education sector now includes polytechnics, public colleges, specialized institutes, and community colleges, institutes of technology, colleges of applied arts and technology, CEGEPs, and career colleges. New kinds of institutions have emerged and new partnerships between institutions have been created (Shanahan, 2015c).

To promote access, structurally there is a trend across provinces towards establishing pathways through the higher education system between colleges and universities sectors as well as between institutions within a sector. At the same time structural legacies have presented challenges in the governance arrangements of some provincial systems of higher education. For example, in Ontario the college sector was created in the mid-1960s to operate parallel to the university sector without an explicit transfer function. The historical silos of the two sectors in this province have proved a stubborn structural arrangement for the government to dismantle. Meanwhile other provinces across Canada have developed student pathways through the higher education system between colleges and universities. In some provinces the colleges have historically fed directly into the university system (such as Québec), or there is a transfer mechanism between colleges and universities (such as British Columbia and Alberta).

Across the country as higher education systems expand and become more complex provincial governments have responded in various ways, employing a variety of strategies and mechanisms to organize and steer the system. There is evidence of a general shift toward system-level co-ordination and governance. Provincial governments are employing broad public sector legislation that capture publicly funded universities and colleges. Governments are exerting more control over higher education systems, increasing regulations, and creating new bodies to help organize the provincial systems and to advise the government. Most provinces have adopted legal, treasury/funding and market-like mechanisms as policy tools to allocate

resources including competitive, targeted, matching funding mechanisms that encourage partnerships with industry and leverage private sector resources. Arguably these mechanisms present governance challenges because they devolve regulatory influence, and in some cases authority to bodies outside government and universities, in the process undermining university autonomy and compromising provincial government control over the system (Bruneau & Savage, 2002; Shanahan et al., 2014; Shanahan & Jones, 2007).

Quality and accountability have become a priority with institutional differentiation, programmatic diversification, and the international mobility of students. To manage an increasingly complex higher education environment provinces have employed new kinds of quality assurance frameworks for degree recognition in conjunction with institutional contracts attached to funding (Marshall, 2008; Shanahan, 2015c; Shanahan & Jones, 2007; Weinrib & Jones, 2014). For example, in some provinces (for example Ontario and British Columbia) governments have introduced institutional mandate agreements (also referred to as contracts or mandate letters). These are legal agreements between provincial governments and institutions that set out performance expectations and goals, institute reporting requirements against targets, and attach government operational funding to performance-based outcomes. There are inevitable implications for institutional autonomy in these trends not only in terms of the pull exerted on institutional missions by targets and performance indicators, but also in terms of new forms of regulation and reporting requirements to organize and ensure quality and accountability goals (Fisher et al., 2014; Shanahan & Jones, 2007).

One consequence of this trend within the university is a mushrooming of administrative operations responsible for collecting data and managing the required government reporting. Universities have become “sprawling conglomerates” with important societal, economic, and intellectual responsibilities (Fallis, 2007, p. 17). As a not-for-profit corporation and charitable organization, the university is exposed on several fronts to risk and legal liability and is governed in its activities and relationships by multiple areas of law including employment, labour, contract, human rights, constitutional, administrative, and intellectual property law, just to name a few. All of this has led to the increasing role of full-time managers responsible for an array of administrative and accountability exercises in both financial and academic areas. The expanding ranks of managers at Canadian universities, a phenomenon evident in other jurisdictions, has altered the collegial culture and imported business sector values, knowledge and attitudes associated with New Public Management, that some critique as antithetical to the university’s traditional mission and role in society (Bernatchez, 2019; Deem, 1998; Lea, 2009)

Some observations can be made about governance reforms in this changing Canadian context. Politically, constituent consultations in higher education around these changes have varied widely across the provinces and across various political administrations at different points in time. In some cases, the process of reforms has been “draconian,” “reactive,” and “ad hoc,” while in other cases they have been “rational,” “incremental,” “consultative,” and “collaborative,” reflecting an ongoing tension between centralized decision-making within government and decentralized

decision-making within the higher education sector (Fisher et al., 2014, pp. 336–337). Furthermore, in the flux of the Canadian higher education landscape there is evidence of system, sector, and institutional convergences and divergences happening at the same time. Convergence is apparent in the academic drift of non-university institutions increasingly offering degrees, activities previously the purview of universities. Similarly federal government research funding has had enormous gravitational pull on all higher education institutions, yet at the same time it has had the effect of stratifying provincial higher education systems across the country based on institutional research capacity. Path dependence is at work as provinces respond to their unique regional demands and historical system structures. High institutional autonomy of universities bolstered by provincial differentiation policies and distinct institutional mandate letters has encouraged institutional diversity.

In such a complex and fluid environment, leadership matters at all levels. At the provincial level, the Premier's policy directions have prevailed setting directions for major changes in higher education. Politically the support of key government officials and civil servants to champion policy initiatives within government have also been critical to successfully influence policy directions. Within the university context the power and political acumen of university presidents and high-level managers has increased at the expense of the academic faculty who have become more removed from institutional decision-making (Metcalf et al., 2011). To be effective leaders, board of governors and university presidents must be pragmatic and political: strategically advocating for their institution's interests, targeting key decision-makers within government, knowing government priorities, and understanding government pressures and constraints. They must have strong relationships with community groups and private industry to leverage partnerships and to fund raise. Leaders must be astute communicators and media savvy to promote their institution not only to prospective students but to prospective investors, donors, and politicians (Axelrod et al., 2011; Stromquist, 2009; Bruneau, 2009).

Conclusion: Features and Reforms in Canadian Higher Education Governance

Higher education in Canada has become an increasingly complicated governance environment. The neo-institutional lens is especially helpful in capturing the distinctive features of Canadian higher education that shape and politicize governance at all levels: federally, provincially, and institutionally. Neo-institutional theories elucidate how organizations and governments work, how system organization influences policy choices, and how policymaking can be an exercise of individual political power within governance structures. Neo-institutionalism also captures the contradictory dynamics of convergence and divergence: path dependence associated with historical legacies (Thelen & Mahoney, 2010) as well as rationalization associated with external isomorphic pressures on organizations (Bromley & Meyer,

2014). In Canadian higher education both are occurring simultaneously as federal and provincial government reach for various mechanisms to regulate and steer an increasingly complex system.

The politics of higher education governance reforms in Canada are shaped by the tension between centralization and decentralization of power that runs through the legislative structural arrangements. Although constitutionally legal authority over education is decentralized to the provinces, power over all sectors is politically, and in practice, controlled by individuals in the highest level of government because of Canada's parliamentary system of governance which centralizes decision-making power in the First Ministers offices. At the same time individuals are captured by the idiosyncratic governance structures and the legislative framework of Canadian higher education. These include federalism, the constitutional division of powers, and the dual, shared governance model of universities. These institutional features distribute power: enabling or constraining decision-making. Canadian higher education governance frameworks are the result of historical, socio-cultural, and political legacies evolving uniquely by province. But they are influenced by, and must respond to, contemporary environmental forces such as political- economic conditions that exert strong isomorphic pressures (Fisher et al., 2006, 2014; Rexe, 2015; Shanahan et al., 2016; Shanahan, 2015a).

Canadian federalism and the primacy of provincial government jurisdiction in education have caused political conflicts in intergovernmental relations in higher education policymaking. Federal spending powers have been used in highly influential ways in higher education bypassing provincial oversight, resulting in a high degree of federal government penetration into provincial higher education governance. Environmental forces such as globalization and internationalization in higher education have introduced a greater overlap between areas of provincial and federal jurisdictions which has exacerbated the intergovernmental tensions. Provincial and federal governments have instituted an array of reforms and innovative structural, legal and treasury strategies that have arguably transformed Canadian higher education. At the forefront of these initiatives have been the introductions of competitive, matching, and targeted funding schemes and performance-based funding mechanisms that have altered institutional behaviour and paved the way for stratification and differentiation in a relatively homogenized system of higher education (Axelrod et al., 2011, 2012; Fisher et al., 2014; Shanahan, 2015b; Trilokekar et al., 2013).

Recent trends and government's responses to them, in Canadian higher education, have had clear implications for university governance at the system and institutional level. At both levels of government (federal and provincial) we see stronger state control and steering of higher education driven by system expansion and demand for access propelled by the belief that higher education is an important economic and social driver. The higher education sector is increasingly captured by broader public sector legislation shifting the public/private nature of publicly funded universities. Universities are increasingly seen as public, democratic spaces as opposed to private, ivory towers. In the complex contemporary context, university governance and leadership are critically important and have come under increasing scrutiny. All these developments in Canadian higher education have constrained

institutional autonomy, challenged collegial and managerial governance structures, and altered institutional culture.

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Chapter 5

The Politics of Higher Education Governance: Comparative Perspectives



Glen A. Jones

Abstract This chapter offers a comparative perspective on the three proceeding papers that focus on the politics of higher education in Western Europe, the United States and Canada. Common themes include the importance of understanding the political context in the analysis of higher education reforms, as well as the multi-level, and frequently multi-sector, nature of higher education governance. The three chapters point towards elements of both convergence and divergence in the politics of higher education governance reform, though there is little evidence that these very different systems are heading towards some common model, though some comment elements may be emerging. The politics of higher education governance reform continues to be grounded in the distinctive histories, political structures, and contextual features of each jurisdiction. More systematic forms of comparative analysis might provide us with new ways of understanding or exploring the distinctive contextual elements underscoring these complex political processes.

Introduction

Public issue salience is an extremely important and commonly used concept in political science. While the term is frequently underspecified, the basic notion that there are differences in the importance assigned to policy issues within a democratic political system underscores much of the analysis of political activity (Dennison, 2019). The concept may be simple, but it is extraordinarily challenging to study empirically, in part because there are both demand and supply elements operating within a dynamic, highly complex political environment. On the supply side of the equation, a variety of political actors, for example political parties, attempt to influence the relative importance assigned to policy issues in an attempt to shift public opinion (Leeper & Slothuus, 2014). The objective, of course, is to influence and

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address the demands of voters, and the relative salience of issues that are assumed to effect voting (Dennison, 2019).

Those who study the politics of higher education governance recognize the tremendous importance of understanding the complex issues of power and authority that underscore the governance of higher education as a public policy issue, but they also recognize that the mechanisms of this governance, the structures and approaches that steer or regulate the sector, have modest if any public issue salience. There are certainly public issues associated with the higher education sector that may influence voting (a point strongly reinforced by Junglut and Dobbins', [this volume](#) analysis), such as student access, research, tuition and student financial assistance, though it is frequently assumed that these issues are less important to the electorate than employment, health care, schooling, immigration and climate change; few would ever argue that the governance of higher education itself is an issue of salience when voters head to the polls. Instead, the politics of higher education governance is about the complex and frequently multi-level intersections of structures and actors, of networks and stakeholders, operating within quite distinct social and historical contexts; it is frequently influenced by, but generally off the radar of, public issue salience.

The objective of this chapter is to offer a comparative perspective on the three preceding papers, each of which provides masterful reviews of the literature, and presents research and findings, on the politics of higher education governance in Western Europe, the United States and Canada. Each paper offers a highly original contribution to the literature, but what can we learn by looking across these studies in terms of identifying similarities and differences, elements of convergence or divergence, or key questions that might move the study of the politics of higher education governance forward?

In the Beginning: National, Regional and Temporal Starting Points

Western Europe is a region, while the United States and Canada are countries. The basic fact that the unit of analysis differs so dramatically between the three papers is not a sampling error, but rather reflects key differences and influences in the politics of higher education governance, the story of higher education governance reform and the focus of scholarship in these three quite different jurisdictions.

The history of higher education in Europe is, of course, longer, deeper and richer than the history of higher education in North America. The history of the university in Europe is extraordinarily complex and multi-faceted and involves unique national histories and institutional models, the evolution of quite distinct notions of the role of higher education within society, and quite different assumptions underscoring the relationship between universities and the state. These distinctive histories, models and social contexts continue to play a significant role in the politics of higher education governance.

However, the starting-point for contemporary reforms in higher education governance appears to be far more related to patterns of massification; this multi-dimensional expansion of higher education, in enrolment, missions, institutional types and functions, was largely supported by the public purse, leading to renewed interest in governance approaches, structures and mechanisms. This transition took place earlier in the United States than any country within Europe. New policy discussions and governance mechanisms emerged with the development and evolution of American state “systems” of public higher education, and researchers began to study and categorize these governance or coordination mechanisms (for example, Berdahl, 1971). Canada’s postwar expansion of higher education led to the emergence of “provincial” systems during the 1960s, and almost every province created a “buffer” or intermediary body designed to provide at least some level of system-level coordination (Jones, 1996), and scholarship on these provincial systems and their coordinating mechanisms began to gradually emerge in the 1970s (Sheffield, 1978). The transition to mass higher education in Western Europe occurred more gradually, with significant national differences, but as Jungblut and Dobbins note in their paper, higher education governance reforms had become an important feature of Western European higher education since the 1980s.

It is important not to lose sight of the very different starting points of governance arrangements in the United States, Canada and Western Europe during this time period. The constitutions of both the United States and Canada created federations where higher education is the responsibility of state/province. The federal government plays a role in higher education in both countries, especially related to research funding and student financial assistance, and so multi-level governance elements are embedded in both political systems; however it is the state or provincial government that has primary responsibility for governing higher education, and protecting these rights against threats of federal government intervention has been a recurring theme. The Canadian political context for higher education policy may be seen as even more decentralized than the American, since, as Shanahan notes, there is no national minister or department of education or higher education with authority over the sector. In both countries, decentralization of authority within a federal political context led to the emergence of very different state/provincial systems of higher education.

A second key starting-point for understanding the politics of higher education governance in the United States and Canada is the historical importance placed on institutional autonomy. As Rubin ([this volume](#)) notes, governance reforms in the United States have largely focused on coordination or governance board arrangements which emerged as buffer agencies designed to somewhat distance universities from the political vagaries of governors and state legislatures. McLendon (2003) noted more than 100 proposals for governance reform between 1985 and 2000, including proposals to increase the oversight responsibility of governance structures, increase accountability, or increase institutional authority or discretion. Given the constitutional separation of authority between the executive and legislative branches of state government, and the development of distinct state coordinating or governing board arrangements, the political focal point becomes the reform of these

state-level governance arrangements and structures, in some cases moving to centralize authority, in others to decentralize decision-making to separate institutional governing bodies.

Relatively high levels of institutional autonomy is also the starting point for the discussion of governance reforms in Canada, and, as in the United States, an early focus of attention was on the development of intermediary or buffer bodies to play coordinating roles within the new provincial systems and protect institutions from direct political interference. With the exception of a rather unique regional coordinating body that emerged in eastern Canada, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, these bodies were gradually abandoned in favour of more direct relationships between governments and institutions (Jones, 1996). As Shanahan ([this volume](#)) describes in detail, the relationships between governments and universities, as distinct, not-for-profit corporations, were largely premised on supporting, or at the very least tolerating, high levels of autonomy over many areas of decision-making, with governments focusing on issues of funding and the regulation of tuition. The relative level of institutional autonomy may have changed over time, and shifted in different ways within different provincial contexts (Eastman et al., 2022), but notions of institutional autonomy underscored post-war governance reforms.

In sharp contrast, the starting point for contemporary governance reforms in Western Europe involved a plethora of nation-specific arrangements and mechanisms, grounded in diverse histories and institutional models. Putting aside the United Kingdom as an outlier, higher education governance in many of these systems involved differing levels of state authority and control (ranging from the top-down Napoleonic traditions, to Humboldtian models of academic self-governance within state administered institutions). The phrase “steering-from-a-distance” captured a major shift in approach from what had been, in many systems, state-centered governance, and yet one might observe that distant steering had characterized higher education governance in the United States and Canada throughout the last half of the twentieth century. These different starting points become quite important in exploring the politics of higher education governance from a comparative perspective (Austin & Jones, 2016).

In their thoughtful review of the research literature, Jungblut and Dobbins ([this volume](#)) identify two common pressures or themes that underscored governance reforms throughout the Western European region. The first is the influence of New Public Management on governance reforms throughout the region. Seeking greater efficiency, governance reforms frequently involved reducing direct government control and shifting strategic decision-making authority to universities and university leaders. New Public Management (NPM) influenced the politics of governance reform, and NPM and related concepts also became an explanatory tool for scholarly analysis and underscored a considerable body of research during this period. For example, the shift in relationships between governments and institutions, and, in particular, the emerging emphasis on the assessment of sector and institutional outputs provided a foundation for Neave’s (1998) now classic notion of the “evaluative state.” Scholars focused attention on the increasing role of external

stakeholders, competition for students and research funding, and increasing managerialism in a context in which institutions were assigned greater autonomous authority. Once again, there were significant differences in governance reforms between systems, grounded in different national models and histories, but researchers noted common themes underscoring reforms and an increasing body of comparative governance research looking across, or between selected countries, began to play a key role in higher education scholarship.

The second pressure noted by Jungblut and Dobbins ([this volume](#)) was the Bologna process, which emphasized student mobility and internationalization, but also issues of comparability and quality assessment within a European higher education area. They argue that these pressures not only underscored major reforms in governance, but catalyzed an increasing application of theories and concepts drawn from political science to the scholarship of higher education system reform including neo-institutionalism, the “socio-economic school”, the “international hypothesis” and power-resource theory. As a regional project, the Bologna process led to reforms in governance throughout Western Europe, but it also became, as Jungblut and Dobbins ([this volume](#)) note, a “major ice-breaker” for comparative scholarship of governance reform and brought an increasing theoretical depth and sophistication, drawing heavily from political science, to governance research.

This brief review illustrates that starting points for governance reform, and scholarship on the politics of governance reform, in Western Europe, the United States and Canada are quite different. While notions of institutional autonomy underscored key elements in the emergence of system-level governance in the United States and Canada, the foundations of system governance in Europe were remarkably varied, but both the Bologna process and the relatively common elements aligned with the adoption of New Public Management became associated with national governance reforms in which governments pulled back from centralized approaches in favour of steering more autonomous, competitive, managed institutions.

Political Actors in the Context of Low Public Issue Salience

As noted at the outset of this paper, while there are certainly higher education policy issues that may be important to voters, few would argue that higher education governance itself is a public policy issue that might enamor the electorate. In the absence of public demands for governance reform, scholarship on the politics of reform has focused on the role of government bureaucrats, political actors, stakeholders or other key pressures and their influence on governance structures, processes and arrangements. All three papers provide thoughtful reviews of existing research on these political elements, and all three offer new insights based on the analysis of original data.

As Rubin ([this volume](#)) notes, scholarship on governance reform in the United States has focused considerable attention on the political activity and influences underscoring the reform of state-level governance structures. While there are

certainly federal government influences on public higher education (role of accreditation, student financial assistance, research funding), the politics of higher education governance reform is largely local. While state-level governance agencies might have once been understood to be “buffers” separating the sector from political interferences, these agencies themselves have become a form of political battleground; influencing or controlling these agencies (through controlling appointments to agency boards, modifying their roles or scope, etc.) became a mechanism for aligning the sector to the goals and objectives of those in power. Research on governance reform in the United States has led to the development of typologies to categorize state-level governing agencies (for example, McGuinness, 2016), and these typologies have provided a foundation for comparative studies of governance reforms over time, as well as analyses of the roles of various actors, stakeholders, and contextual elements in the politics of state-level governance reform. Case studies of the politics of local, state-level reforms, frequently but not always grounded in principle-agent theory, provide the foundation for multi-state or even national cross-case analyses within this highly complex, decentralized system of higher education. This work illuminates the role and influence of various actors and stakeholders, such as governors, legislative insiders and institutional leaders, but it also highlights the diversity of reforms, from large-scale restructuring of governance, to minor, nuanced, changes seen as politically advantageous.

Rubin ([this volume](#)) introduces the concept of “stakeholder salience” as a useful tool in the analysis of governance reform, and, in particular, his analysis of the Nevada case study presented in his paper. Like neo-pluralist notions that not all interests may be equal, stakeholder salience distinguishes between the relative importance or influence of stakeholders as actors within policy networks or policy communities.

Shanahan ([this volume](#)) frames her review of the politics of higher education governance reform in Canada within the unique arrangements of Canadian federalism. She notes that one of the key themes underscoring governance reform has been the increasing role of the federal government in the area of research policy, a dramatic shift in approach at the turn of the twenty-first century beginning with a reduction in federal indirect funding for higher education through national provincial-transfer programs in favour of new, direct investments in research and research infrastructure. Based on the interviews conducted for her study, this shift in policy approach was heavily influenced through the advocacy of a relatively small number of presidents of leading research universities. The success of these political actors in lobbying for change, and the magnitude of new investments, served to reinforce the importance of the federal government not just in funding university research, but as a political arena for advocacy, coalition-building, and stakeholder engagement. While these changes signal important shifts, the provinces continue to be responsible for higher education policy and Shanahan ([this volume](#)) notes that governance reforms have tended to focus on modifications to a relatively limited number of policy approaches or instruments tied directly or indirectly to government funding. Governance reforms are primarily seen as modifications to government funding mechanisms, frequently with increased strings attached, including, in some provinces, the increased use of direct agreements between individual universities and government, and performance

funding. Institutional governance (frequently bicameral with academic senates and boards focusing on administrative and financial oversight) continues to have considerable autonomy, though there are variations by province, with reforms emerging from shifting government regulation (and sometimes legislation) and the complex interactions within policy networks that underscore these shifts.

In their excellent review of the literature, Jungblut and Dobbins ([this volume](#)) note the important and complex role of political actors in the reform of governance within Western European systems of higher education, but they focus particular attention on the role of political parties. The fact that multi-party coalition governments are relatively common within the continental context means that understanding the preferences of political parties has different implications for governance reform in the European context that it does in the United States or Canada. Of course partisan politics plays a role in all three, but there are no coalition governments within what is essentially a two-party system in the United States, and minority parliaments are quite uncommon within Canadian provinces. Understanding the positioning of political parties across the ideological spectrum takes on a distinctive importance when governments are frequently formed by coalition, where small parties can play a vital role in forming a government. Given this context, Jungblut and Dobbins ([this volume](#)) provide a detailed review of the election manifestos of political parties in six European nations in order to explore the implications of party platforms in relation to the centralization (government steering) or decentralization (institutional autonomy involving rule-governed communities of scholars) of higher education governance. With the exception of the United Kingdom, they note that there are significant differences between political parties in each of the five other countries in terms of preferred approaches to governance. The ideological positioning of political parties has direct implications for both the higher education policy issues viewed as important enough to be included in an election manifesto, but also in the approach to governance (such as the role of markets in governing independent institutions, or the view of universities as instruments of national political agendas requiring government steering). In other words, while university governance itself has little public issue salience, they illuminate how parties identify higher education policy platforms that have important implications for governance and university autonomy.

Common Themes

At the heart of all three papers are two rather obvious commonalities. The first is that the political context, the structure of government and the traditions and histories that underscore the ways in which the role of government in relation to the governance or higher education are understood, are key elements in the analysis of the politics of higher education reform. The findings of each of these papers are not generalizable to the others without somehow taking into account the realities of Canadian federalism, the history and evolution of state coordinating mechanism in the United States, or the diversity of higher education systems, the range of

political/societal assumptions underscoring the relationships between universities and the state, and the realities of political coalitions and partisan politics within Western Europe. Context, including histories, structures, and political systems, clearly matters, in part because these contextual elements underscore the pathway and the related path dependencies that all three papers explicitly or implicitly allude to. These contextual factors also mean that there are important differences in the foci of political activity, for example the actions of governors, legislators and other stakeholders in reform initiatives that commonly focus on the role and activities of coordinating boards in the American states, the policy networks seeking to influence the ministries responsible for higher education within Canadian provinces, and the various actors, including political parties, government bureaucrats, and other stakeholders, who play a role in the reform of governance within European systems. Partisan politics is important in terms of understanding the complex implications of the two-party American system on higher education governance in the United States, the shifts in higher education policy direction in Canadian provinces, such as Alberta and Quebec (Bégin-Caouette et al., 2018; Eastman et al., 2022), and the realities of coalition governments within many European jurisdictions. Political actors are central to all three studies, but the focus of their attention differs dramatically given key differences in the political context in which they are functioning.

The second is that all three papers point towards bodies of scholarship that are comparative, but the jurisdictional foci for these comparative analyses differs dramatically. As Jungblut and Dobbins ([this volume](#)) note, there has been an increasing international comparative focus to studies of the politics of governance reform in Europe. Common pressures, such as NPM and Bologna, have led to a considerable body of scholarship that looks across national systems in order to understand governance reforms from a comparative perspective, but they also note the important role of transnational pressures, and transnational policy conversations influencing these reforms. The comparative elements within the higher education governance scholarship focusing on Canada and the United States have largely focused on province/state governance arrangements within the federal context of these systems. Shanahan ([this volume](#)) notes the work that she and others have done to compare provincial systems and governance reforms (Eastman et al., 2018; Fisher et al., 2014). Rubin ([this volume](#)) points towards a robust body of scholarship comparing the politics of governance reforms between states. While scholarship in this area has become increasingly international and comparative in Europe, research in the United States and Canada continues to focus primarily on comparative studies within the jurisdiction, and international studies or perspectives are relatively uncommon. Comparative studies focusing on federal systems may be the important exception here, as scholars try to understand the commonalities and differences associated with higher education governance and governance reform within federations (Capano, 2015; Carnoy et al., 2018). One might, however, observe that the scholarship on higher education governance in the United States and Canada has been somewhat more insular than the scholarship within Europe.

The third is the importance of considering the multi-level nature of governance in research on the politics of governance reform. This theme is dealt with quite

explicitly by Shanahan ([this volume](#)) who documents the impact of federal government decisions to modify federal transfers to the provinces and markedly increase federal investments in research and innovation. Lobbying the federal government on research policy has become increasingly important given the magnitude of new investments. Changes in federal policy and strategy have had both direct and indirect implications for governance at both the provincial and institutional levels (Eastman et al., 2019). High levels of institutional autonomy implies that institutions have the capacity for self-governance, and so the politics of governance reform focuses both at the institutional level (involving leaders, internal and external constituencies and stakeholders), as well as provincial governance reforms, frequently involving increasing demands of accountability, new direct agreements between governance and institutions, and regulatory and funding shifts. Rubin ([this volume](#)) notes that the very emergence of state-level coordination was, at least in part, a response to a post-war federal government mandate. The newly elected Biden administration announced national plans for increasing access through some form of student funding arrangement to support tuition-free community college enrolment, changes that, if they had been enacted, would have had enormous implications for the politics of governance reform at the federal, state and institutional levels. The federal government's role in student financial assistance means that it has assumed a key role as "banker" within American higher education, and different governments have used this positioning to further national accountability and regulation mechanisms, especially for the large for-profit private higher education sector (Antonio et al., 2018). Rubin's case study focusing on Nevada, as well as many of the research studies that he reviews, point towards the shifts in governance at state and institutional levels, frequently involving transitions between levels of decentralization and centralization. The fact that Nevada's state coordinating board has been elected reinforces both the realities of multi-level governance, but also the distinctiveness of this political context. Jungblut and Dobbins ([this volume](#)) note the shifting relationships between universities and government within Western Europe as a response to both common, frequently transnational, challenges, but also within unique political context.

It is also interesting to note the sometimes multi-sector nature of multi-level governance, which adds further complexity to our understanding of the politics of higher education governance. While one might argue that the higher education "sector" that defined the boundaries of governance emerging through processes of massification (policies related to system expansion, educational quality, access, student financial assistance, etc.) is now complemented by government policies and funding arrangements focusing on research and innovation. Shanahan's analysis suggests that these policy sectors (one focusing on higher education, one focusing primarily on research) are operating almost in parallel and, within the Canadian federal system, assumed to be the primary responsibility of different levels of government. Somewhat similar sector distinctions can be found within the United States, where statewide governance arrangements focus primarily on addressing the higher education needs of the state, while the federal government continues to play a major role in research funding. One could argue that there are parallels in Europe given the growing importance of the European Research Council (and relevant European

Research Area initiatives), though in some countries national governments have also devoted considerable attention to the research and innovation policy sector, such as the Excellence Initiative in Germany (Götze, 2021). From the perspective of institution-level governance, the political processes and governance arrangements associated with both of these policy sectors are extremely important, especially since both may have steering effects, the two policy streams may sometimes be in tension, or increasing government investments in one sphere may serve to decrease the level of resource dependency on the second. Of course, the politics of research and development is influenced by the relative role of higher education within the national research and innovation system; roughly 42% of all research in Canada was performed by the higher education sector in 2018, compared with 13% in the United States or 18% in Germany (Bégin-Caouette et al., 2021; Finkelstein et al., 2021; Götze, 2021; Jung et al., 2021).

Given these common themes, the three papers point towards elements of both convergence and divergence in the politics of higher education governance reform. One might argue that there are clear elements of convergence associated with governance reforms emphasizing elements of institutional autonomy within the context of state steering and the increasing use of market mechanisms, and the “politics” of these reforms points towards the increasing importance of a wide range of political actors, including key stakeholders, within reform processes. All of these elements have implications for university administrators and institution-level governance. In advocating for the best interests of the university, administrators must carefully navigate within an increasingly complex web of stakeholder interests, while avoiding perceptions of partisanship. Perhaps the greatest defence of institutional autonomy is sound institutional governance, therefore demonstrating the strategic, decision-making capacity of the institution, and countering political perceptions of the need for reform or policy intervention.

Despite these broad elements of convergence, there continue to be very different structures and approaches to higher education governance both between and within the United States, Canada and Western Europe. There is little evidence that these very different systems are heading towards some common model, even though some common elements may be emerging. The politics of higher education governance reform continues to be grounded in the distinctive histories, political structures, and contextual features of each jurisdiction.

Looking across these three papers, there are few signs of convergence in terms of the scholarship on the politics of higher education governance reform. Each of the three papers points towards quite different theoretical foundations and bodies of prior research. There are few common elements, in fact one might conclude that each of the three papers is contributing to a quite distinct scholarly conversation on a relatively common theme.

The Possibilities of Comparative Scholarship

Each of these three chapters contributes to our understanding of the politics of governance reform, and how the study of these political processes and elements have been taken up in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. Each illuminates the distinctive political elements underscoring higher education governance reform in these unique contexts, and of course the review of literature on the increasing comparative nature of scholarship on governance in Western Europe, catalysed in part by common pressures and transnational conversations, illuminates the increasing recognition of distinctive national histories and political contexts within jurisdictions in the region, but also the possibilities associated with drawing from the scholarship of political science to add to the theoretical sophistication of research in this area.

One is left with a clear sense of the possibilities of further comparative scholarship in the analysis of the politics of higher education governance reform across these jurisdictions. What might we learn from a comparative conversation framed by a common conceptual vocabulary and relatively common theoretical foundation? In what ways might more systematic forms of comparative analysis provide us with new ways of understanding or exploring the distinctive contextual elements underscoring these complex political processes? In what ways might further comparative studies in this important areas raise questions or lead to insights that might not have arisen within bodies of scholarship that have focused on the local, national, or regional dimensions?

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Part II
The Politics of Higher Education Finance

Chapter 6

Politics of Higher Education Funding in (Western) Europe – And Beyond



Julian L. Garritzmann

Abstract This chapter provides an overview on higher education (HE) funding in (Western) Europe – and the advanced democracies more generally. The first part of the chapter develops a typology of HE funding and offers a systematic descriptive overview on HE funding in the advanced OECD economies, paying particular attention to Europe. Comparative data is analyzed on public HE expenditure, private expenditure, different kinds of tuition fees, different kinds of financial student aid, and research and development spending. The chapter's second part discusses the existing literature on explanations for differences in HE funding. It points at three sets of determinants: socio-economic structural factors, politico-economic actors, and political institutions. The literature review also identifies several important gaps in the literature. The chapter's third part addresses one of these gaps by shedding new empirical light on public opinion towards HE tuition fees in Europe. Using novel public opinion data, it analyzes attitudes towards different kinds of tuition fees, offering also explanations for citizens' preferences. The final section concludes and points at avenues for future research.

Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor
BAföG	Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz (a federal German higher education law on financial student aid)
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GERD	Gross domestic expenditure on R & D
INVEDUC	Investing in Education in Europe (project and survey)
MA	Master
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

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R & D	Research and Development
UK	“United” Kingdom
U.S.	United States of America
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Introduction

Higher education (HE) funding has enormous social, economic, and political consequences. Different funding models have considerable effects on students’ studying behavior, such as choice of subjects and duration of studies (Archer et al., 2003; Becker & Hecken, 2009; Curs et al., 2007; Dynarski, 1999; McPherson & Schapiro, 1991; Nielsen et al., 2010), and therefore affect socio-economic mobility and inequalities (Ansell, 2010; Busemeyer, 2014; Garritzmann, 2016; Weisstanner & Armingeon, 2018).¹

How and why do the HE funding systems differ across Europe? What are the politics of HE funding? The first part of the paper offers a typology of HE funding as well as a comparative overview on countries’ HE funding systems. Geographically, it focuses on Europe, but draws comparisons to other advanced economies. As the goal is to provide an international perspective, the unit of analysis is the nation state; I hasten to highlight though that often there is substantial and interesting subnational variation, as e.g., analyzed in Garritzmann et al. (2021).

The second part of this chapter seeks to explain this variation. It summarizes research on determinants of HE funding, identifying three sets of explanations: socio-economic structural factors (e.g., economic well-being, type of economy, and level of HE enrollment), political actors (e.g., political parties), and institutions (particularly electoral systems and policy legacies). The section closes by identifying several gaps in the literature, such as the role of public opinion, media, and interest groups in the politics of HE funding in Europe.

In the third part, I address one of these gaps, namely public opinion on HE funding. In democracies, a key question is to what degree policy-makers are responsive to public opinion (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Busemeyer et al., 2020) and – vice versa – to what degree public opinion is shaped by existing policies (Pierson, 2000; Mettler, 2002). Exploiting the “Investing in Education in Europe” (INVEDUC) data, a representative survey in West Europe (Busemeyer et al., 2020, 2018), I analyze attitudes towards HE tuition fees.² What do citizens think about different kinds of tuition models? Why do some citizens accept tuition fees while others oppose them? Which tuition models are more popular and why? The novel empirical analyses answer these and related questions to address a missing puzzle piece in the

¹For helpful comments I thank Jens Jungblut, Ben Jongbloed, Martina Vukasovic, Alexander Mitterle, Chris Pokarier, Sara Diogo, and Zhamilya Mukasheva.

²https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA6961

political economy of HE. The final section concludes and points at avenues for future research.

Higher Education Funding in Western Europe (and Beyond)

HE funding systems differ tremendously across the world. No two countries in the world have the same system. This section first offers a framework to analyze HE funding before it provides a comparative overview on systems of the advanced democracies, with a particular focus on Western Europe.

A Typology of HE Funding

HE funding is a complex phenomenon. In order to systematize this variety, I first develop a typology. Figure 6.1 sketches some of the main dimensions along which HE funding types differ. To begin with, a major distinction has to be made between public and private funding, i.e. the degree to which money comes from governmental or private sources.

Public funding can further be differentiated according to different *sources*, especially different levels of government: besides the central (national/federal) government, several subnational governmental levels can be involved as well as supranational administrations (e.g., the EU). Moreover, public funding can be distributed via different *channels*, i.e. money can be given directly to HE institutions (HEIs), but also to students (i.e. financial student aid) and their families (e.g., via education-related tax deductions or family allowances). Money to HEIs can be

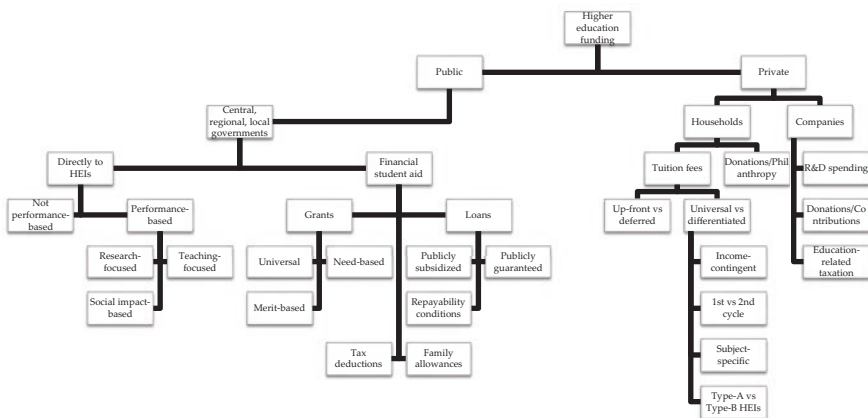


Fig. 6.1 A typology of different types of higher education funding

allocated according to several mechanisms, e.g., on a lump-sum basis, based on student numbers, or performance-based (e.g., regarding graduation rates or research output) (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2011). Financial student aid comes in different forms, for example as grants (that do not have to be paid back) or as loans (which students have to pay back). Moreover, grants and loans are given for different reasons and via different procedures: Grants can be universal, merit-based, or need-based; loans can be publicly subsidized, publicly guaranteed, or privately funded (e.g., by banks or donors) and differ on the terms of repay ability (e.g., after graduation, income contingent, etc.). In short, there are very different ways how public money is spent on HE.

Private funding also comes in different types. First, we need to distinguish spending from *households* and *companies*. Households (i.e. students or their families) can fund HE via tuition fees (or other fees) or via ‘philanthropy’, i.e. private donations to HEIs. In Western Europe, the latter is quite uncommon and the amounts negligible so this source is neglected here. There are different kinds of tuition models, for example some where students pay ‘up-front’ (i.e. before they study) or ‘deferred’ (i.e. after graduation). Moreover, tuition amounts can differ across HEIs (e.g., Type-A versus Type-B institutions), across subjects (e.g., studying medicine is more expensive in some countries), or across individuals (e.g., depending on students’ family background or studying performance). Private companies can fund HE via donations or contracts with HEIs (e.g., ‘dual studies’ in Germany), via research and development (R & D) investments, or indirectly via education-related corporate taxes, to name but some options.

Why Care?

Why is it important how HE is funded? The specifics of the different systems matter because they have strong effects on students’ enrollment and studying behavior, countries’ economic growth and innovation potential, and on inequalities. For example, the level and kind of tuition fees are extremely important for several reasons. For one, tuition fees have large effects on students’ enrollment and studying behavior: Tuition fees deter children from lower socio-economic strata to enroll in (longer) studying programs and more expensive HEIs or to even enroll in the first place (Curs et al., 2007; McPherson & Schapiro, 1991), because they are more risk- and more debt-averse (Archer et al., 2003; Becker & Hecken, 2009), resulting in (persisting) educational and socio-economic inequalities. Moreover, the kind of financial student support available also has large effects, as students from different socio-economic groups respond differently to these incentives (Dynarski, 1999; McPherson & Schapiro, 1991; Nielsen et al., 2010): more generous systems (especially: those that focus on grants rather than loans) have stronger effects on students from lower higher socio-economic strata.

How Do the HE Systems Vary Across Europe?

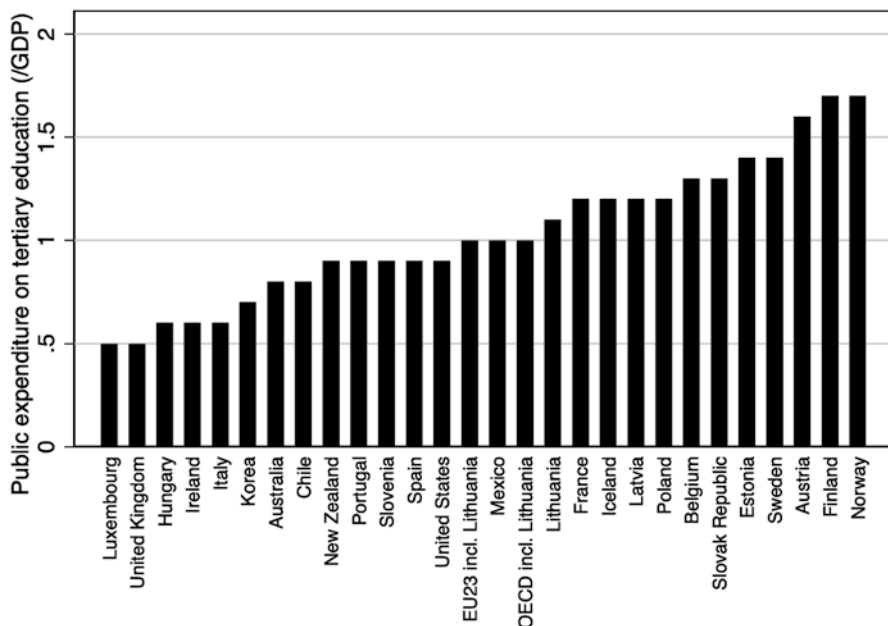
Before presenting empirical information, it first needs to be mentioned that compared to North America (cf. the subsequent chapters), much less systematic information is available for Europe, especially when it comes to time series data. The best comparative data is offered by the OECD (“Education at a Glance”) and the European Commission’s “Eurydice” reports. Yet, even this data is only available for the period since 1995 at best. Often, information is only available for single years and few countries. The World Bank offers some longer time-series data, partly going back to the 1970s, but the measures are less sophisticated and contain many missing values. Comparisons are thus hampered by data availability.

The following overview cannot do justice to the complexity of the existing HE funding systems. Instead, it focuses on a few elements sketched in Fig. 6.1: Regarding public spending, I concentrate on total public expenditure on HE, public expenditure on student aid, and differences between different kinds of financial student aid. Regarding private spending, I analyze total private household expenditure on HE, average annual tuition fees, and the shares of students paying fees. Elsewhere (Garritzmann, 2016) I offer a more detailed overview and analysis of the HE funding systems of 33 OECD countries. As data was partly missing, some countries are not displayed in some graphs.

Total Public HE Expenditure

To start with, Fig. 6.2 plots the level of total public expenditure on tertiary education, i.e. the left branch of Fig. 6.1 without further differentiation. The amounts are divided by countries’ GDP to make them comparable. We observe considerable differences: While some countries’ public HE expenditure amounts exceeds 1.5% of GDP, others remain below 0.5%. The high-spenders are mainly Nordic European countries and Austria, but also several Central and Eastern European countries (especially ICT-focused Estonia). Among the low-spenders we find Southern Europe, but also most Anglo-Saxon countries (the U.S. scores in the middle), and North East Asia (where we partly lack data on this indicator but know from other sources). The two Latin American OECD members also score below- average.

Taken together, we observe a country-ranking that is quite familiar to welfare state scholars (Esping-Andersen, 1990): the inclusive Nordic European welfare states stand out with generous public spending, whereas the Southern European and Anglo-Saxon “residual” welfare states invest much less in HE. The continental European “conservative” welfare states score in the middle.



Source: Author's compilation, based on data by OECD Stats (2019).

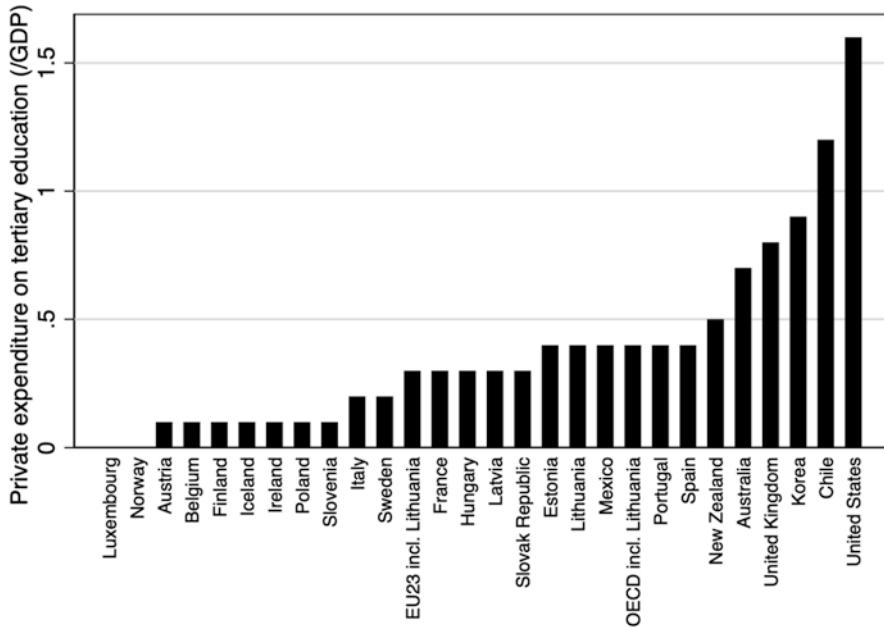
Fig. 6.2 Public expenditure on tertiary education as a share of GDP (2015)

Private HE Spending

We find almost the mirror image regarding private (here: household) expenditure on tertiary education, again as a share of GDP (Fig. 6.3). The Anglo-Saxon countries show high levels, above 0.5 of GDP (except Ireland). The same is true for both Korea and Chile (as well as for Japan, cf. Garritzmann, 2016). At the other extreme, we find all Nordic European and most Continental European countries, where private HE expenditure is low – or even inexistent. Public and private expenditure seem to function as substitutes (Heidenheimer, 1973): while HE is mainly funded by the public in some countries (especially Nordic Europe, but also Europe more generally), private contributions play a much larger role in the Anglo-Saxon countries, in North East Asia, and Latin America.

Average Tuition Amounts

Another way to look at the degree of private households' contribution is average tuition fee amounts. On the one hand, this measure is very interesting, because it is much more concrete and easier to understand than the more abstract total expenditure amounts as a share of GDP. On the other hand, average tuition amounts can be misleading, because they do not show the (partly: massive) variation around the



Source: Author's compilation, based on data by OECD Stats (2019)

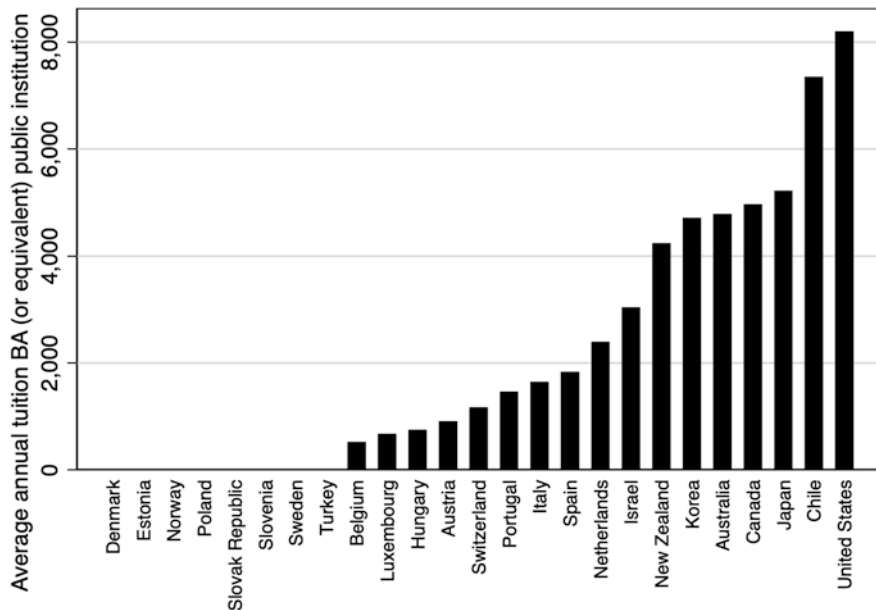
Fig. 6.3 Private expenditure on tertiary education as a share of GDP (2015)

averages. In the U.S., for example, average annual tuition amounts to \$8000 but we know that the individual amounts differ starkly across states, institutions, and individual students.

Figure 6.4 plots the average annual amounts that national BA (or equivalent) students pay at public universities. We find the previous pattern confirmed: Students in the Anglo-Saxon, North East Asian, and Latin American countries on average pay comparatively high amounts (above \$4000), whereas students in Continental and Southern Europe and especially in Nordic Europe study 'free-of-charge'. In general, a common characteristic of the European countries (except England) is thus that they have mainly publicly financed HE systems.

How Many Students Pay?

Figure 6.5 complements these findings by showing the share of students that pay tuition fees, which is relevant to know the distribution of fees. We see marked differences. In Nordic Europe and Scotland, regular national students do not pay tuition fees (there are some fees for students at private institutions, but these are tiny minority). In most Western European countries as well as in some South East European countries most students pay fees – but often low amounts, as shown above. Only some pay in Austria, Germany (information is missing here, but see



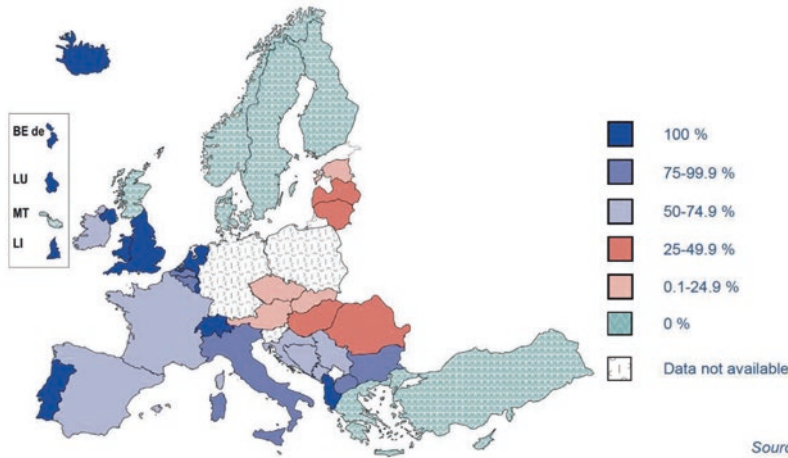
Source: Author's compilation, based on data by OECD (2018: Table C5.1). In a few cases the OECD offers a range rather than a single value (e.g., in Luxembourg "449 to 896") – in these cases I calculated the mean value between the upper and lower bound.

Fig. 6.4 Estimated average annual tuition amounts for full-time national students for a BA (or equivalent) at a public institution (2015/16)

Garritzmann, 2016), the Baltics, the Visegrád countries, and Romania. The reasons for these differentiations differ. In Germany, for example, most students at public HEIs study tuition-free whereas students at some private institutions pay (considerable) fees; the Baltics, in contrast, established a different system, where tuition depends on students' types of studies and grades, so different students at the same institution pay different amounts.

Financial Student Aid

How much do different countries spend on financial student aid? To assess this, Fig. 6.6 shows two different measures: It plots public expenditure on student aid (here: grants and loans) as a share of GDP and as a share of total public HE expenditure. Both measures show that Nordic European and Anglo-Saxon countries spend more on financial student aid than countries of the "conservative" Continental European welfare regime. The Southern European countries, as well as Japan and Chile have the lowest shares of expenditure on financial student aid.



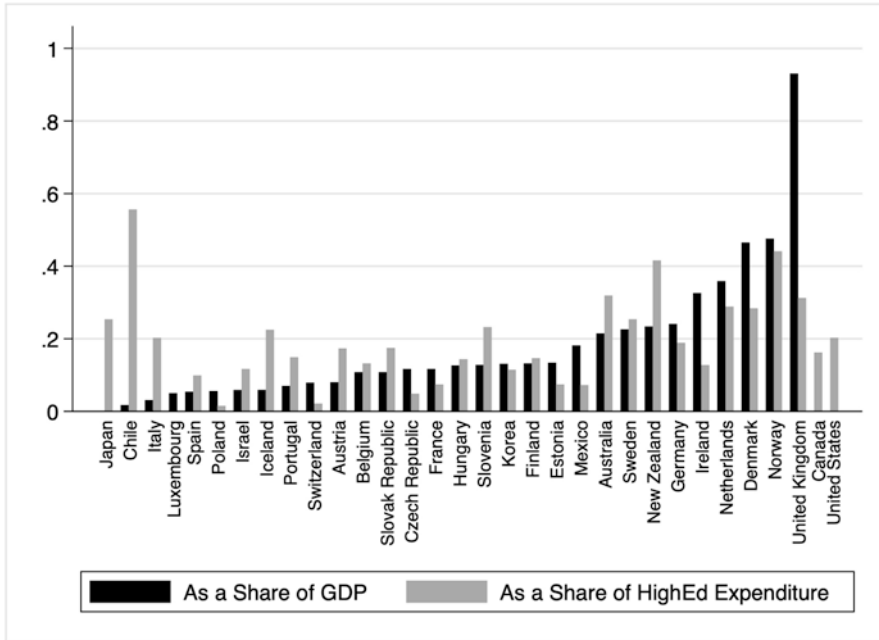
Source: Figure taken from European Commission (2018: Figure 1). Reproduction permission granted.

Fig. 6.5 Share of first-cycle full-time national students paying annual fees above 100€, 2017/18

What Kinds of Financial Aid Do Students Receive?

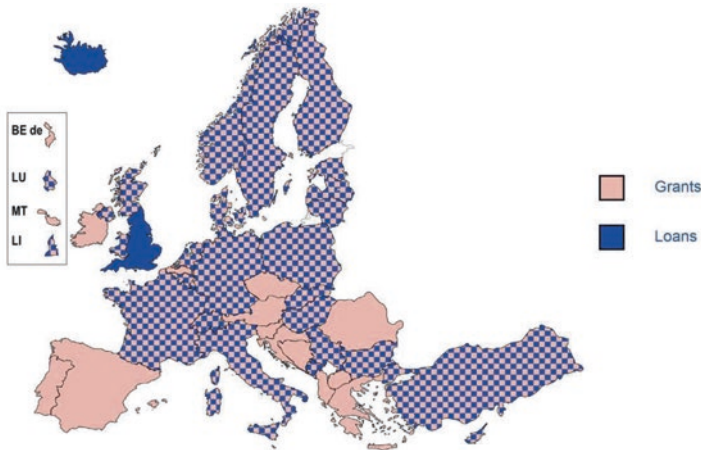
An important further distinction is whether students receive financial student aid in the form of grants (i.e. amounts do not have to be paid back) or as loans (i.e. amounts need to be paid back) – or whether they receive only indirect support via their families (via tax deductions or family allowances). Figure 6.7 shows that in most countries both grants and loans are available. This is not the case, however, in England and Iceland, which focus on loans only, and in Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Austria, the Czech Republic, the Balkans, and Romania, which take a grant-only approach.

Things get even more complicated when we look at different kinds of grants and loans. Figure 6.8 illustrates that the logic and justification of grants is very different across Europe (Chevalier, 2016). In the universalistic Nordic welfare states, grants are universal, i.e. they are not based on students' merits or parental background but all students are eligible (although more recently there are some differentiations between national and foreign students). In most of Southern Europe, Switzerland, Austria, and Scotland, in contrast, grants are purely need-based. A few countries also mainly offer merit-based grants (e.g. Latvia and some Balkan countries). The majority of European countries combines need-based and merit-based grants, often giving one type of grants to needy students and another type of grant to students with the best grades. In Germany, for example, BAföG (which used to be a grant, but is a capped loan nowadays) is need-based depending on parental background whereas programs like the Deutsche Studienstiftung or various other donors reward grants to the top-1% students or to students with outstanding social engagement.



Source: Author’s compilation based on data presented in Garritzmann (2016: Figure 2.4).

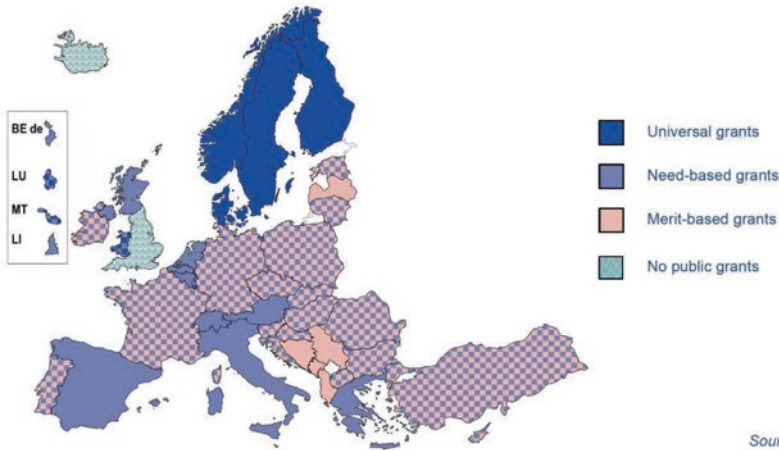
Fig. 6.6 Public expenditure on student aid (as a share of GDP and as a share of total public HE expenditure) (2008)



Source: Eurydice.

Source: Figure taken from European Commission (2018: Figure 8). Reproduction permission granted.

Fig. 6.7 Availability of grants and loans for first-cycle full-time national students (2018/19)



Source: Figure taken from European Commission (2018: Figure 9). Reproduction permission granted.

Fig. 6.8 Main types of grants to first-cycle full-time national students (2018/19)

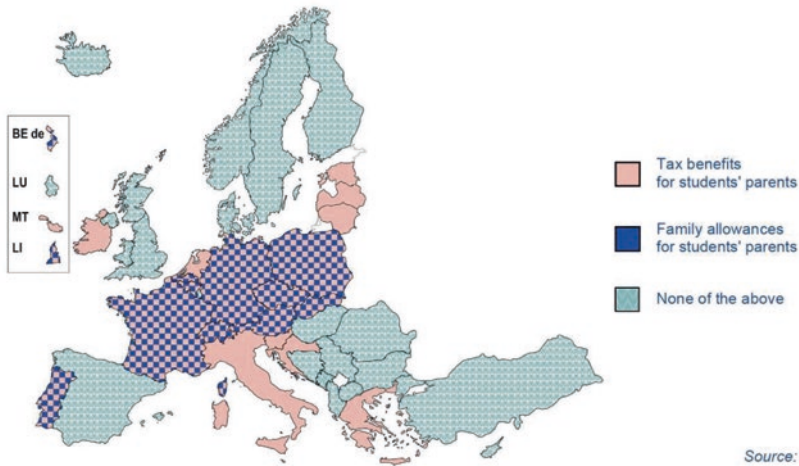
Financial Aid to Students' Families

The schematic sketch of different kinds of HE funding (Fig. 6.1) showed that financial student aid can also run more indirectly through students' families (via tax deductions or family allowances). These types of indirect support are interesting and important for several reasons. First of all, the *de facto* amounts that are distributed to families are often much larger than the amounts granted directly to students. Moreover, their distributive implications differ, as especially tax-deductions favor upper- and middle-class families over lower-income groups. Finally, the normative backings and implications of a family-focused rather than an individual-focused approach are very distinct (Chevalier, 2016).

Figure 6.9 summarizes whether tax benefits and/or family allowances are available to students' families. We observe a clear pattern: While family-focused student aid is absent in Nordic Europe, the UK, Spain, and most of South Eastern Europe, it is highly common especially in the Continental European conservative welfare states. Here, many students rely on their families' financial resources to finance their studies, as other forms of student aid (grants and loans) are available to a much lower extent as the previous figures demonstrated.

R & D Expenditure

Before concluding the descriptive overview, I want to quickly shed light on another important form of HE funding, i.e. research and development (R & D) expenditure. R & D expenditure can come from both public and private sources and – as shown



Source: Figure taken from European Commission (2018: Figure 14). Reproduction permission granted.

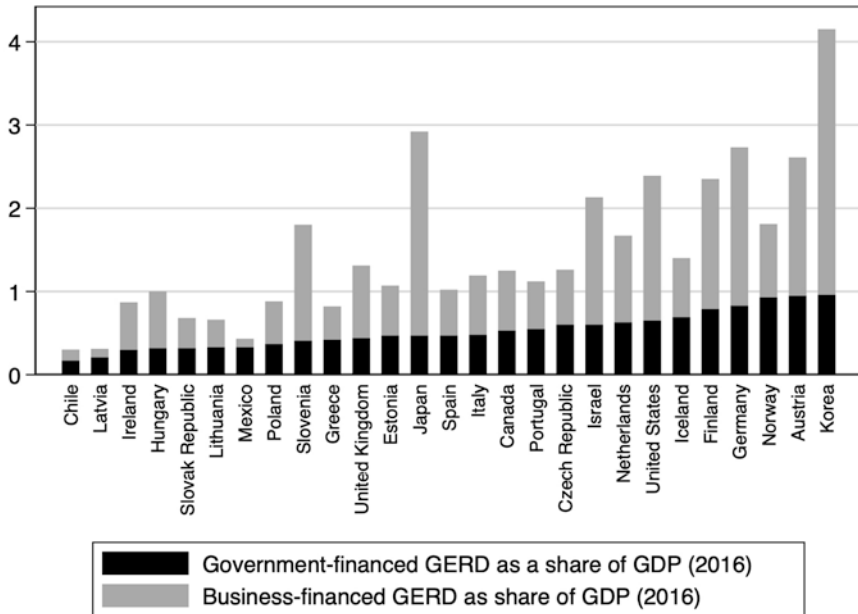
Fig. 6.9 Financial support for students' parents (2018/19)

below – add up to substantial amounts. Given space constraints, I again focus on a very simple and stylized summary by only showing a single indicator: In Fig. 6.10 we see the public and private R & D expenditures as a share of GDP. To be sure, not all of this spending goes to HE (as there also is a lot of research outside of the HE sector), but it can be an important funding source for HEIs, particularly for schools of applied sciences and for specific subjects (e.g., STEM), which is why I included it here.

Figure 6.10 shows that the differences in government-financed gross domestic expenditure on R & D (GERD) are actually rather minor compared to the differences in the private sector. While there are differences between high-spending Korea, Austria, Norway, and Germany, on the one hand, and low-spending Chile, Latvia, Ireland, and Hungary, on the other hand, the differences in private investment are much more substantial. The largest relative amounts are seen in North East Asia (Korea and Japan), followed by Germany, the U.S., Austria, Finland, and Israel.

Summary: Different Worlds of HE Funding

To sum up, this section illustrated how the HE funding systems differ considerably across countries. We found that public and private expenditure seemed to function as substitutes. Moreover, the types of financial student aid systems differed starkly, with some countries spending much more than others; some focusing more on grants, others more on loans; and some taking a more individual-focused perspective whereas in some others families play a much larger role.

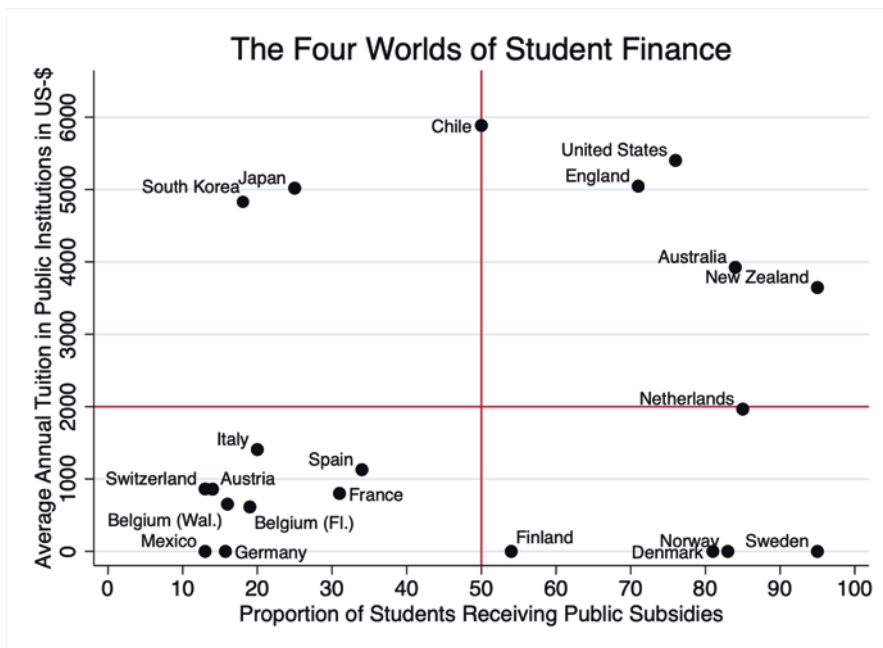


Source: Author’s compilation based on OECD Stats (2019), cf. the “Main Science and Technology Indicators” (<https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00182-en>). This data needs to be analyzed with caution, as the definition of the spending categories differs to some degree between countries and as some values are based on estimations (see the primary source for details).

Fig. 6.10 Government- and business-financed gross domestic expenditure of R & D (GERD) as a share of GDP (2016)

Elsewhere (Garritzmann, 2015, 2016, 2017) I proposed to summarize this complex variation by distinguishing four types of systems: The Four Worlds of Student Finance. To illustrate this, Fig. 6.11 plots the share of students benefitting from public subsidies (grants and loans) against average annual tuition amounts. We can arrive at a very similar clustering when using many more variables and complexity-reducing methods, such as cluster analyses or principle component analyses (Garritzmann, 2016: Chapter 2).

- In some countries students study tuition-free and receive substantial student support: The Low-Tuition High-Subsidy model. This is mainly the case in Nordic Europe.
- North East Asian and several Latin American countries show the opposite constellation, i.e. they have considerable tuition fees, but sparse public support systems: The High-Tuition Low-Subsidy Model.
- In the Anglo-Saxon countries, private spending is also considerable, but students can also rely on a range of financial student aid programs. This is the High-Tuition High-Subsidy world.



Source: Author's compilation based on Garritzmann (2016: Figure 2.8).

Fig. 6.11 The four worlds of student finance

- In Continental Europe, finally, students study free of charge, but also are hardly supported in their studies financially, and often have to rely on their families or jobs to finance their studies: The Low-Tuition Low-Subsidy cluster.

Put differently, while the European countries are distinct from North and South American as well as North East Asian countries by their reliance on public funding and limited role of private expenditure, there are still considerable differences within Europe, as, for example, some countries (especially Nordic Europe) support students financially much more than others (Continental and Southern Europe), and as the types of student support systems vary, with more focus on the individual in Nordic, Southern, and Eastern Europe, and more focus on the students' families in Continental Europe.

What Explains Differences in HE Funding in Europe?

How can we explain the substantial differences across countries? And – focusing on Europe – why do most European countries have very low private contributions to HE and differ in their financial student aid systems? How can we explain the different funding regimes?

In the following, I discuss the existing country-comparative literature on these questions. To start with, it needs emphasis that – compared to the broad literature on North America (cf. the subsequent chapters) – there is much less work Europe, partly because of lack of comparative data. This is true for education policy in general (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2011; Iversen & Stephens, 2008) and for HE funding in particular (Ansell, 2010; Garritzmann, 2016). Moreover, most of the comparative literature focuses on total (public or private) education spending (e.g., Boix, 1998; Busemeyer, 2006; Castles, 1989, 1998; Jensen, 2011; Potrafke, 2011) and often does not focus on HE in particular (but see: Ansell, 2008, 2010; Busemeyer, 2006, 2009; Garritzmann, 2016; Garritzmann & Seng, 2016; Iversen & Stephens, 2008; Wolf & Zohlnhöfer, 2009), let alone offer a systematic analysis of the single components highlighted in the descriptive overview above. For example, to my knowledge only one study (Garritzmann, 2016) has analyzed determinants of financial student aid across countries, identifying parties and their respective sequence and duration in office as the key explanation.

Most of the comparative studies analyze (public) expenditure from the perspective of welfare state research or from a varieties of capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001) perspective. Following this literature, I discuss the findings along the established ‘schools’ of welfare state research: First, I summarize findings on ‘socio-economic factors’, second those on ‘political and economic actors’, and third literature on the role of ‘institutions’. Compared to work in the U.S. that has focused on median voter models and the role of interest groups (cf. the subsequent chapters), the European-focused literature has placed particular emphasis on the role of governing parties, as well as on structural factors. These factors will thus be discussed in more length, before I highlight some shortcomings in the literature.

Can Socio-economic Factors Explain HE Funding?

A first group of explanations of (higher) education expenditure are socio-economic factors. First of all, *demographics* matter: Several scholars have argued that a country’s age profile affects its education spending, as countries with a higher share of youth simply have higher need for educational investments. Busemeyer et al. (2009) and Iversen and Stephens (2008) found this to be the case for HE, as older societies tend to have lower public investment.

A second, related factor is the share of students attending HE, i.e. the *enrollment rate*. Ansell (2010) and Busemeyer (2006) found that public HE expansion is higher the larger the share of a country’s generation attending college. As enrollment in HE is growing in countries around the globe (Lee & Lee, 2016), this is a core explanation why HE budgets are also increasing. Wolf and Zohlnhöfer (2009) found a cross-sectional association also for private HE expenditure. A related important factor is the *balance between academic HE and vocational education and training* (VET). Some countries (e.g., Austria, Germany, or Denmark) have very strong and prominent dual apprenticeship VET systems, in which – at least historically – the

majority of students was enrolled, rather than attending academic HE. Schmidt (2002) identified this as a main reason for Germany's low (higher) education expenditure.

A third important factor is *structural economic and technological change*, especially the respective size of countries' agrarian, industrial, and service sectors. As countries deindustrialize and develop into service-oriented knowledge economies, their demand for (higher) skills also increases, again enhancing demand for social investment in general, and (higher) education expenditure in particular (Jensen, 2011). This trend is closely related to the increasing *share of women entering the labor market*. Women can benefit from (higher) education expenditure in several respects, as traditionally main caregivers, as laborers, and as students. In line with this, the female employment rate is positively related to (higher) education expenditure (Busemeyer, 2006, 2009), as is the share of women in parliament (Iversen & Stephens, 2008). On the demand-side, however, women favor social investments focused on skill *preservation* and *mobilization* rather than additional skill *creation* policies (Garritzmann & Schwander, 2021).

Modernization theorists and many economists claim that as countries become wealthier, they have larger fiscal discretion and use these funds to increase public expenditure, (higher) education being one of the areas (one version of 'Wagner's law'). The empirical evidence, however, is mixed. While some (e.g., Iversen & Stephens, 2008) found *GDP per capita* to be negatively related to HE expenditure, others detect no effects (e.g., Ansell, 2010; Garritzmann & Seng, 2016). There is more consistent evidence that HE expenditure follows countries' general level of total public spending: as countries' total public spending increases their HE budget also tends to grow (Busemeyer & Garritzmann, 2017; Garritzmann & Seng, 2016). Moreover, higher total public spending seems related to lower private HE spending (Wolf & Zohnhöfer, 2009).

A very prominent argument, especially among normative theoretical economists is the assumption that private HE expenditure increases in times of mounting *public debt and recessions*. Johnstone (2003, 2009, 2011; Johnstone & Marcucci, 2010), Jongbloed (2004), and Vossensteyn (2009), for example, make this type of argument, expecting tuition rises in higher debt countries. And indeed, Garritzmann (2016) found some support for this, as private expenditure seems to rise following public debt (both in levels and yearly changes).

Globalization has been identified as a final important socio-economic factor. Boix (1998), Iversen and Stephens (2008), and Busemeyer (2006, 2009) argued that more open economies are likely to spend more on (higher) education. Busemeyer and Garritzmann (2017, 2018) provided a micro-logic for this relationship, showing that in globalizing economies, citizens tend to demand more educational investments (trying to avoid unemployment by updating their skills). Empirically, however, the evidence is mixed: Busemeyer (2006) and Iversen and Stephens (2008) found trade openness to be positively related to HE expenditure, whereas Busemeyer and Garritzmann (2017) did not find effects, resulting in an interesting puzzle: Globalization and the development towards knowledge economies might increase

public demand for HE spending, but it does not automatically also lead to de facto higher spending.

In sum, several crucial socio-economic factors have been employed to explain variation in HE funding, pointing at important relationships. A key challenge for this literature remains the identification of causal relationships, as the identified not only shape education policy, but are (at least partly) also shaped by education policy. Endogeneity is thus a key challenge for this stream of research.

How Do Political and Economic Actors Affect HE Funding?

A number of political, economic, and social actors could affect HE funding. The bulk of existing (political science) literature has focused on the role of parties. Most studies have argued that (higher) education resembles other social policies and accordingly developed similar expectations: In line with Power Resource Theory (Korpi, 1983; Stephens, 1979), *leftwing parties* should favor public education spending because education can contribute to socio-economic upward mobility and equality of opportunities (Busemeyer, 2006, 2007; Castles, 1989, 1998; Hega & Hokenmaier, 2002; Iversen & Stephens, 2008; Potrafke, 2011; Schmidt, 2002, 2007). Moreover, Boix (1998) argued that the center-left's interest in education should even increase over time, as globalization renders demand-side economics inefficient and forces them to use supply-side mechanisms, education being an important one. Busemeyer et al. (2009) added that especially Social Democrats might become increasingly focused on (higher) education over time, as they try to stretch out to new electorates, especially the educated middle class. Iversen and Stephens (2008) and Busemeyer (2006, 2009), among others, reported support for this thesis, as public HE expenditure was found to be higher among leftwing governments.

At the same time, however, HE has several characteristics that render the party politics of public and private funding more complicated. The main reason is that in all advanced democracies access to HE is dependent on parental background: The children of higher socio-economic groups are much more likely to attend college than those of poorer and less educated groups (Becker & Hecken, 2009). Moreover, we know that students from higher-SES backgrounds are more likely to study in longer and more prestigious programs, making them the core benefit group of HE. An important consequence is that public spending on HE (especially when spent directly on HEIs and not via student aid) can be financially regressive rather than progressive, i.e. leading to redistribution towards higher groups, as public tax money is spent on a public good that is more likely to benefit higher strata (Fernandez & Rogerson, 1995; Le Grand, 1982). In fact, Karl Marx was – exactly because of these arguments – an opponent of public spending on HE and favored considerable tuition fees: “When in some countries HEIs are ‘free-of-charge,’ this only means covering the rich offspring’s education costs from public tax coffers” (Marx, 1973 [1890/1891]; my translation). Against this background, some argued that it is not

the political left, but rather the *political right* that favors public expenditure on HE (Jensen, 2011).

More recent studies tried to disentangle the complex redistributive dynamics and partisan politics in this complex policy field: Ansell (2008, 2010) argued that the question whether the left or the right favors HE expenditure can be resolved by considering the level of enrollment in HE. He argues that as long as enrollment levels are comparatively low, rightwing parties are the main proponent of public expenditure on HE – and leftwing parties proponents of tuition fees – because their respective electorates are likely (unlikely) to benefit from HE. Yet, as soon as the enrollment level increases, the left’s interest in HE should increase and the right’s support of additional spending should decrease, as the left now sees – and the right fears – a reasonable chance of their electorate benefitting from HE. In sum, Ansell (2008, 2010) argues that partisan effects are *conditional on the respective enrollment level*.

While these arguments are highly plausible and convincing, I argued (Garritzmann, 2016, 2017) that the politics of HE funding de facto are even more complex. This is so because of the *different types of HE funding* differentiated in Fig. 6.1. While Marx’ and Ansell’s analysis are generally spot-on, their arguments are mainly true for public expenditure directly to HEIs (i.e. the very left branch of Fig. 6.1). Yet, there are many other ways to distribute public funding, most importantly financial student aid. My analysis of 33 OECD countries over the entire post-war period shows that the left in essentially all countries has always tried to focus expenditure on financial student aid (particularly: grants) to facilitate equality of opportunities in HE. The right, in contrast, has often opposed student aid, or – if they had to accept them – pushed for loans instead of grants, and for family-based tax deductions and child allowances rather than grants, as – again – their traditional constituency is more likely to benefit from these kinds of spending.

The differences between countries’ HE funding systems can then be explained by looking at the respective partisan composition of government, and the duration of parties in office (Garritzmann, 2016, 2017): When the left has dominated post-war politics, as for example in Nordic Europe, they installed generous financial student aid, abolished tuition fees, increased public HE funding, and kept the private sector at a minimum. When, in contrast, rightwing parties dominated politics (e.g., Japan or Chile) financial student aid remained minimal, public HE expenditure remained focused on a few elite colleges, and countries witnessed the raise of the private, tuition-dependent sector. In a third group of countries (depicted in the bottom-left corner in Fig. 6.11), left governments ruled for some time, but were not in office long enough to establish their preferences. Once the right came back to office, they retrenched generous student aid, and returned to countries’ low-tuition low-subsidy rather-low tuition historical starting point. This retrenchment was possible, because the left’s generous subsidies had not yet generated strong positive feedback effects in public opinion and society at large (on public opinion more specifically, cf. the section “[Public Opinion on Tuition Fees](#)” below). In a final scenario, the left ruled longer and did manage to establish financial student aid stabilized by positive feedback effects – here, the right was unable to retrench these

policies and switched towards support of tuition fees to equip HEIs with sufficient funding to deliver their high quality. In short, my *Time-Sensitive Partisan Theory* argues that a combination of government partisan composition and government duration can explain differences in HE funding (Garritzmann, 2015, 2016, 2017).

While political parties have received considerable attention, the European-focused literature has shed much less light on the role of *organized interest groups* and the *social partners* (i.e. employer associations and unions) in HE funding. In fact, I am not aware of a single comparative study that has included information on interest groups or social partners as an explanation of HE funding. Iversen and Stephens (2008) come the closest to this by looking at the number of working days lost due to strikes (which could be interpreted as a measure of unions' strength), but this is a rather indirect test. In contrast to the U.S. literature, where the role of interest groups (e.g., teacher unions) is a core element of the analysis, it remains a neglected field in the European literature. A straightforward reason for this might be that interest groups and social partners might play a much smaller role in HE funding in Europe. The main reason for this is that – at least historically – they used to have a rather minor interest in HE, as the social partners largely concentrated on the non-academic part of post-secondary education, i.e. vocational education and training (Thelen, 1999, 2004; Culpepper, 2011).

Institutions and HE Funding

A third prominent group of explanations has pointed at the role of political institutions, in particular electoral systems and federalism, as well as policy legacies. Building on a standard political economy model (Iversen & Soskice, 2006), Busemeyer and Iversen (2014) argued that the type of *electoral system* could explain the level of education spending. The core argument is that majoritarian and proportional representation systems produce different types of majorities: While majoritarian systems make center-right coalitions between middle-class and upper-class voters more likely, proportional representation systems are more likely to produce center-left coalitions (Iversen & Soskice, 2006). Given these arguments and the findings about party politics summarized above, Busemeyer and Iversen (2014) reasoned that majoritarian systems might be related to higher private education spending, while proportional representation systems should exhibit lower private spending. While the authors did not study HE spending, one could extend the argument in this direction. Empirically, however, the evidence is far from clear. Höhmann and Tober (2018) and Döring and Manow (2015) challenged the notion that electoral systems are systematically related to a specific coalition types, and Garritzmann (2016: 14) discussed a range of country cases that do not fit the assumed pattern.

Others pointed at the role of *federalism*, arguing that private HE spending should be higher in federalized countries (Wolf & Zohlnhöfer, 2009). Yet again, the evidence is less clear: While some prominent federations like the U.S., Canada, or Australia have large private contributions, several European federal countries

(Germany, Switzerland, Belgium) show comparatively low private spending. The link between federalism and HE funding thus at least is more complex than assumed by some initial studies. One reason is that decentralization is probably more important than federalism and the correlation between the two rather weak (Garritzmann et al., 2021).

There is much more agreement on the role of *policy legacies*, i.e. pre-existing policies. Several scholars have argued and found – in line with historical institutionalism – that countries’ policy development largely is path dependent, i.e. there are hardly any examples of radical change in the type of HE funding, but rather slow-moving gradual change. In comparative quantitative analyses this can be seen in the large and consistent effects of ‘lagged dependent variables’, for example in the studies by Busemeyer (2006) and Garritzmann (2016: 254). For a recent review of the literature see Garritzmann and Garritzmann (2023, forthcoming). More generally, this literature has shown that and why countries’ (higher) education systems are resilient, despite arguments about the potentially harmonizing effect of globalization or ‘world society’ arguments.

Brief Summary and Shortcoming of the Existing Literature

The discussion of the existing literature on HE funding in Western Europe (and the OECD countries) showed that – compared to North America – the size of the existing literature is much smaller and the number of established facts still lower. Most existing studies have focused on socio-economic structural factors, such as characteristics of countries’ economies, educational enrollment levels, and demographics. In terms of political actors, the focus has been on governing political parties. Moreover, some studies have analyzed the role of political institutions (producing largely controversial results) and of policy legacies (showing that the HE systems seem largely path dependent).

Several potentially important factors have not been analyzed yet. Most importantly, – again in contrast to the literature on North America – we still know surprisingly little about the role of public opinion for education policy in general (but see Busemeyer et al., 2020) and particularly in HE funding, which is surprising as it is a key explanatory factor in public policy research on democratic systems. In democratic polities, a key assumption is that policy-makers are and should be at least to some degree responsive to public opinion. Vice versa, we would also want to know more about potential “policy feedback effects” (Pierson, 2000; Mettler, 2002), i.e. how policies shape public opinion.

While much literature in the U.S. has applied median voter models to HE funding (cf. the subsequent chapters), no comparative study has investigated the role of public opinion in Europe. There might be two main reasons for this. Theoretically, given that most European countries have proportional representation multiparty systems characterized by multidimensional party competition, the link between public opinion and policy is much less straightforward than in North America’s

majoritarian party systems. Empirically, moreover, we simply lack comparative time-series data on the public's preference on (higher) education (Busemeyer et al., 2020, 2018; Busemeyer & Garritzmann, 2021). But public opinion can be a crucial factor in shaping HE policy, as it can shape and constrain policy-makers' room-for-manuever (Garritzmann, 2016). I seek to contribute some new insights here by analyzing public opinion on HE funding in the subsequent section.

Public Opinion on Tuition Fees

One major gap in the existing (European-focused) literature on HE funding are analyses of public opinion. We do not know a lot about citizens' attitudes towards education policy in general and towards HE (funding) in particular. What do citizens want when it comes to HE funding? What kind of funding do they prefer? How can we explain the respective preferences? Are people's preferences mainly driven by their self-interest, their values and ideological standpoints, or by the institutional contexts they live in?

I seek to answer some of these questions for the case of attitudes towards HE tuition fees. I will offer new insights by exploiting a new representative public opinion survey of eight West European countries (Busemeyer et al., 2020, 2018).³ I proceed as follows: In the next section, I briefly discuss the existing studies on attitudes towards (higher) education policy in Europe. Based on these studies and the literature discussed above, I then develop several theoretical expectations about public opinion on HE tuition fees. Afterwards, I introduce the data, present results, and conclude.

Attitudes Towards HE Policy: Existing Work and Theoretical Expectations

Public opinion on education policy has for a long time been a neglected field in Europe (Busemeyer et al., 2020, 2018; Busemeyer & Garritzmann, 2021). One probable reason is the lack of comparative survey data on education policy. The common comparative public opinion surveys such as the European Social Survey, the International Social Survey Program, or the Eurobarometer, hardly include questions on education policy. If questions are included, these remained very general and abstract, i.e. asking whether citizens in general would like to see more public expenditure on education. Accordingly, no comparative study has investigated people's attitudes and preferences towards HE tuition fees.

³https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA6961

While we lack studies on public opinion towards tuition fees, a few recent studies analyzed attitudes towards other aspects of education policies, especially towards public education spending (Ansell, 2010; Busemeyer et al., 2009; Busemeyer, 2012; Busemeyer & Iversen, 2014; Busemeyer & Jensen, 2012; Estevez-Abe et al., 2001) and towards financial aid for HE students (Ansell, 2010; Garritzmann, 2015). The main finding of these studies is that attitudes and preferences are shaped by three groups of factors: Firstly, *materialistic self-interest* matters: Beneficiaries of education spending, i.e. students and pupils, favor public education spending (Busemeyer, 2012; Busemeyer & Iversen, 2014), particularly on financial student aid (Garritzmann, 2015). Those paying for these benefits, i.e. taxpayers, are more likely to oppose increases in education spending (ibid.). Likewise, support for additional public education spending decreases with income when this spending is redistributive, i.e. for example in the form of financial student aid (Ansell, 2010; Garritzmann, 2015).

A second important group of determinants are people's *values and norms*, particularly their ideological standpoints. Leftwing voters and people who demand more redistribution are much more supportive of public education spending (on HE) than rightwing voters and opponents of redistribution (Ansell, 2008, 2010; Busemeyer, 2014; Garritzmann, 2015). In line with this, a detailed analysis of Switzerland (Busemeyer et al., 2011) found that preferences towards the relationship between public and private education spending are best explained by citizens' ideological positions: Left-oriented individuals demand larger spending from the public and from the business sector, but smaller contributions from students. Right-leaning respondents, in contrast, favor lower public but higher private contributions. These findings are also in line with the models by Ansell (2010) and Garritzmann (2016) who argue that (in today's 'mass education systems') leftwing voters oppose tuition fees and rightwing voters support tuition fees, as discussed above.

Finally, *contexts* matter, particularly characteristics of the education systems that people were socialized in. In the U.S. that the type of education spending has remarkable effects on students' preferences and political behavior (Mettler, 2002). Busemeyer et al. (2011) found that individuals growing up in Swiss cantons where vocational (vis-à-vis academic) education plays an important role also are more supportive of vocational education. And Garritzmann (2015) discovered that public support for financial student aid is much higher in countries with already generous student support systems. These authors argue that these associations emerge because the existing educational institutions shape people's attitudes, in line with Pierson's (Pierson, 2000) arguments on positive feedback effects.

Against this background, we can derive the expectation that people's attitudes towards tuition fees are also likely to be shaped by a combination of materialistic self-interest, political attitudes, and macro-level feedback-effects. I expect:

H1: Students and parents are more likely to oppose tuition fees, as they bear the direct costs. But opposition to tuition fees decreases for richer individuals.

H2: Leftwing voters and supporters of redistribution are more likely to oppose tuition fees.

H3: Public support for tuition is larger in countries with established tuition fees.

What explains what different *kinds of tuition fees* that people prefer? On this question, we have even less empirical knowledge, as – to my knowledge – this has not been studied yet, even though it has been an important political and social debate in many countries. Thus, I start by outlining three ideal-typical tuition models that people could support/oppose (and which we included in our survey):

- an *universalistic* model, where all students have to pay,
- an *income-based* tuition model, where tuition amounts depend on students’ or their families’ financial situation,
- a *performance-based* tuition model, where tuition amounts depend on their school performance, e.g., on grades (usually in secondary education).

Which factors shape people’s preferences towards these three models? While I lack the space to develop a full-fledged theory here, I expect that citizens’ preferences are closely related to their materialistic self-interest and their view on fairness and redistribution. I thus expect:

H4: The poorer and the more supportive a respondent is of redistribution, the more likely (s)he is to support income-related tuition fees and to oppose performance-based tuition.

H5: Public preferences are likely to mirror the respective countries’ tuition systems, i.e. in systems where universal, income-dependent, or performance-based tuition fees are established, public support is higher for the respective systems.

Research Design

Empirically, I rely on a public opinion survey that we conducted in eight West European countries in 2014: the INVEDUC survey (Busemeyer et al., 2020, 2018).⁴ We selected two countries from each “World of Welfare” (Esping-Andersen, 1990) Sweden and Denmark as Scandinavian welfare states, Germany and France as conservative welfare states, Italy and Spain as Southern European ‘residual’ welfare states, and the UK and Ireland as the closest examples of liberal welfare states in Western Europe. The countries also vary considerably with regard to their tuition-regimes as discussed above (Garritzmann, 2016): Scandinavia remains tuition-free (with the partial exception of students from non-EFTA countries), the continental and Southern European countries have either no or only comparatively low tuition fees, whereas tuition is very high in England (Ireland lies somewhere between these two). In each of the eight countries, we surveyed a representative sample of 1000–1500 individuals (aged 18–99); overall 8905 persons participated. The survey was conducted in the spring of 2014 via computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) by a professional survey-institute. The average response rate was comparatively high (30%) and a comparison to the high-quality ESS data does not reveal any

⁴https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA6961

significant differences, underlining the high data quality and the representativeness. Technical details are discussed in Busemeyer et al. (2020, 2018).

The following question captures respondents' preferences towards tuition fees in general: *"In Europe in some countries universities charge tuition fees, in other countries they do not. Independent of the policy in your country what do you think? Should the government allow universities to charge tuition fees?"*. Respondents could answer "yes" and "no", as well as "don't know" and "no answer". A disadvantage of the framing of the question is that it does not provide information on the level (amounts) of tuition that respondents would prefer; thus, some might think about, for example, 500€ while others imagine 12,000€ or more. Nonetheless, this question framing seemed reasonable and best-fitting because otherwise a much more detailed question (explaining the status quo in the respective countries) or several questions would have been needed, considerably complicating the question framing and making comparability across countries impossible.

Subsequently, we confronted those who had answered affirmatively to this first question with a follow-up: *"Who should have to pay tuition fees?"*. Here, we offered three answer categories to cover the three ideal-typical tuition models: "students whose parents have a high income" (the income-related model), "students with low and average grades" (the performance-based model), or "all students" (the universalistic model). Moreover, two residual categories were included: "don't know" and "no answer".⁵

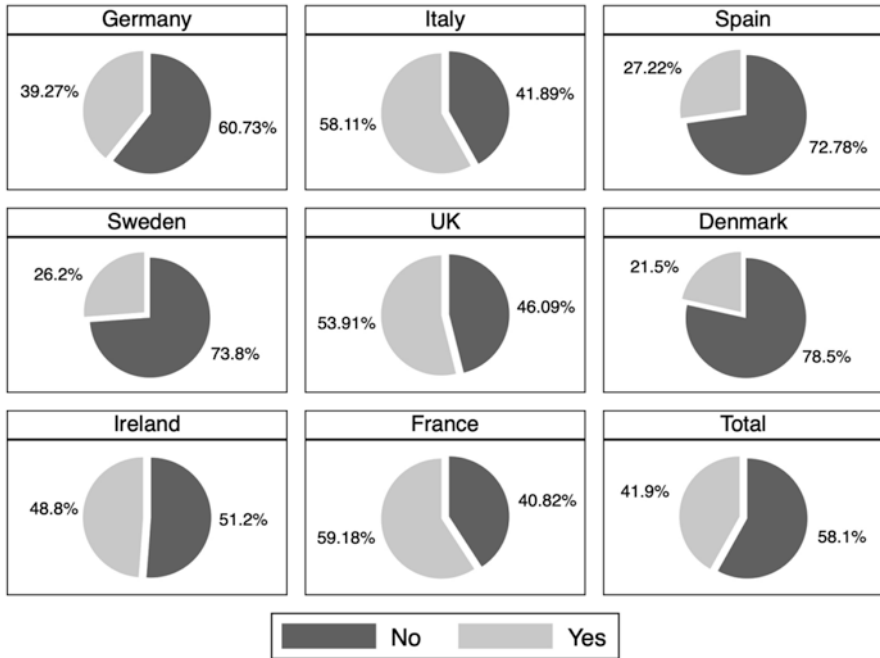
Next, I first discuss simple descriptive statistics before turning to determinants using multiple regressions: First, I analyze determinants of support/opposition of tuition fees, applying logistic regressions. Subsequently, I analyze answers to the second question, using multinomial models. As the number of cases on the macro-level (countries) is too small ($N_j = 8$) for multilevel modeling, I include country fixed-effects to control for country differences and compute country-clustered robust standard errors.

Descriptive Findings: Support and Opposition of Tuition Fees

Figure 6.12 provides an overview of answers to the question whether respondents think the government should allow universities to charge tuition fees.⁶ A first noteworthy result is that – in contrast assumption about tuition fees being extremely

⁵Whereas the latter three answer categories were exclusive, the two former ones were not (i.e. respondents could be in favor of tuition for children from high income families *and* for grade-related tuition). While this makes sense theoretically, it complicates the empirical analysis methodologically because discrete choice regression models assume explicit categories. In order to deal with this problem, we dropped those respondents who ticked multiple boxes in the multinomial models for the sake of simplicity. This seems reasonable, as these are just 59 respondents.

⁶All descriptive statistics are computed including survey weights, while they are excluded in the regression analysis (cf. the discussion in Busemeyer et al. 2020, 2018).



Source: Author’s compilation based INVEDUC data as discussed in the text.

Fig. 6.12 Should the government allow universities to charge tuition fees?

unpopular – it is *not* the case that everyone opposes tuition fees. In the pooled sample (shown in the bottom right of Fig. 6.12), public opinion is rather split between supporters (40%) and opponents (56%) of tuition fees. Whereas the fee-opponents constitute a majority, the group of supporters is not much smaller. It also deserves mentioning that only a very small proportion of the respondents state a non-response (4%), indicating that many people seem to have clear and explicit preferences on tuition fees.

Figure 6.12 also reveals remarkable differences across countries: In the two Nordic European countries, the most generous “Worlds of Student Finance” (Garritzmann, 2016) a large majority of the respondents oppose to tuition fees: 79% in Denmark and 74% in Sweden. This is clearly in line with the theoretical expectations that preferences differ by contexts (Hypothesis 3), although empirically I am unable to clarify the direction of causality here.

In contrast to Scandinavia, a majority of the respondents in the UK, Italy, and France support tuition fees. Again, this is fully in line with the theoretical expectations: I hypothesized that in countries where tuition fees have been well established, people will be much more likely to support them. Again, the data does not allow causal claims, but the empirical patterns are clearly in line with this expectation. Ideally, even more detailed questions would be available, asking respondents more

specifically about the *level of* tuition fees they would prefer. While I cannot prove this empirically here, my expectation would be that we would find acceptance of much higher levels in the UK (particularly England) than in Italy and France, where some, but considerably lower tuition fees are charged, as shown above.

Germany and Spain (and Ireland) fall somewhere in between these two ideal-typical groups: In Spain, a large majority opposes tuition fees and the pattern looks rather similar to the Scandinavian countries. This is somewhat surprising, given that students in Spain also have to pay some, but only modest tuition fees (as in Italy and France). It might be the case here that this large opposition to fees is partly driven by the time point (in 2014) during the Great Recession. In Germany, about 60% of the surveyed population opposes tuition fees. Germany is a very interesting case regarding tuition fees, because this topic featured very prominently on the political agenda between about 2003 and 2010 and was one of the most salient topics in many *Länder*-elections with strong party political differences (Garritzmann, 2016; Krause, 2008). Yet, tuition fees were highly unpopular in public opinion so that all conservative-led governments either lost subsequent elections or had to alter their positions after a referendum (Garritzmann, 2016). As a result, Germany nowadays is tuition-free again (except for a few private HEIs).

In sum, the data shows two ideal-typical country-groups: One in which (considerable) tuition fees are charged and public opinion is largely in favor of fees; and one in which students study free-of-charge, backed by large majorities of tuition-free HE. Two countries (Germany and Spain) fall in between these ideal-types for the discussed reasons.

Descriptive Findings: Who Should Pay?

Who should pay tuition? Table 6.1 shows the preferred tuition model of those respondents who stated support for tuition in the first question.⁷ We find that in the pooled sample a majority of those respondents who favor tuition (56%) supports universal fees, i.e. they think that all students should pay. Another big share of tuition-supports (37%) supports income-related tuition fees. Less than 5%, in contrast, think that tuition fees should be performance-based, i.e. that students with low or average grades should pay.

Do attitudes on which students should pay tuition fees also vary by country? Table 6.1 clearly answers affirmatively. We observe three country groups: In tuition-free Scandinavia, in line with the context-hypothesis (Hypothesis 3), a large majority believes that HE should be provided free-of-charge; a minority thinks that *all* students should pay. Interestingly, the other two options (tuition depending on parental income or student-performance) do not receive any support in Scandinavia.

⁷Note that the number of total observations is slightly higher (3632) than those who reported a “yes” in the previous question (3573) because the first and second answer category were not exclusive (59 respondents ticked both boxes).

Table 6.1 Support for different tuition models: Which tuition model do the tuition-supporters favor? Share of respondents supporting different options, by country

	GER	FRA	ESP	UK	DK	SWE	IRE	ITA	Total
Students with high income parents	31.71	34.74	29.37	37.81	27.23	14.02	54.76	46.90	36.93
All students	63.78	61.40	57.54	58.80	70.68	83.03	42.86	43.15	57.96
Students with low grades	3.24	2.98	8.33	1.85	2.09	2.21	2.16	5.82	3.42
High income students and low-grade students	1.26	0.88	4.76	1.54	0.00	0.74	0.22	4.13	1.69

Source: Author's compilation based on INVEDUC data as described in the text. Excluded are those respondents who opposed tuition fees in the first place

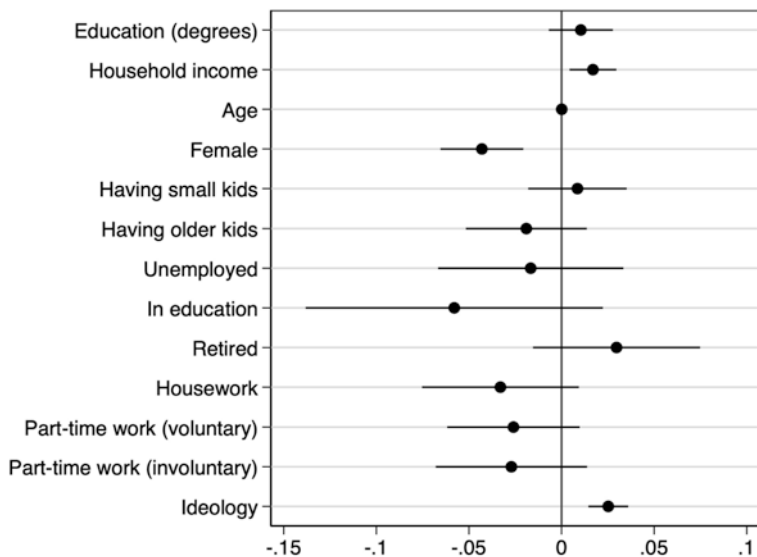
Rather, people seem to hold universalistic attitudes with regard to tuition fees ('nobody or everyone'). In a second group of countries, a majority of the supporters of tuition fees wants income-dependent tuition. This is the case in Ireland, and to a lesser degree in Italy. Here, fees seem to be perceived as a tool for redistribution, where people think that rich parents should pay for their children's education whereas the costs for students from lower socio-economic strata should be covered by the state. In a final country group (Spain, Germany, France, and the UK) the tuition-supporters fall into two groups, some wanting all students to pay, others preferring to charge tuition by families' financial background.

Interestingly, there hardly is any support for performance-based tuition fees in any country. The share of respondents in favor of this option is less than 6% in all countries, and less than 3% in most countries. This might look different in countries that have established such a dual system, but at least in Western Europe this model is very unpopular. In a similar vein, the number of respondents stating support for income-related *and* grade-related tuition is negligible (59 of 8905), see Table 6.1.

What Explains Support and Opposition of Tuition Fees? Micro-level Determinants

Who supports tuition fees? Figure 6.13 provides answers, by showing the determinants of tuition-support (i.e. average marginal effects). As expected in Hypothesis 1, income matters: Richer individuals are more likely to support tuition fees (the finding holds both for individual and household income). This could be for several reasons: Firstly because they pay disproportionately more taxes and therefore benefit from a reduction of public spending and a privatization of educational costs. Secondly, it might be the case that richer individuals are likely to be more concerned about the quality of rather than the costs of HE. And thirdly the higher a respondent's income, the lower the (perceived) financial hurdle of tuition fees should be.

Moreover, women are more likely to be opposed to fees. There are several potential explanations for this finding: By now, women are more likely than men to attend HE, so they might be more directly opposed to installing fees. Moreover, women



Notes: Average marginal effects and 95% confidence bands, logit regression, pooled sample, including country fixed effects, robust country-clustered standard errors.

Fig. 6.13 Determinants of support for tuition fees

have been found to be more risk-averse than men, potentially also leading to opposition of fees. Women's opposition to fees might also be related to different perceptions of fairness and equality of opportunity, which remains untested here.

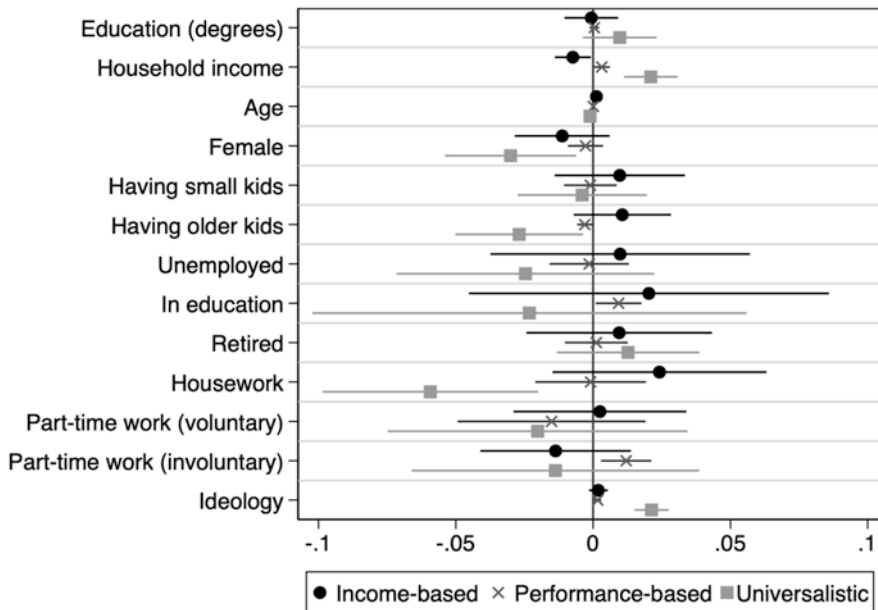
A third important factor are respondents' ideological standpoints on a left-right scale, confirming Hypothesis 2: The further left respondents locate themselves, the more opposed they are to tuition fees. This is an important finding, not only because it confirms Busemeyer et al.'s (2011) finding for Switzerland for a broader set of countries, but more importantly because it provides empirical support for an important association that has hitherto only been assumed in the political economy of skill formation literature, namely that leftwing voters are more likely to oppose tuition whereas rightwing voters are more likely to support tuition (Ansell, 2008, 2010; Busemeyer, 2014; Garritzmann, 2016; Iversen & Stephens, 2008).

Interestingly, the other variables are not statistically significant at conventional levels. Neither education or age, nor respondents' labor market situation or their household composition seem to play a role once we control for income and ideological standpoints. Most remarkably, the preferences of current pupils and students are not statistically distinguishable from other citizens. It is *not* the case that students are (much) more opposed to fees than other citizens. The coefficient is negative, but is not significant at common levels. This might be for several reasons. One is that descriptively in fact most students oppose fees (232 oppose fees, while only 83 support fees), but that the effect is covered by other factors, especially age, gender, and ideological standpoints as these factors are correlated, leading to some multicollinearity.

Finally, as already discussed, there is evidence for strong country-level differences, as the country fixed-effects (not shown here) are highly significant and show strong effects in all specifications, in line with the positive feedback arguments presented in Hypothesis 3.

What Explains Attitudes Towards Who Should Pay? Micro-level Determinants

What explains respondents’ attitudes towards which student group should pay tuition fees? Figure 6.14 presents results of multinomial model analyzing answers to the second survey question: “Who should have to pay tuition fees?”, where we offered the answer categories “students whose parents have a high income” (income-based model), “students with low and average grades” (performance-based model), and “all students” (universalistic model).⁸ The reference category are those



Notes: Average marginal effects and 95% confidence bands, multinomial regression, pooled sample, including country fixed effects, robust country-clustered standard errors.

Fig. 6.14 Determinants of support for different tuition models

⁸In order to facilitate readability, results are available but not shown for the small group of 59 persons who favored income-related *and* performance-related tuition fees.

respondents who opposed fees in the first question, but we get very similar findings when using e.g. those who support universalistic fees as the reference instead.

Figure 6.14 shows that for universalistic tuition fees we find the same political dynamics as for general support versus opposition of tuition fees: Richer respondents, men, and those leaning towards the political right are more likely to favor tuition for all students. Moreover, those with older children at home and those whose main labor market activity is household work significantly oppose universalistic fees, which supports a rational choice perspective of cost-minimizing respondents.

Interestingly, current pupils and students are also significantly more likely (than full time workers) to support performance-based tuition (rather than no tuition). This is a puzzling finding. A pure rational choice perspective would have predicted the opposite, i.e. students opposing fees rather than accepting any kind of fees. There could be different reasons why they still seem to support performance-based tuition. One reason might be that the pupils and students in the survey sample do not perceive themselves as those with “low or average grades”, i.e. they do not expect to pay tuition themselves. Yet, while this might be the case, I unfortunately cannot test this explanation with the current survey. Another reason might be that – in contrast to a materialistic self-interest perspective – pupils and students actually perceive it as fair if the lower-performing students are charged tuition.

Finally, as theorized (Hypothesis 4), support for income-dependent tuition decreases by income: Poorer respondents are more likely to support this more redistributive tuition-model. As expected, ideology also matters, but in an unexpected way: *Ceteris paribus*, right-leaning individuals are (slightly) more likely to support income-based tuition fees than left-leaning individuals.

Take-Aways

After a long period of scholarly inattention, education systems and education policies have recently gained much prominence in political science (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2011; Iversen & Stephens, 2008). Existing studies, however, have focused on the macro-level and public opinion towards education policy remained understudied. This is particularly true for HE, where even fewer comparative studies on people’s policy preferences have been conducted.

Here, I offered a first comparative analysis of individuals’ preferences towards HE tuition fees. Studying these is crucial due to the ever-increasing importance of education systems in general and due to the rising political salience of tuition fees in the political and public discourse in many countries. The analysis revealed that public opinion on tuition fees differs considerably across countries, in line with arguments about positive feedback effects, i.e. public opinion aligning with the respective HE funding systems. Regarding determinants, I found that three groups of factors can jointly help to explain preferences towards tuition fees in general, and towards specific kinds of tuition fees in particular: materialistic self-interest, ideological standpoints, and contextual factors.

Conclusion and Outlook

This chapter discussed the politics of HE funding across the advanced democracies, with a particular focus on (Western) Europe. It first provided a typology to systematize different kinds of HE funding, with different political dynamics and socio-economic effects. Thus, when discussing the politics of ‘HE funding’ we always need to specify what kind of funding we are talking about. Using this typology, the chapter’s second part offered a comparative overview on HE funding in Western Europe and beyond. It demonstrated that the advanced democracies differ considerably with regard to how they fund HE. After demonstrating some of the empirical complexity, I demonstrated that we can distinguish four kinds of HE funding systems: The Four Worlds of Student Finance. I then discussed existing explanations, pointing at three groups of theories: structural approaches, theories focusing on political actors, and explanations focusing on institutions.

There are several important gaps in the existing literature that would merit future research. As discussed above, a major shortcoming is that – compared to studies in North America – we know surprisingly little about public opinion on HE policy outside the USA. In the final part of this chapter, I addressed one of these gaps, by analyzing public opinion towards HE tuition fees in Western Europe. Novel survey data showed that preferences differ considerably across countries, arguably because citizens adapt their preferences to their respective countries’ HE systems. I argued elsewhere (Garritzmann, 2015, 2016, 2017) that this ‘conservative’ public opinion stabilizes the respective HE funding systems and makes (radical) policy change unlikely. Yet, many more questions remain unanswered, such as: What do citizens think about other aspects of HE policy, such as HE governance, internationalization, changing curricula, etc.? How and why does public opinion change over time? And does public opinion affect policy-making? What is the interplay between attitudes, parties, interest groups, experts, and HEIs?

Another important shortcoming of the Europe-focused literature is the lack of studies on the role of interest groups. While there might be substantial reasons for this lack (i.e. interest groups being less important in the European context), future work could explore this relationship more systematically, especially given the prominence of interest groups in the North American literature (cf. the subsequent chapters). Who are the important interest groups for HE (funding) policy in the European context? What are their preferences, resources, and strategies? Under what conditions do they influence policy-making and how are they in turn affected by specific policies?

The same is true for the role of the media. Incorporating analysis of the media and insights from political communication research could contribute to a better understanding of the politics of HE funding, particularly regarding the interaction of public opinion, the media, and political actors. It certainly would be interested to study policy framing, agenda setting, and other media-related aspects of these political dynamics.

Also, to the best of my knowledge there have not been any studies on the relationship between different types of governance (as discussed in several chapters in this book) and types of funding systems yet. How do different HE governance systems relate to different funding systems? Are, for example, systems leaning towards more managerial approaches and New Public Management also more privatized and focused on performance-based funding? Which governance systems are more expensive? Which are more efficient and effective? Connecting the literature discussed here with work on HE governance (see e.g., Dobbins et al., 2011; Chou et al., 2017) could very nicely connect two crucial fields in HE research that hitherto remain largely unconnected.

Geographically speaking we know much more about the politics of HE funding in Western Europe than in Central and Eastern Europe (but see Vukasovic, 2009). A comparative analysis exploring the respective patterns and dynamics in the Baltics, the Visegrád group, in Southeast Europe, and the former Yugoslavian countries could add important knowledge not only about these countries per se, but also about HE in a time of European integration.

Moreover, in terms of data, analyses of European countries in particular – and comparative analyses of the advanced economies more generally – are still hampered by limited data availability. While the OECD, the World Bank, and the European Commission have made important efforts to provide comparative data, most of this data is only available for the last two decades at best. Yet, historical institutionalists taught us that the roots of countries' education systems are much older, going back to the medieval time (Busemeyer, 2014; Thelen, 1999, 2004). As the most important enrollment expansion in HE has taken place after the Second World War (Lee & Lee, 2016), much would be gained if historical data were made available and comparable for HE funding for the post-war period. Any future effort to make such data available would thus be highly welcome.

Finally, a 'unified test' of all rival explanations in one simultaneous model would be interesting, as this would tell us more about the relative importance of socio-economic, political, and institutional factors. Related to the previous point, such a test will become empirically easier the more data becomes available.

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Chapter 7

Higher Education Finance in the United States: Sources of Funding and Impacts of State Investments



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Abstract Higher education funding in the U.S. is complex and distributed through multiple funding sources that change over time with important differences across states, public and private institutions, and institution types. This chapter provides an overview of the major sources of funding for U.S. higher education and how they have ebbed and flowed over time. We investigate the potential ramifications of changes in state funding, which has long been the primary source of revenue for public institutions. We find evidence that state appropriations to institutions and student financial aid are directly tied to student outcomes in higher education, with both funding strategies essential to increasing student access and success. We also discuss inequalities in state funding between states, institutions, and student demographics, which contribute to an already highly unequal U.S. economy and educational system. The chapter concludes by discussing the successes and implications of the U.S. approach to funding higher education and the importance of continued public investment in institutions and students.

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Introduction

As in many other countries, higher education finance in the United States (U.S.) is complex and multilayered. Funding for higher education comes from numerous public and private sources and varies significantly across states and institution types. In addition, the relative amounts of funding from each source and institutional reliance on public and private sources has changed considerably over time. In this chapter, we describe these trends; provide a framework to understand the many revenue sources for higher education institutions in the U.S.; and, with an in-depth literature review, analyze the impacts and outcomes of different methods for funding public institutions.

Before entering the discussion of higher education funding sources in the U.S., it is important to understand that not all institutions are funded equally. The U.S. has public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit postsecondary institutions. There is no national or federal public institution system. Instead, most public institutions are entities of their states, while some are owned by Native American tribes. Each type of institution relies on different funding sources.

Public institutions have historically been primarily funded by state tax appropriations, but state funding has been unsteady in the last few decades and as a result, public institutions are increasingly reliant on other funding sources (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019). Public institutions on average received just over half of their total educational revenues from state and local governments in 2021, down from 80% in the 1980s (Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). With a few exceptions, public institutions do not receive direct federal appropriations and the bulk of their non-government revenues come from student tuition. Community colleges (which primarily serve their local area and offer sub-baccalaureate credentials) and regional public institutions (which primarily serve their region rather than the state or nation) are the most reliant on state and local funding and receive fewer tuition revenues (McClure, 2018). On the other hand, large public research universities have higher tuition rates and enroll more out-of-state and international students (who pay much higher tuition). They also receive state, federal, and private research funding and are thus less reliant on general appropriations (Ehrenberg, 2006; Hearn et al., 2016). Some prestigious public research institutions also receive significant donations and earn income on their endowments, but this funding source is not equally distributed across institutions. A small number of public institutions are owned by Tribal (Native American) governments rather than state governments and have a different funding structure. In most cases, these Tribal institutions receive no state appropriations and are heavily reliant on federal appropriations, resulting in fewer total revenues than comparable state-owned public institutions (Nelson & Frye, 2016).

At almost all private institutions, the primary revenue source is tuition and fees. Tuition revenue is a mixture of private funding from individuals, government financial aid, and public or private student loans, all of which flow through the student. From an institutional perspective, all tuition revenue serves the same purpose and there is no net revenue effect to the institution based on the source of tuition funds.

Private institutions are also more dependent on private giving and income from endowments.

In the first half of this chapter, we follow the typography used in the previous chapter to provide a framework for higher education funding sources and methods in the U.S. and describe each funding source in detail. Unless otherwise specified, our primary focus is on the funding sources for public institutions, as they serve 75% of all college students in the U.S. and have a more varied funding structure.¹

The largest source of funding for public higher education institutions in the U.S. is state governments, and the second half of this chapter is concerned with what we know about the impact of each of the two main state higher education funding sources—direct operating support and student financial aid—on student success. We find clear evidence that increased financial resources are directly tied to student success in higher education. We conclude by discussing the implications of the U.S. approach to funding higher education and the importance of continued public investment in institutions and students.

Public Funding in U.S. Higher Education

One of the core beliefs that motivates the general approach to public funding of higher education in the United States is the idea of cost sharing. Within the U.S. context, cost sharing takes the form of spreading the burden of funding higher education between levels of government (federal, state, and local), between direct aid to institutions and direct aid to students and families, and between governments and students (i.e., the tuition and fees they pay). While there remains a consensus that each actor has some level of responsibility for funding higher education, there is little agreement regarding the distribution of the cost sharing. Therefore, these decisions must be renegotiated each year within a contested political space. This leads to significant variation in public funding for higher education between states and over time.

As indicated, public institutions of higher education are primarily publicly funded with appropriations and financial aid from state, federal, and local governments.² State and federal governments have longstanding commitments to funding higher education (California State Department of Education, 1960; Hegji, 2017; Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019). However, public funding from states has not kept up with economic inflation and growth in the student population (Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). In this section, we describe the primary methods of public funding for higher education and, for each method, discuss trends over time and across states.

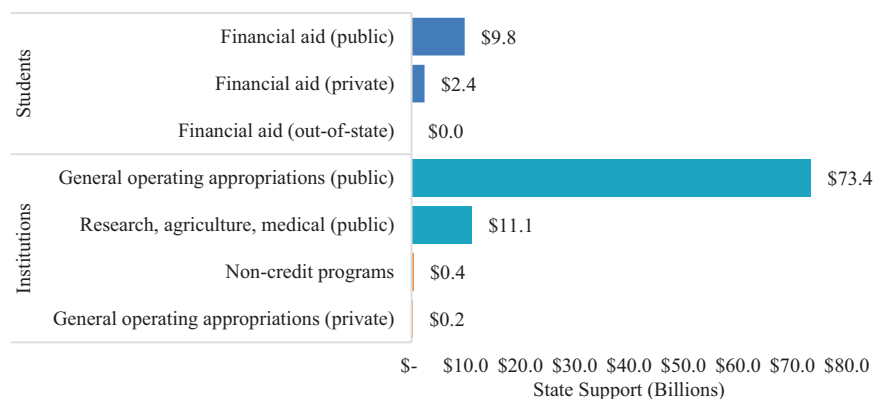
¹Based on authors' calculation of IPEDS data.

²Appropriations go directly to institutions. Financial aid is awarded to students, who apply it to their tuition and fee payments and may use it to cover non-tuition costs.

State Funding

State funding is the largest single source of revenue for the majority of public higher education institutions. State governments spent on average 8.5% of their budgets on higher education in 2021 (NASBO, 2021). States invest in public higher education in two primary ways: through direct funds to institutions (general operating appropriations) and through direct funds to individuals, who can then choose which institution in their state to spend those dollars (student financial aid).³ Many states also provide a smaller proportion of funding to support research at public universities (Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). Historically, most state spending on higher education has been allocated directly to institutions as general operating appropriations. However, over the last two decades state investments in student financial aid have increased while state support for general operations has fluctuated with the economic cycle (Delaney & Doyle, 2011; Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). As a result, the relative size of these two components of state support has changed over time, with state financial aid as a percent of state support increasing from 4.8% to 11.2% over the last 20 years.⁴ Fig. 7.1 shows the distribution of state higher education funding between students and institutions.

There is substantial variation across states in the amount and distribution of state investment in higher education as well as in the degree to which states have



Notes: Public and private refer to institutional control of ownership. Out-of-state refers to institutions, which may be public or private, but are located out of the jurisdiction of the state providing funds.
Source: Authors calculations of SHEEO SHEF data.

Fig. 7.1 State funding for higher education by category (in billions), fiscal year 2021

³States vary in the restrictions of state student financial aid. Some states, such as Tennessee and Florida, allow students to use these funds at in-state public or private institutions, whereas other states, such as New York, restrict these funds to in-state public institutions only.

⁴Based on authors' calculation of SHEEO data.

recovered from declines in state funding during the two most recent U.S. recessions (which occurred in 2001 and 2008).⁵ Both state general operating appropriations and state financial aid are important factors in financing the education of today's students, but the relative impact of each of these funding sources is not well researched. The latter half of this chapter more closely explores the known impacts of state investments in general operating and financial aid on student access and success.

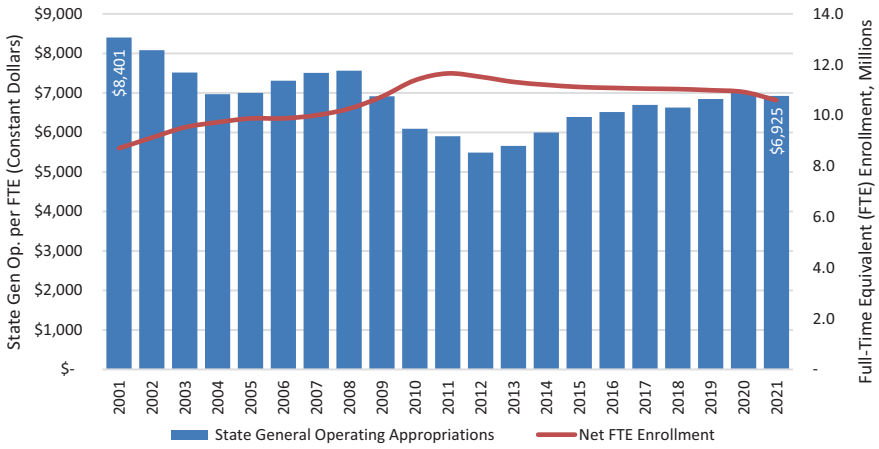
General Operating Appropriations General operating appropriations refer to state-funded tax and non-tax appropriations given directly to public and private institutions for general instruction and operations (not including research). While some types of state support can be earmarked for specific purposes, general operating appropriations are typically considered unrestricted revenue and can be used for any purpose that fulfills an institution's mission (Tahey et al., 2010). Traditionally, general operating appropriations have been used to subsidize the cost of educating state residents, allowing state residents attending public institutions to pay a lower tuition price than an out-of-state student and, in most cases, a lower tuition price than they would pay at a private institution. In most cases, operating appropriations come from the state's general fund, which is funded through state consumption and income tax revenues (NASBO, 2021). In addition to tax appropriations, some states use alternative sources of revenue to fund certain programs. For example, several states earmark a portion of lottery profits for merit-based aid programs (Ness & Mistretta, 2010). In this section, we focus exclusively on public general operating appropriations because private general operating appropriations account for only 0.2% of total state general operating appropriations.⁶

State general operating appropriations for public institutions increased 0.3% in inflation-adjusted dollars from 2001 to 2021. However, the full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of students increased 21.7% over that timeframe. This means that on a per-FTE basis, state support for public general operating appropriations has declined 17.6% since 2001 (Fig. 7.2).

The national figures mask considerable variation in general operating appropriations across states. After adjusting for differences in cost of living and the enrollment mix across institution types, state general operating appropriations per FTE in 2021 ranged from less than \$3000 in Arizona and Colorado to over \$15,000 in Alaska and Wyoming (Fig. 7.3). There are also large differences in state appropriations across institution types. In general, two-year institutions (which primarily award associates degrees and are also called community colleges) receive fewer state appropriations per FTE (Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). However, two-year institutions in the U.S. also receive local appropriations from governments below the state level in 32 states, described in a later section.

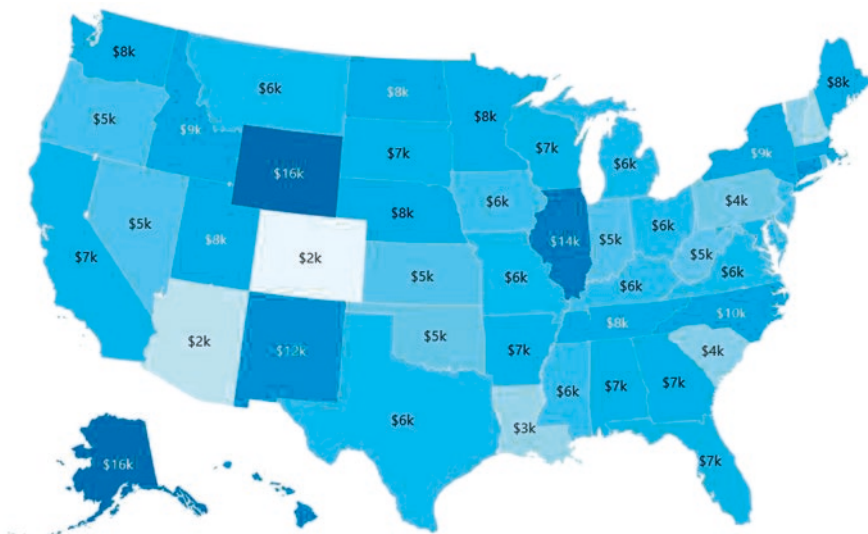
⁵The U.S. entered a short recession in 2020, the long-term impacts of which were not understood at the time of publication.

⁶Based on authors' calculation of SHEEO data.



Notes: Data are adjusted for inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ 2021 CPI-U. FTE enrollment excludes medical students.
 Source: Authors calculations of SHEEO SHEF data.

Fig. 7.2 State general operating appropriations and FTE enrollment, 2001–2021 (constant dollars)



Notes: Data adjusted in two ways: (1) SHEEO’s Enrollment Mix Index (EMI) adjusts for differences in the distribution of enrollment by sector in each state compared to the national enrollment distribution; and (2) the Cost of Living Index (COLI) is calculated based on the weighted average of county-level data collected by the Council for Community and Economic Research.
 Source: Authors calculations of SHEEO SHEF data.

Fig. 7.3 State general operating appropriations per FTE by state, 2021 (adjusted)

Funding Allocation Formulas States allocate general operating appropriations to institutions using several strategies, which have changed over time. Funding formulas were designed to make the appropriations process more predictable and stable by using quantitative data that measured states' share of institutional costs. Over time, formulas became more complex by accounting for differences in institution missions, cost differences between programs, and incorporating analysis of peer institutions (McKeown & Layzell, 1994). The use of funding formulas varies greatly by state. Some states utilize multiple formulas for different functional areas (e.g., instruction, student services, etc.), while other states use relatively simple formulas based on FTE enrollment (SRI International, 2012).

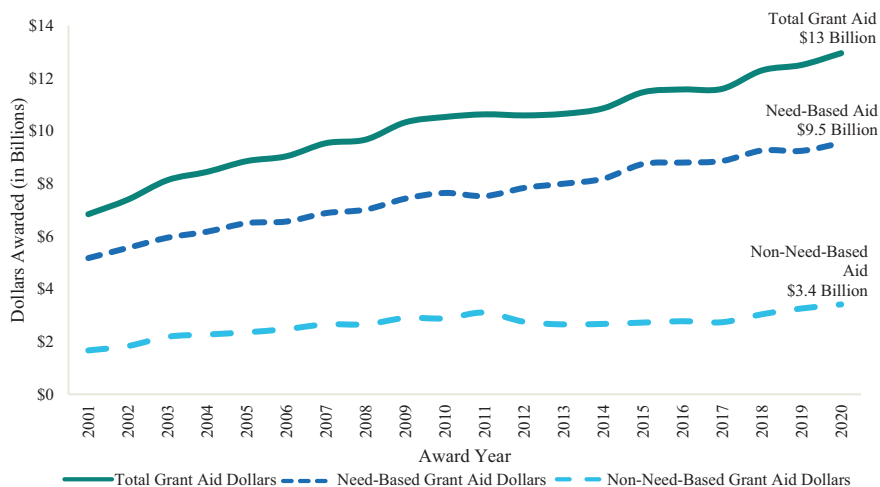
Beginning in 1979 with Tennessee, state policymakers began incorporating performance indicators (such as retention rates and graduation rates) into funding models. This development, commonly known as performance-based funding (PBF), has gone through multiple iterations and waves of adoption (Dougherty & Natow, 2015). As of 2020, at least 30 states were implementing an OBF model (Rosinger et al., 2020). Research on the newest models suggests that they may exacerbate equity gaps if formulas do not incorporate metrics to prioritize the success of underrepresented students (Gándara & Rutherford, 2017).⁷

State Student Financial Aid Subsidies provided directly to students to then use at their college of choice are known as student financial aid. Many state financial aid programs began in the 1970s when the federal government offered matching funds to states for providing student financial aid (Heller, 2011).⁸ These programs were primarily targeted to financially needy students, but, in recent years, non-need-based programs have proliferated (Doyle, 2006). Many of these programs are referred to as merit-based student grant aid programs and often require students meet a grade point average or admissions test score threshold to be eligible. Historically, state grant aid has been less vulnerable to economic recessions than general operating support (Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). In stark contrast to the cyclical trends that characterize the general operating appropriations funding patterns presented above, state support for student grant aid consistently increased during the 2000s. From 2001 to 2020, need-based grant aid increased 84.5%, while non-need-based grant aid increased by 105% (Fig. 7.4).

State Research Appropriations In addition to state funding for general institutional operations and student financial aid, states also provide funding for research, agricultural stations, and medical or hospital appropriations to some public institu-

⁷The U.S. continues to struggle to broaden access and success in higher education to the groups who have been historically underrepresented and excluded from higher education, particularly students who identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander, or come from low-income households.

⁸The major need-based state financial aid programs no longer have a federal matching component, though the State Student Incentive Grant has morphed into the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) grant program (Federal Student Aid, 2021).

**Notes:**

1. State grant aid includes all scholarship and grant aid awarded to undergraduate and graduate students, including the small portion of aid allocated to non-public institutions.
2. Data are adjusted for inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2021 CPI-U, indexed to 2020.

Source: National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs.

Fig. 7.4 State grant aid for need- and non-need programs, U.S., 2001–2020 (constant dollars)

tions. Research funding is generally allocated to public research institutions; agricultural funding is allocated to institutions specifically designated by the government as “land-grant” institutions (APLU, n.d.); and medical and hospital funding is allocated to universities with a medical school or hospital (Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). Over time, these research, agricultural, and medical appropriations (including medical schools and hospitals) have declined as a proportion of total state higher education funding and in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Primary Predictors of State Funding The variation between states in in state general operating appropriations for higher education brings up natural questions regarding the determining factors for levels of state support. Research on state higher education funding has identified several demographic, economic, and political factors that affect state support. Among these three categories, state economic conditions and the availability of tax revenue are the most significant predictors. Periods of declining tax revenue are particularly detrimental for higher education funding due to balanced budget requirements that prevent states from operating deficits. These requirements require states to reduce expenditures when tax revenues do not adequately cover current spending (Hou & Smith, 2006; Poterba, 1994). Higher education funding is often a primary target of policymakers cutting budgets to meet balanced budget requirements because higher education is generally viewed as the most discretionary budget item (Hovey, 1999; Okunade, 2004). This makes higher education susceptible to being crowded out by increases in demand for other budget categories such as healthcare and corrections (Kane et al., 2003; Weerts & Ronca, 2012).

Political factors also impact funding decisions. Republican party control of state executive and legislative branches is associated with lower levels of state support for higher education, while the capacity of a state's legislative body has been consistently associated with increased state support (McLendon et al., 2009; Tandberg & Griffith, 2013). Interest groups and governance structures can play a role in appropriations decisions. A larger ratio of higher education groups relative to all registered interest groups is associated with increased state support for higher education, while strong state-level governing boards are associated with decreased state support (Tandberg, 2010a, b).

Federal Funding

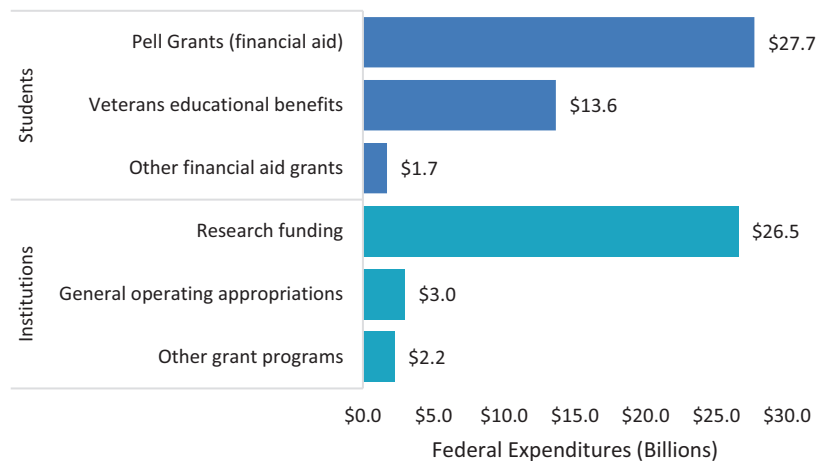
The federal government spends about 2% of its total expenditures on higher education, primarily through student financial aid and competitive research grants (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019).⁹ In contrast to state funding for higher education, only a small portion of federal funding is appropriated directly to higher education institutions. In addition to these areas, the federal government also provides significant aid to those students who served in the U.S. military in the form of veterans' benefits (Fig. 7.5). Over time, federal investments in higher education have increased in both absolute and relative terms (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019). In this section, we outline the ways in which the U.S. federal government supports public and private higher education institutions.

General Operating Appropriations Since the passing of the Higher Education Act in 1965, the federal government has provided funding to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs).¹⁰ The federal government also provides support to two federally chartered private institutions located in Washington, D.C. Finally, the federal government funds the U.S. military academies.

HBCUs are colleges and universities established prior to 1964 with the primary mission and purpose of educating Black students (Williams & Davis, 2019). Unlike non-HBCUs, these institutions receive direct appropriations from the federal government in recognition of their contributions to promoting equal opportunity and to correct decades of discriminatory practices by the federal government (Williams & Davis, 2019). TCCUs are chartered by sovereign Indian nations with the specific purpose of providing higher education to American Indians (Hegji, 2017). Notably,

⁹Excluding loans and tax credits.

¹⁰The U.S. federal government provides similar funding to a broader group of minority-serving institutions (MSIs), which are designated based on enrollment demographics and apply for competitive grant awards. These institutions are not discussed in this section because their competitive, term-based grants differ substantially from the annual, noncompetitive, formula-based awards to HBCUs and TCCUs (Hegji, 2017).



Notes: Includes funding for public and private institutions. Does not include student loans or tax credits.
Source: Adapted from Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019.

Fig. 7.5 Federal funding for higher education by category (in billions), 2017

with very few exceptions, TCCUs do not receive state or local appropriations and are, as a result, heavily reliant on federal appropriations (Nelson & Frye, 2016).

Federal Research Funding Most institutional federal higher education funding is in the form of research grants and contracts (Fig. 7.5). Federal research dollars are allocated on a competitive basis, and institutional researchers apply to receive funding for specific research projects (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019). Federal research expenditures at higher education institutions have increased greatly over time, growing 60.5% from 2001 to 2019 (National Science Foundation, 2020). The federal government is the largest funder of higher education research in the U.S., accounting for about 71% of external research funding in 2019 (National Science Foundation, 2020).

Federal Student Financial Aid Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 led to the creation of the primary federal student financial aid programs that remain today: work-study, need-based grant aid, and federal loans. Though these programs have been altered numerous times since their inception, they maintain the same intent: to equalize opportunity and access to postsecondary institutions (Mumper et al., 2011). Eligibility for these programs is portable, and students may use their awards at any of the approximately 6000 Title IV-eligible colleges and universities, including public, private non-profit, and private for-profit institutions. A discussion of the two largest types of aid (Pell grants and federal student loans) follows.

Pell Grants The federal Pell Grant is a means-tested grant aid program that serves more undergraduates than any other grant aid program in the United States. The maximum award for the program in 2022–23 is \$6895, with students with greater

financial resources or who attend part-time receiving a lesser amount (Federal Student Aid, 2022). Though the Pell Grant is generous in the number of students it serves, the maximum award has not kept pace with increases in college prices.

Federal Student Loans Student loans have received considerable attention in the U.S. in recent years with some calling for outstanding student debt obligations to be forgiven (Looney et al., 2020). According to the most recent data, outstanding student loan debt topped \$1.5 trillion in the third quarter of 2020 (New York Federal Reserve, 2020). There are several federal loan programs, including programs for undergraduates with no credit requirements (Direct Loans), programs for graduate students (Graduate PLUS Loans), and programs designed for the parents of undergraduates (Parent PLUS Loans). Importantly, debt burdens include money borrowed for both tuition and fees, and education-related cost-of-living expenses. As can likely be gleaned by this brief description, the federal student loan programs serve a diverse set of postsecondary finance needs.

Tax Benefits The federal government also provides federal tax relief to students and their families through higher education tax benefits. Federal tax credits reduce the amount of money an individual owes to the federal government (Bartel, 2020). Education tax credits can be seen as a partial refund for money spent on higher education and were originally targeted toward middle-income earners who did not qualify for federal need-based aid (such as Pell grants). In 2017, 8.7 million tax credits were awarded (Internal Revenue Service, 2020). Total federal spending on higher education tax benefits has increased consistently over time (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019).

Primary Predictors of Federal Funding There are several influential actors affecting the federal funding of higher education in intentional and unintentional ways. The history of sweeping changes in federal higher education policy are marked by presidential administrations attempting to make significant societal changes, like the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act (e.g., GI Bill), the 1958 National Defense Education Act, and the 1965 Higher Education Act. As monumental as these changes to the federal higher education landscape were, the subsequent political environment and funding efforts have been characterized by a lack of fundamental change (Hearn, 2001). Instead of overhauling or consolidating programs, Congress and presidential administrations have instead chosen to tweak existing programs. These decisions, or lack thereof, have the ultimate consequence allowing established policies to drift along without intention (Hearn, 2001).

The higher education lobby in Washington, D.C., has been dominated by the activities of six associations of university presidents. The lobbying efforts of the presidential associations are most evident around the funding of federal student financial aid programs, where their political activities have been criticized for spending too much time on consensus-building (rather than direct lobbying), for not supporting friendly candidates through campaigning or fund-raising, poor

relationship building with elected officials and their staffs, and for having somewhat disorganized and less than effective advocacy efforts (Cook, 1998; Parsons, 2004; Wolanin, 1998). While there are numerous other higher education associations, the “big six” associations of university presidents are the most important and influential higher education interest groups at the federal level (Cook, 1998).

Local Funding

In 32 states, local governments provide tax appropriations to public higher education institutions (Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). Local appropriations are primarily used for two-year institutions but in some states a small amount may also go to four-year institutions. Since 1980 (the earliest data available), inflation-adjusted local appropriations have increased steadily over time. This increase is not explained by a relative increase in two-year enrollment; in fact, most of the enrollment growth since 1980 has occurred at four-year institutions.¹¹

Private Funding in U.S. Higher Education

The majority of private funding for U.S. higher education comes from student tuition and fees (which may be financed through student loans). In addition, institutions receive private gifts and donations from individuals and organizations, including those designated for research, but those revenues make up a very small portion of most institution’s total revenues (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019). For this reason and because tuition and fees are an increasingly important revenue source for U.S. higher education, we focus our discussion of private revenues on student tuition and fees.

Tuition and Fees

The primary source of private funding for U.S. higher education at public and private colleges and universities is student tuition and fees which is the sum of all student tuition and fee payments. Tuition rates vary by student type. At public institutions, tuition rates depend on student residency (students attending college in their state of residency have much lower tuition), degree program, student level, institution type (with community colleges charging the lowest tuition and research universities the highest), and the level of state funding an institution receives (Ma &

¹¹Based on authors’ calculation of IPEDS data.

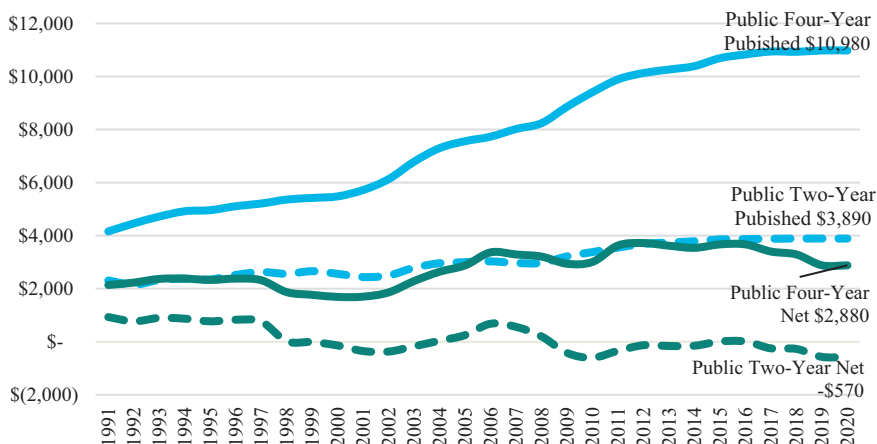
Pender, 2021). Most institutions discount their tuition for certain students or student groups using tuition waivers and scholarships or other financial aid. Fees also vary substantially and can be required of all students or can be program or course specific. Over time, tuition rates in the U.S. have increased faster than inflation, and institutions have increased their discounts and waivers, resulting in increasingly differentiated prices for the students at a given institution (NACUBO, 2022).

At public institutions, tuition rates are impacted by the political process and, in some cases, are subject to state approval. In many states, tuition rates for undergraduate in-state students are controlled by a state board or government (Armstrong et al., 2017). In response to concerns about the rising cost of college, states have increasingly limited or frozen tuition rate increases. However, few states control fees. Fees vary from technology and athletic charges to library fines and online course surcharges. Fees have generally not been controlled by state governments and in some states, fees have increased considerably to make up for declines in state funding and tuition rates that are frozen or limited (Kelchen, 2016).

Trends in Tuition Rates For several decades, the price of college in the U.S. has increased at a rate far beyond inflation. However, there is an important difference between the often-publicized rise in published tuition rates and what students actually pay. All public and private institutions publish tuition and fee rates for a given academic year (the sticker price), but these prices often do not reflect the average tuition and fees students are charged (the net price). The difference is due to financial aid and scholarships from federal, state, local, institutional, and private sources. At two-year public institutions, inflation-adjusted student net price decreased 161% from 1992 to 2021. At four-year public institutions, the net price increased 35% beyond inflation (Fig. 7.6).

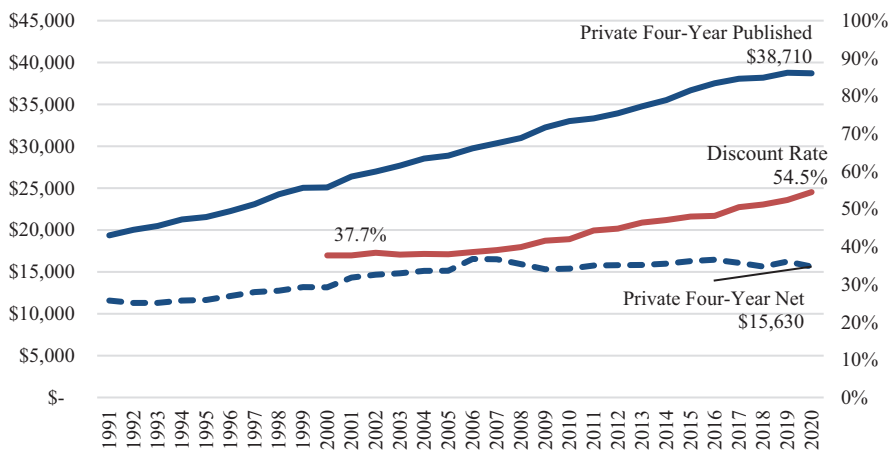
Private institutions have higher tuition rates because they are not subsidized by state and local government appropriations. We focus here on private four-year institutions due to better data availability. From 1992 to 2021, inflation-adjusted net price increased 35% at private four-year institutions (Fig. 7.7). In large part, increase to the net price at private institutions have been metered due to increases in institutional financial aid. The percent of first-time full-time students receiving institutional aid at private institutions increased from 37.7% in 2001 to 54.5% in 2021. This means that private not-for-profit institutions discounted, on average, more than half of their advertised tuition rate (NACUBO, 2022).

Trends in Tuition and Fee Revenues The tuition rates described in this section impact the total tuition revenue received by an institution. However, total tuition and fee revenue is also affected by changes in the mix of students attending an institution. In general, tuition rates at public institutions are lowest for students seeking associates degrees (a two-year degree), higher for those seeking a baccalaureate degree (a four-year degree), and highest for those seeking a graduate degree like a masters or a doctorate. At public institutions, state residents pay greatly subsidized tuition rates and contribute less per-FTE to an institution's total tuition revenue than out-of-state or international students. Tuition revenues at public institutions have grown consider-



Notes: For full-time, in-state undergraduate students. Published tuition is average undergraduate in-state tuition and fees. Net tuition is the average tuition and fees after applying federal, state, and institutional grants. Beginning in 2006-2007, net price is for first-time students only. Data are adjusted for inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2021 CPI-U.
 Source: College Board, Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2021.

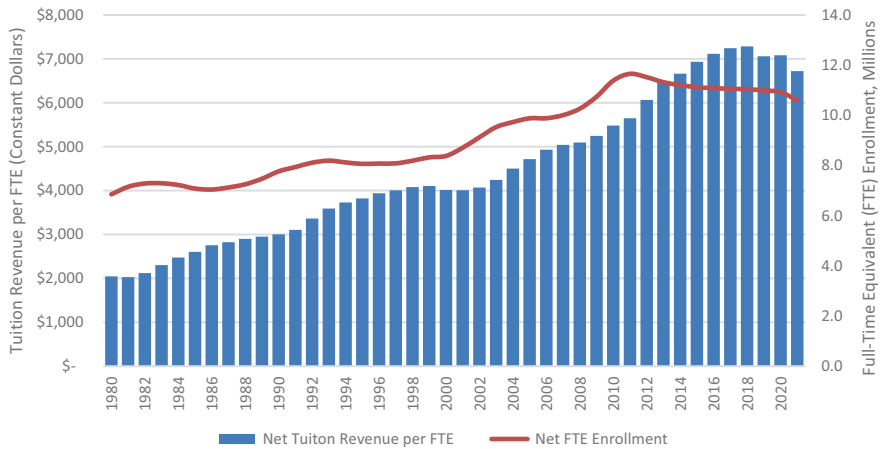
Fig. 7.6 Published and net tuition rates at two-year and four-year public institutions, academic years 1991–1992 to 2020–2021 (constant dollars)



Notes: Tuition rates are for full-time undergraduate students, discount rate is first-time full-time only. Sticker price is the average institution's published undergraduate tuition and fees. Net price is the average institution's tuition and fees charged after applying federal, state, and institutional grants. Beginning in 2006-2007, net price is for first-time students only. Discount rate is the

Fig. 7.7 Sticker price, net tuition, and discount rate at four-year private not-for-profit institutions, academic years 1991–1992 to 2020–2021 (constant dollars)

ably over time due to increases in tuition rates and a move toward increasing out-of-state and international enrollments who pay much higher tuition. However, inflation-adjusted tuition revenues per FTE began to decline in 2019 due to minimal



Notes: Full-time equivalent enrollment converts student credit hours to full-time, academic year students, but excludes medical students. Tuition revenue includes all tuition and fees, net of state and institutional financial aid, institutional tuition waivers or discounts, and medical student tuition and fees. Federal financial aid is included in the tuition data presented here. Data are adjusted for inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI-U for 2021.

Source: Authors calculations of SHEEO SHEF data.

Fig. 7.8 Tuition revenues and FTE enrollment at public institutions, 1980–2021 (constant dollars)

tuition rate increases and growth in student financial aid. Since 1980, annual inflation-adjusted tuition revenue per FTE enrollment has increased 229% (Fig. 7.8).

Variation Across States and Regions At public institutions, private revenues (tuition dollars) are collected in conjunction with the public revenues that subsidize higher education. In general, there is wide variation across the U.S. in the extent to which public institutions are subsidized by the state (Laderman, 2020). In the West, there are (with some exceptions) higher levels of state support and relatively low tuition revenues. In the Northeast and Midwest, state support tends to be low and tuition high leading to a high reliance on student tuition dollars. The South has lower state support and lower tuition revenues, meaning that institutions in those states have lower total revenues than the rest of the country (Laderman, 2020).

Changing trends and the variety of funding sources lead to questions about the efficacy and efficiency of the primary funding strategies. For example, what are the impacts of direct state general operating appropriations to institutions and of state student financial aid on student outcomes? Given the scope of the funding and their potential importance in addressing persistent problems in higher education such inequality, equity gaps, low graduation rates, and a rapidly changing economy, we make these funding sources the focus of the remainder of this chapter. In what follows, we analyze the most current and rigorous research to identify the relationship between state funding for higher education, state student financial aid, and critical postsecondary outcomes.

Impacts of State Higher Education Appropriations and Financial Aid

Questions about the unique impacts of state appropriations and financial aid on desired outcomes have circulated for decades. The effort to determine the ideal structure of public funding for higher education is not new but has shifted focus in the face of an overall declining reliance on state support for public institutional revenues. In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, researchers and policymakers in the U.S. were concerned that using state dollars to broadly fund higher education was regressive, as students from higher income families still disproportionately attended college, and families across the income spectrum funded state subsidies (Hansen & Weisbrod, 1969; Peltzman, 1973). In the 1980s, the choice between general operating appropriations and state financial aid was framed as a debate between two schools of thought; those who believed higher education provided public benefits and should be funded through general operating appropriations to institutions, and those who argued that higher education had private benefits as well, and therefore students should share the burden of its funding (Hearn & Longanecker, 1985). Advocates of the two funding models discussed theoretical economic trade-offs, but little evidence existed on the extent to which the funding structure mattered for states and students (Hossler et al., 1997).

Empirical interest in the trade-offs between allocating state funding to institutions versus students waned in the early 2000s as state funding began to decline (Laderman & Kunkle, 2022). Tuition rates and revenues increased in response, and the attention of many researchers and advocates turned to these concerns. Much of the research reviewed in the following sections of this chapter focused exclusively on either appropriations or grant aid rather than discussing the relative advantages of each.

In this section, we describe the most rigorous existing research on the effects of state appropriations and student grant aid. We begin with the state appropriation findings, outlining the impacts of state appropriations on institutions and students. We then turn to state grant aid, where we discuss the effects of grant aid on enrollment, persistence, and completion, followed by a discussion of the comparative effects of each funding strategy on student outcomes. We end this section with a summary of findings, wherein we provide a high-level overview and discuss the main takeaways from this section.

Methodology

We conducted systematic literature reviews of prior research on state general operating appropriations and state financial aid. We began with foundational studies identified by each author, and expanded our search based on the references found in those studies and keyword searches in multiple databases. Since the empirical research on state appropriations is much less developed than the literature estimating the effects of grant aid, we employ separate inclusion criteria and foci of the two literature review sections.

For state appropriations, studies which examined the change in state appropriations on institutional or student outcomes and used a rigorous quantitative design (e.g., difference-in differences, instrumental variables estimation, fixed or random effects) were included. The state financial aid literature is more developed, and we were able to narrow our inclusion criteria to studies that utilized a quasi-experimental or experimental research design, in addition to a few summary articles. Across both sets of literature, we limited to articles published within the last decade. Eleven state appropriation articles met our criteria, compared to 40 state financial aid articles. Many articles that did not meet our time or rigor criteria were used for background.

Findings

Effects of State Appropriations

There are two main ways that public institutions respond to declining state appropriations—by raising tuition revenues or by decreasing institutional expenditures. Here we review the recent literature related to both mechanisms. A summary of our findings on the effects of state appropriations can be found in Appendix A (Table 7.A1).

Institution Outcomes: Changes in Tuition State appropriations are inversely related to tuition prices at public four-year institutions. A 10% reduction in overall state funding at public four-year institutions leads to a 1.1% increase in enrollment-weighted tuition and a 0.7% increase in published tuition price (Goodman & Volz, 2020). A \$1 decline in state appropriations per FTE leads to in-state tuition rate increases ranging from \$0.11 at Master’s institutions to \$0.44 at Bachelor’s institutions (Zhao, 2018).¹² The relationship between state funding cuts and higher tuition and fees has increased over time (Webber, 2017). In recent years, a \$1000 reduction in per FTE state appropriations would result in the average student paying an additional \$412 in tuition. Changes in tuition revenues may manifest as changes in the price that students must pay to attend college or as a shift in institutional priorities toward enrolling more high-paying students (e.g., out-of-state students, higher-income students). The literature is mixed on whether cuts in state funding impact community college tuition (Goodman & Volz, 2020; Zhao, 2018).

Institution Outcomes: Changes in Institutional Expenditures Institutions that are unable to raise tuition and fee revenue to the extent necessary to offset state funding declines respond to cuts by decreasing expenditures.¹³ Declines in state

¹²In the United States, institutions are classified based on their highest level of degree offered. Two-year institutions, commonly called community colleges, award primarily associates degrees and certificates; four-year institutions all award baccalaureate degrees and are further classified by whether they offer master’s degrees (“master’s institutions”) or doctoral degrees and engage in substantial research.

¹³When state appropriations decline, institutions respond to the loss in total revenue by increasing alternative revenue sources (such as tuition revenue) or by decreasing total expenditures.

appropriations negatively affect almost all expenditure categories, with the largest impact on spending for direct educational costs including instruction, academic support, and student services (Deming & Walters, 2018; Goodman & Volz, 2020; Zhao, 2018). The extent to which institutions rely on making spending cuts, as well as the types of cuts made, varies between institution types. Community colleges experience the largest impacts (Zhao, 2018).

Student Outcomes: Enrollments Changes in state appropriations are positively related to student enrollment outcomes at both the state and institution level. At the state level, a \$1000 increase in state funding per recent high school graduate is associated with a 5.5 percentage point (pp) increase in public postsecondary enrollment per potential college student (Trostel, 2012). Decreases in state appropriations diverts students from the public to the for-profit sector (Goodman & Volz, 2020), with a 10% drop in appropriations leading to a 3% decrease in enrollments at public colleges. This shift is concerning due to evidence from other studies suggesting less favorable labor market outcomes for students who graduate from for-profit institutions (Cellini & Chaudhary, 2014; Deming et al., 2016).

At the institutional level, Deming and Walters (2018) find that a 10% increase in total institutional spending leads to a 3.3% increase in fall enrollment and an 8–8.5% increase in enrollment in each of the following three years. Bound et al. (2019) find that a 10% drop in appropriations leads to a 1.7% and 1.5% decrease in in-state undergraduate enrollment at research and non-research universities (respectively). A key mission of public postsecondary institutions is to educate residents of the state. However, declining state appropriations can lead institutions to stray from this part of their mission and seek out out-of-state students who contribute more tuition revenue to replace lost funding (Jaquette & Curs, 2015).

Student Outcomes: Graduation Rates and Completions The research overwhelmingly finds evidence that cutting state appropriations leads to reductions in graduation rates and the number of degrees awarded.¹⁴ For example, a 10% increase in state appropriations per FTE at four-year public institutions is associated with an approximately 0.64 pp. increase in graduation rates (Zhang, 2009); a 10% increase in per-capita state appropriations is associated with a 3% increase in overall state bachelor's degree production (Titus, 2009); and a 10% increase in state appropriations increases community college completions by 14.5% and bachelor's completions by 4.5% in the years following the increase (Deming & Walters, 2018).

Exploring the heterogeneity in this relationship, Bound et al. (2019) find that at public research universities, a 10% decrease in state appropriations per FTE leads to a 3.6% drop in bachelor's degree attainment and a 7.2% decrease in doctoral attainment. Zhao (2018) finds that the most detrimental impacts are at community

Reductions in state support lead to reductions in institutional spending, which impacts student outcomes. Total revenue is not held constant in such studies.

¹⁴ Graduation rates measure the proportion of full-time students in a cohort who complete their degree in a certain time frame (e.g., bachelors in 4 years). Completions measures the total number of degrees awarded in a given time period.

colleges, where a one standard deviation decrease in state appropriations per FTE (\$2962) resulted in a 1.68 per 100 FTE reduction in degrees. This impact may be because community colleges are unable to increase their tuition, and instead respond to state appropriation cuts by reducing expenditures. This is supported by Deming and Walters (2018), who find evidence that the effect of state appropriation changes on total awards is driven by changes in expenditures. Chakrabarti et al. (2020) estimate the effects of a change in state appropriations *while a student is enrolled in college* and find that a \$1000 increase per FTE increases the likelihood of earning a bachelor's degree by age 25 by 1.5 pp., and increases the likelihood of community college students transferring and earning a bachelor's degree by age 25 by 3.9 pp.¹⁵

Inequalities in State Appropriation Funding The research presented here suggests that changes in state appropriations have substantial impacts on institutional and student outcomes at the national level, but these analyses mask the wide variation between states in funding levels and the extent to which public institutions depend on state funding. Likewise, institutional responses to cuts in state funding differ between institution types. Public four-year institutions receive more state funding, yet simultaneously have far greater ability to replace some lost state dollars through tuition increases (Webber, 2017; Zhao, 2018). Community colleges receive less state funding and respond to cuts by reducing institutional expenditures (Chakrabarti et al., 2020; Zhao, 2018).

Inequality in funding across institution types, and the disparate impacts of funding changes, are particularly concerning because students of color disproportionately attend institutions with fewer resources (Ahlman, 2019). From 2006 through 2016, underrepresented students of color (defined as American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, Latinx, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander) made up an increasing proportion of enrollment at all public institutions, but were disproportionately likely to attend community colleges—the public colleges with the fewest resources. Universities with the most revenue disproportionately educate the most advantaged (full-time, white, affluent) students (Mugglestone et al., 2019). These patterns suggest that the funding disparities between institution types may not only be unequal, but inequitable as well, as states increase the existing advantages of affluent white students and provide the most resources to institutions that need them the least.

Effects of Financial Aid

Unlike general operating appropriations for institutions, financial aid is awarded directly to students and can directly target particular populations. Student grant aid can be awarded based on financial need, academic merit, some combination of the two, or to

¹⁵In their exploration into the mechanisms at play, Chakrabarti et al. find evidence that four-year institutions respond to increases in state appropriations by decreasing tuition but do not alter their institution spending on instruction, student services, or academic support. The authors find that two-year institutions respond to increases in state appropriations with price and quality responses, both decreasing tuition and increasing institutional spending.

entire student subpopulations. We review the impacts of state grant aid programs and include evaluations of federal, local, and funded programs when we believe they provide important context. A summary of our findings can be found in Appendix A (Table 7.A2).

Student Enrollment The research on the effects of state grant aid on enrollment outcomes are mixed. Early research on merit-based programs found significant overall enrollment effects using aggregated data, with sizable increases in college-going amongst recent high school graduates (Cornwell et al., 2006; Dynarski, 2004). More recent research, often relying upon state administrative data and regression discontinuity research designs, complicates these earlier findings, suggesting state grant aid has no discernable impact on overall college-going (Bruce & Carruthers, 2014; Gurantz & Odle, 2020). However, promise programs, which advertise free college tuition to a subpopulation, can have substantial impact on initial college enrollment (Carruthers & Fox, 2016; Nguyen, 2020). Gurantz (2019b) finds that college-going increased substantially in year two of a statewide promise program. One of the primary purposes of state merit grant aid programs is to retain talent by keeping high-achieving students in-state to boost the state economy, and these programs are largely successful at incentivizing students to enroll in their home states (Cornwell et al., 2006; Sjoquist & Winters, 2016; Zhang & Ness, 2010).

Grant aid can also impact the type of institution a student attends. Many studies suggest flexible grant aid often moves students, especially academically marginal and low-income students, from two-year institutions into four-year institutions with better outcomes (Bartik et al., 2021; Toutkoushian et al., 2015). Moreover, when grant aid is limited to public institutions, enrollment shifts to public institutions (Cohodes & Goodman, 2014). When state aid can be used at both private and public institutions, some evidence suggests that students may attend a higher cost institution (Bettinger et al., 2019; Gurantz, 2019a).

Student Persistence Persistence refers to the proportion of students who remain enrolled at any institution from year to year. The most rigorous recent evidence suggests that receiving student grant aid strongly impacts student persistence (Angrist et al., 2020; Castleman & Long, 2016; Scott-Clayton, 2011), though these findings are not consistent across all contexts, including the two-year sector (Anderson & Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Carruthers & Welch, 2020).

Student Completion The research examining the effects of financial aid on student completion is mixed, with most studies finding positive or null effects. In their recently published metanalytic review of this literature, Nguyen et al. (2019) estimate that for every \$1000 dollars of grant aid, degree completion increases approximately 2.5 pp. The average effect is large, but it does mask some heterogeneity across program designs and aims. For example, studies on the impact of merit aid on completion find no effect (Gurantz & Odle, 2020; Sjoquist & Winters, 2015), and, in rare cases, may reduce a student's likelihood of success (Cohodes & Goodman, 2014). Recent evaluations of hybrid need-based and merit-based aid programs have found positive impacts on completion, primarily driven by low-income and under-represented racial groups (Bettinger et al., 2019; Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016).

Comparative Impacts of Appropriations and Financial Aid

State appropriations and financial aid likely work together to improve student outcomes, but it is difficult to compare their relative impacts. Still, several studies have attempted to evaluate the effects of both funding sources on institutional and student outcomes. Toutkoushian and Hillman (2012) found that increasing both appropriations and merit-based grants was associated with increased college-going rates, but increases in merit-based aid had a much larger effect. Similarly, Toutkoushian and Shafiq (2009) found that need-based aid is the most financially efficient way to increase enrollment because it increases low-income enrollment but does not decrease other student enrollment. However, they argue state appropriations may be less politically volatile and can help drive state priorities for higher education. On the completion side, Avery et al. (2019) simulated the effects of several funding policies on bachelor's degree completions and found that both tuition and fee cuts and increases in state appropriations to increase institutional spending had positive effects across groups and sectors.

Summary of Findings

The studies reviewed here present important evidence regarding the impacts of funding decisions made by states. State funding has important impacts on enrollment and completion that must be considered. Funding increases are positively related to student enrollment, while appropriation declines lead to increases in out-of-state enrollment, decreasing the share of low-income students and students of color, especially at the most prestigious universities. Changes in state appropriations also positively impact graduation rates, the number of credentials awarded, and statewide degree attainment.

However, the effects of state appropriations differ by sector and by an institution's reliance on state support. Over time, institutions have increased tuition revenues and decreased expenditures in response to declining per-student state appropriations, but different institution types vary in their ability to adopt each strategy, leading to tangible differences in student outcomes. Public four-year non-research institutions and community colleges experience the most detrimental cuts to institutional expenditures because of declining state appropriations, negatively affecting enrollment and completion outcomes. These differences in institutional responses to declining state appropriations exacerbate existing inequalities, wherein the institutions that struggle to increase alternative revenues in response to declining state support also have lower levels of per-student appropriations.

State financial aid studies examining the enrollment effects merit aid find mixed effects, showing increased enrollment when using aggregated state-level data, and no effects when using individual-level data. However, grant aid has been shown to change where a student chooses to enroll, with merit aid increasing the likelihood of recipients remaining in their home state, promise programs increasing enrollment at

eligible institutions, and programs exclusive to public institutions shifting students to the public sector. Grant aid is also positively related to persistence, and there is strong evidence supporting the notion that grant aid positively impacts completion for low-income students and students of color.

Any comparison of the effects of appropriations versus financial aid should consider that the different funding sources have varied intents and objectives. Not all public funding for higher education is intended to increase enrollment and completion for all students. For example, states may choose to target programs that increase enrollment for the lowest-income students (through need-based aid) or may be interested in retaining students who are likely to leave the state for college (through merit-based aid). Given the complexity of the U.S. higher education system, a combination of direct institutional support and financial aid to students will continue to be necessary. Such investments are essential to increasing student access and success.

Discussion

The U.S. approach to funding higher education has not grown from any common strategy or singular set of goals. Instead, multiple actors have and continue to play a role and accept some responsibility, each operating with their own goals and a vague shared understanding of the purposes of higher education. This disparate approach to financing such a critical industry has inherent risks and weaknesses. Most notably, it has allowed for persistent and significant inequalities to exist between states, institutions, and student demographics. These inequalities are not only inefficient but, more importantly, are unfair and unjust; introducing another layer of structural inequality into an already highly unequal U.S. economy and educational system.

That said, the U.S. approach to funding its colleges and universities has also achieved tremendous success. By most accounts it was the first country to massify its higher education “system”, reaching far higher enrollment and attainment rates far faster than any other country (Gumport et al., 1997; Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). Likewise, its research universities have produced major advances in science, technology, arts, and culture, fueling the economy and improving the quality of life and standard of living in the U.S.

However, such advantages are beginning to wane. Other countries are making major investments in their higher education systems and have now matched or exceeded the U.S. in their educational attainment rates (OECD, 2020). Attainment rates in the U.S. have largely flatlined for decades as the U.S. continues to struggle to broaden access to higher education to students who have been historically underrepresented. A significant barrier to the U.S. improving educational attainment rates is its complex and high-cost approach to financing higher education.

The U.S. approach to higher education finance has given primacy to the states. The states have provided significant direct funding to public institutions with the belief that a robust system of public institutions advances the state’s interest in having an

educated citizenry and a strong and vibrant economy. Such funding has lowered the cost to attend college for students and provided flexible funding to institutions to advance their missions. However, this financial and social contract has been frayed as states have disinvested in higher education. Although states seek to expand postsecondary access, as demonstrated by many states having established goals to increase statewide educational attainment rates, this is not always reflected in states' higher education funding behavior. Higher education funding often serves as a "balance wheel" in state budgets (Hovey, 1999; Delaney & Doyle, 2011), and it takes a back seat to other budget categories, particularly during times of economic downturn.

In the U.S., the determination of state funding for higher education appears to be path dependent; state funding cuts have become a standard, self-reinforcing part of the political process for higher education (Pierson, 2000). For decades, states have followed this path with minimal pushback, and over time the logic of alternative revenue sources situating higher education as the appropriate state budget area to cut has become more mainstream (Thelen, 1999). Moving forward, historical patterns suggest that states will continue to cut funding for higher education whenever they face strain in their budget. It would take massive public pushback against the rising cost of college and a shift in the public view of higher education to divert from the current path of state disinvestment (Pierson, 2000).

The disinvestment by states in public higher education has exacerbated existing inequalities and moved U.S. higher education finance towards a more privatized or market-based approach, where students assume a greater burden and states invest in individual students, via financial aid, rather than institutions (Lacy & Tandberg, 2014). The move away from directly investing in institutions toward student financial aid may be a politically popular move as such aid provides direct benefits to likely voters. State lawmakers, who must run for reelection, may view increasing student financial aid as a politically popular strategy, and care will need to be taken to ensure that such increases aid do not come at the expense of direct institutional funding.

Institutions unable to pass on the costs associated with reduced state funding to students through tuition increases have responded by decreasing expenditures, particularly direct educational costs such as instruction, academic support, and student services (e.g., decreasing full-time faculty, limiting course offerings, reducing tutoring and advising opportunities), which may reduce the quality of education that students receive and negatively affect their overall postsecondary experience. As discussed previously, the institutions that most profoundly experience these cuts in educational expenditures, and subsequent reduction in quality and degree production, are public four-year non-research institutions and community colleges; institutions that are already under-resourced and disproportionately serve low-income and underrepresented racial groups.

As the literature reviewed in this chapter demonstrates, this disinvestment of states to their public higher education institutions has negatively impacted institutions' ability to enroll and successfully graduate students. It has also increased the complexity of U.S. higher education finance as institutions have had to seek alternative revenue streams and engage in complex enrollment management strategies (e.g., tuition discounting and recruiting out-of-state students). Institutions unable to

pass on the costs associated with reduced state funding to students through tuition increases have responded by decreasing expenditures, which may reduce the quality of education that students receive. The institutions that most profoundly experience these cuts are public four-year non-research institutions and community colleges; institutions that are already under-resourced and disproportionately serve low-income and underrepresented racial groups.

Nevertheless, lawmakers continue to debate the need for state support and the appropriate levels of public funding for higher education. A consistent theme in U.S. academic higher education has been this disconnect between research and policy. This has been most notably highlighted by George Keller's (1985) metaphor that higher education research is a "tree without fruit" because of its inability to influence decision makers. This may be nowhere more apparent than in the research on the impacts of public funding for higher education.

Ideally, policy research may serve to provide the intellectual backdrop for specific policy areas, as the steady development of theory and the accumulation of findings reshape understandings, frames, and beliefs (Hillman et al., 2015; Weiss, 1978). It is our hope that by summarizing the recent research connecting public funding of higher education to critical outcomes, we have begun to reshape the intellectual backdrop of this critical area of public policy.

Avenues for Further Research

While the literature on the impacts of changes in state higher education funding has become increasingly rigorous, researchers should continue to move toward more causal research designs, particularly those using student-level data, that isolate the effect of state appropriations on different student subgroups. Additionally, embedded in much of the literature on state appropriations is an assumption that the effect of a change in state appropriations is linear; however, it is likely that a given increase or decrease will have differential impacts on a state with low versus high funding levels. Further analysis of the heterogeneous effects of changes in state appropriations on institutions with varying reliance on state funding would help answer important questions about disparate impacts.

The grant aid literature would also benefit from the estimation of heterogeneous effects by student subgroups whenever possible. There's much to be learned about how financial aid affects students across the ability spectrum, all income levels, by racial group, and even by the timing of college or financial aid applications. Understanding these more nuanced effects may not only help with determining mechanisms, but it may also help the research and policy communities reconcile disparate findings. Additionally, it must be seen as paramount to include financial aid from all or at least other sources than the program being evaluated. Lastly, many recent studies rely on a regression discontinuity design, which estimates the local average treatment effect of a given aid program. However, policymakers are interested in more students than those near the eligibility threshold, and efforts to incorporate methods that provide all policy-relevant parameters should be considered.

Conclusion

The literature and background provided in this chapter paint a portrait of a complex and multi-sourced approach to financing higher education. We outlined the important role student financial aid has played and continues to play in lowering the cost to students and helping them access and succeed in college. However, the literature also reveals that state operating appropriations to institutions play a critical role in advancing student success. Moving forward state policymakers will need to better recognize the importance of direct support to institutions and increase their investment in institutions while continuing to invest in student financial aid. This will not be easy and will require difficult decisions and potential trade-offs. However, a reinvestment in higher education will be necessary if the U.S. hopes to broaden access and success in higher education and realize the many benefits of a robust and vibrant public higher education system.

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Appendix A

Table 7.A1 Summary of state appropriations literature review

<p>Effects of State Appropriations on Institutions Public institutions respond to declines in state appropriations in two main ways: (1) raising tuition revenues, and (2) decreasing institutional expenditures.</p>	
<p>Changes in tuition State appropriations are inversely related to tuition rates at public four-year institutions Institutions raise tuition revenue by increasing out-of-state and international enrollments This strategy of raising alternative revenues is most prevalent at doctoral institutions (especially state flagships), followed by master’s and bachelor’s institutions. The evidence is mixed on whether two-year colleges respond to cuts by increasing tuition.</p>	<p>Changes in institutional expenditures Institutions that are unable to raise tuition and fees to the extent needed to offset state funding cuts respond to cuts in state appropriations by decreasing expenditures. The largest impact is on education and related expenditures (instruction, academic support, and student services). This response is most prevalent at two-year institutions and least common at doctoral institutions.</p>
<p>Effects of state appropriations on student outcomes Through the mechanisms of changes in tuition and institutional expenditures, cuts in state appropriations have a negative impact on student enrollment and graduation rates/completion outcomes.</p>	
<p>Student enrollment Decreases in state appropriations lead to a decrease of in-state undergraduate enrollment, with these effects lasting several years. Enrollment is not impacted equally across all sectors; students move from the public to for-profit sector. Some public four-year institutions (predominately research universities) respond to state appropriation cuts by increasing their enrollment of out-of-state undergraduate students.</p>	<p>Graduation rates and completions Decreases in state appropriations lead to: A decrease in degrees and certificates awarded at two- and four-year institutions A decrease in graduation rates at four-year colleges, with the largest impact at research/doctoral institutions A decrease in statewide bachelor’s degree attainment</p>

Table 7.A2 Summary of student grant aid literature review

<p>Effects of financial aid on college enrollment</p> <p>The effects of student grant aid on overall college enrollment are mixed. Programs that offer support services in addition to financial awards are more consistently successful. Student grant aid often causes marginal students to attend more expensive institutions and institutions where they're eligible to receive aid.</p>	
<p>Overall college-going</p> <p>There's little evidence to suggest the federal Pell Grant, the largest student grant aid program, has a consistent effect on college going.</p> <p>Grant aid programs with advising and mentoring components are more successful in causing students to enroll in college.</p> <p>Student grant aid with easy application processes, simple eligibility requirements, and marketing efforts are the most successful in inducing students to enroll.</p>	<p>Type of institution</p> <p>Evidence consistently suggests that student grant aid programs successfully induce <i>where</i> students enroll, rather than just <i>if</i> they enroll.</p> <p>Merit- and need-based grant aid cause students to enroll in more expensive institutions (e.g., 4 vs. 2-year).</p> <p>The preponderance of evidence suggests that state merit aid programs successfully retain students in their home state for college, but further research is needed.</p>
<p>Effects of financial aid on college persistence & completion</p> <p>The evidence on the effects of grant aid on college persistence and completion is much more convincing than the evidence on enrollment with most studies suggesting aid causes students to persist and graduate at higher rates than their non-aided peers.</p>	
<p>Persistence</p> <p>Receiving student grant aid causes students to remain in college.</p> <p>Little is known about the heterogeneous effects of grant aid on student persistence.</p>	<p>Completion</p> <p>Meta-analytic evidence suggests that \$1000 in student grant aid increases the probability of completion by 2.5 percentage points.</p> <p>Those students with the most financial need are the most likely to benefit from student grant aid.</p> <p>Grant aid programs that invest in the program beyond just the money given to students (e.g., mentors, intensive advising, etc.) are the programs which have been the most successful.</p>

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Chapter 8

Financing Higher Education in a Federal System: The Case of Canada



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Abstract This chapter offers an overview of higher education funding in Canada, using the case of the Province of Québec to show part of the differences between regions of the country regarding university finances. First, we briefly sketch the evolution of higher education and its funding, showing regional differences. Second, we take a deeper look to the federal role in financing higher education to understand tools that are used to influence higher education development and research in Canada. Third, we look at the case of the province of Québec to understand the distinctive differences in university funding. We end this chapter by raising questions on the evolution of university financing at a time when provinces are facing new challenges regarding the demand for higher education activities, the role of research in developing the country or finding answers to new problems that we are facing in the society and its economy, especially in a context of growing internationalization of higher education.

Introduction

Although Canada is often presumed to be within the orbit of the United States, and in numerous cases also is, Canadian higher education has in many fundamental respects followed a different path. When one talks about the financing of higher education in Canada, the discussion is to an exceptionally large degree about public finance. Until the mid-1990s in most Canadian provinces, government either provided or controlled a large part of the funding of colleges and universities. Control included close regulation of tuition fees and many ancillary fees. Student assistance,

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although shared fiscally by the federal government and provincial governments, is for the most part woven from a single fabric and funded either with public capital or with publicly guaranteed private capital.

Historical Overview

The first university in Canada was French and Roman Catholic, established by pontifical charter in 1663, the Séminaire de Québec, which became Université Laval in 1852. Early in the nineteenth century, some colleges were founded through private benefaction and incorporated separately from government as private corporate entities. McGill College (now McGill University) was founded on this basis. While the colonial legislatures had an interest in promoting higher education, they did not interfere with, nor did they fund, colleges and universities that were founded on this basis.

Public finance first became a factor in Canadian higher education in Upper Canada (now Ontario) in 1827, when the precursor of the University of Toronto was founded with an endowment of crown land. This model was later followed in other Canadian colonies. Like the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, Canada saw the founding of many small sectarian colleges, none of which were financed publicly. As new provinces were founded in the Canadian west during the nineteenth century, new universities were modeled to a considerable extent on the American “land grant” universities. These were public institutions, although for the most part poorly financed. Moreover, and perhaps more distinctively, they were very autonomous. Responsibility for the public interest was vested by the government in the boards of trustees of the universities, a policy that was confirmed as recently as 1993 in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993). Until the beginning of the twentieth century, most Canadian colleges and universities were sectarian.

Following confederation in 1867, education was established as a provincial responsibility. Through the Great Depression and the Second World War, the federal government developed some interest in higher education through modest financial commitments in scientific research and support for employment. Universities began to be regarded as the public’s principal instrument for conducting scientific research. The Second World War cemented the connection between higher education and research. There was a massive expansion of university enrolment in the post-war period that was funded almost entirely by public subsidies, both federal and provincial.

By 1970, almost all the many small sectarian colleges and universities that had typified Canadian higher education in the previous century had either become secular and eligible for public funding or had affiliated or federated with public universities. During that period, the terms *college* and *university* had taken on their current meanings in Canada. Although there are a few exceptions, a *college* in Canada when used to describe a free-standing institution is what in many other English-speaking jurisdictions would be called a *community* or *junior college*. Cégeps, on the other hand, carry

a somewhat similar role in the province of Québec, although they have no degree granting powers and are a mandatory prerequisite for Québec universities (postgraduate, non-university institutions). In comparing statistics across national systems, it is important to keep this distinction between universities, colleges and Cégeps in mind.

Public funding for higher education in Canada, even when generous, can have and has had powerful steering effects. For example, throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, some Canadian provinces funded sectarian institutions. When sectarian factionalism became too fractious and inefficient, provincial governments, one by one, stopped it by withdrawing public funding and directing the funds to secular institutions exclusively. In some provinces, no institutional charters were changed, no enabling legislation was withdrawn; instead, the governments simply turned off the financial tap. Through various forms of provincial “federation” legislation, the only route that sectarian institutions could follow to gain access to public subsidies was by “affiliating” or “federating” with secular publicly funded institutions. Other provinces however introduced legislations to secularize universities. In practical effect, with very few exceptions, higher education is, in most provinces of Canada, highly regulated and protected from entry with degree granting rights protected by law, close integration with provincial and federal policies, and tuition fees regulation.

Universities depend to a great deal on public financing, but as Canadian universities seek to offset declining public subsidies by expanding international enrolment, competition may become the greatest factor in institutional behavior and, in turn, shape the system or, more precisely, each provincial system. To understand these differences in the dependance to public funds, the case of the Province of Québec might be the most evident one (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1 shows that the Government of Québec contributes 51% of Québec’s university revenue, while students contribute 18%. This situation differs from other provinces, because even if the province of Québec is contributing more than other provinces based on its GDP, universities’ expenses are at 15,2 K\$ in Québec while it is 20,9 K\$ in the rest of Canada; a difference of 38%, mostly related to the fact

Source	Operating funds	Restricted funds	Total
Government of Québec	3 102	250	3 352
Government of Canada	70	612	619
Student fees	1 167	0	1 167
Other sources	777	551	1 328
Total	5 116	1 413	6 529

Source: Système d’information sur le financement des universités (SIFU).

Table 8.1 Sources (in M\$) of revenue in Québec’s Universities (2018–2019)

that GDP per capita in Québec is 16% lower than in Canada and also to student fees and charity revenues that are lower (Fortin, 2021). For Québec's English universities where donation revenue is higher, this doesn't affect their fiscal situation as much. For example, McGill University, which is usually ranking among the top 50 universities in the world, is profiting.

Federal/Provincial Financial Relations

Higher education is a provincial prerogative under the Canadian system of federation. The federal government can influence policy through financing research (Polster, 1998), fiscal means, and indirect programs. The provinces have more fiscal influence setting policy and shaping systems because almost all allocations to colleges and universities flow through policies that they set, and the politics that surround them. In addition to fiscal power, the provinces have regulatory powers that the federal government does not have in respect to the design and conduct of systems of higher education.

Within the federation, jurisdictional prerogatives make a difference, even when they do not involve financial contributions. There are some long-standing areas of fiscal contention and policy differences. The systems of transfer payments from the federal government to provincial governments for post-secondary education have for the most part been unconditional. As a matter of arithmetic – albeit complicated – the transfer payment algorithms are capable of earmarking, and thereby create accountability to the federal government. Initially, the transfers took the form of cost-sharing or matching grants in the interest of national programs and pan-provincial standards of quality. Provinces could not divert the transferred revenue to other purposes. In time, earmarking was replaced by block grants, limited only by broadly defined principles. The limits were, however, not contractual, which was confirmed by the Supreme Court in 1991. The court described the limits as “political accords” (Cameron, 2013). Ultimately in terms of the amounts of funding available to colleges and universities, it is provincial policies and priorities that count. Despite federal financial contributions, public finance policy towards higher education in Canada is framed principally at the provincial level. That a reference to the Supreme Court was necessary, however, is evidence of tensions and disagreements between the two levels of government.

Federal Role in Higher Education Financing

The role of the federal government in financing higher education in Canada has basically four components: indirect transfer payments to provinces, direct payments for student financial aid (except in Québec), sponsorship of research, and tuition tax credits.

Transfer Payments

After the sporadic funding schemes that followed both World Wars, the Canadian federal government in 1957 introduced the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), by which the federal government transferred funding to provinces for post-secondary education, hospital insurance, and Medicare. It is important to understand what “transfer” means in Canadian public economics. With the exception of Québec, all income taxes – provincial and federal – are collected by the federal government. Through various redistribution schemes, some of the thus pooled funding is then returned to the provinces, in either the form of cash or “tax points,” which is a fiscal arrangement by which federal rates of taxation decrease in deference to provincial rates. It is then up to provinces to decide how much of the consequent “tax room” to use. In 1977, the CAP was replaced by the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Provincial Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act (EPF). From this point forward, all federal operating funding for post-secondary education ceased to be direct; it was instead paid to provinces for allocation to colleges and universities. That act has been amended and reviewed, each time with a different legislative title but elementally the same purpose (Government of Canada, 2015). EPF is still the term most used to describe the arrangements. The 1996 amendment was historically important. It followed a decision made in the previous year by the federal government to merge the EPF program with the transfer programs for health and social welfare. The merged program was then called the Canada Social and Health Transfer (CSHT). The merge also came with a reduction in transfers, which triggered financial pressure in most provinces, led to tuition increases in most provinces and some student mobilizations. The ratio between the health component and the “social” component which includes post-secondary education, was then about two to one. In 2004, however, the CSHT was then split in its two components: social transfers on one side and health transfers on the other, with specific earmarked funds for each. The funding ratio however stayed the same and increased steadily since then (Government of Canada, 2014). The transfers are now based on a per capita amount (*idem*).

Student Financial Aid

The second federal role is the Canada Student Loan Program, which was initiated in 1937, at the height of the Great Depression. It was first established as a program that young people struggling with employment could use to acquire vocational training (Fisher et al., 2005). For the federal government, it then had constitutional grounds as a targeted unemployment insurance program, a shared power between provinces and the federal government. The program was later reformed and legislated in 1964 to take its current form. The legislation includes articles that recognizes the provincial rights to withdraw (Government of Canada, 2020). Since its inception, the

Québec government withdrew from the program and has a distinct provincial program ever since. In other provinces, the CSLP is offered jointly with provincial programs. In 1995, the CSLP Act was replaced by the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act and has expanded since then to include grants (although still called the Canada Student Loan Program).

The CSLP is a federal policy transferring means-tested amounts to eligible students. With time, the Canada Student Loan Program is no longer what its name denotes: it is now a fully-fledged grant and loan program. On top of grants, loans are subsidized and include grants and “loan forgiveness” (in effect, another grant made after the fact once a student’s need-based debt reaches a specified upper level). Except for Québec, the front end of the program are its provincial student aid programs: from a student perspective, one student aid application is enough to be evaluated by both provincial and federal programs. Each of the ten provincial program has its own formulaic calculation, but each are based on needs evaluation. For out of Québec students, 60% of the average loan is provided by the federal CSLP and the balance is provided by a provincial loan program (Plager & Chen, 1999). Liquidities are provided by the federal government. The latter also contracts the administrative services needed to award loans and collect debts. The debt is guaranteed by government and, during the period of a student’s enrolment, plus 6 months, is serviced by government.

From 1998 to 2008, the federal government operated another scholarship program, called the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. The first awards were made during the 1999–2000 academic year, following the establishment of a \$2.5 billion endowment in a foundation. Outside Québec, the scholarships were awarded based on financial need and academic merit. A small portion – 5% – were awarded solely based on merit. In some provinces, the Canada Millennium Scholarships were used to displace a portion of loan forgiveness, which meant in practical effect no net gain in funding was available to the student, except for lowering future interest costs. In Québec, the use of the Foundation was however seen as an attempt to circumvent constitutional powers to provinces (see further discussion below).

Research

Research is the area in which Canada comes closest to having a nation-wide system. Federal funding for research flows through three granting councils: the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR). In almost all cases this funding flows through universities directly to researchers through research grants. They are not unconditional “transfers”. The funding must be spent according to the applications submitted by principal investigators to the councils for competitive appraisal. Any unspent funding cannot be retained by either the researchers or their universities. Although not formally classified as research council, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), established in

1997, provides funding for scientific technology research infrastructure. Unlike the other councils, CFI funding is allocated on a non-formula basis and without any direct connection to the location and volume of research sponsored by the granting councils. CFI grants are made only to universities; individual researchers cannot apply. Funding from these councils to universities amounted to about \$2.3 billion annually at the end of the 2017. Some universities also receive funding from Health Canada for research. This funding, however, is in the form of contracts initiated by the federal government. There is also a National Research Council (NRC) but it provides relatively little direct funding for university research; it is in practical effect the federal government's in house research and development agency. Budgets for the NSERC, SSHRC, and CIHR are relatively stable from year, which does not mean that universities think that the budgets are adequate or allocated appropriately (Advisory Panel, 2017). Funding for the CFI is irregular and unpredictable from annual budget to annual budget.

Unlike many other jurisdictions, research agencies in Canada usually fund only the direct costs of research; no provision is made for the indirect costs and overhead costs of research. Nor may the salaries of professors be charged to research grants, as they can be, for example, in the United States. Those costs are assumed to be met from the post-secondary allocation of the Canada Social Transfer, and in turn through provincial operating grants, plus tuition fees, and other sources of institutionally generated revenue. Funding from the CFI is for new infrastructure and to correct technological obsolescence.

Research Overhead and Infrastructure

Recognition of the costs of research overhead and infrastructure is the most significant area of policy dissonance, as opposed to policy diffusion, between Canada and other jurisdictions. There is a supplementary Research Support Fund (RSF) that provides funding, based approximately on universities' performance in attracting grants from the three federal granting councils. The overhead rate is flat, and ranges between 20% and 25% depending on the specific fund from which grants are made. There is no *ad valorem* relationship between the value of direct grants awarded and the budget available for the indirect costs of overhead and infrastructure. The budget from which this funding comes is separately determined. The allocation formula is not direct; smaller universities, as a matter of policy, receive their allocations first, with the balance – whatever it finally amounts to – then allocated to larger universities. The result is a redistributive policy, which means that some larger institutions receive less than 20%. The Panel for the Review of Federal Support for Fundamental Science (2017), in addition to recommending an increase in RSF funding to cover 40% of indirect costs of federally sponsored research, also recommended that the redistributive model be abandoned.

In contrast, the actual indirect costs range between 45% and 60% of the direct costs of research (Gouvernement du Québec, 2013; UQTR, 2018). The average actual rate of supplementary federal funding was just over 21% in 2017 (Advisory

Panel for the Review of Federal Support for Fundamental Science, 2017) Because the costs are actual, they have to be covered by internal subsidies from other sources. This is not a minor technicality. The Advisory Panel for the Review of Federal Support for Fundamental Science (2017) estimated that in 2015 as much as half of the spending for research and development came from the higher education sector itself, mainly provincial block grants and tuition fees.

Universities are partially guilty for this phenomenon. Canadian universities have long argued for core funding, by which they mean a unitary and fungible combination of instruction and research. There is no national statistical reporting of expenditures on instruction and research separately. That is the way the universities want it, even though there is a wide range of research intensity among them (Jonker & Hicks, 2016) and among disciplines within them (Advisory Panel for the Review of Federal Support for Fundamental Science, 2017). Universities favor unconditional federal transfer payments for much the same reason. One study (Gillen et al., 2011) suggests that active university research faculty fear that if the true costs of their research were displayed there might be less support for research overall. For example, even if Québec recognized theoretically an indirect cost of research to be between 45% and 60%, it assumes only 27% of it (Gouvernement du Québec, 2013; UQTR, 2018). This means that in practical terms, the government doesn't consider that the true indirect cost is at the assumed theoretical level and only very few university leaders complain about that.

Research Focus: Balancing Applied and Pure Research

As in many jurisdictions there are differences of policies and political opinions about the appropriate balance between public investment in applied research and pure research. The issue is more urgent and contentious because, compared to the U.K., U.S., and Australia, Canada lags far behind in private sector investment in research and development (OECD, 2014; Nicholson, 2018). Higher education research and development and public investment in it thus become the key means of expanding GDP. Both federal and provincial levels of government care about this.

Tuition and Education Tax Credits

Post-secondary students in Canada are eligible for tuition fee tax credits, which are applicable to income tax paid federally and provincially, and for education tax credits, which are available in all provinces but Québec. The education credits can be claimed for every month during which a student is enrolled in post-secondary studies and are intended to defray such costs as books and living expenses. The tuition tax credit program began in 1961; the education tax credit in 1974 (and was abolished at the federal level in 2017).

From 1974 onward, the Canadian tax code has allowed a tax deduction for savings that parents set aside for their children's university or college education. This is called the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP). As long as the contributions to an RESP are used for eligible higher educational expenses, they are never taxed. The use of the RESP was problematic. For the first 20 years use of the RESP was relatively low. Less than 2% of post-secondary students were using RESP funds to finance their education. The nature of the RESP's tax arithmetic was such that those sectors of the population which avail themselves of the program did not comprise those who are in the lowest tax brackets (Donnelly et al., 1999). Raising the rate of utilization was one of the reasons for, in 1998, enhancing the plan to include a matching federal grant (called the Canada Education Savings Grant – CESG) and to allow a wider range of eligible investment instruments. The Canada Learning Bond (CLB) was added in 2018. In 2016, just under 420,000 students were in receipt of RESP pay-outs that amounted in total to about \$397 million. Both figures represent an approximate 30% increase in participation since 2011. Participation by low- and middle-income families increased by just over 20% from 2011 to 2016, while overall participation increased by 31% (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2016). So, the RESP plus enhancements seems to have significantly increased the program participation rate for low- and middle-income students since its inception. Of these three programs, two – the RESP and the “basic” Canada Education Savings Grant – are not needs-tested.

The tuition fee tax credit covers all tuition fees paid to eligible post-secondary education institutions, including those outside Canada, and are applied against income taxes paid federally and in all provinces. The education tax credit is based on the number of months a student is enrolled in the respective tax year, adjusted for full-time or part-time status. The credits are non-refundable. If the value of credits are greater the value of the individual's taxes for that year, taxes are reduced to zero, but not below zero. Non-refundability is not absolute, as it is for other credits in the Canadian tax system. The credits can be carried-forward to future years – including years after an individual has ceased to be a student – if they cannot be used in the current year. Students may transfer the value of some of their credits to their parents or spouses. The practical effect of these provisions is more a matter of deferral than refundability (Neill, 2007). The credits are *ad valorem*, even for students enrolled in colleges and universities outside Canada with tuition fees higher than in Canada.

Tax credits can be more progressive than tax deductions. They are claimed more by students in lower income tax brackets than either the Registered Education Savings Plan or the Canada Education Savings Grant (Neill, 2007). They are not progressive in the sense that, like the RESP and the “basic” Canada Education Savings Grant, they are not needs-tested. As of 2016, the value of tax credits claimed was about \$2.3 billion, an amount which is nearly double the amount spent for other non-needs-based student assistance programs: the Canada Education Savings Grant (\$800 million) and the Canada Learning Bond (\$500 million), for a total of about \$3.3 billion. In the same year, the total amount spent for needs-based student assistance programs (Canada Student Loan Program loans and grants) was \$3.4 billion (Usher, 2018a). Thus, although the credits are the most significant single form of

federal income support for post-secondary students, they are not as visible – and therefore less politically contentious – because they do not appear as spending in budgetary accounts. Instead, they are accounted for as foregone tax revenue, as they are in two provinces – Saskatchewan and New Brunswick (Neill, 2007; Usher, 2018b) – that have supplementary tax credit programs. On its face value, Neill (2007) calculated from 2006 data that tax credits, if claimed, reduced “sticker price” tuition fees by between 72 and 55%, depending on the province. Usher (2006) calculated that from 1995 to 2005 average tuition fees across Canada increased by 43.9%, but only by 24.7%, when adjusted for the effects of tax credits. Neither calculation takes into account other student financial assistance. A study conducted by Hicks for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario in 2014 that added other student financial assistance into the calculation shows an even further reduction in net tuition (Hicks, 2014).

Depending on the weight given to behavioral and credit constraints arguments, tax credits are either seen as having a powerful effect on accessibility or either as inefficient subsidies (i.e.: having little impact on enrollment and graduation rates). When little these factors are seen as minor, the nature of the subsidy (e.g., tax credits vs student loans) becomes irrelevant and the “net sticker price” then becomes an effective measure as they are substitutable. One can then argue that the scale and role of tax credits in post-secondary education are usually missing from the political discourse about tuition fees and student financial assistance in Canada, especially when it comes to the political orbit of student union politics. One can wonder why they have so little place in the political discourse (one argument being their lack of visibility). However, if one gives enough weight to credit constraints and behavioral effects, the substitutability of measures can be questioned. One could argue that because of credit constraints, having the money at the time the expense is made (e.g., loans) is different from money at the end of the fiscal year (e.g.: credits). One could additionally argue that perceptions of loans and grants because they are more visible, have more behavioral impacts on enrollment. On top of the redistributive analysis, the importance of these factors in enrollment decisions also imply an analysis of efficiency. What good is a measure that is 100% used, but does not change enrollment patterns?

Despite the increase in program usage of RESPs and the popularity of the tuition tax credits, there is both empirical and theoretical evidence that suggests that these programs have little effect on changing enrollment and graduation patterns (Milligan, 1998, 2005; Long, 2004; Silliman, 2005; Morris, 2003). This may explain why the federal government abolished the education tax credit to transfer the funds to the student grants and loans program or why the Québec government reduced the tuition tax credit from 20% to 8% to transfer the resulting funds in the Québec student aid program. Despite the ongoing conversation on the effectiveness of the measures, RESPs and tax credit may be around for a while. What began as a governmental initiative nearly 60 years ago is now encoded in the fabric of tax returns and savings paradigm aimed at middle income families. It is now tacitly endorsed by every governing political party since then and, as Béland (2010) would say, could be “locked in” insofar as policy diffusion is concerned.

Tax Policy and Philanthropy

As they seek to expand their research and teaching capabilities beyond revenue from public subsidies and fees, Canadian universities are turning to fund-raising, or what is politely called “advancement” as a major financial strategy. As recently as 2016, charitable gifts constituted only about 4% of revenue to Canadian universities and income from endowments were just over 1%. These amounts, particularly endowment revenue, vary a lot from university to university, for example in Ontario the range is from 3–19% (COFO, 2017), while some universities have no endowment at all. More significant in terms of policy and overall funding, the revenue received from charitable gifts increased every year since 1996, and by 30% since 2005 (Higher Education Strategy Associates, 2018). The amounts, however, are not significant in terms of overall charitable giving in Canada; between only 1–2% of total giving annually is directed to higher education. Donors are 15 times more likely to donate to hospitals than universities. Other charitable organizations cover more than 35% of their expenses by expendable donations and revenue from endowments (Turcotte, 2012).

Over time, Canadian universities have lobbied the federal government, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, for several changes in the income tax treatment of donations that they receive. These have included adoption of the American practice for donations of marketable securities. The underlying issue here is the treatment of capital gains: should they be assigned to the donor prior to the donation or to the donee, for example a university, after receipt of the donation? The latter is far more advantageous to universities financially and aids fund-raising. This issue has become chronic, without a broad resolution. A number of other policy goals pursued by Canadian universities include allowing a higher (up to 150%) deduction for donations for scientific research and to adopt the American practice of allowing depreciated cost and any unrealized appreciation. For corporate donors, replacing some deductions with tax credits or allowing deductions for donors who lease assets to universities, which might be real property or cultural property, are also relevant issues. Moreover, allowing gifts to universities to have the same (higher) income limitations as gifts to government or widening rules for gifts of cultural property to exclude different treatment of Canadian cultural property are further suggestions. However, this list is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive, of the interplay between government and philanthropy in university finance in Canada.

It was not until 1948 that Canadian income tax law included a provision allowing deductions for charitable contributions. Even then, the maximum deduction allowed was 10% of net income; the maximum for corporations was 5%. So, Canadian fund-raisers have had to play catch-up. Charitable giving in Australia, also a former British colony, but not geographically close to the United States, has had a tax treatment experience almost identical to Canada’s, where English Common Law with respect to philanthropy continued into the twentieth century. Is it possible that colonial history and legal systems sometime explain policy behavior more than does policy diffusion? It could explain the cultural divide between French speaking

Canadians and others, for whom the culture of donation to “roman catholic” universities sometimes amounts to the perception of spending on something already paid through taxes.

Analysis of the Federal Role

The federal government’s emphasis on economic performance is both a matter of policy and politics (Government of Canada, 2016). The policy approach to human capital is “task specific” (Gibbons & Waldman, 2004). Employment and Social Development Canada’s Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS) organizes 500 occupations into five human capital skill levels: on-the-job training, high school, college education, university education, management (professional post-graduate). The last three comprise 77% of occupations. There is a reason for this: labour productivity in Canada has been declining since 1992 (OECD, 2018; Ontario’s Panel on Economic Growth & Prosperity, 2018). Education improves labour skills quality. The connection between labour productivity and economic performance also explains Canada’s ranking second in the world in the percentage of immigrants selected on economic criteria (OECD, 2018).

On the political side, the emphasis on human capital formation can be explained by voter behavior and the constitutional division of powers. Polls consistently show that the voting public is far more concerned about the economic issues than educational issues. Year after year national (and provincial) polls rank the economy either first or second, usually interchangeably with health care, as voters’ highest priorities. The highest that education has ranked is eighth, and that ranking combines schools, colleges, and universities (Anderson & Coletto, 2018). Furthermore, employment and economic performance is a federal matter whilst education is not. The use of such language can thus be understood as a mean to develop legitimacy in a provincial competence.

The Case of the Province of Québec and Its Funding Policy for Higher Education

It is perhaps proper to answer what may be puzzling to an international readership: of all the ten provinces and three territories in Canada, what makes Québec special? This question, and its answer, is intrinsically tied to Canada’s politics, DNA, and to the broader question of whether Québec is a distinct nation. Four key social and historical differences, all connected to the history of *La Belle Province*, yields institutional and policy singularities that makes the province distinctive. This is not to say that higher education policies are different in all traits and matters. For instance, the university funding mechanism in Québec shares a common core with other

provinces and jurisdictions, some of the provincial fiscal expenditures related to higher education match those found in the federal tax code, and the core formula to determine student aid shares similarities with other provinces and jurisdictions.

Québec is the sole province whose official language is French. Because of its French origins, it inherited the language, the cultural traits, and a legal system distinct from the rest of Canada. The Civil Code and its conceptual philosophy on the source of the law, from general codified principles, is central in understanding the provincial government's activity (MacDonald, 2016). It permeates in the legal constitution of Cégeps and in the formulaic codification of the provincial student aid program. Their roles and responsibilities exist solely by their definitions in the Law (Gouvernement du Québec, 2019b). Québec's institutional history is also influenced by a reluctance – and sometimes a resistance – to the federal government's intervention and spending in competences that are constitutionally exclusive to provinces. Higher education is one of them. This tension has led to unique practices of inter-governmental relations within the federation. For instance, the *Gérin-Lajoie* doctrine, a posture of the province in matter of international affairs, states that the province has full diplomatic competency in matters related to education. A recent incarnation of this doctrine is the nomination of Québec delegates at UNESCO by the federal government (Université de Sherbrooke, 2006; Gouvernement du Québec, 2019c). Another example of unique practice are the negotiations surrounding the Canada's Millennium Scholarship foundation, or the absence of a federal student aid program in Québec (Government of Québec, 2019a; Sirois, 2000). Finally, the social and political influence of student unions in Québec are one of active demonstrations and strikes when needed. Rarely observed in the rest of Canada, this culture of demonstration is a key underlying political force explaining the evolution of the tuition fees policy in Québec. One of the unique realities of Québec is that the government is used to changing financing regulations after facing problems or a public crisis, usually following a large consultation process (Quirion et al., 2020).

As in many provinces, the birth of the modern Québec higher education system occurred during the 1960's. Universities were considered a strategic instrument for socioeconomic development in the 20 years following the Second World War (Racine-St-Jacques & Maltais, 2016; Umbriaco et al., 2007). The *Rapport Parent* sketched the modern look of higher education policies in Québec (Corbo, 2014; Parent, 1965). The higher education system in Québec can be characterized by its institutional actors, its funding policies and its lobbying groups. All universities in Québec are considered private but are established in legislation; each have had their own acts since 1967. The list of Québec Universities can be found legally coded in the Québec legislation (Gouvernement du Québec, 2019d). As in other provinces, the provincial government has legislated the degree market such that no other institutions have the right to grant bachelors, masters, or PhD degrees within the province (Gouvernement du Québec, 2019d). Competition-wise, the university market is closed, and competition occurs only between existing universities. In addition to the universities, there are forty-eight Cégeps and other private colleges. These institutions are unique to Québec, and most were founded following the Royal Commission on Education in the Province of Québec (Parent, 1965). These bring together

students that are preparing for university (2 years) and those that will complete a vocational post-secondary 3 year program, entering at 17 years old. Their role is two-fold: they bridge high schools to universities through two-years of pre-university programs and they bridge high schools with the labour market through three-year vocational programs. There is some evidence that their creation leads to a significant increase in enrollment and mobility (Lewis, 2003). Cégeps share similarities with colleges in the rest of Canada. Cégeps exist by legislation and are government entities under the Ministry of Higher Education. As a result, there is no academic freedom or autonomy, at least not for program creation, program change, and governance. The government nominates most of the board members and they have no degree granting powers. In 2004, the Québec government floated the idea of giving them a degree granting status, but student unions and teachers' unions opposed the idea (Chouinard, 2004a, b) so it was dropped. Completion of a Cégep credential is the *de facto* requirement to seek admission in a university program. This (almost) mandatory passage to Cégeps echoes the structure of the education system in France.

Funding

Although they have separate appropriations, Universities and Cégeps share a common funding mechanism structure, often dubbed a funding formula. Both formulas are input-based, meaning that they tie the proportion of dedicated appropriations to production inputs such as student enrollment (which is the main variable), building costs etc. (Gouvernement du Québec, 2020; Frolich et al., 2010). Especially at the university level, the formula shares similarities with France, but also with other entities such as the U.S. state of Texas or the province of Ontario (University of Texas, 2016; Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2015). In Cégeps, the bulk of funding is tied to bargaining contracts (57%), followed by academic activities. In contrast, 71% of the funding allocation in universities is tied to enrollment. Noticeably, there is no funding component tied to bargaining contracts at the university level. This has led the *Fédération Québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'universités* to demand such a component. Recently (2019), the Government of Québec has recognized the research function of Cégeps by specific subsidies and also increased their autonomy regarding their development.

The annual appropriations amount is established through the normal cycle of yearly budgetary review. This means that the appropriations must be approved by the government in council, and that there is a political component to the determination of appropriations. As such, the funding mechanism generates incentives to increase enrollment in funding areas with the highest margins, but the disconnect between appropriations figures and the increase in enrollment can lead to a decrease in funding per student. If total appropriations do not change over time, the incentives of the funding formula generate what is known as a zero-sum game (Rizzo, 2004; Ehrenberg, 2008). Universities and Cégeps compete for budget shares rather than accrued appropriations.

There were two important revisions of the funding formulas since 1995. First, in 2000 the university funding formula switched from a model of a mix between unconditional transfers and student enrollment to the current full enrollment based approach (Gouvernement du Québec, 2020). Second, it changed again in 2019, adjusting the weights of disciplines and cycles of study, and deregulating tuition fees for international students. There are three main changes. First, it brings the yearly funding for doctoral students lose to \$40,000 for the first 3 years of a PhD, a substantial 50% increase. Second, additional fixed (and university specific) funds to support regional universities were also introduced. Third, it further introduces a smoothing mechanism to reduce the redistributive effects of the weight changes in the short run. These changes however have clear redistributive effects in the long-run, making some universities structurally advantaged over others. On top of these changes, additional but smaller conditional subsidies are awarded to increase the quality of teaching programs, to support the recruitment of international students and to link universities better with enterprises.

Regarding internationalization of the student body, the Government of Québec has no explicit policy except through its financing regulations (Umbricco et al., 2007). Finally, the CÉGEP funding formula was also amended in 2019 to recognize the research-oriented component, support smaller campuses and to enhance the recruitment of international students (Gouvernement du Québec, 2019).

Tuition

In Québec, tuition fees for Québec students have been historically the lowest and uniform, if compared with other provinces (Statistics Canada, 2019). The history of tuition policy in Québec is historically tied to the idea of *gratuité scolaire* (free tuition) and to the history of student strikes. Based on their impact at shaping tuition policies (and more recently, student aid), it should be recognized that the student movement is an incredibly powerful force, most often *reactive*, that shapes the financing policy process. It has lead commentators in Québec to call them the most powerful lobby in Québec (Boileau, 2005), which is quite different than in the rest of Canada. While student unions in the Anglophone part of Canada are not mobilizing a lot and act with deference towards university leaders and ministers, student unions in Québec are very well organized. The province often sees students' leaders becoming minister, deputy-minister, or even minister chief of cabinet. The most significant case that highlighted the power and influence of student unions was the 2012 strike, now known as the *Maple Spring*, which lasted roughly 6 months, and transformed into a social movement that spread beyond universities (Simard, 2013). It was initiated by an announced 85% tuition increase. As an outcome, the government lost an election, and the subsequent government canceled the announced policy and replaced it with a policy of fee indexation to disposable household income. This is the current policy, which seems to have the tacit agreement of current student unions (Gouvernement du Québec, 2018a). Despite tuition fee regulation, since

1998, universities have increased ancillary fees in a non-uniform way, circumventing the official policy of a tuition freeze (Allard, 2009). The approach inhibited any possibility of a coordinated strike. In 2013, ancillary fees however became regulated through the university funding formula and their growth was capped in line with the other tuition fees.

Student Aid

The Québec Student Aid, commonly known as *prêts et bourses* (loans and grants), has its current structure since the 1960's. It remains the sole student aid program in the province, as the provincial government opted out of the Canada Student Loan (and Grant) Program. The core formulaic structure of student aid is the same across Canadian provinces, that is: $\text{Aid} = \text{Estimated Needs} - \text{Estimated Resources}$. Estimated needs are based on the circumstances of a given student: household structure, education level, tuition fees etc. The estimated resources are based on the socio-economic background of the student: dependence to parents, marital status, potential children etc. The specific design of these parameters varies from one province to another, changing the specific generosity of the program in the different provinces.

Besides the common structure, there are two notably distinctive characteristics to the Québec student aid program. First, it is the sole needs-based program in the province, and it is entirely autonomous. This contrasts with other provinces, where an effort of integration with the Canada Student Loan (and Grant) Program is made. This integration is sometimes quite complicated from both the backend and the front-end perspective.¹ Second, the Québec program can be characterized as more generous for low-income individuals, but also more targeted. This means that students in mid-range households receive less support than in other provinces. However, the reverse is true for low-income households.

There are other policy episodes which further illustrate the distinctive role of students as policy actors as well as the distinct nature of Québec with regards to the federal government. First was the creation of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation. It was seen by most provincial interest groups and the Québec Government as an attempt to circumvent provincial powers in higher education (Gagnon, 1999). While the foundation was welcomed in other provinces, it took 2 years of negotiations between the federal and the provincial governments, brokered by student unions, to reach an agreement. In the resulting deal, the Foundation would abandon giving grants directly to students and transfer the money to the Québec government. In return, the government would use half of it to lower the

¹In provinces where the provincial and the federal programs are integrated at the front-end, the threshold of admissibility still varies by level of government. This creates discontinuities in the variations of aid. All of this could be avoided if provinces used article 14 (opt-out with compensation) of the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act.

student loan ceiling and use the other half to fund Cégeps and universities (Sirois, 2000). In effect, Québec had agreed to use the funds under conditions, but at the same time, forced the Foundation to spend the funds on something different than scholarships. As education is a provincial responsibility, Québec uses every tool it has to keep a full control on its development, something that is less essential for the other provinces.

In 2019, the government also introduced a new form of grant for internships being mandatory within a university degree, a measure lobbied for by student union over many years. In this matter, the role of the student unions was closer to “ordinary” interest groups. In the argumentative space, they elicited how the government treated public internships differently (i.e.: free labor) than the fiscal treatment of private internships (i.e.: wage subsidies). In the pressure space, they used both pressure tactics as well as active intervention during the provincial election. As a result, the party currently forming the government promised (and delivered) paid mandatory internships. Finally, in 2020, partly triggered by the effort to support income during the pandemic, the federal government announced additional funds of 9 billion dollars for student aid, increasing loan and grant amounts in the Canadian program, which also affected Québec.

Concluding Note and a Look to the Future

The higher education systems in Canada can be compared to a bumblebee: it shouldn't be able to fly, but it does. Compared to other jurisdictions, its performance is well above average. The system is stable if sometimes difficult to comprehend. Amid policy and political debates, the quality of higher education is high, and more taken for granted than debated. The interface between federal and provincial policy, although perhaps appearing messy, divides mainly along lines of fiscal practice and program delivery. Public financial support for higher education usually divides equally between federal contributions, which, except for research, are in most respects indirect, and provincial contributions, which are direct. Because provinces have the power to regulate the existence of universities, to control university finances (mainly subsidies and tuition fees), the balance of total financial support falls to them, and it is their policies that determine the overall expenses investments in higher education.

However, trade-offs about quality, accessibility, program delivery and the role of higher education in economic growth are concerns for both levels of government. These trade-offs are not, however weighted identically. The economies of some provinces are as large as those of some countries: Ontario's is as large as Switzerland's, Alberta's is as large as Denmark's, Quebec's is as large as Israel's. Provincial economies are different in more than size, for example, in manufacturing, resource extraction, agricultural production, or immigration. They have different trading partners. They have different politics. That they – separately, not collectively – and the federal government have different ideas and priorities for the

economic role of higher education may be inescapable. It certainly should not be surprising.

The fiscal stability of the Canadian higher education system over the first two decades of the twenty-first century was due mainly to a nearly 100% increase in enrolment of international students. Total income and expenditure per student over approximately the same period were virtually flat. There is an explanation for what otherwise might be seen as a conundrum, in the past and for the future. During the 1990s, demographic domestic demand for access declined, in some provinces by as much as 17% (Keen, 2007). For many universities this meant that international students were filling already funded under-subscribed study places. Marginal costs did not rise. Domestic demographic demand for access is projected to rise to previous levels between 2024 and 2026 (Hango & de Broucker, 2007). For Québec, recent revisions showed that the number of students will continue to rise (similar to the last 20 years) with at least 30% more students in 2030/2031 than in 2019/2020 (Quirion et al., 2020; Rexe & Maltais, 2022).

This could have two results, one that would extend overall stability, and one that could force strategic change. Provincial governments so far have either been silent or positive about the growth of international enrolment. It did not cost them anything, and costs for institutions have been very low. However, no provincial government will tolerate international students displacing domestic ones. One result could be a reduction in reliance on international enrolment or, at least, significantly less reliance from the side of universities. The other could be a continuation of taking full advantage of the international student market. That, however, would mean real growth in capacity with attendant high marginal costs, which in turn would mean less net marginal revenue, except in cases where tuition fees are deregulated. There is little or no prospect that provincial governments will meet those costs and the choice of Québec to deregulate international student fees is already an observable answer to this problem. For some universities, provincial governments will in practice become minority shareholders. This may not necessarily de-stabilize the system but might re-shape it as market forces overtakes the public policy role of the state.

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Chapter 9

Higher Education Funding in Canada, the U.S. and Western Europe – A Comparison



Ben Jongbloed

Abstract This chapter compares the higher education funding systems in the United States, Canada and Western Europe as described in the three previous chapters in this volume. To illustrate differences and commonalities between states we use a number of complementary perspectives and concepts: (1) Esping-Andersen's three *welfare regimes* of liberal, conservative and social-democratic societies, (2) three key *funding dilemmas*/characteristics around funding, along with OECD statistics and information on these characteristics, (3) higher education governance modes as shown in Clark's *triangle of coordination*, and (4) the perspective of *policy frames* driving higher education policy-making. The three policy frames we distinguish are: (1) economic competitiveness and labour market relevance, (2) scientific excellence and exclusiveness, and (3) societal challenges and inclusiveness.

Bringing these perspectives together allows us not just to describe the state-of-the-art in terms of the funding mechanisms of particular states, but also sheds light on the global movement towards market-type steering through the introduction of cost sharing, competition and performance-based funding in higher education. Our argument is that national higher education governance and funding systems differ in the degrees to which they will introduce (or already have embedded) particular manifestations – or *varieties* – of *academic capitalism*.

Introduction

This chapter compares higher education funding systems in the United States, Canada and Western Europe. Based on the descriptions of the three systems by, respectively, Laderman et al., Lang et al. and Garritzmann in the previous chapters we will make this comparison along the lines of the three welfare regimes identified by Esping-Andersen (1990). This welfare system classification will be combined

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with varieties of academic capitalism approach, introduced by Bégin-Caouette et al. (2016) and Schulze-Cleven & Olson (2017). Against this background, we hope to provide readers from Europe, North America and beyond with valuable insights on trends in funding policies from a comparative welfare perspective.

To compare funding policies across countries, the next section of this chapter develops a typology of higher education (HE) funding. This will be done along the lines of some of the key questions and issues for higher education funding (section “[Funding Systems: The Key Questions, and Some Data on Funding](#)”). How (OECD) countries have approached these questions is reflected in their choices in terms of levels of funding (the public-private trade-off), the policy instruments used for the funding of the HE institutions (e.g., through block grants and/or competitive funds for HEIs); and the way national funding authorities have shaped the student financial support system (through merit-based and/or need-based aid; student grants and/or student loans, et cetera).

Different welfare regimes may be connected to different funding policies and different funding reforms implemented in the three systems. Section “[Welfare Regimes and Funding System Characteristics](#)” will, therefore, present some highlights of funding systems embedded in the three ideal type welfare regimes – the liberal, conservative and social-democratic types distinguished by Esping-Andersen (1990).

Based on the three ‘country chapters’ (Europe, Canada, U.S.) describing HE financing, we then will compare the three funding systems (section “[Marketisation in Higher Education: Coordination Modes and Policy Frames](#)”), looking at their funding policy characteristics and connecting these to the dimensions of the three welfare regimes. In all three regions we have seen the introduction of more market-type steering and financing of higher education. All regions have witnessed the emergence of *academic capitalism* (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). However, we argue that the particular type of academic capitalism that has emerged is mediated by the specificities of countries’ welfare regimes, their coordination modes and the dominant ideas – policy frames – about how the higher education system works r should work.

In section “[Conclusions and Reflections](#)”, we look back at the relationship between welfare regimes and coordination modes in higher education, on the one hand, and funding policies, respectively marketization policies and academic capitalism varieties on the other.

Funding Systems: The Key Questions, and Some Data on Funding

Countries differ a lot with respect to the way they finance their higher education providers and the students who study for a degree in those institutions (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2016). There are differences between the developed and

less-well developed countries in the world, but also between countries within these two broad groups. Even the richest countries in the world – most of them members of the OECD – show clear varieties when it comes to the extent they finance their higher education system, the types of public expenditures for higher education and the recipients of public funding (OECD, 2020a, b). OECD databases, such as Education at a Glance, show wide differences in terms of the levels of funding and the composition of funds (e.g., OECD, 2021). Furthermore, as illustrated by the three chapters in this volume describing the Canadian, U.S. and European funding systems, there are also significant differences in the way public and private funds are allocated to higher education institutions and students in higher education.

The wealth of countries is one reason for these differences, but also the priorities attached to higher education (or, more generally, education in its entirety) are part of the reasons. Countries or regions (generically, “states”) invest in education to promote economic growth (Nelson & Phelps, 1966) and innovation (Acemoglu, 1997; Redding, 1996). Within the overall framework of the welfare systems of countries, higher education plays a role that is often linked to the social-economic development of the country – its citizens and firms – and how that well-being/wealth can be improved further through education and research. Resourcing of higher education, therefore, is a policy tool – a means to an end, a strategy – for creating individual and national competitive advantage.

In deciding on the funds invested by countries – their governments, their citizens – in higher education, important choices and trade-offs must be made. Choices have to be made about using scarce resources to achieve often-conflicting goals. This implies that funding issues are very much about priority setting and assessing policy effectiveness and opportunity costs. In many ways, these are questions of a political-economic nature (Garritzmann, 2016).

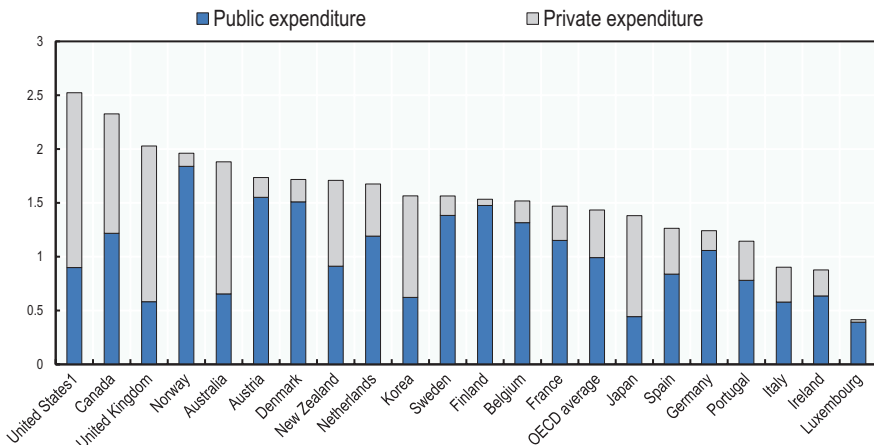
Public budgets for higher education have grown considerably (Johnstone, 2004). And with higher education being such a large part of the public sector, there is increasing scrutiny on how public resources for higher education are allocated and used – for education, research, student support, infrastructure, staffing, campus development, etcetera. At the national (i.e., federal, country, state) level, reforms in educational financing are frequently debated in policy circles to identify the funding mechanisms that produce the best outcomes in terms of guaranteeing access for students, high-quality education, and high-quality research, as well as connecting this education and research to the needs of society. Therefore, many trade-offs and dilemmas around equity and efficiency in higher education emerge (Enders & Jongbloed, 2007). And, given the political-economic nature of these dilemmas, higher education funding therefore cannot be studied from an economic perspective alone, but also will need to draw on insights from political science, public administration, public policy, and organizational studies. As illustrated by the Lang et al. chapter on the U.S. in [this volume](#), political factors also impact funding decisions.

These key political-economic questions are:

1. How much is spent on higher education (or spent per student/ graduate/ unit of knowledge)?
2. What is the share of private spending (by students; households; companies) on higher education as compared to that of the public (government)?
3. How are the public funds for higher education made available to institutions and students?

Many of these questions are covered in the Garritzmann chapter in [this volume](#) and the author has provided some examples of the different ways countries have answered them. Elsewhere in this volume, the Laderman et al. ([this volume](#)) chapter on the U.S. funding system provided examples of the different higher education spending choices made by U.S. states in answering the above questions. The developments in the U.S. illustrate that particular types of support for higher education are susceptible to being crowded out by increases in demand for other budget categories. The latter relates to another fundamental question, namely what are the activities or societal domains that qualify for public funding? Questions like these go beyond the educational and research needs of states and necessitate making assessments of the returns on public investment in different areas of public concern.

To address the first key question the broadest measure of financing for HE is total public and private spending on higher education. Public spending includes not just operating transfers to HEIs for education or other purposes (capital expenditures, research expenditures), but also government payments to students (student financial support). In 2018, the OECD countries shown in Fig. 9.1 on average spend about



Note: 1. Figures are for net student loans rather than gross, thereby underestimating public transfers.

Source: Based on OECD (2021), Figure C2.2 (<https://stat.link/n2rbd1>)

Fig. 9.1 Total expenditure on higher education institutions as a % of GDP, by source of funds (2018)

1.4% of GDP on higher education from public and private sources - two-thirds of it on average coming from public and one third from private sources (OECD, 2021).

Looking at the public expenditure on higher education, Fig. 9.1 shows that the Nordic countries stand out with generous public spending, whereas Anglo-Saxon countries such as the UK and the U.S. spend much less. Western European countries invest quite considerably in higher education while Eastern Europe and some Southern European countries score in the middle of the distribution.

On the second question – the share of private funding – Fig. 9.1 as well as the chapter by Garritzmann in [this volume](#), show that private expenditure on HE is particularly high in the Anglo-Saxon countries, especially in the U.S. The same is true for both Korea and Japan. In these countries, the level of tuition fees is relatively high.

Our third key question is about mechanisms of funding. Here, we focus on public funding, because that is where policies (and politics) have the greatest impact. The funding mechanisms question can be broken down into three sub-questions that deal with (1) the funding channel; (2) the funding base; and (3) the funding conditions. The first sub-question asks whether funds flow to student (*customer*) or provider (*supplier*). The second addresses the choice (say, trade-off) of making funds dependent on measures of input (e.g., student enrolment, cost projections, staff volume) or indicators of output (say, performance measures, such as degrees, publication counts, or citation measures). The third sub-question touches on the choice of allocating funds to higher education institutions in a top-down fashion by means allocating block grants, or allocating funds through a competitive process where HE institutions (or academics) themselves are more in the lead. In the latter case, HEIs submit proposals that then are negotiated and/or selectively awarded.

The way in which funds are allocated matters, because it affects the behaviour of those (i.e., HEIs, students, researchers) receiving them. The mechanisms for public funding contain important incentives to achieve higher education's three main goals, viz. quality, efficiency and equity. In order to encourage these goals, many governments have started to introduce performance elements in their funding mechanisms in the belief that this will contribute to a higher degree of cost consciousness and goal orientation among HEIs and students (Burke, 2002; Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001). Performance-based funding modes create an environment of quasi-markets (Herbst, 2007) and both the Garritzmann and the Laderman et al. chapter in [this volume](#) present examples of performance-related funding arrangements introduced by states in the U.S. and elsewhere in the OECD.

As shown in these two chapters and in other research (e.g., de Boer et al., 2015), many countries have implemented formula-based funding mechanisms where the public support that HEIs receive is based on a set of performance indicators such as the number of Bachelor and Master degrees (e.g., Austria, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, and several states in the United States such as Tennessee), the number of exams passed by students (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Tennessee, Louisiana, South Carolina). Funding for research can be made dependent on performance measures such as the number of doctoral degrees (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands) or assessments of research quality (e.g., Italy,

Poland, UK), or the volume of competitive research grants won (Norway, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Scotland).

There are different ways in which performance-based funding systems can be designed and the shares of public funding attached to measures of performance can differ very much between countries (e.g., de Boer et al., 2015). The hypothesis put forward in this chapter is that the degree of performance-orientation in the funding systems and performance-related tuition models will depend on the political-, socio-economic context of the country at hand – in particular its welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990). are expected respectively. However, they also have raised concerns about unintended effects (Dougherty et al., 2016).

Welfare Regimes and Funding System Characteristics

Given the different approaches to higher education funding described in the three funding chapters in this volume, the immediate question that arises is: What is underlying the differences in the higher education funding systems across the (western) world? Garritzmann (this volume), in his chapter, suggests that the differences can be traced back to socio-economic structural factors, policy legacies, political institutions (e.g. political parties, interest groups) and public opinion (attitudes).

Taking up this suggestion, we make use of the *welfare regime* concept to denote the social-economic context of countries/states (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Welfare regimes are shaped by political legacies and are characterized by coherent patterns of social policies – around standards of living, social insurance, healthcare and employment. Esping-Andersen identified three main types of welfare states – three regimes – and categorized the modern OECD economies into three different categories:

1. Liberal welfare regimes (e.g., Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, and UK) are characterized by a strong role for markets, with states only assuming responsibility for welfare when the family and market fails.
2. Conservative welfare regimes (e.g., Austria, France, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland, and Belgium) are characterized by a commitment to preserve social structures and hierarchies, and in particular the traditional family.
3. Social-democratic welfare regimes (e.g., Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland) are characterized by universal social benefits for all citizens, guaranteeing the individual and families a decent standard of living, independently of market participation and family wealth.

In this section, we have attempted to compare the three regions (CAN, U.S., OECD/EU) and their higher education funding systems along similar lines, placing the funding systems in their social fabric – their particular welfare regime context (see Table 9.1). In doing so, we follow Pechar & Andres (2011), who studied higher education policies more broadly and who also included policies around access and participation in their comparison. Our attempt looks at funding models only.

Table 9.1 Welfare regimes and their higher education funding systems

	Public & private investment in HE	Mechanisms for funding HE providers	Mechanisms for financial support of students
Liberal (U.S., UK, Canada, Australia, NZ)	Medium/high public funding to foster human capital investments High tuition fees	Competitive grants Performance-based funding Deregulation/ decentralized decision-making Privatization; private provision	Individual responsibility for investing in education Reliance on student loans Risk taking Selection of students based on meritocratic criteria High proportion of students receiving aid (particularly: loans)
Conservative (e.g., DE, FR, ES, IT, NL, CH, BE, AT, PT)	Medium levels of public funding (reflecting medium investments in HE) Modest tuition fees	Reliance on block funding of HEIs Academic self-governance (peers) involved in allocation decisions Targeted funding Top-down provision (e.g. excellence funds) Supranational steering	Need-based and merit-based grants Status and class-based Reliance on family allowances and tax benefits Lower proportion of students receiving aid
Social-democratic (NO, SE, FI, DK)	High levels of public funding Zero/low tuition fees	Public provision of HE Balance between block funding and project funding Broad-based umbrella organisations involved in allocation decisions	Students as citizens Universal grants, not based on merit Less reliance on family No tax benefits through parents or family allowances High proportion of students receiving aid (particularly: grants)

Source: Author

Note: For country abbreviations see Appendix

Table 9.1 distinguishes the three types of welfare regimes, as well as three characteristics of the funding systems that relate to the key questions identified in section “[Funding Systems: The Key Questions, and Some Data on Funding](#)” (above). The funding characteristics are:

1. public/private investment in higher education;
2. mechanisms for the funding of HE providers;
3. mechanisms for financial support of students.

In the following we will clarify the cells in the table, explaining why the specific funding characteristic and the particular welfare regime category go together.

As part of the first set of characteristics, the volume of total public and private higher education expenditures (as a percentage of GDP) indicates the extent to which a country invests in higher education – expressing attention for human capital development and wealth creation. As shown in Table 9.1, liberal regimes show the highest levels, followed by social-democratic regimes, and conservative regimes.

The level of tuition fees is also part of the first set of characteristics, and addresses the question of who pays the fees and whether there is a differentiation of fees. When looking at the division between private and public expenditures, we see high private contributions in some liberal countries (mainly North America). This feature helps bring total spending on higher education to the highest levels worldwide. Tuition fees are modest in conservative regimes, and this is reflected in relatively moderate shares of private expenditures in many continental European countries. Fees are even lower – or zero – in social-democratic regimes.

Turning to funding mechanisms (the second set of funding characteristics), we expect liberal states to relatively embrace more market-type steering approaches. Indeed, in many Anglo-Saxon countries, the core funds that states provide to their HEIs are more driven by performance-based funding mechanisms and a higher share of research funds is provided by means of competitive procedures. An example is the heavily performance-based mechanism of research funding in the UK (i.e. the REF – Research Excellence Framework). The chapters by Lang et al. ([this volume](#)) and Laderman et al. ([this volume](#)) show that for the funding of research, the federal governments in Canada, respectively the U.S., heavily rely on research councils that provide competitive research grants.

When it comes to these funding mechanisms, the social-democratic countries are at the other side of the spectrum; they rely more on combined block funds for education and research, with some targeted project funds decided by intermediary organisations that represent the collective interests of a wide set of stakeholders. Conservative states, such as the ones in continental Western Europe, take a middle position between the liberal and the social-democratic regimes, and make use of a more balanced mix between state steering through block funds and competitive funding by means of research councils. Here, the academics themselves are much more controlling the market and channelling the competition between HEIs.

On the third funding characteristic, student financial support, we note that in liberal countries (see chapters by Laderman et al., [this volume](#) and Lang et al. [this volume](#)) the state very much supports underrepresented groups, providing them with relatively modest means-tested grants. Given that liberal countries stress the private benefits of investing in higher education, they expect their students to be prepared to take out a loan to cover the costs of their higher education. In contrast, students in social-democratic countries have access (as independent citizens) to scholarships/grants from their government and/or to student loans.

In conservative countries, marginal students receive grants and student loans are less prominent. Here, one might say that the student support systems are less well-developed. In this group of conservative welfare systems, Southern European countries are more family-oriented, with students very much dependent on their family for financial support and their parents receiving tax support. Few of these countries

have loan schemes for their students – unlike many liberal and social-democratic countries.

Following the OECD, countries can be roughly divided into four groups – four ‘worlds’, in the words of Garritzmann (2016) – depending on their level of tuition fees and the financial support available through the country’s student financial support system for tertiary education (e.g., OECD, 2012, Chart B5.1). Table 9.2 places countries in these four groups, using a share of 50% students benefiting from student support and a tuition fee level of (roughly) USD 4000 as the cut-off points for making distinctions between groups. Countries where the student support system is relatively generous and where students pay no or low fees are often in social-democratic regimes that have more progressive tax structures and where citizens face high income tax rates. In many countries in continental Europe, students are charged low or moderate fees (with the exception of the Netherlands). Many of these countries fall in the category of conservative welfare regimes.

Surely, student support policies are subject to change, with some countries developing their student support systems and/or revising the fees charged to their students (Hauptman, 2007). The chapter by Laderman et al. (this volume) illustrates the multiple reforms and tweaks made to the states’ and the federal government’s support for student grant aid, student loans and tax benefits. Also in Canada (see the chapter by Lang et al., this volume), changes were made in the federal student loan program and the system of tax credits that helps reduce the students’ tuition fee cost. With the ongoing corona pandemic, several countries have provided more generous grants to students – at least for the time being. Some of these measures may turn out to be more structural reforms and may lead to the blurring of distinctions between conservative and social-democratic countries.

What Tables 9.1 and 9.2 do not capture is the interaction between the dimensions, that is either between public funds and private funds, or between institutional funding and student funding. Garritzmann (this volume) points to the phenomenon that sometimes governments use public and private expenditure as substitutes in order to maintain a stable level of total spending. An example is raising student contributions (e.g. tuition fees) or replacing student grants by student loans while at the same time reducing public expenditures on higher education. This policy is also

Table 9.2 The four worlds of student finance (situation: 2017/18)

	Less than 50% of students benefit from public loans AND/OR scholarships/grants	More than 50% of students benefit from public loans AND/OR scholarships/grants
Below average (or zero-fees) charged by public HEIs	AT, IT, ES, PT, FR, BE, DE, CH	FI, NO, DK, SE
Above average tuition fees charged by public HEIs	South Korea, Japan,	U.S., CAN, UK, AUS, NZ, IE, NL

Source: OECD (2019, 2020a, 2021); Garritzmann (this volume)

Note: For country abbreviations see Appendix

known as a cost sharing (Johnstone, 2004) or privatization (Brown, 2011) and it may be driven by political as well as economic (e.g. austerity) motives.

In the chapter by Laderman et al. ([this volume](#)) we see another example of substitution. The authors present trends that show an increase of public expenditures on student aid in the U.S. coinciding with a decrease in the direct funding of institutions through the states' appropriations to their higher education institutions.

These examples refer to the trade-offs that policymakers make between goals like improving access, encouraging efficiency and ensuring high quality. How policymakers choose between goals and how they make trade-offs can be related to the state's politico-economic conditions and demographic factors, but also to public opinion and interest groups, as argued in the Garritzmann chapter ([this volume](#)). The Laderman et al. ([this volume](#)), chapter also mentions the role of political factors and interest groups that impact funding decisions in the U.S. A complicating factor that affects the funding decisions and trade-offs in the U.S. is the balanced-budget restriction that each state in the United States has to respect and that can affect the level and type of state grant aid for students.

Marketisation in Higher Education: Coordination Modes and Policy Frames

Categorizing countries in terms of welfare regimes, 'worlds' of student finance and classes is a useful exercise when highlighting similarities and differences across countries, but it does not capture the dynamics in the funding systems. An interesting question is whether over time one can detect funding systems converging or perhaps growing more apart. At the system level, what changes in the financial governance arrangements in the higher education systems can be detected?

Esping-Andersen pictured the three welfare regimes as different arrangements between state, market, and the family. Burton Clark, one of the most influential higher education researchers of the past decades, made use of a similar 'triangle of coordination' to analyse higher education governance (Clark, 1983). The three corners of Clark's triangle are the state, the market and the academic oligarchy. His triangle (see Fig. 9.2a) has frequently been used as a paradigm for describing, assessing, and comparing systems of postsecondary education (e.g., Van Vught, 1989).

Both in Esping-Andersen's and in Clark's coordination triangles we encounter the state and the market. The state – or government – stands for public hierarchical administration or bureaucracy, while the market represents coordination through competition and leaves coordination to the 'invisible hand'. Unlike Esping-Andersen's, Clark's triangle does not include the family, but instead awards a role to the professional self-management by an academic oligarchy. Coordination in the higher education system thus is pictured as the balance between academic self-governance, state and market competition.

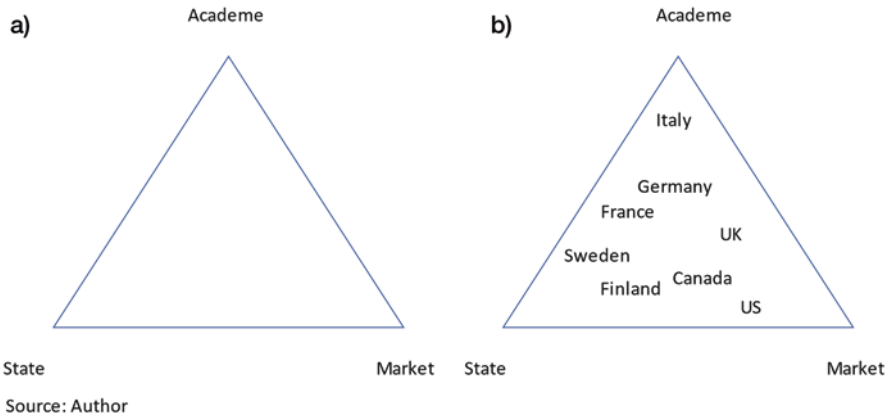


Fig. 9.2 Clark’s triangle of coordination

In terms of the balance between the three principal actors in the triangle of coordination (Fig. 9.2), one could say that, throughout many years, the locus of power was in the corner of academic self-governance. However, the need to make higher education more efficient and more relevant to the labour market and the economy meant that, gradually, the state took back more control over how and where its budget was spent. This placed the focus more on bottom-left and bottom-right corners of the triangle. The introduction of more market-type steering in the public sector (including in higher education) meant that the state stepped back and is allowed market forces to gain more control (Jongbloed, 2003).

Figure 9.2b shows an attempt by the author of this chapter at placing some OECD member states in Clark’s triangle of coordination. Based on recent information from the OECD on current funding model characteristics and student finance arrangements (OECD, 2020b, 2021) the picture compares the countries in terms of higher education funding arrangements. We have to stress that locating the countries is not an exact science; the picture is mostly intended as a means to summarise funding-related information into some kind of stylized visualisation.

The Nordic countries have been placed in the state corner; some of the larger continental European countries (e.g., Italy, Germany, France) are leaning more towards the academic self-governance corner, while the Anglo-Saxon states (e.g., Canada, UK, U.S.) are closer to the market corner.

Marketization is one of the most frequently debated trends in higher education Brown, 2011. It is often seen as reflecting the broad world-wide rationalisation trends in the public sector (Ramirez & Meyer, 2013) and includes the introduction of performance criteria, competition, the introduction of tuition fees, privatisation, liberalisation and the use of contracting, for instance through performance agreements. Markets stress freedom to choose; they encourage responsiveness towards customers (e.g. students) and innovation (to gain a competitive advantage). While across the higher education systems in Canada, the U.S. and Europe one can see

examples of New Public Management-inspired funding reforms (e.g., Broucker & De Wit, 2015; and the three funding chapters in this volume), these reforms have been implemented differently by the funding authorities in the various countries. The differences in political-economic structures – *welfare regimes*, in short – have led to different varieties of marketisation in higher education; to different varieties of academic capitalism (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Other scholars (e.g., Bégin-Caouette et al., 2016; Jessop, 2017) also have tried to explain the emergence of different varieties of academic capitalism.

Policy studies have used the term politico-administrative *regimes* to study how policies and coordination modes are affected by context (e.g., Dobbins et al., 2011; Bleiklie & Michelsen, 2019). Others pointed to paradigms (e.g. Hall, 1993) and policy frames (Surel, 2000; May & Jochim, 2013). Paradigms, policy frames and policy regimes are about the ‘constellation of ideas, institutional arrangements, and interests that are involved in addressing policy problems’ (May & Jochim, 2013, 426). Capano (2023) stressed the importance of ideas and instruments in policymaking.

Policies and reforms undertaken by governments and funding authorities as part of rationalisation efforts have contributed to a convergence in higher education coordination systems. However, while we can detect similarities as a consequence of these isomorphic tendencies that are strengthened by globalisation and policy internationalisation, we still can detect divergences in steering higher education systems (Musselin, 2011). Reforms depend, first of all, on the social welfare regime and the cooperative arrangements between state, market and academe in which they are situated. However, they also will be driven by a policy framework – an idea or understanding between policymakers of how the higher education system should work and what policy instruments are the most suitable to solve policy problems (Capano, 2023). Policy frames encompass norms and values – political priorities in terms of what needs fixing and what the different actors should and should not do. Without an “idea” about what to expect when they act, policymakers cannot intervene. Policy frames therefore are ‘diagnostic/prescriptive stories that tell, within a given issue terrain, what needs fixing and how it might be fixed’ (Rein & Schön, 1996). Policy frames thus help policymakers choose.

This chapter is not the place to discuss where policy frames and policy ideas come from, but it is fair to say that in today’s interconnected global economy the emergence and diffusion of ideas and policy recipes is the result of debates among policymakers collaborating in international forums such as the OECD and the EU, as well as debates among experts and scientists that interact with policy-makers in various communities, fora, think tanks and public media. Governing instruments in higher education are increasingly influenced by the ideas and recipes of international organisations such as the OECD and the EU.

In other words, higher education funding policy frames equally have been shaped by ideas put forward by different communities of experts and policymakers. In that respect one can distinguish the following dominant policy frames / policy ideas:

1. the policy frame of scientific excellence;
2. the policy frame of economic competitiveness;
3. the policy frame of societal challenges.

Obviously, these frames are ideal types –like many of the other tools and classifications presented in this chapter. Reality will always be a mix of different types. However, making the distinction between three policy frames helps reduce complexity.

The three frames have been identified in previous research (Ulnicane, 2015) and feature prominently in recent European discussions on science and innovation policy (Sørensen et al., 2016), thus very much focusing on the research mission of higher education. In this discussion, scientific excellence (frame #1) is about academia focusing on scientific capital – research output, high-quality research articles, et cetera. The economic competitiveness frame (frame #2) focuses on relevance in research – applied research outputs, valorisation of research and knowledge transfer. Research addressing societal challenges (frame #3) involves higher education undertaking activities that aim to contribute to major societal issues and achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (Mazzucato, 2021).

The three research policy frames can be broadened to also include the education mission of higher education, thus reformulating them into the following three policy frames:

1. To acknowledge not just the research but also the education mission of higher education, we rephrase the (first) policy frame of scientific excellence and relabel it as *excellence and exclusion* – thus highlighting its contrast to a policy frame that focuses on inclusiveness and equality in education.
2. To broaden the policy frame of economic competitiveness to also include education, we relabel it to *competitiveness and relevance*, thus stressing the links between higher education graduates and the labour market. Economic competitiveness is not just strengthened by means of HEIs producing applied research, but also by giving more of a say to business in shaping the curriculum (next to its influence on the academic research agenda).
3. The third policy frame (i.e. societal challenges) can be broadened to encompass the education mission by ensuring that the higher education curriculum pays attention not just to learning outcomes that focus on economic relevance, but also on social relevance, sustainable development goals. We therefore relabel it to societal challenges and inclusiveness.

The result of this rephrasing of the three dominant policy frames in Table 9.3 shows the different degrees of marketisation – or different varieties of academic capitalism that one may expect to encounter in the different combinations of welfare regimes and point of gravity (locus) in the state-market-academe triangle.

One may argue that in liberal welfare regimes, where the coordination of the higher education system very much takes place through markets and competition, the higher education institutions will be focusing more on research

Table 9.3 Welfare regimes, policy frames and academic capitalism

		Dominant Policy Frame	Variety of academic capitalism
Welfare regime and locus in Clark's triangle	Liberal/market-oriented	Economic competitiveness and labour market relevance	Hybridisation
	Conservative/academic self-governance	Scientific excellence & exclusiveness	Coordinated HE market
	Social-democratic/state-centered	Societal challenges & inclusiveness	Consensus & collaboration

Source: Author

commercialisation and will engage in partnerships with the private sector. This is likely to lead to economically driven HEIs that become more like hybrid organisations (Jongbloed, 2015).

Funding concentration and stratification is a more common feature of the Continental European model, where academic self governance still is relatively strong. Here, the introduction of markets will be more coordinated (also by European policymaking), protecting academic autonomy and maintaining a balance between the production of scientific capital and economic capital. Academic capitalism will be more moderate compared to the liberal model.

In the social-democratic (say, Nordic) model, the balance between block funding and competitive funding is also moderate, but there is more steering by the state to make the HEIs focus more on producing outputs for the public good. Values like consensus, inclusiveness and collaboration will be put relatively high on the higher education agenda (Esping-Andersen, 2015).

As part of global rationalisation trends, marketisation policies therefore are mediated by the nations' social welfare arrangements, their national traditions and their policy regimes. They undergo national translation and are 'filtered' by local contexts, thus giving way to path dependencies and exhibiting historical institutionalism (Thelen, 1999). As a result, different varieties of academic capitalism are the end result. Thus, the label marketization can be used to describe very different things (Jungblut & Vukasovic, 2018).

Conclusions and Reflections

Overlooking the different kinds, patterns and politics of higher education funding in countries across the world, the first observation we made in this chapter is that countries differ tremendously. However, secondly, there are also similarities between countries – in particular between countries that have similar social fabrics – that belong to a particular social welfare regime. Liberal, social-democratic, and conservative regimes could be distinguished partly based on the public-private funding

ratio for higher education systems. This relation between welfare regimes and funding characteristics was found in earlier studies (e.g., Pechar & Andres, 2011; Bégin-Caouette et al., 2016).

However, a straightforward relationship between welfare regimes and funding patterns does not exist, and, as stated by Garritzmann ([this volume](#)), when studying the variety of higher education funding one always needs to specify the kind of funding that one looks at. There is a wide variation within each of the three welfare regimes and at the same time also a significant amount of overlap among the different regimes.

In this comparative chapter, we have taken a kind of a winding road, starting with welfare regimes, then taking on board some of the key funding dilemmas in higher education and using both Clark's triangle of coordination and the perspective of policy frames to arrive at different varieties of academic capitalism – different manifestations of marketisation.

Along the way we argued that governance and funding in higher education is not a simple matter of more or less state intervention. Rather, it is about regulating competition, channelling markets through a cleverly designed composition and balance of performance incentives, contracting for outcomes, tuition fee setting, quality assurance policies, et cetera. Ultimately, the challenge is 'how to get the incentives right'.

In this chapter, we have argued that funding models in liberal, conservative and social-democratic systems will vary not just in terms of their locus in Clark's triangle, but also in terms of policy frames. Given the nature of the different worlds of welfare capitalism distinguished by Esping-Andersen, we expect markets and the policy frame of economic competitiveness to be more frequently used in the Anglo-Saxon model while 'competing' policy frames around excellence and societal challenges are more likely to receive a higher place on the policy agendas of conservative, respectively social-democratic states.

Despite the distinctions in governance and funding between higher education systems situated in the three welfare systems, some common characteristics have appeared over time. Many higher education systems have witnessed increased marketisation tendencies, based on a policy frame of economic competitiveness. However, new policy frames are on the rise. Modern policy frames/paradigms place a heavy focus on relevance of higher education for contributing also to other policy domains, in particular to addressing the sustainable development goals (SDGs). This may imply that we may see a shift back from market-oriented funding policies, where government takes the lead and sets the direction of change, enabling bottom-up experimentation. Higher education then not just is stressing economic (or innovation) issues, but also addresses societal issues in areas such as health, environment and energy. The mission-based approach would expect higher education institutions to help produce breakthrough technologies, in R&D projects carried out together with business and industry. Government then would have to become more of an *Entrepreneurial state* (Mazzucato, 2011, 2021). And, given that individual states will not be able to manage and resource such challenges alone, one may expect to

see a bigger role played by supranational governments and international organisations in creating missions and supplying the resources required.

The key question is, of course, whether funding policies matter for the outcomes of the system. In the U.S. chapter (Laderman et al., [this volume](#)) ample attention is paid to the relationships between state funding and student success. As stated by Garritzmann ([this volume](#)), higher education funding matters, because different types of funding models have considerable effects on students' enrolments, their studying behaviour and, therefore, on inequalities in society. But equally interesting then is whether the evidence on policy effectiveness actually feeds back into the design of funding policies and the debate on the varieties of academic capitalism that shape the performance of the higher education sector.

We hope that this comparative chapter can help shape a theoretical framework to study how countries' political-economic structures, coordination modes and policy frames may influence the public goods and private benefits produced in higher education systems. In doing so, this chapter also may contribute to the ongoing debate on the balance between the converging and diverging tendencies in higher education funding systems.

Appendix: Country Abbreviations

AT	Austria
AUS	Australia
BE	Belgium
CAN	Canada
CH	Switzerland
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
NZ	New Zealand
PT	Portugal
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States

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Part III
Framing of Higher Education Policy

Chapter 10

Policy Framing in Higher Education in Western Europe: (Some) Uses and (Many) Promises



Meng-Hsuan Chou, Mari Elken, and Jens Jungblut 

Abstract This chapter contributes to our understanding of the transformation sweeping the higher education sector in the last 50 years by examining how higher education policy has been framed and reframed since the 1970s in Western Europe. How policies are framed and reframed is important because it helps us make sense of higher education policy reforms around the world: the various models that drive it, the politics promoted, and the potential winners and losers resulting from framing and reframing. The literature review on framing and higher education policy in Western Europe shows that scholars examined three overlapping themes: the origin and evolution of European higher education policy cooperation (the ‘European Story’), Europeanization (‘When Europe Hits Home’), and the evolution of national higher education policy (‘National Story’). To provide a more considered discussion of framing and higher education policies, we then examine the higher education policy frames, framing, and reframing at the European-level, in Germany, and in Norway. The conclusion reflects on the avenues in which the framing approach could be used to generate more interdisciplinary and comparative higher education research in the post-pandemic context.

Introduction

The higher education sector has been radically transformed in the last 50 years. From an area of concern for the select few who were privileged to access tertiary education, it is now at the heart of a global market that commands the attention of policy actors in states, international and regional organizations, universities,

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companies, as well as students and their families (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007; Teixeira et al., 2004). Many factors have contributed to this transformation, ranging from national and regional economic growth to familial and individual aspirations, and more. This chapter intends to contribute to our understanding of this transformation by examining how higher education policy has been framed and reframed since the 1970s in Western Europe. How policies are framed and reframed is important because it helps us make sense of higher education policy reforms around the world: the various models that drive it, the politics promoted, and the potential winners and losers resulting from framing and reframing.

To do so, this chapter proceeds as follows. We begin by presenting the analytical framework structuring the empirical analyses: identifying how we define frames, framing, and reframing in policymaking. This discussion enables us to show how the very act of framing or reframing activates a transversal consideration of possible policy action to take (see Chou, 2012 for a discussion of sectoral and lateral strategies). The emergence of this transversal consideration opens up new channels to achieve policy objectives (e.g., governance levels), which in turn may ultimately alter the fundamental power balance between policy actors involved. Next, we review how framing has featured in higher education studies on Western Europe. Specifically, we look at how ‘framing’ as an analytical device has been explicitly applied to investigating higher education policy reforms in Western Europe. The review shows that scholars apply the framing approach differently to examine three overlapping themes: the origin and evolution of European higher education cooperation (‘European Story’), top-down Europeanization (‘When Europe Hits Home’), and the evolution of national higher education policy (‘National Story’). To provide a more considered discussion of framing and higher education policies, we then examine the higher education policy frames, framing, and reframing at the European-level, in Germany, and in Norway. We conclude by discussing the avenues in which the framing approach could be used to generate more interdisciplinary and comparative higher education research in the post-pandemic and new geopolitical contexts.

Frames, Framing, and Reframing

The framing literature is an established literature in multiple disciplines and research areas (see Benford & Snow, 2000; Cerna & Chou, 2014; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). Scholars from diverse humanities and social science fields have all been fascinated by how this analytical approach could be used to describe, explain, and even predict individual and organizational behavior and outcomes (Benford & Snow, 2000; Daviter, 2007; Dudley & Richardson, 1999; Geddes & Guiraudon, 2004; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016; Morth, 2000). Indeed, what these studies have in common are their emphasis on the significance of ‘framing dynamics in accounting for the final shape of policies, politics, and polities’ (Cerna & Chou, 2014, p. 79). For our purposes, we focus on how the framing approach is used in the public policy field because it

directly offers insights into how and why policy reforms emerge and unfold. Following Rein and Schön (1991, p. 263), we define framing as ‘a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality so as to provide guideposts for knowing, analysing, persuading, and adapting’.

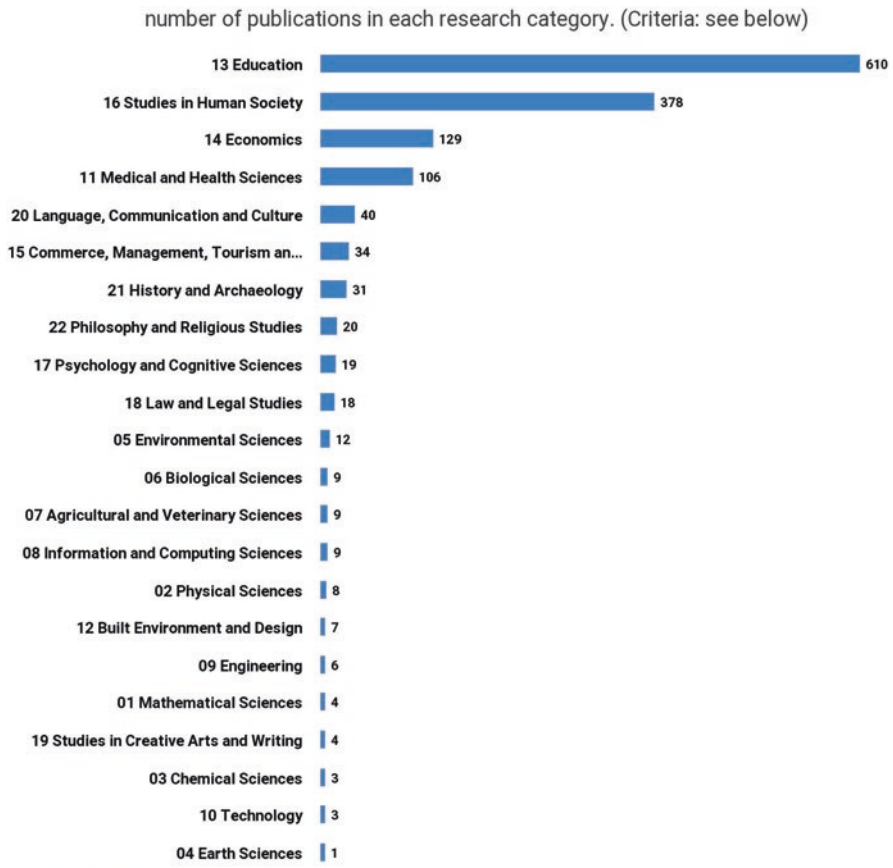
Framing relies on ‘an overriding evaluative or analytical criterion’—‘frames’—that are informed by the institutional environment within which policy actors are based (Daviter, 2012, p. 1). The framing process ‘does not take place in a political vacuum and venue selection is significant because it signals who has jurisdiction over access points to the agenda’ (Cerna & Chou, 2014, p. 79). For Weiss (1989, p. 1170), ‘frames are weapons of advocacy and consensus’, as actors ‘manipulate an issue’s scope to better advance their positions’ (Cerna & Chou, 2014, p. 79). For instance, Cerna and Chou (2014) showed how the different framing of two instruments for foreign talent recruitment affected the pace of policy adoption and substantive contents because negotiations took place in different venues and promoted distinct frames. For them, ‘changes in venue affect frames and changes in frames facilitate changes in venues’ (Cerna & Chou, 2014, p. 80; cf., Daviter, 2012; Guiraudon, 2000). Here, venue changes could be sectoral (from one policy sector to another) and between governance levels (e.g., from national to supranational, or national to local).

Frames are thus integral to the framing process, but what exactly are frames? Cerna and Chou (2014, p. 80) tell us that, in the main, scholars do not specify the general constitutive parts that make up a frame. Instead, scholars prefer to zoom in and focus on elaborating the frames specific to their cases (e.g., collective action frames, competition frames, market/defense frames, and so on). They argued that frames could be identified through ‘an *associated discourse* conveying *problem-definition*, *value-judgement* or *vision*, and *policy solution*’ (emphasis original, Cerna & Chou, 2014, p. 80). These elements invoke the four distinct functions that Entman (1993, p. 52) claims frames play: define the problems at hand, diagnose probable causes, put forth moral judgments, and recommend remedies to address problems identified. As an analytical approach, an emphasis on framing allows us to zoom in and out: from specific formulations employed to justify individual policies, to overarching historical justifications of a higher education governance system. While most studies applying the framing approach concentrate on the agenda-setting stage of the policy cycle, Cerna and Chou (2014, p. 80) argued for approaching framing as a sequential process of framing and reframing that can take place throughout the policy cycle. For them, ‘it is in the *framing* and *reframing* of an issue that public policy outcomes are explained’ (Cerna & Chou, 2014, p. 80). Framing and reframing are thus political processes that reveal power dynamics between the actors involved, as well as those excluded.

In the next section, we continue with a literature review of how studies of higher education policy in Western Europe have used framing as an analytical device to account for policy reforms, resistance, and failures. We concentrate on identifying the policy frames invoked in these processes, attending to the discourse behind problem definition, the vision promoted, and the policy solutions advanced.

A Literature Review of Framing Higher Education Policy in Western Europe

We used the Dimensions platform for the literature review and performed an ‘abstract search’ with the following keywords: higher education, policy, Europe, frame analysis. This initial search yielded 1462 publications (see Fig. 10.1). The main contributions came from the Education research category (610 publications), which included the research sub-categories Specialist Studies in Education, Education Systems, Curriculum and Pedagogy, and Other Education. The diverse contributions from different research categories tells us that scholars writing in



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 Criteria: Text - 'higher education policy Europe frame analysis' in abstract.

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Fig. 10.1 Dimensions analysis – number of publications in each research category

other spaces—such as sociology, political science, and publication administration (all sub-categories under the research category Studies in Human Society)—are also interested in the framing of higher education policies in Western Europe. Applying the timeframe condition (1971–2019) to the 610 publications, we are left with 571 publications: 480 articles, 64 chapters, 13 conference proceedings, 8 monographs, 5 preprints, and 1 edited book. Looking at the distribution of publications over this timeframe (see Fig. 10.2), we find that the early 2000s marked the start of strong scholarly interests on framing and higher education policy in Western Europe—a period coinciding with the launch of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Next, we read through the titles and abstracts (where available) of 571 publications to identify publications that applied the framing approach to studying higher education policies in Western Europe. This step left us with less than 50 publications. An additional step of reading the publications reduced the total number to a handful, which we discuss in detail below. Before elaborating how the existing literature used the framing approach, it is equally important to explain which articles we excluded. Many publications were excluded because their usage of ‘framing’ or ‘frames’ were more colloquial than analytical; we also excluded duplicates. Another group of publications we excluded were book reviews and essays (e.g., Neumann, 2012) because we were interested in original research using the framing approach. We did not include articles that exclusively examined other regions or countries. For example, we excluded Eastern Europe and the significance of ‘geographical’ and ‘political’ frames (Kozma & Polonyi, 2004), reframing Australian higher education

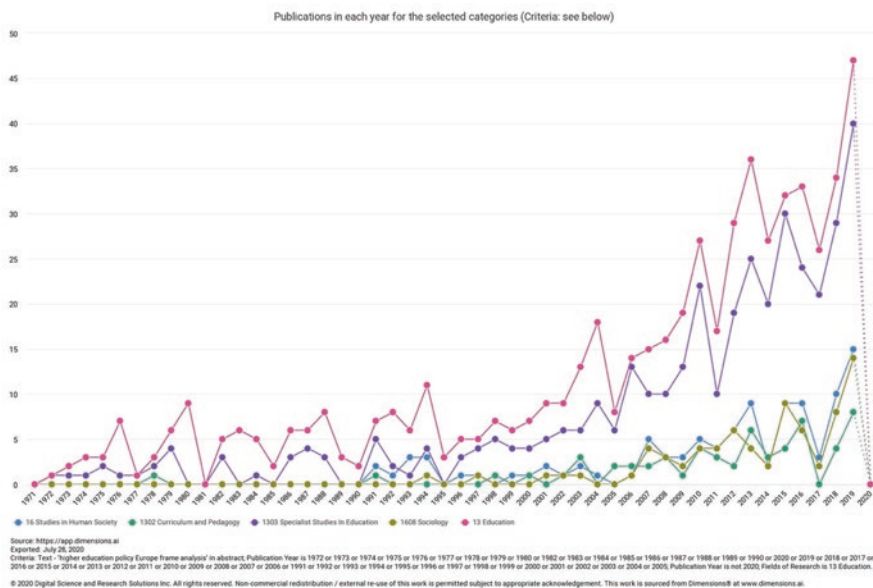


Fig. 10.2 Dimensions analysis – publications in each year for selected categories

policy (from social/cultural to marketization) (Pick, 2006), and framing Chilean teacher education (Fernández, 2018). Our literature review delineates the main attributes that higher education studies identify and how these attributes echo mainstream studies of European higher education policy cooperation.

We found that existing research could be organized as addressing three overlapping themes. We call the first theme the **‘European Story’**. Under this theme, we find studies that are interested in the emergence and evolution of European higher education cooperation, and the external and internal factors steering developments from a framing viewpoint. For instance, elevating the framing approach to the level of ideational models, Zgaga (2009) examined how two visions of Europe—‘Europe of the euro’ and ‘Europe of knowledge’—play out against four “archetypal models” of higher education: Napoleonic, Humboldtian, Newmanian, and Deweyan. The two policy frames that emerged in Zgaga’s (2009) analysis emphasized distinct approaches towards a policy solution: a more utilitarian market-driven frame (‘Europe of the euro’), and a more culturally-grounded and non-market frame (‘Europe of knowledge’) where knowledge generation and circulation is proposed as the way forward to strengthening modern Europe. Embedded within these two visions of Europe is the consistent problem European policymakers have been tasked to address for decades: How to sustain and improve Europe? While he noted that we ‘are witness to the progressive instrumentalization of higher education’ towards a neoliberal agenda, Zgaga (2009, p. 175) urged us to consider the full range of higher education’s likely contribution to citizenship. His analysis reminds us that policy frames are rooted in interpretations of (grand) visions that steer actor behavior and thus a more comprehensive frame analysis should include these ideational models as reference points. In an analysis of academic research on higher education in Europe, Ramirez and Tiplic (2014, p. 439) found that the academic discourse mirrored this policy shift Zgaga identified: there is a ‘growing emphasis on management, organization, and quality and less emphasis on student access to higher education, an earlier equity concern’.

Looking at the interaction between European-level and global developments, Erkkilä (2014) conceptualized global university rankings as a transnational policy discourse, and showed how it framed and reframed higher education in Europe as a ‘European problem’ needing to be solved. The overall problem definition is one that emphasized the lack of competitiveness of European higher education systems vis-à-vis those elsewhere, prominently the U.S. and the rising stars in Asia. The image promoted is one in which ‘Europe’ would be increasingly edged towards the very periphery of the global higher education landscape and hierarchy. In so doing, he analytically and empirically revealed the power of rankings familiar to many scholars working in higher education institutions around the world: as the policy frame through which problems within higher education institutions are identified, as well as the provider of ‘ideational input for policy measures tackling the perceived problems’ (Erkkilä, 2014, p. 91). How higher education institutions fared and responded to the power of rankings, Erkkilä (2014, p. 92) argued, depended on their institutional size and position along the center-periphery axis. Similarly, in their research on the effects of globalization and global competition on the higher education

sector, Bagley and Portnoi (2016, p. 23) also found that the ‘pervasive rhetoric about excellence, rankings, and world-class status’ did not have uniform effects.

Under the ‘European Story’ theme, we find research focused on mobility and new institutions created for the Europe of Knowledge. Examining the ‘principles and standards of mobility evolving in the Bologna process’ through discourse analysis, Powell and Finger (2013, p. 271) found that mobility benefits and effects have been embraced and taken for granted among policymakers. At the same time, issues of selectivity are understated in the policy discourse even though only a small minority of students were able to attain the ideal of spatial mobility espoused by the Bologna Process. They argued that this understatement, or, indeed, intentional ignorance, would likely undermine the Bologna aspirations to promote access and social mobility for all students. Put differently, how students are selected in practice go against the assumed social cohesion policy frame embedded in the Bologna vision (cf., van Geel, 2019, for how Dutch education professionals and Ghanaian migrant youths frame the relationship between mobility and education differently). What we may conclude from their analysis is that mobility programs embedding spatial educational mobility as a solution towards identified policy problems of access and social immobility contained fatal design flaws. While the extent to which such design flaws could ultimately undermine policy efforts towards the European Higher Education Area require further analysis, we know the imbalance between incoming and outgoing student ratio among EHEA countries remain stark (see Fig. 10.3), with countries such as the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland,

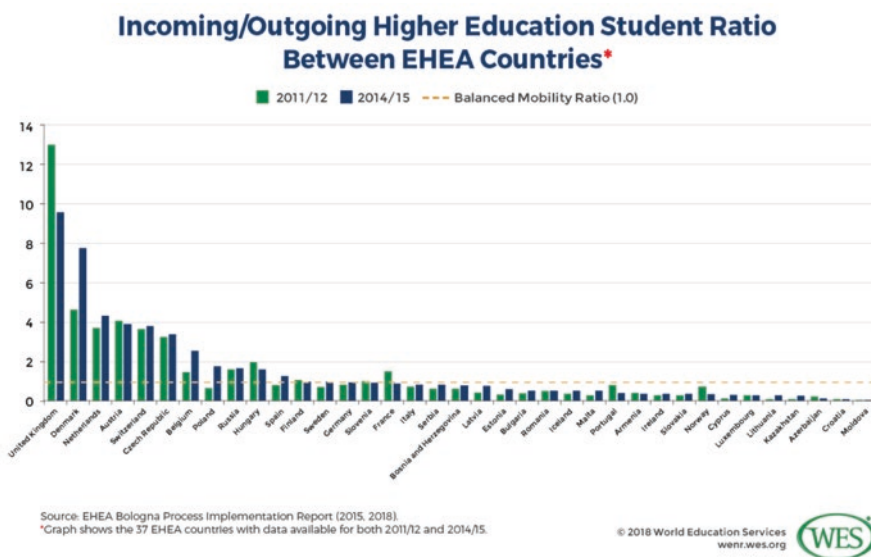


Fig. 10.3 Student Ratio between EHEA Countries (Incoming and Outgoing). (Source: WENR, <https://wenr.wes.org/2018/12/student-mobility-in-the-european-higher-education-area-eha> (accessed 15 August 2020))

Czech Republic, and Belgium attracting far more students than they are sending out. Applying the framing perspective, their research interrogates the distance between policy discourse and practice—a common research interest also among policy scientists.

Turning to one of the Europe of Knowledge institutions, Salajan (2018) investigated the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), formally created in 2008 to facilitate innovation by coordinating collaboration between academic, research, and industry. Studying the main documents establishing the EIT, Salajan (2018) found that the policy frame the European Commission promoted used the following rhetorical language: one of urgency (quick action must be taken), one of challenges (absence of such an institution constituted an internal threat), one of competitiveness (notion of ‘strong’ Europe), one of innovation (exploit academic research findings for commercial use), one of entrepreneurship (infuse entrepreneurial spirit into academic actors eager to innovate), one of exemplarity (the EIT will be the reference point), and one of excellence and prestige. According to Salajan (2018), what the policy frame leading to EIT’s creation tells us is that the European Commission perceived the role of the university as servicing the economic competitiveness and innovative capacity of Europe.

What we find in common among the studies in the ‘European Story’ category is the growing centrality of universities and higher education—whether through improved standing in global rankings, or increased educational mobility, or establishing new institutions at the European-level, and more—as essential to the sustainability and competitiveness of Europe. This turn towards universities and higher education as providing the solutions to European problems reflects the general turn towards knowledge as the way forward for (smart) policymaking around the world (Chou et al., 2017).

The second theme among the literature we identified is **‘When Europe Hits Home’** and here we find research that examines the effects of (top-down) Europeanization on participating member states of European processes from a framing perspective. For example, comparing education policymaking in England and Scotland, Grek and Ozga (2010) addressed the question: What does the referencing or non-referencing of a ‘Europe’ frame reveal about a devolved polity? They showed that policymakers in Scotland preferred aligning and referencing their position with ‘Europe’ while those in England invoked global influences and thus positioned England as a global actor and not merely European. Grek and Ozga’s (2010) findings challenge the common assumption in the literature that depicts the UK as a monolithic entity. Indeed, it points to potential tensions between units within devolved polities, and the differentiated impact that Europe has ‘at home’—a finding familiar to Europeanization scholars who have examined other sectoral developments.

In a similar research, Brooks (2019, p. 2) found that ‘the idea of Europe constitutes an important “spatial imaginary” for higher education within the continent, and helps to frame the ways in which students are conceptualised’ (for more about how students are framed, see Brooks, 2018; Budd, 2017). Here, following Watkins (2015), ‘Europe’ as a spatial imaginary refer to ‘socially held stories that constitute

particular ways of talking about places and spaces’ and can be constructed as ‘place imaginaries’, ‘idealised space imaginaries’, and ‘spatial transformational imaginaries’ (Brooks, 2019, p. 6–7). Empirically, her research found that for policy influencers in Germany, Ireland, Poland, and Spain (not those in the UK and Denmark), ‘Europe acted as a spatial imaginary—providing various socially-embedded stories that constitute particular ways of talking about specific places’ (Brooks, 2019, p. 16). There existed a collective sense that they were involved in a “‘European project”—the idea of building a region in which values and beliefs are shared, and mobility between nation-states is both common and straightforward’ (Brooks, 2019, p. 9–10). For her, Europeanization is akin to a process of spatial transformation.

What the existing studies in the category ‘When Europe Hits Home’ have in common is how the policy frame of ‘Europe’ enables participating states to address the issue of positionality with regards to current policy definitions and solutions, as well as *future* ones. This is significant because it shows the imprinting of today’s ‘ways of doing things’ onto tomorrow and beyond. At the same time, the huge body of higher education literature exploring the theme of ‘When Europe Hits Home’ paints a far more complex story, with some highlighting the impact as a translation of the European agenda for domestic purposes. There is thus tremendous scope to situate framing studies within this larger body of work.

The third theme we delineated is one we call ‘**National Story**’, which refers to a different set of research that applies the framing approach to analyze developments at the national-level. While these studies do refer to developments at the European-level and the increased external pressures to internationalize higher education systems, the focus is on examining how historical legacies and policy frames change over time as a result of interacting with both external and internal forces. For instance, Pick (2008) compared Germany and Australia using a frame analysis and found that both countries experienced profound changes to their higher education systems in the late 1980s that set these two countries on a pathway of convergence along a neoliberal policy trajectory. His analysis highlighted the increased dominance of the following frames in Germany’s case in response to greater demands to access higher education and more European pressures to compete in a global market: the importance of employability and Europe in these developments. The policy frames we identified in the ‘European Story’ are thus also present in this category.

In sum, what the Dimensions literature review tells us is that the extant literature on framing and higher education policy in Western Europe is small, but rich and diverse. There is no unified framing analysis approach among the literature reviewed, with some scholars choosing to concentrate on identifying the policy framing in documents, while others focused more on practice and discourse uttered, as well as the implications of competing frames for the overall policy vision. Indeed, the diversity in applications confirmed that scholars were interested in different aspects of the policy cycle: from agenda-setting to negotiations and implementation. This is a departure from the general framing literature, which tends to focus on framing during the agenda-setting stage. When we examine the concentration of higher education studies applying the framing approach, we see that the majority is interested in the ‘European Story’, indicating that there is a tendency to study ‘Western

Europe’ as European-level developments. Indeed, our Dimensions analysis identified less publications falling under the theme of ‘National Story’. This could change if we introduce individual countries as search keywords, but it is beyond our scope.

The literature review highlights different policy frames relevant to the Western European context—the social mobility frame, the employability frame, the innovation/competitiveness frame, and the Europe frame—each with a policy discourse conveying the problem identified, a specific vision of how it should be (i.e., ideational models), and a policy solution to realize the vision. At the same time, we should acknowledge that analytically these frames may be distinct, but they are all part of the larger story about higher education policy developments in Western Europe. What this means is that empirically these frames overlap to weave together a story with different plots and perspectives—all of which make up a wider body of knowledge. While the review shows that the framing approach sheds light on the many questions of interest concerning higher education reforms sweeping through Western Europe since the 1970s, this set of literature is scattered across different publication outlets, speaking to different audiences. Indeed, it appears that a robust set of research explicitly building on the framing approach is still wanting. In the next section, we turn to three detailed case studies to empirically contribute to this undertaking.

Framing Higher Education Policy in ‘Europe’, Germany, and Norway

In this section, we look more closely at the framing and reframing of higher education policies at the European-level, in Germany, and in Norway. We begin with an updated case of ‘Europe’ to provide the broader regional context against which most national reforms are debated and considered. The European higher education policy context has several unique characteristics as compared to a typical national context. The European Union (EU) merely has subsidiary competencies in higher education policy. This means that it cannot freely develop supranational policy, it can merely encourage cooperation and provide support with its limited policy instrument toolbox. The EU is not the only arena for cooperation in Europe. A key arena outside the EU’s framework is the Bologna Process, a voluntary intergovernmental policy coordination process introduced in 1999. While Germany and Norway both represent national higher education policy contexts, the federal structure of Germany means that the framing analysis to a larger extent represents a ‘zooming out’, analyzing overall system trajectories, whereas in the Norwegian case we are able to look into specific reform initiatives and framing processes within. In this manner, the three cases illustrate the three stories—the European story, Europe hitting home, and the national story—as well as the potential of the framing approach to both zoom in and out of policy processes.

‘Europe’: From Europe of the ‘People’ to ‘Euro’, ‘Knowledge’, and Future

Higher education has been a sensitive area for European-level policymaking. The historical development has been gradual, marked by processes of (informal) expansion and formal constraints. While the initial developments largely took place within the European Community, the last two decades have been defined by institutionalization of the EU and Bologna as two distinct higher education governance sites (Gornitzka, 2010), at times with distinct dominant frames, and at times converging. In this section, we analyze these developments using policy documents adopted at the European-level and published academic studies.

Historically, the first ideas of European-level higher education policy have been traced back to the 1950s (Corbett, 2005, p. 27), followed by a gradual expansion of activities. In the 1970s, the basis for future cooperation was established, identifying areas for cooperation (Commission of the European Communities, 1973), principles for collaboration (mutual learning and information exchange) (The Council, 1976), and establishing administrative resources for coordination (the educational division in the new Directorate General for Research Science and Education) (Beerkens, 2008). In the 1980s, there was a period of informal expansion, in particular after the *Gravier* decision, which created the legal basis for Community involvement in (higher) education by widening the definition of vocational training (Pépin, 2006). Arguably, this in itself could be seen as a case where (re)framing of ‘education’ plays a prominent role in justifying policy action.

In 1987, the Erasmus exchange program was established. Mobility of students and staff became an undisputed goal where Community-level action was desirable, perceived as a ‘safe’ area for coordination where joint action would not challenge national diversity and ownership. Erasmus has since been a major pillar for constructing European-level policy coordination in higher education. It has also resulted in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) that later become an important element in the Bologna Process. Student exchange was also linked to more general policies on mobility of workers and labor market, giving it legitimacy to bypass the more difficult and nationally sensitive cultural functions (Gornitzka, 2010, p. 538). Overall, the mobility focus is usually associated with both an employability frame (mobility of workers) and a culturally oriented frame (shared identity).

While the success of the Erasmus program led to further ambitions of expansion, the 1992 Maastricht Treaty halted this process and instead formalized the subsidiarity principle (De Wit, 2007). The Treaty formalized what were seen as appropriate areas for regional cooperation, e.g., developing the European dimension in education, encouraging academic mobility, promoting cooperation, developing information exchange and distance learning. In this period, the lifelong learning theme appeared as an important side theme for EU education coordination. While initially this was more associated with VET policies, it became widened (Cort, 2009). The 1993 Delors White Paper emphasized lifelong learning as a means to integrate the entire education and training agendas (Commission of the European Communities,

1993). This lifelong learning emphasis has also created more space for integrating economic and social policies (Holford & Mleczeko, 2013), later linked to a growth and skills agenda.

The 2000 Lisbon Agenda marked a major turning point in European higher education policy cooperation, introducing the knowledge economy frame as the dominant (but not only) policy frame. The Lisbon Agenda was launched under the much-quoted aim of becoming ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’. The three headlines were around employment, economic reform, and social cohesion—warranting a necessity to also modernize educational systems (Lisbon European Council, 2000). The introduction of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) also meant a new approach, resulting in a set of shared targets outlined in the Education and Training 2010 Work program (The Education Council, 2001). The role of educational systems was to cater to the demands of the knowledge society and employment. As progress on fulfilling the Lisbon Agenda was initially modest, it was relaunched with an even stronger growth and jobs focus. Policy coordination was thus more explicitly linked to economic and employability frames.

Initiatives such as the Modernization Agenda present an urgent need for national and institutional reforms (Maassen & Stensaker, 2011). The Modernization Agenda followed up on existing areas for cooperation, e.g., mobility, but it also took up new dimensions, such as higher education governance, autonomy, and funding. These are presented as necessary for universities to ‘make their full contribution’ to the goals of the Lisbon Agenda. In the aftermath, both European institution-building (e.g., the EIT, see Gornitzka & Metz, 2014; Salajan, 2018) and stretching of what is possible within the subsidiarity principle (establishment of the European Qualification Framework, see e.g., Elken, 2015) have been observed. Nevertheless, while the Lisbon Agenda was (re)launched with much fanfare, the targets were not met.

The intergovernmental Bologna Process was established in 1999, representing a parallel process to EU policy coordination. The formulations in the initial Bologna declaration were careful and sometimes vague (Amaral & Neave, 2009, p. 290). Nevertheless, the declaration started by highlighting the necessity to establish a more ‘complete and far-reaching Europe’, where education has a key role to play. The signatory countries committed to establishing the European Higher Education Area by 2010, constructed around six main action lines. These built on a range of pre-existing structures and mechanisms (e.g., ECTS). Whereas during the 2000s EU policy is to a stronger extent framed around the contributions of education to the knowledge economy and skills, the Bologna Process communiqués explicitly stressed the role of education for developing and strengthening ‘stable, peaceful and democratic societies’ and cultural dimensions, emphasizing universities’ independence and autonomy as vital assurances for fulfilling their roles. While the EU was unlikely to interfere with cultural aspects of education, Bologna’s intergovernmental nature made this possible.

The Bologna documents also underlined the importance of mobility and employability, and as such echoed shared concerns expressed within the EU. The overall tone was, however, a stark difference from the tone in the Modernization Agenda, which largely emphasized the urgency of reforms. One could thus argue that, at least in the early 2000s, the Lisbon Agenda in the EU and the Bologna Process, embodied different policy frames. The differences have gradually disappeared over time as the European Commission became a member in the process. Indeed, we see that there has been a mutual adjustment between the EU and Bologna Process over time (Keeling, 2006, p. 208). This has been visible in how formulations in declarations have become more instrumental in its policy program and have increasingly moved away from emphasizing differences as a driving force (Veiga, 2019), or that the Bologna Process started to include specific numerical goals for share of mobile students, similar to EU benchmarks (Vögtle, 2019).

The European Higher Education Area was officially launched in 2010, and the progress on individual action lines as a whole has both resulted in successes and failures, largely ‘remaining a patchwork’ of the 48 different systems participating in this process (Vögtle, 2019). While most of the core action lines have remained in place, there are also some new initiatives, such as emphases on the relevance and quality of learning and teaching provision. In others, the action lines have become rephrased and have transferred to the next step, such as from mutual recognition towards discussions of automatic recognition. Nevertheless, the overall picture is scattered, and progress is uneven between areas and countries.

In the EU, the last decade saw a greater focus on skills. Several policies and instruments have been developed, incorporating the European Qualifications Framework (2008), the Skills Agenda (2016), and the ESCO (classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations). Here, the common denominator is viewing skills formation from a lifelong learning perspective, where formal educational institutions are part of a larger ecosystem. Education is assumed to occur across sites and locations, providing a basis for a lifelong and lifewide learning process. Emphasis on learning outcomes, modulization, and parity of esteem are part of this shift in EU policies for higher education. A key concern is skills mismatch: the skills acquired in formal educational systems not matching the needs of the labor market. This skills focus is also visible in the renewed agenda for higher education (The European Commission, 2017), where the role of higher education institutions as providing skills is highlighted. This skills emphasis is a manifestation of two policy frames: employability (stressing labor market needs and the necessity to maintain employment as a part of a social policy), and societal challenges (underlining *future* labor market needs when knowledge and competence are vital in solving grand challenges and educating for jobs not yet well defined). These two frames are echoed in the commitment to develop the European Education Area by 2025, essentially marking an attempt of strengthened horizontal policy coordination on the European-level.

In recent years, a renewed emphasis has emerged on the cultural aspects of regional integration and the role of higher education in contributing to shared norms. The European University Initiative was launched in 2017, with an aim to

‘strengthening strategic partnerships across the EU between higher education institutions and encouraging the emergence by 2024 of some twenty “European Universities”, consisting in bottom-up networks of universities across the EU’ (European Council, 2017). While similar to earlier calls for institutional cooperation across Europe, the initiative also marks a more extended scope of cooperation. European institutions enthusiastically embraced the first two calls, which resulted in somewhat uneven participation rates across various parts of Europe (Jungblut et al., 2020). It remains to be seen what effects these new consortia will bring, but they represent a potential next step in reframing European universities as engines for regional integration. Below, we look at developments in Germany and Norway to see how their policy reforms have been framed and reframed.

Germany: From Humboldtian Ideals to Employability and Knowledge Economy in Europe

The most prominent label that has been used to describe the essence of German universities is linked to the ideas behind the Humboldtian model of higher education (Clark, 1983; Hüther & Krücken, 2018). In the tradition of the German research university, the unity of teaching and research as well as a comparatively strong role of the professoriate are key elements of higher education. Moreover, higher education since the nineteenth century has been by-and-large a public endeavor as universities fulfil key tasks for the state (such as training civil servants) and, in turn, receive most of their funding from the public purse (Olsen, 2007). Up until the 1960s, German higher education mainly consisted of one type of institution—universities, which until today carry a higher prestige due to their heritage in the Humboldtian ideals (Hüther & Krücken, 2018). The policymaking environment for higher education in Germany is rather complex due to the federal structure of the state. The division of legal responsibility between the federal level and the *Bundesländer* has been an object of several reforms over the years that led to shifting responsibilities for parts of the higher education policy portfolio between the different levels. However, throughout all the years the main responsibility lay with the *Bundesländer* leading to increased complexity in higher education policy debates.

To understand the role of higher education in German education policy in general, it is necessary to consider two issues that are relevant for the way in which higher education policy is framed. First, German secondary education is stratified and only one of the three different types of schools formally qualifies pupils to attend higher education (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993). Second, Germany traditionally has a strong Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector that educates many young people and offers attractive career trajectories upon graduation (Busemeyer, 2015; Thelen & Busemeyer, 2012). Indeed, it was only in 1990 that more students attended higher education than VET (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993). Today, however, some parts of the VET sector struggle to find apprentices while the

demand for higher education rises continuously, which led to the creation of new higher education institutions that span both sectors (Graf, 2013). These two issues create conditions that, until the end of the 1960s, framed higher education as the domain of universities, generally inaccessible to most students.

In the 1960s, German higher education underwent several fundamental changes that contributed to the emergence of a policy frame in this sector: access and social mobility. In the years spanning post-WWII and the 1960s, the German higher education system was characterized as having low levels of participation, no student support, and moderate tuition fees, making higher education an elitist undertaking (Garritzmann, 2016). The change in governing coalition in 1969 at the federal-level—from Christian Democrats to a social-liberal coalition—set in motion reforms that increased the salience, and adjusted the framing, of German higher education policy (Garritzmann, 2016). Specifically, it led to a situation in which increased access to higher education became a central political goal and a key topic of public debates. Several policy initiatives launched during this period sought to expand access and social mobility, including the creation of a generous student support scheme, an increase in study places, and the abolishment of tuition fees (Garritzmann, 2016). The more fundamental change introduced in 1969 was the transformation of the German higher education system from a unitary to a binary system with the creation of *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied science). These institutions were intended to meet the increased demand for higher education, while having an orientation towards the labor market and employability by offering shorter and more vocationally-oriented programs (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993).

When the federal government changed back to a Christian Democrat-led coalition in 1982, the new government pursued policies that retrenched student support and limited access to higher education (Garritzmann, 2016). This continued in the mid-2000s when several Christian Democrat-led coalitions in the *Bundesländer* adopted initiatives to introduce tuition fees for higher education. It was only after widespread student protests and electoral losses in some *Bundesländer* that these initiatives were rolled-back, leaving Germany in the position of a low-subsidy and no-tuition country (Garritzmann, 2016); for instance, only around 15.8% of students received support in 2020 (Destatis, 2021). What we may conclude is that, while the access and social mobility frame has been present in German higher education policy reforms, this policy frame is associated with left-of-center political parties. Indeed, only when these political parties were in government, either at the federal level or in one of the *Bundesländer*, were they able to successfully advance higher education policy reforms promoting the access and social mobility policy frame. This is radically different from the Norwegian case, as we shall see next, where a more consensus-oriented style of policymaking ensured continuity in policy focus over time.

Given the comparatively high level of social selectivity and the elite characteristics of the Humboldtian model (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993), German universities traditionally did not emphasize the fostering of employability. While the introduction of *Fachhochschulen* represented the growing significance of the employability

and skills frame in the German higher education landscape, for most universities the shift towards employability as an important mission only became visible following the Bologna Process and the Europeanization of German higher education (see below). There was some competition between universities and *Fachhochschulen* regarding the question of attractiveness of labor market opportunities, but universities still had the upper-hand when it came to societal reputation due to their provision of credentials leading to higher ranks in the hierarchy of industry or the public sector (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993).

Employability became important in the framing of German higher education policy throughout the 1990s when debates concerning time to degree and the average age of university graduates emerged (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993). The launch of the Bologna Process ushered in a series of reforms indicative of a reframing of higher education policy; for instance, the introduction of the new BA/MA degree structure to replace the classical 5 year single-cycle degrees leading to a *Diplom* or *Magister Artium*. This was designed to provide students with the opportunity to leave higher education after 3 years with a degree that qualifies for the labor market (Hüther & Krücken, 2018; Vukasovic et al., 2017). In addition, the new quality assurance regimes entailed a focus on employability of graduates (Hüther & Krücken, 2018), which constituted a significant shift away from the historical ideal that students were responsible for their progress; now universities were held accountable for students' progress (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993).

The attempt to increase the overall percentage of higher education students enrolled in *Fachhochschulen* further moved the employability frame to center stage. While these institutions historically educated around a quarter of the total student population (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993), the percentage of students in *Fachhochschulen* increased in 2020 to 36.4% (Destatis, 2020). This development was driven by a general concern that rising student numbers might negatively affect the research function of German universities, particularly since a decline in student numbers expected since the 1980s never materialized (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993; Hüther & Krücken, 2018). As part of the broader discussion about the relationship between universities and *Fachhochschulen*, we find the outlines of a (now) dominant policy frame: the role of research and innovation for economic development. In the Humboldtian ideal, basic research has been the core duty of Germany universities and, to some extent, the public research institute sector (Frackmann & De Weert, 1993). By contrast, *Fachhochschulen* had a limited function regarding research: they focused primarily on applied research and were traditionally not allowed to award PhD degrees. This clear division was called into question as European discussions about the comparative weakness and fragmentation of the European Research Area vis-à-vis the U.S., and more recently Asia, emerged (Chou, 2012, 2014).

Since the 2000s, we find a steady process of gradual convergence of the tasks and missions of German universities and *Fachhochschulen*. Specifically, this is characterized by academic drift towards universities, exemplified by an increased focus on the research function of *Fachhochschulen* with a designated funding program as well as the initial developments of PhD programs (Hüther & Krücken, 2018). At the

same time, institutional differentiation among universities challenged the Humboldtian ideal, which, given its elitist roots, perceived universities as elitist organizations of more or less equal quality (Jungblut & Jungblut, 2017). Following the publication of the first international university rankings, leaders in European countries and universities collectively realized how far the world perceived their universities to lag behind U.S. universities with regards to research and innovation output. In Germany, this led to the introduction of the Excellence Initiative in 2005 (now Excellence Strategy), which identified national flagship universities based on their research performance with the explicit aim to further catalyze their output through additional funding (Hüther & Krücken, 2018).

Like in other Western European countries, much of the higher education policy reforms in Germany are linked to the broader processes of regional integration of higher education in Europe (Hüther & Krücken, 2018) in response to globalization pressures (Chou et al., 2016). Indeed, Germany was a founding member of the Bologna Process and Germany's pro-European integration stance is well-known (Vukasovic et al., 2017). This reframing of German higher education policy moving away from the historical Humboldtian approach throughout the first two decades of this millennium must be situated in the broader context of increasing regional integration at the European-level (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2020a). The nesting of German higher education policy as 'European', either through support for the new European University Initiative (DAAD, 2020) or as part of the European Research Area (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2020b), clearly signals that the changes that have been sweeping the global higher education landscape are also being received in Germany. At the same time, the development over the last five decades also shows that historical roots of German higher education still matter and create path-dependence regarding the way international developments are integrated into German higher education policy. Thus, the German case underlines the importance of historical trajectories and existing intuitional arrangements for policy framing.

Norway: Framing and Reframing Egalitarianism Incrementally

Compared to many other countries in Western Europe, Norwegian higher education has a comparatively shorter history. The oldest university was established in 1811, and additional comprehensive universities were only created after WWII when the expansion and construction of the field of higher education in Norway occurred. Up until then, only some specialized colleges for higher learning existed (e.g., technical college, veterinary college). Norwegian higher education sector can be seen as part of the Nordic model, emphasizing a strong nation state, egalitarianism, and regional considerations (Pinheiro et al., 2014).

For Norway, the central policy dilemma in this sector has been between ensuring the regional dimension of higher education and facilitating quality by concentration of resources. Here, the regional dimension refers to the different parts of the

country, and not the supranational (i.e., between Norway and Europe). Given the equalitarian emphasis in the Nordic model of higher education, the access policy frame has traditionally been important in Norway, particularly during the post-WWII expansion period. The Norwegian access policy frame encompasses two distinct debates: *who* has access (broadening access) and *where* this access is located (regional dimension). The latter has also been the basis for structural changes in Norwegian higher education since the 1960s.

Until very recently, Norwegian higher education policy reforms have been characterized by incrementalism, we find long lines of development persisting across various governments and often over several decades. Policymaking processes are consensus-oriented and usually involve the stakeholders, the sector, and experts. Another notable feature is the tradition of public committees that provide advice to policymakers. The committees are appointed by the state, usually led by a prominent expert/stakeholder and have wide representation. The experts involved contribute to specifying the nature of problems, discussing their causes and relevance, and suggesting appropriate solutions (Tellmann, 2016). While the reports are advisory to the ministry, in higher education they often form an important input for policies discussed by the Parliament. We therefore also analyze the committee reports to identify the policy frames associated with these reforms because these reports reveal a significant portion of the framing process.

The various public committees convened in the higher education sector have addressed access, reaching very different conclusions. For instance, the Kleppe committee (1961) calculated how many graduates the labor market was anticipated to need and determined that further expansion of higher education was not necessary (Omholt, 1995), with a dominating employability frame. The Ottosen committee (1965) introduced two important changes concerning access. First, all post-secondary education became a part of ‘higher education’, a term the subsequent White Paper consolidated (St. meld. nr. 17, 1974–1975). Second, a new regional college system was established with considerable support in the sector (Aamodt & Lyby, 2019). By the mid-1980s, the system expanded considerably, and debates on access became increasingly engaged with concerns about quality (Kyvik, 1983). The Hernes committee (NOU, 1988: 28) argued that ‘everything cannot be done everywhere’ and concluded that duplication would likely lead to stronger hierarchies in quality instead of facilitating access across Norway. The proposed solutions broadly involved enhanced division of labor, collaboration and networks, along with the necessity to view the sum of institutions as a national system. Following the Hernes committee report, the 1990 White Paper (St. meld. nr. 40, 1990–1991) set in motion a large-scale merger in the university college sector in 1994.

The debate around system structure persisted. After the 2002–2003 Quality Reform, university colleges had the opportunity to become recognized as universities when they fulfil certain criteria. This led to an increase in the number of universities across Norway. The Stjernø committee was mandated to revisit the overall system structure and address system fragmentation (NOU, 2008: 3). The proposed solution was radical: all public higher education institutions were to be merged into

8–10 large regional institutions. While most committee reports have been implemented more or less ‘as is’, the idea of these radical mergers created considerable opposition and were thus not implemented. The ministry nevertheless continued to encourage greater collaboration and division of labor in the sector (the so-called ‘SAK’ policy). The idea of mergers did not disappear. In 2015, the ministry issued the White Paper ‘Concentration for quality’ for facilitating mergers in the sector (St. meld. nr. 18, 2014–2015), marking another step towards stronger consolidation and concentration of resources. Fragmentation was still perceived as an issue and the White Paper refers to widespread belief that now ‘the time had come’ for a structural reform. This time, however, the mergers were to take place from the bottom up. The argument put forth emphasized the need for Norway to adapt to a changing world amid growing societal challenges. The regional dimension of the access policy frame remained one of several stated reform goals.

While the long-term development has been that of incrementalism, in 2021 Norway received a new government, which put decentralization of the system much stronger on the agenda again, marking a rapid U-turn from the processes of stronger concentration. The frames invoked are strongly linked to the *where* dimension of access, emphasizing the necessity to make education available across the whole country, e.g., by emphasizing the necessity to establish decentralized and distance learning opportunities.

The *where* dimension has been highly visible in Norwegian higher education policy. By contrast, the *who* dimension of the access debate has been less visible in many of the major committee reports and white papers. The primary focus has been on creating equality of opportunities. In the Nordic welfare state context, tuition-free higher education and relatively generous support from the public student support system (*Lånekassen*, established in 1947) are largely taken for granted, there are hardly any serious debates about introducing tuition fees. Recent studies have shown, however, considerable inequalities in access to higher education in Norway, e.g., in terms of parental education (Aamodt, 2019).

Along with access, quality has been a major overarching emphasis in Norwegian policy for higher education since the 1980s and can largely be connected to several of the overarching frames discussed in this chapter. It has been the normative underpinning for suggestions concerning concentration of resources, for suggesting reforms concerning educational provision, as well as linked to discussions on the contributions that education makes to society, labor market, and economic development. While these represent a user-oriented view of quality and could be seen to be associated with claims of relevance, there is a parallel and more academic view on quality in higher education in Norwegian policy framing as we shall now elaborate.

The Quality Reform (St. meld nr. 27, 2001), building on the Mjøs committee report (NOU, 2000: 14), presented a comprehensive reform of higher education in Norway, emphasizing issues concerning quality and efficiency. While the Reform argued for creating a knowledge society, thus linking these discussions with the societal challenges policy frame, it also launched the notion of ‘useful *Bildung*’ as a means to integrate traditional academic norms and emphasis on lifelong learning (critical thinking and ability to learn). The Quality Reform encompassed diverse

changes, including changes to the governance and study program structures, as well as introducing quality assurance and performance-based funding while emphasizing mobility, and more. While the Quality Reform has been associated with an Americanization and ‘Bolognization’ of Norwegian higher education policy, it also continued existing trajectories of higher education reforms by providing solutions (e.g. new degree structure) to identified problems in the system (Michelsen & Aamodt, 2007). The Bologna linkage introduced a more explicit regional integration policy frame into Norwegian higher education reforms by integrating student and researcher mobility and the notion of the European Higher Education Area into the reform package. The main policy frames embedded in the Reform are associated with local issues, emphasizing quality, societal responsiveness, and relevance—representing an amalgamation of employability, societal challenges, and economic development policy frames.

Debates concerning quality in Norwegian higher education policy have continued and are shifting. For instance, the 2016 White Paper ‘Culture for quality’ (St. meld. nr. 16, 2016–2017) proposed a range of measures to address educational quality. The reform package relates to several concurrent frames, given the multifaceted quality definition that underpins the problem formulation. There is an economic dimension concerning efficiency, a relevance dimension that refers to both society and employability, and a societal challenges argument that requires high competence and learning outcomes. Nevertheless, there is also a parallel, and less utilitarian dimension emphasizing the *Bildung* traditions of learning for personal development. There is now many reform activities underway in Norway, including new white papers on both system governance, relevance of higher education, and student mobility.

What the case of Norway reveals, in contrast to Germany, is how incremental higher education reform processes lead to co-existing, but differentiated, interpretations of individual policy frames. For instance, access, particularly its geographical dimension, shifted from system expansion to structure and quality. While the new U-turns emphasizes decentralization, this is not accompanied with expansion. Overall, this can also be associated with a broader shift from an input to a more output thinking in higher education governance, thus enabling discussions about the contributions that education makes towards employability, economic development, and grand challenges. It is in these broader debates that we observe how policy frames are blended. For example, employability has expanded from rationalistic calculations of labor market needs to a broader societal relevance frame where employability is viewed in a context of uncertainty, a rapidly changing labor market, and the necessity of restructuring the economy for the future, and in so doing overlaps with a societal challenges frame. Similarly, international economic competitiveness and solving societal challenges have emerged as prominent overarching policy frames, but these discussions take place in a Nordic welfare state context, and thus do not appear as radical shifts towards an economized view of higher education as elsewhere in the world.

Regional integration and internationalization in general are important policy objectives in Norway. Indeed, sections on mobility, European research funding, and internationalization can be found in nearly all recent white papers. Yet these are often strategically integrated into local reform concerns (e.g., Quality Reform). A characteristic of the Norwegian policy discussion is the persistent undertone of scientific excellence and academic values, e.g., by emphasizing the unique characteristics of higher education and *Bildung* as a norm. This can be a result of a policymaking mode where the sector and organized interests are heavily involved. This can also be interpreted as a strategic legitimization device to assure support for proposed measures. Overall, policymaking in Norway has generally been characterized by path-dependency – incrementalism and long lines of development. While more recent changes suggest a time of more rapidly changing policy priorities, it also remains to be seen whether this is a temporary state of affairs, or a new style for Norwegian higher education policymaking.

Conclusion: The Many Promises of the Framing Approach

This chapter reviewed how the framing approach has been applied in studies of higher education policy reforms in Western Europe. By doing a Dimensions analysis, the review found that the literature is highly diverse, rich, but few in numbers. Higher education scholars applying the framing approach focused on three overlapping empirical themes: the origin and evolution of European higher education policy cooperation, or what we called the ‘European Story’; top-down Europeanization (‘When Europe Hits Home’); and the evolution of national higher education policy reforms (‘National Story’). These studies uncovered at least four distinct policy frames that are significant to higher education policy developments in Western Europe: the social mobility frame, the employability frame, the innovation/competitiveness frame, and the Europe or regionalism frame.

Examining higher education policy framing and reframing at the European-level, in Germany, and in Norway, we found that the framing approach enables us to observe how policy frames are used to usher in radical and incremental policy changes. For European-level developments, policy frames were used as discursive tools to carve out a space for European cooperation in an area of national sensitivity. In Germany’s case, clearly distinct policy frames competed for dominance, the outcome being a function of which political party coalitions were in power. By contrast, Norway has for the most part been a case of incremental reforms focused on the policy problem of access, interpreted through a Nordic lens of equitable geographical distribution and over time also a concern for quality. The inclusiveness of the Norwegian reform process has resulted in a blending of different policy frames within the reform debates.

There are implications of our research design and case selection. For instance, by selecting two Northern European countries, where European integration in higher education has been more prominent on the agenda, we are able to see how ‘Europe hits home’. At the same time, we are not able to explore *how* and *why* European integration in higher education are *less* on the policy agendas in other European countries. Ultimately, what our three cases revealed about the policy framing approach is that it allows us to compare and analyze reform efforts in three very distinct contexts. Indeed, the framing approach was used to discuss broader systemic changes (as in Germany’s case), as well as to delineate specific narratives emerging from policy documents (e.g., Norway and European-level developments). Overall, a framing analysis encourages us to consider how the presence and absence of diverse policy frames, as well as their competition, accounted for the similarities and differences in reform outcomes in Western Europe. Nevertheless, this also points out that the framing approach, while flexible for both zooming in and out, must be employed with care for analytic precision.

To conclude, there are several avenues in which the framing approach could be usefully applied to lead to more interdisciplinary and comparative insights into developments in higher education. As our review and the detailed case studies have shown, the higher education policy sector is highly porous given the increasing role of universities in achieving policy goals in other sectors: as an engine for economic growth (nationally, regionally), as a scientific solution provider for policy challenges, as a leveler of social inequality, and more. What this means is that higher education scholars interested in studying reform efforts and resistance in this domain need to go beyond the boundaries of this sector. For instance, scholars have already called attention to the nexus between higher education and research policy developments in Europe (Chou & Gornitzka, 2014; Chou et al., 2017), as well as nexus with migration policies (Cerna & Chou, 2022); these avenues of research are particularly productive in the European context.

In a post-Brexit and post-pandemic Europe facing new geopolitical realities, integration in higher education may take on new directions. New geopolitical realities and a war in the region have strengthened commitment to Europe from within and from global allies, but it also introduced uncertainty. Indeed, this may lead to education obtaining less policy attention, but it could also reinvigorate emphasis on European values and norms and an acknowledgement of the importance of higher education’s role in their dissemination. The framing approach would be especially suitable to explore the underlying tensions between competing frames, as well as opportunities seized for sectoral collaboration (see the case of European Scientific Visa in Cerna & Chou, 2014). Finally, the framing approach could also be integrated in comparative regionalism studies to explore how frames emerge, are supported, or contested in different parts of the world. As higher education internationalization becomes a shared experience around the world, the framing approach could shed light on the travel of ideas, the circulation of actors who promote them, and the friction they generate in diverse institutional settings.

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Chapter 11

Policy Framing in Higher Education in the United States



Cecilia M. Orphan and Casey McCoy-Simmons

Abstract This chapter situates policy framing in the context of higher education in the United States. First, the chapter overviews framing and frames as concepts of import to postsecondary policy making. Next, the chapter describes who in the U.S. engages in framing including interest groups, IPPOs, policy elites, the media, and social movements. To illuminate the role of framing and frames in U.S. postsecondary policy, and the diverse policy actors who frame, this chapter explores how the Truman Administration framed higher education's purposes as compared with the Bush and Obama Administrations. In doing so, the chapter shows how the rise of neoliberal ideology as a governing rationality within the institutional environment shifted how policymakers frame higher education policy problems and solutions. The chapter also explores how framing and frames can both encourage change in the institutional environment while embedding new institutional norms and paths into policy and institutional practice. The chapter concludes by describing why framing matters in U.S. postsecondary policy while surfacing the contested nature of framing as a concept and theory.

Introduction

Policy actors use words, images, metaphors, storytelling, and other rhetorical strategies to explain the world and the problems facing society. Within higher education, policy actors hold beliefs, feelings, and ideas about how the pressing issues facing the system arose and use framing to convey these understandings to public and policymaker audiences (Druckman, 2004; Orphan et al., 2021; Orphan et al., 2020). In the broadest sense, framing is the intentional use of language to present an issue (Bacchi, 2009).

Policy actors engage in framing to convince others of the rightfulness of their interpretation of policy problems and solutions and to frame the context of

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subsequent policy debates about these issues (Matthes, 2012). In this way, frames and the process of framing can be understood using an institutional theory lens; in this paper, we conceptualize frames as scripts available for organizational and policy action and conformity within institutional environments (Meyer & Bromley, 2013; Thelen, 1999). Scholars developed institutional theory to conceptualize the environments in which organizations exist. Institutional theory explores how institutional environments transmit norms and ideas that organizations adopt and conform to as they seek legitimacy (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). As we argue, global shifts in the institutional environment due to political or economic events may influence the types of frames political actors advance (Thelen, 1999).

When policymakers and the public broadly accept frames for policy issues and problems, which often happens when policy actors successfully connect frames to norms and ideas in the institutional environment, these frames move onto the policy agenda and policy actors design solutions for them (Birkland, 2011; Orphan et al., 2021). Once policy is enacted that reflects these frames, they become institutionalized. The words policy actors use to frame issues structure policy debate and action and subsequent institutional norms. As Schattschneider (1975) wrote, then, framing is consequential because “the definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power ... [S]he who determines what politics is about runs the country” (p.17). In higher education, policy actors who effectively frame postsecondary issues and problems in policy debates influence the solution design process (Matthes, 2012). That said, policy actors face challenges in advancing frames when competing policy actors advance alternative frames that garner significant attention (Matthes, 2012). This fact is due to the contested nature of political power within institutional environments which imbues policy actors with differing types and levels of power (Thelen, 1999). People may reject or alter frames depending on who is engaged in framing as well as how well frames align with the norms present in the institutional environment. Frames may also forge new paths for institutional action both at the public policy and organizational policy levels that encourage organizations to align their activities with these new norms (Meyer & Bromley, 2013; Thelen, 1999).

While scholars are increasingly using framing theory to understand United States (U.S.) postsecondary policy (e.g., Adams, 2016; Orphan et al., 2020), examinations of framing in education policy are far more common in European settings (e.g., Kozma & Polonyi, 2004; Serrano-Velarde, 2015). The purpose of this conceptual chapter is to situate framing in the context of U.S. higher education while describing its institutional effects on the environment of postsecondary policy making. We start by discussing framing and frames as distinct concepts and institutional processes of import to consider when exploring the policy formation process. Next, we describe who in U.S. postsecondary policy engages in framing including interest groups, intermediary public policy organizations (IPPOs), policy elites, the media, and social movements. To illuminate how framing and frames operate in U.S. postsecondary policy, and how diverse policy actors engage in framing, we compare how the Harry S. Truman presidential administration (1945–1953) framed higher education’s purposes with the presidential administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama (2001–2016). Throughout, we discuss how political and economic events in

the global institutional field affect how policy actors frame higher education's purposes. We also explore how particular framings for higher education's purposes contribute to framings of the system's problems and appropriate solutions. Specifically, we show how the rise of neoliberal ideology, which has become culturally rationalized in the U.S. environment (Meyer & Bromley, 2013), has influenced how policy actors frame higher education's purposes, value, problems, and solutions (Berman, 2012; Giroux, 2014; Meyer & Bromley, 2013; Thelen, 1999). We conclude by discussing why framing matters in postsecondary policy while surfacing the contested nature of framing as a concept and theory.

What Is Framing?

Scholars have examined framing in the media, public policy, mass communications, public relations, opinion polling, and marketing (Borah, 2011; Druckman, 2004). Where frames are often identified as ideas that "enable people to 'fix' discourse in place as speech acts" (Goldstein & Beutel, 2009, p. 277), framing is the use of these frames. van Hulst and Yanow (2016) described the importance of differentiating these terms, pointing to frames as a static term and framing as "offer[ing] a more dynamic and ... potentially politically aware engagement" (p. 93). Frames can thus be understood as nouns (speech acts) that motivate action or promote specific understandings of issues, and framing can be understood as a verb describing policy actors' efforts to transmit these understandings to the broader institutional environment (Thelen, 1999).

Framing can serve a variety of functions and take different forms depending on the policy actors and contexts involved (Goldstein & Beutel, 2009). Policymakers use frames during storytelling to control policy discourses and contextualize policy issues (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). We understand policy frames and framing as a form of policy feedback, as conceptualized by Thelen (1999), which generates new paths for policy action for organizations (in our case, postsecondary institutions). This policy feedback also leads to tangible policy solutions that encourage or force postsecondary institutions onto institutionalized paths.

Adams (2016) argued for examining policy texts such as policy statements, agendas, and speeches to ascertain the frames policy actors use. This reading of policy texts should not be taken at face value, though, as they contain "meaning as a result of wider social, cultural and political potentialities" (Adams, 2016, p. 301). In this way, social/political contexts and the broader institutional environment shape the efficacy and types of frames policy actors advance even as they may use frames to encourage postsecondary institutions to align with preferred paths (Thelen, 1999).

Framing can also problematize an issue previously not viewed as problematic (Adams, 2016). For example, in shaping education policy debates, the Bush Administration framed students as problems due to unequal academic success across demographic groups (Goldstein & Beutel, 2009). The Administration then framed teachers as blame-worthy for these 'problems.' Policy actors used this

framing to create the *No Child Left Behind* law which connected school funding to student performance on standardized tests and resulted in lower funding for schools enrolling high-needs students. Thus, frames can shape political arguments such as those about *No Child Left Behind* by explaining social issues that require remedying (Bacchi, 2009). While framing can be argumentation, frames may differ from the arguments they shape as they highlight specific points or (re)interpret issues (Hänggli & Kriesi, 2012).

Frames may also simplify issues by reducing complex phenomena within the institutional environment to manageable concepts the public can understand (Bacchi, 2009), creating sense-making that allows policymakers to describe an otherwise ambiguous issue as having an attainable solution (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). By making sense of policy uncertainties, sense-making “brings a stronger process orientation to framing, seeing it as a many-dimensional socio-political process grounded in everyday practices and ordinary beliefs” (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 105). Interestingly, policy actors often reproduce existing frames or cultural values which contributes to their legibility and attractiveness (Bacchi, 2009).

In summary, policy actors use frames to tell stories about social issues within the broader institutional environment while also motivating organizations to align with existing or new institutional norms. When sense-making succeeds, framing effects have occurred (Druckman, 2004). Framing effects are present when policy actors and the public are convinced by a policy actor’s framing/frames and incorporate them into their own beliefs and subsequent decisions. Framing effects are also evident when organizations align their activities with new institutionalized paths forged through framing (Druckman, 2004; Meyer & Bromley, 2013; Thelen, 1999).

Who Engages in Framing in U.S. Postsecondary Policy?

In the U.S., policy operates at the federal, state, and local levels (St. John et al., 2018). Policy actors operate at all three levels and may independently frame issues or partner with other policy actors to advance the same frames (Orphan et al., 2021). Policy actors who are viewed as credible and nonpartisan are often trusted more than those who appear to have an agenda, which lends seemingly unbiased groups greater power to frame public understanding and subsequent policy action (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009).

While policy actors may be concerned with the needs of students and, at times, faculty members, students and faculty members often exert less influence over policy discourses and policy formation processes. This is true unless these individuals are associated with established interest groups or social movements that have gained national appeal and standing. In fact, policymakers often prefer the information and framing of IPPOs over that of professors or students during open testimony about proposed legislation (Perna et al., 2019). For this reason, we focus our discussion on the policy actors that research demonstrates are most influential in framing postsecondary policy issues at all levels; namely interest groups, IPPOs, policy elites, the

media, and social movements. These policy actors may have competing interests regarding postsecondary policy, but all strategically engage in framing.

Interest Groups

As their name implies, interest groups serve specific interests, population segments, or ideologies (Gándara & Ness, 2019; Miller & Morphew, 2017; Tandberg, 2010). Marsicano and Brooks (2020) defined interest groups by their advocacy role, writing that they “spen[d] money lobbying Congress at a level that required reporting expenditures” (p. 449). Interest groups are thus inherently political (Gándara & Ness, 2019). Due to their political nature, interest groups deploy frames aligned with their ideological views or stakeholder groups. In the U.S., it is increasingly difficult to ascertain who is an official interest group because the line between policy actors and the public has blurred (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). Interest groups also collaborate across political differences and policy actors which has led to an “increasingly crowded [field] with framers and situations to frame” (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 104).

In the U.S., a powerful set of interest groups with missions to influence federal postsecondary policy, colloquially known as the ‘Big Six’ (Cook, 1998; Marcus, 2014), includes five institutional membership associations who advocate on behalf of their members and postsecondary sectors: the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (regional public universities (RPUs)), the American Association of Community Colleges, the Association of Public Land-Grant Universities (public research universities and land grant universities), the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (private, independent universities and colleges), and the Association of American Universities (elite, research universities) (Orphan et al., 2021). The American Council on Education is an umbrella interest group that comprises institutional members across sectors which convenes the Big Six as an interest group coalition that advocates for issues, problems, and solutions of common concern across postsecondary sectors (Cook, 1998). This coalition frequently frames policy problems and issues via public letters addressed to federal policymakers and legislators co-signed by the six association presidents (McCoy-Simmons et al., 2022; Orphan et al., 2021). Through these letters, the Big Six claims to speak for all of U.S. higher education given its representation across sectors which garners them significant policy elite and media attention. The Big Six commonly frames the problem of low graduation and retention rates for students of color as stemming from inadequate public funding for postsecondary institutions rather than the shortcomings of colleges (Marcus, 2014). The Big Six also frames the perceived undue regulations on colleges as problematic and, in doing so, advocates for the interests of their member institutions rather than that of students or communities that may be protected by regulations (McCoy-Simmons et al., 2022; Orphan et al., 2021). One such letter signed by the Big Six supported the *Academic Freedom through Regulatory Relief Act*. This letter framed

regulations as being overabundant, costly, and ineffective, stating that “the sheer volume, ineffectiveness and cost of regulations and related actions promulgated or proposed by the Department of Education have far exceeded what might reasonably be required” (American Council on Education, 2015).

Other postsecondary interest groups engaged in framing include those advocating for unionized professors, the for-profit education sector, and wealthy, elite universities (e.g., Columbia University and Harvard University) (Marsicano & Brooks, 2020). Interest groups are also involved in negotiated rulemaking that determines postsecondary law (Natow, 2016). Such interest groups include accrediting bodies, financial aid administrators, campus government relations officers, and the Big Six (Natow, 2016). Interest groups operating at the state level tend to advocate for increased state funding for public universities and colleges (Tandberg, 2010). Often interest groups frame policy proposals and problems in ways that reveal the perceived harms experienced by the interests or ideologies for which they advocate (Cook, 1998; Natow, 2016; Tandberg, 2010), such as Young Invincibles who advocates on behalf of students for debt forgiveness and college affordability (n.d.).

Intermediary Public Policy Organizations

IPPOs are boundary-spanning organizations situated between policymakers and other stakeholder groups (Hammond et al., 2019; Ness, 2010; Ness et al., 2020) that seek to manage change in both those parties. IPPOs operate at all policy levels, with some active to influence and inform state policy and others working on federal policy. Intermediary organizations operate independently of these two parties and provide distinct value beyond what the parties alone would be able to develop (Honig, 2004, p. 67).

Some IPPOs lobby elected officials (Miller & Morphew, 2017; Orphan et al., 2021), but IPPOs mostly exert influence and attempt to frame policy issues and problems by sharing information and framing problems and solutions (Hammond et al., 2019; Ness et al., 2020). While policy elites may have the final say in enacting policies, IPPOs exert power as external policy actors who are able to influence policy elites (Broucker et al., 2019). IPPOs engage in motivational and mimetic framing by encouraging states and postsecondary institutions to adopt desired policy solutions by demonstrating that others have done so and enjoyed success (Miller & Morphew, 2017). Some IPPOs also frame the roles of policy actors as Complete College America (CCA) did by framing governors as meritorious “game changers” when they enacted policies aligned with CCA’s framings of problems and solutions (Ness et al., 2020). As such, IPPOs exert power by identifying and encouraging alignment with dominant or new institutional paths (Thelen, 1999).

While IPPOs’ framing of policy issues and problems are often influenced by their ideological leanings, Orphan et al. (2021) found that some IPPOs were more transparent about their ideologies than others. IPPO ideology also influences how they frame issues. Gándara and Ness (2019) found that both progressive and

conservative IPPOs identified state funding and college affordability as policy problems but framed the causes of these problems in different ways. Progressive groups framed unaffordability as resulting from inadequate government funding while conservatives blamed government subsidies. While disagreement can exist across political ideologies, IPPOs may form echo chambers composed of coalitions that advance narrowly defined frames for problems and solutions (Orphan et al., 2021), and these frames may align with existing institutional paths. Many higher education IPPOs are funded by the Gates and Lumina Foundations to advocate for specific policy solutions (Orphan et al., 2021), a fact that has led some scholars to call foundations advocacy philanthropists, shadow lobbyists, and policy patrons (Lubienski et al., 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). Common funding sources among IPPOs may also contribute to an echo chamber effect and the nationalization of education policy and policy frames which previously had largely been state-based (Orphan et al., 2021).

Policy Elites

Policy elites are elected officials and policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels with the power to enact policy change (Natow, 2016). Policy elites primarily convey frames during political campaigns and while in office through the media, then analyze public responses to frames using opinion polling (Hänggli & Kriesi, 2012; Matthes, 2012). Opposing policy elites may advance counterframes (Matthes, 2012), which can also influence public opinion (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). Policy elites may address their opponents' frames covered by the media but do so less in political advertisements that tend instead to focus on delivering their core frames rather than responding to counterframes (Hänggli & Kriesi, 2012). In education policy, policy elites receive support in developing frames from "policy engineers" who identify frames that distill "strategies geared towards the improvement of educational practice" (Adams, 2016, p. 292).

A notable example of policy elite framing was that of President Obama who framed the purpose of community colleges as being to enhance workforce development (Bragg, 2014). While community colleges have long aligned curricular offerings with regional workforce needs, they are multi-purpose institutions that engage in a variety of educational activities including offering the first 2 years of college to bachelor's-degree-seeking students, basic literacy courses, and personal enrichment opportunities (Thelin, 2019). Nonetheless, the Obama Administration's focus on the sector's workforce development role narrowed the purpose of community colleges to their workforce development role within policy discourses and the institutional environment. As this example shows, policy elites have significant power to frame policy issues in indelible ways.

The Media

The media may be the most accessible policy actor engaged in framing as journalists translate policy frames and counterframes created by policy actors for public consumption (Henig, 2009; Matthes, 2012). For this reason, policy actors hoping to advance their desired frames into the institutional environment often seek to leverage the media's "ability to commandeer the bully pulpit, over faceless bureaucracies and multiheaded legislatures" (Henig, 2009, p. 296). Media frames are shaped by a variety of factors including organizational ideology, a journalist's gender, and societal cultural values (Borah, 2011).

One example of media framing is how reporters tend to frame the RPU sector in the U.S. (Orphan, 2020). RPUs were established to facilitate postsecondary access to students regardless of their preparation levels (Thelin, 2019). As a result of their access missions, RPUs facilitate greater upward mobility for low-income people than any other U.S. postsecondary sector (de Alva, 2019). Despite their important role, the national media often frames RPUs as struggling, middling, amorphous, and vulnerable (McClure, 2018; Orphan, 2020). In one media story, a reporter framed the sector using the metaphors of death and survival, pointedly asking, "Public Regionals never die. Can they be saved?" (Gardner, 2017). Interestingly, local media tend to frame RPUs in more appreciative ways, often describing their local RPU's efforts to improve the workforce and community wellbeing (Orphan, 2020). Given the media's national reach, the frames they advance exert influence public and policy elite opinion as well as the institutional environment.

Social Movements

Social movements are composed of "signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613). Social movement activists use culturally relevant frames to convey arguments, enlist support, and attract media attention (Bacchi, 2009; Benford & Snow, 2000; Matthes, 2012). Social movements use collective action frames to describe an issue, evolve with changes in the institutional environment, motivate action among activists, and recruit people to join (Benford & Snow, 2000). Movements may elaborate on the causes of problems, assign blame, and diagnose solutions (Ness et al., 2020). Social movements may also use frame articulation to show the connections between disparate issues and amplification to focus attention on specific issues.

An important social movement that has framed policy issues, problems, and solutions within U.S. postsecondary policy is for social and racial justice (which is connected to the international Black Lives Matter movement) (Anyon, 2009; Hailu & Sarubbi, 2019; Rhoades et al., 2005). Students and faculty members involved in this movement have organized to end school segregation, protect Affirmative Action,

establish Ethnic Studies departments, ensure equitable access for disabled, female, and bilingual students and students of color, and found tribal colleges to strengthen tribal nation sovereignty (Anyon, 2009; Crazy Bull, 2015; Hailu & Sarubbi, 2019; Rhoades et al., 2005). Highly effective social movements advance policy frames that lead to policy and organizational change (Meyer & Bromley, 2013).

Framing Higher Education's Purposes, Value, Problems, and Solutions

In the U.S., the policy actors described above have framed higher education's purposes in various ways that are context dependent (St. John et al., 2018). In this section, we use prior research and key policy texts to compare how the Truman Presidential Administration (1945–1953) and the Bush and Obama Presidential Administrations (2001–2016), in partnership with other policy actors, framed higher education's purposes. These administrations are noteworthy because they exemplify how the ascendance of neoliberal ideology changed how policy elites framed higher education's purposes (Berman, 2012; Giroux, 2014; Orphan, 2018; Tomlinson, 2018). Indeed, neoliberal ideology spans party identification in the U.S., with Democrats (e.g., President Obama) and Republicans (e.g., President Bush) advancing neoliberal frames for higher education (Orphan et al., 2020). Neoliberal ideology emphasizes higher education's obligations to improve the economy and advocates for the use of assessment, surveillance, and accountability to evaluate colleges (Berman, 2012; Broucker et al., 2019). Neoliberal ideology also emphasizes education's individual benefits over its collective benefits, ultimately changing the purpose and structure of schools (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). By comparing these presidential administrations, we show how moves in the global institutional environment towards neoliberalism opened new pathways for policy framing and action (Broucker et al., 2019; Thelen, 1999). We conclude by describing how different frames for higher education's purpose have led to distinct framings for policy problems and solutions.

Framing Higher Education's Purposes

In 1947, President Truman established a commission to study the future of higher education which argued that higher education's purpose was to promote educational opportunity and strengthen democracy (Gilbert & Heller, 2013; Thelin, 2019). The Commission's timing is notable, given Thelen's (1999) observation that the sequencing of international events can create openings for new domestic policy understandings. The Commission was active during the early days of the Cold War when the U.S. wanted to demonstrate the superiority of its democratic and capitalist system.

The Commission's report framed education as "by far the most hopeful of the nation's enterprises" (Truman Commission, 1947, p. 5), stating that "education for all is not only democracy's obligation but its necessity" (p. 5). While the Truman Commission framed higher education's societal role as one of democratic nation building (Gilbert & Heller, 2013; Thelin, 2019), Critical Race Theorists have argued that attention to equity was animated by the U.S.'s desire for global hegemony rather than genuine concern for the status of minoritized communities (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Bell, 1980).

During this time, policy actors framed the knowledge creation role of universities in terms of the utility of research to humanity and to U.S. global dominance (Berman, 2012; Tomlinson, 2018). During the 1970s, the federal government began reducing barriers for postsecondary institutions to partner with the private sector on research (Berman, 2012). This change aligned with newer framings for higher education's role in producing knowledge; namely, policy actors increasingly framed knowledge university research as being most useful for industry and U.S. economic and military advancement. Prior to this, policy actors saw university-produced knowledge as potentially useful to industry, but postsecondary institutions were not assigned any special responsibility for producing knowledge for industry. This shift was a precursor to neoliberal ideology which came to dominate domestic and global policy discourses in the 1980s–1990s (Berman, 2012).

The 1980s was an important turning point for postsecondary policy due to national events which forged new understandings and policy feedback mechanisms for postsecondary policy (Thelen, 1999). During this time, college enrollments declined as the Baby Boomer Generation graduated and high school classes grew smaller (Thelin, 2019). The U.S. also experienced a recession which constrained public postsecondary funding (Berman, 2012). Policy actors began framing higher education's purpose as economic and individual rather than collective and democratic in response to these events (Giroux, 2014). While this framing was not novel (the Truman Commission also highlighted higher education's economic role), what was new is how higher education's purpose was narrowed to its strictly economic role (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). Postsecondary leaders advanced this framing by arguing for continued public investments in their colleges to fuel economic growth and individual earnings rather than to strengthen democracy (Thelin, 2019). Federal and state policymakers adopted this framing (Berman, 2012; Tomlinson, 2018). Policy actors also saw U.S. higher education as a vital counterpoint to Soviet Union scientific innovation during the Cold War, further entrenching the system's role in promoting U.S. global dominance (Thelin, 2019). This economic framing marked the ascendancy of neoliberal ideology as a governing political rationality for postsecondary policy (Berman, 2012; Giroux, 2014).

Fifty-nine years after the Truman Commission, the Bush Administration, under the purview of Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, established a Commission to analyze higher education (Department of Education, 2006). The Commission's report only mentioned democracy once and framed higher education's purpose in far narrower terms; specifically, higher education's purpose was to ensure individual prosperity and strengthen the national economy.

Inherent in framings about higher education's purpose are considerations of its value to society (Tomlinson, 2018). As policy actors increasingly framed higher education's purpose as being purely economic, policymakers began valuing higher education for the individual and national economic prosperity it generated, and this change reflected neoliberal shifts in the global institutional environment (Tomlinson, 2018). In this framing, higher education was commodified and evaluated by its return on investment (ROI) to the economy (instead of society *writ large*) and consumers (namely, students purchasing tuition and industry investing in research) (Tomlinson, 2018). In response, postsecondary institutions increasingly rationalize themselves to policy elites and regulators by demonstrating their ROI and accountability to neoliberal standards rather than by showing how they improve democracy and advance equity (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). Conversely, the Truman Commission's framing of the system's value surfaced its ability to promote economic prosperity as well as democracy and equity (Thelin, 2019; Tomlinson, 2018).

How policy actors frame higher education shapes how they frame college students. Where the Truman Commission framed students as contributors to society and capitalism deserving of educational opportunity, policy actors now frame students as consumers and future workers purchasing a service that will ensure their individual prosperity and promote national economic growth (Orphan et al., 2020; Saunders, 2007; St. John et al., 2018). As policy actors frame students as consumers, postsecondary funding shifted from being given directly to colleges as social institutions advancing democratic society to being given to students via need-based grants or loans that allows them to purchase the colleges and universities they want to consume (St. John et al., 2018; Thelin, 2019). Students have also been framed as human capital being prepared for consumption by industry (McDonald, 2013; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Tomlinson, 2018). In framing students as human capital, Orphan et al. (2020) found that U.S. governors focused on ensuring students' expedient movement through college in order to enter industry. In this framing, U.S. higher education becomes a means to an end (a pathway to economic prosperity for individuals and society) rather than a process of learning and holistic development (Saunders, 2007; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Yet as Broucker et al. (2019) asserted, efficiency goals may erode the educational mission of schools.

IPPOs have framed students and postsecondary institutions in similar ways (McDonald, 2013). CCA frames students' motivations as being to achieve "a college degree or valued workplace credential" (American Dreams Are Powered by College Completion, n.d.), which ignores other public values potentially motivating students. Strikingly, IPPOs engage in this framing irrespective of their ideological leanings showing the entrenched nature of neoliberal ideology as the institutionalized frame for U.S. postsecondary policy (McDonald, 2013; Orphan et al., 2020). This framing has created transactional relationships between students and institutions as students pay institutions to improve their human capital while ensuring an enjoyable collegiate experience (Saunders, 2007; Tomlinson, 2018). In short, neoliberal framing has reshaped the relationships individuals, communities, and policy actors have with social institutions while redefining higher education's purpose.

Framing Higher Education's Problems and Solutions

How policy actors frame higher education's purposes and societal value lead to frames for the system's problems and solutions. With its concerns about higher education's democratic purposes, the Truman Commission framed unequal access and unaffordability as the major problems facing the system (Thelin, 2019). The Commission framed the solutions to this problem as increased funding, federal oversight, and expansion of the community college sector (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). Alternatively, the Spellings Commission framed low graduation and retention rates as higher education's most significant problem because both diminished the economy (Department of Education, 2006; Markwardt, 2012). In this framing, college access was de-emphasized, and college completion was prioritized. The Spellings Commission's framing of higher education's problems as economic was a departure from that of the Truman Commission which framed higher education's problems as connected to societal inequities (Markwardt, 2012; Thelin, 2019). In this section, we describe how contemporary frames for postsecondary policy problems and solutions are situated in neoliberal ideology which governs the institutional environment (Berman, 2012; Giroux, 2014). We also describe how various policy actors advance neoliberal frames and promote the Completion Agenda movement as a policy path to solve postsecondary policy problems. We consider the Completion Agenda movement because social movements can rationalize new institutional norms and generate new institutional paths that cause organizations to change their actions and policies (Meyer & Bromley, 2013; Thelen, 1999).

The Spellings Commission framed the causes of unequal college completion across demographic groups as higher education's unwilling or inability to innovate, contain costs, be efficient, and maintain affordability (Markwardt, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). In this framing, the Commission ignored the financial realities created by declines in postsecondary funding since the 1980s (Laderman & Weeden, 2019; Welner, 2011). As the neoliberal framing of higher education's purpose gained traction, postsecondary public funding continued declining and hit a historic low during the Great Recession (Laderman & Weeden, 2019). In a sense, the downward funding trend is logical given how policy actors frame higher education's purposes – if individuals and private enterprise are the primary beneficiaries, why should the public fund higher education (Berman, 2012)? Irrespective of the impact of funding cuts on colleges, policy actors and IPPOs across the ideological spectrum have perpetuated neoliberal framings for higher education's problems (Horn & Kelly, 2015; Massy, 2013; Miller & Morphew, 2017). Indeed, IPPOs who embrace neoliberalism are powerful shapers of policy debates (La Londe et al., 2015; McCoy-Simmons et al., 2022; McDonald, 2013; Orphan et al., 2020).

Scholars have identified President Barack Obama's speech to the U.S. Congress in 2009 as the birth of the Completion Agenda movement (Hammond et al., 2019; Markwardt, 2012; Ness et al., 2020.) During this speech, President Obama framed the problem of unequal college completion as threatening the U.S.'s global

economic dominance and recovery from the Great Recession, referencing the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's finding that the U.S. was no longer the most educated country in the world (Hammond et al., 2019; Ness et al., 2020). President Obama also framed the necessities created by the knowledge economy for college graduates as a guiding rationale for improving educational attainment, stating that "[i]n a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite" (2009, para. 62). President Obama identified the year 2020 as a goal date to remedy this problem. Given Thelen's (1999) observation that global events can forge new paths for policy action, it is logical that President Obama advanced this economic and individualistic framing during the Great Recession when public and policy elite receptivity to these economic arguments was likely high (Bragg, 2014).

Shortly after this speech, the Lumina Foundation, the largest private foundation devoted to U.S. higher education, announced its own goal date of 2025 to ensure 60% of the population possessed a quality postsecondary credential and structured its funding opportunities to align with this goal (Hammond et al., 2019; Ness et al., 2020). The Gates Foundation also became a major policy actor in the Completion Agenda movement (Miller & Morphew, 2017). Other policy actors joined the Completion Agenda movement by launching new IPPOs (e.g., CCA), reconfiguring their existing work, or structuring policy debates to connect them within the movement (Miller & Morphew, 2017; Ness et al., 2020), events demonstrating that this new institutional path had gained broad acceptance. Since its creation, CCA has arguably become the most influential IPPO advancing the Completion Agenda movement, deriving its power from its ability to frame postsecondary problems and identify solutions, and receiving significant funding from the Gates and Lumina Foundations (Hammond et al., 2019; Miller & Morphew, 2017; Ness et al., 2020).

Since the Completion Agenda movement began, it has become *de rigueur* for policy actors to frame the problem of unequal degree completion across racial groups as being economic (Bradbury & Triest, 2016). In this framing, the untapped potential of students of color to become human capital or, in CCA's framing, support a "strong economy" for which "the skills gap must be closed," are most salient (Complete College America, 2011; Clay, 2019). As Roummel Erichsen and Salajan (2014) argued, this framing of unequal postsecondary access and success situates both as problems facing individuals seeking financial prosperity and the U.S. seeking global economic dominance rather than problems facing a society with persistent systemic racial oppression.

When higher education fails to meet the demands placed on it by students, policymakers, or the public, policy actors commonly frame the system as in crisis (Christensen et al., 2011; Newfield, 2008; Thelin, 2019). This framing has been used by authors of popular press books including *Academically Adrift* (Arum, 2010) and *American Higher Education in Crisis? What Everyone Needs to Know* (Blumenstyk, 2014). When framed thusly, higher education's failings to position the U.S. as a global economic power or prepare quality human capital are often framed as causes for the crisis (Markwardt, 2012; Erichsen & Salajan, 2014). For example,

the Spellings Commission argued that higher education was in crisis due to low completion and retention rates (Department of Education, 2006; Markwardt, 2012). Later, CCA decried the “college graduation crisis”. Scholars have critiqued the crisis framing used by IPPOs and other policy actors as manufactured to advance a neoliberal reformist agenda (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; McDonald, 2013; Picciano & Spring, 2012). Nevertheless, the framing of U.S. higher education as in a state of perpetual crisis persists and has motivated urgent action among postsecondary institutions and policy actors (Adams, 2016).

To address the perceived crises of higher education’s failure to fulfill its economic purposes, policy actors have framed solutions as being the need for disruptive innovation, accountability, and performance-based funding (Adams, 2016; Broucker et al., 2019; Markwardt, 2012). Proponents of disruptive innovation have pointed to distance learning, lack of affordability and access, and the supposed appeal of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as evidence that higher education as an ‘industry’ is primed for disruption (Brookings, 2020; Christensen et al., 2011; O’Malley, 2019). Strikingly, the framing of disruptive innovation’s utility reveals market-based rationality common in neoliberal ideology (Adams, 2016; Giroux, 2014). Disruptive innovation is concerned with identifying new markets, underserved customers, and untested products that higher education might offer, or that might be offered by third parties, that would disrupt the status quo (Christensen et al., 2011). While MOOCs failed to disrupt higher education due to poor retention and completion rates (ironically the same problems that policy actors believed MOOCs would solve) (Al-Imarah & Shields, 2018; O’Malley, 2019), policy actors continue to frame higher education as needing disruption, and these policy actors span ideologies and include the Center for American Progress, EduCause, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Brookings Institution (Brookings, 2020; Christensen et al., 2011; Horn & Kelly, 2015; Massy, 2013; Miller & Morphey, 2017).

The Completion Agenda movement has advanced a diagnostic frame and rationality to solve the problems it asserts have been created by postsecondary institutions that hinder students’ expedient graduation and entry into the workforce (Markwardt, 2012; Miller & Morphey, 2017). In assigning blame to colleges and universities, policy actors frame solutions to fix postsecondary institutions (Miller & Morphey, 2017). To fix on-time completion, for example, CCA used language such as “time is the enemy” to frame solutions to remediation including forcing colleges to provide co-requisite remediation (2011).

The administrations of both Presidents Bush and Obama advanced accountability as a solution. The major distinction between these presidential administrations was in their strategies for holding institutions accountable. Where the Bush Administration advanced sanctions for educational institutions, the Obama Administration sought greater transparency for student outcomes through publicly available data dashboards (Lederman & Fain, 2017). The emphasis on quantifiable outcomes is connected to the broader moves towards rationalization and quantification in the institutional environment that has embraced neoliberal ideology (Meyer & Bromley, 2013).

Policy actors advancing the Completion Agenda movement have framed assessment and performance-based funding as solutions that would promote accountability, reflecting changes in how institutions are rationalized and demonstrate their legitimacy in the institutional environment (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). Performance-based funding allocates appropriations to postsecondary institutions based on their performance along state-identified metrics and prizes institutional alignment with state economic goals, efficiency, and assessment – all tenants of neoliberalism (Giroux, 2014; Orphan, 2018). Despite research demonstrating that performance-based funding may constrain postsecondary access and fail to produce desired results, this solution has gained widespread acceptance with 41 U.S. states using some form of performance-based funding (Hillman, 2016).

Not only do policy actors have power to frame the problems and solutions, they can also frame research and information as legitimate or delegitimate (Lubienski et al., 2014; McDonald, 2013). In the current case, IPPOs framed the research showing the limited and unintended impacts of performance funding as problematic which caused policy elites to mistrust empirical evidence (Miller & Morphew, 2017). Policy actors can also use information and research politically to frame their desired policy solutions to garner support, as has been the case when IPPOs selectively use research to frame the benefits of performance-based funding (Lubienski et al., 2014; McDonald, 2013; Ness, 2010). These activities culminate in the endurance of neoliberal frames for postsecondary policy solutions.

Why and How Framing Matters

Frames and framing are not merely words – they are expressions of the broader institutional environment that may generate change by forging new paths or reinforcing existing ones that dictate acceptable organizational behaviors (Meyer & Bromley, 2013; Thelen, 1999). That said, research is mixed on the power of frames to enact policy change. The efficacy of frames is reliant on several factors including policy actor credibility, prior stakeholder knowledge, available information, competing frames, timing, repetition, and congruence with prevailing societal norms and values. It is also likely that the broader institutional environment determines the attractiveness of particularly frames. We discuss why and how framing matters as well as the limits of framing in this section.

The language used in frames can moderate framing effects. Policy actors may use buzzwords and catchphrases like ‘lifelong learning’ or ‘no child left behind’ to frame policy issues in relatable and attractive ways that may not lead to enduring policy change (Stenersen & Prøitz, 2020). Research reveals that these short, catchy phrases can initially propel an issue into public view but are less productive within policy elite circles because they are hard to define or transform into actual policy (Stenersen & Prøitz, 2020). This is particularly true when a chain of equivalence is lacking, and the buzzwords fail to align with important social issues.

Prevailing societal and institutional norms also determine the efficacy of frames and framing (Adams, 2016; Bacchi, 2009). Research shows that frames that distill complex policy issues into simple ideas that reference existing cultural values are more successful (Adams, 2016; Bacchi, 2009). As described, U.S. higher education's purposes have been framed in various ways, and these frames are often situated in the broader societal and global concerns and dynamics of their time. As such, frames can change people's understanding of social institutions such as colleges, but people's existing cultural beliefs about social institutions can also influence how they respond to frames (Bacchi, 2009).

While frames that adhere to existing cultural values enjoy success, exceptional policy actors may successfully advance new frames that are misaligned with prevailing societal values (Bacchi, 2009). Policy actor potential to advance new institutional paths using frames points to how the policy actor engaged in framing matters. President Obama's speech launching the Completion Agenda movement took place during his first year in office – a time when the popularity of U.S. presidents is at its height (Gallup, *n.d.*). He was largely viewed as a change agent advancing a message of hope that touched on societal values of optimism and progress and his election was seen as historic as he was the U.S.'s first bi-racial president (Rockman, 2012). These personal attributes likely worked in his favor as he built on the momentum established by the Spellings Commission to launch a national movement with one speech (Ness et al., 2020).

Sources viewed as credible and trustworthy also have greater ability to create framing effects, as do those with oration skills (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). When frames are appealing and advanced by trusted sources, they can endure and shape public opinion and policy long after the policy actor has left public office (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011). This seems to be the case with President Obama – the Completion Agenda movement has outlasted his presidency. The movement's longevity may also be due to the power of IPPOs such as CCA and funders such as the Lumina Foundation to sustain it, as well as paths that have been forged in the institutional environment that compel postsecondary institutions and policymakers to sustain the movement.

Another moderating factor for framing effects includes a person's political party identification. Policy actors who frame a conservative issue to a conservative audience produce a positive framing effect, while the opposite is true when policy actors present a conservative frame to a liberal audience (Dharshing et al., 2017). Partisan frames are also more effective among the politically aware, which disproves the assumption that less politically aware people are more susceptible to framing (Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010). Moreover, an issue frame sponsored by one's own political party is often more influential than when the same frame is sponsored by an opposing party (Slothuus & de Vreese, 2010). Interestingly, those with moderate political knowledge are the most susceptible to framing effects as they seek information to form an opinion, but do not seek as much information as the political knowledgeable who often seek conflicting sources of information to form their opinions (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011).

How the media frames issues can also shape their attractiveness. The media can disrupt policy actor frames by questioning the source's credibility (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009) and resist policy elite frames by demonstrating their incongruence with existing cultural values, sharing opposing information, or repeating counter-frames (Matthes, 2012). While the media is an influential policy actor that develops and broadcasts frames, people do not adopt frames without question. Media frames tend to be weaker if the institutional environment contains competing frames or if the frame presents a weak argument.

The agency individuals possess to accept, refute, or counterargue policy actor frames can also mitigate their effects (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). The public may resist framing effects by thinking critically, drawing on their preexisting knowledge, or consuming multiple media sources – an activity that is becoming increasingly difficult due to the polarized nature of U.S. media (Borah, 2011; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011). Relatedly, Matthes (2012) found that while media frames influenced an individual's attitude, "their attitudes were still shaped by ... argument-based frames" over the frames used by policy elites or the media (p. 257). As Borah (2011) wrote, then, "framing effects are far from being the magic bullet-like effects where citizens play a passive role" (p. 252).

Conclusion and Possibilities

Exactly how and when does framing matter in postsecondary public policy and for whom does it matter? As we have shown, the answer to this question is far from straightforward. That said, a contribution of our chapter is showing how the framing of higher education's purpose leads to specific frames for policy problems and solutions that may reflect or change the broader institutional environment. While we anchored our analysis in prior research and key policy texts, our chapter presents a conceptual argument and thus opens the door to empirical hypothesis testing.

We have described the various policy actors engaged in framing including the media, IPPOs, policy elites, social movements, and interest groups. At times, these policy actors form coalitions to advance policy frames favorable to their constituent groups or aligned with their ideologies. In the U.S., the dominance of neoliberal ideology, which is embraced by policy actors regardless of type, ideology, and governmental level (local, state and federal), has inspired policy solutions that embed neoliberal governing rationality and market-based solutions into postsecondary policy (Broucker et al., 2019). Other research has demonstrated how the broader neoliberal social/political context contributes to the institutionalization of neoliberal rationality within the academic administration of college campuses (Berman, 2012; Orphan, 2018; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Future research should examine how campus leaders respond to neoliberal policy frames for higher education's purposes by reshaping campus discourses and advancing neoliberal (or other) frames for localized problems and solutions or resisting these frames in favor of alternative frames.

We also hope our discussion inspires future research into how framing for higher education's purposes has evolved. This research could explore the implications of these shifts for the system's democratic and public purposes and equity imperatives. For example, scholars could study the genealogy of frames for higher education's purposes, value, problems, and solutions – opinion polling and discursive analyses would be fitting methodological approaches. We also encourage scholars to use time series and difference in different methods to study how specific frames for higher education's purposes, problems, and solutions correlate with funding for and public opinion about the system. Given the ascendance of false information, fake news, and efforts to use misinformation to distort and disrupt democratic processes in the U.S. and globally, we advocate for research examining how higher education's purpose, problems, and solutions are framed in an era of truth decay (Kavenagh & Rich, 2018).

We conclude by reflecting on how policy actors might engage in framing in the neoliberal institutional environment in which there is an assault on truth, facts, and the democratic mission of social institutions. Scholars have shown that neoliberalism weakens social institutions by narrowing their purpose to economic ends at the exclusion of their broader democratic and equity purposes (Berman, 2012; Giroux, 2014; Orphan, 2018; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Given that healthy democracies require social institutions that concern themselves with the maintenance of democratic norms and processes, we believe it is incumbent on policymakers to carefully consider how they frame higher education's purpose, value, problems, and solutions. Likewise, Bacchi (2009) urged policy actors to reflect on how the frames they advance affect different groups. Such reflexivity surfaces the contested and context-dependent nature of social institutions, and the multiple and competing priorities, understandings, and evaluations various actors place on these institutions. By reflexively examining higher education's purposes in broader ways, policy actors may advance democratic and aspirational frames for the system's role in addressing threats to democracy (Kavenagh & Rich, 2018). Such approaches could enliven debates about the social purposes of higher education and its role in strengthening democracy. We do not argue for higher education's economic purposes to be stripped – this is a clear strength and contribution of the system and benefit to individuals and the economy. That said, we hope that policy actors will broaden the frames they use to describe U.S. postsecondary education so that the system's democratic and equity aims might be fully realized.

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Chapter 12

Policy Framing in Higher Education in Canada



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Abstract Higher education is a policy field crossed by multiple issues that often have a global resonance but are framed based upon local idiosyncrasies. This chapter examines how policies give sense and address the four following issues: (1) access, success and social mobility; (2) skills and employment; (3) research, innovation and economic development; and (4) regional integration and internationalization. A review of 65 policy documents, 75 articles from the *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* and 64 scholarly productions from other sources suggests that, since the 1980s, most issues relied upon frames emphasizing the economic utility of higher education. The chapter ends with an analysis of two Canadian realities: the place of Indigenous and Francophone communities in higher education systems. Our analysis then suggests that a new frame, i.e. “inclusion,” permeates the issues of access, research, employment and even internationalization.

Introduction

Frames were first developed in cognitive and social psychology in order to better explain, predict, and even influence people’s choices. For Tversky and Kahneman (1981), decision frames refer to a person’s conception of the acts, outcomes, and contingencies associated with a choice. The authors have used this concept to explain why, when presented with identical problems (in terms of probabilities and outcomes), people would choose different solutions depending on how those problems were framed. The concept of “framing” has also been used by scholars in the field of communication who associated the expression with the key considerations

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emphasized in a discourse to organize reality and provide meaning to events and issues (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

In political science, policy framing represents a structured intersubjective understanding defined by a group of policy actors' beliefs and perceptions of how different elements of reality interact together (Zito, 2011). A first line of inquiry bears some relations to Schattschneider's (1960) work on agenda setting and the "conflict of conflicts" regarding the issues to be included in policy agendas. For the author, the definition of policy issues and alternatives structures the political conflicts by focusing the public's attention on a specific angle of the issue and limits the participation to the debates to actors who fit this angle. A second line of inquiry focuses on what policy makers perceive to be at stake in a policy issue at a particular time (Daviter, 2011). Along this line, framing will influence the political alignment between actors and the consolidation of interests in the policy formulation process.

For Rein and Schön (1977), policy framing involves sense-making (i.e. converting a problematic situation into an understandable problem to be solved), selecting, naming and categorizing features (i.e. focusing on some aspects of the problematic situation), and storytelling (i.e. binding together features into a coherent story about what has been and is going on). For van Hulst and Yanow (2016), the framing process operates on three kinds of entities: the content of policy issues, the identities and relationships between the involved actors and the policy process. The authors stress the inherently dynamic character of framing and invite scholars to look at framing evolution over time. Like Lakoff (2004), we also add that, since policy frames are activated by language and vocabulary, any framing analysis should include a description of the policy discourses as they are formulated by institutional actors in speeches or policy documents.

In the field of higher education, the study of policy frames allowed various scholars to examine how issues such as accessibility, quality assurance, innovation or governance have been understood, debated and addressed in different contexts at different times. For instance, an analysis of the historical trajectories of higher education policies in the U.S. allowed St. John et al. (2018) to observe that the issue of access had been first as equal opportunities (social good), then as academic preparation (individual rights), followed by the frames of diversity and, finally, public choice. Rhoades and Sporn (2002) studies how the frame around quality assurance in higher education was borrowed from the U.S. by various European countries – mostly through a process of mimetic and normative isomorphism; though the term was linked to "strategic management" in the U.S. and to "resource allocation" in Europe. Looking at the Norwegian case, Frölich et al. (2018) studied the impact of recent sectoral autonomy reforms on internal governance through instrumental and cultural frames and uncovered how a cultural script such as "modernized management" had shaped policy and strategies. In a related field, Schot and Steinmueller (2016) identified how science and technology policies evolved from a frame focusing on innovation for growth and national systems of innovation (and international competition) to transformative changes (or using science to meet society's needs); each frame enabling different actors and leading to different policy practises. Similarly, Meyer and Bromley (2014) argue that from a sociological perspective,

organizations, including education, are active agents in their own expansion and rationalization.

In this chapter, we merge considerations on the concept of “policy framing” to higher education policy from aforementioned authors in order to examine the rationalization, sense-making, narratives, discourses and logics policy actors adopted regarding various issues in Canadian higher education systems. The chapter focuses on four broad range of issues that appear at the core of any higher education system: (1) access, success and social mobility; (2) skills and employment; (3) research, innovation and economic development; (4) regional integration and internationalization. Canada is a federal system where provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over education (including higher education) and where there is no Federal Ministry of Education. Consequently, although we attempted to provide a consistent depiction of framing across provinces, one should bear in mind that institutions, cultures and language have a significant influence on how political problems are framed in each province (Fisher et al., 2009). Despite provincial differences, one would remark comparatively little differentiation within the Canadian university sector (Skolnik, 1986). On the contrary, the structure, mission and educational services provided by the college sector vary significantly across provinces (Gallagher & Dennison, 1995). We recognize that some of the issues and corresponding frames presented below could be different for the college sector but, due to space limitations, the chapter will analyze framing in the university sector.

Methodological Approach

In their study of framing in the U.S., St. John et al. (2018) developed an approach based on a combined analysis of policies, research literature and policy indicators. Inspired by this approach, but owing to space limitations, this chapter will focus on the first two components. More precisely, our methodology consisted in a three-stage analysis conducted in tandem, each of which is outlined below.

We first proceeded with a scoping review of the literature investigating one or more of the five following higher education issues calling for policy actions in Canada: access /social mobility, skills/employment, economic development/innovation and regional integration. A scoping review allows to map key research areas, evidence and sources of information in a given field, regardless of the study design. Arksey & O’Malley’s (2005) methodological framework suggests identifying research questions, relevant studies, select studies, chart the data, summarize the results and, then, if needed, to consult actors. Our research question was “What are the frames used to shape policy decisions regarding the four above-mentioned issues?” In this phase, we identified 64 scholarly articles, chapters and books investigating one or more of the issues in Canada from scholarship across the world.

The second phase focused on a review of the scholarly literature specifically produced in the Canadian Journal of Higher Education (CJHE), the oldest and first academic journal dedicated exclusively to the study of higher education within

Canada; started in June 1971 by the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education. While other journals published and continue to publish on higher education within Canada, this is the only one that contains the range of topics (noted above) for this review. Therefore, we focused exclusively on this journal. Future studies may decide to include the Canadian Journal of Public Policy or similar journals for a policy-specific lens, but these journals will not have the range of topics to address the issues addressed here (e.g., access). Since its inception in 1971, the CJHE has published over 1200 articles on Canadian higher education. We selected only those that focused on provincial or federal policies over the past decade, which left just 257 articles, of which 75 articles met the inclusion criteria.

Finally, given the structure of higher education in Canada, we conducted a careful analysis of federal, territorial, and provincial policy documents. In order to locate the relevant artefacts, we searched federal, provincial, and territorial government websites dedicated to the ministries in charge of higher education for three types of higher education policies: legislative (legislation and by-laws) policies, regulatory (regulations, directive or consequential framing of a sector) policies, and guidance (action or strategic plan, orange paper, etc.) policies. We conducted a second, wider search, using Google with the keywords “university OR higher education AND [name of province] AND [theme]” and retrieved 214 policy documents. We identified three degrees of policy relevance to higher education. Some policy documents were completely dedicated to higher education, in others, higher education as “ancillary” in that higher education was one of the many aims of the policy. Finally, some policy documents did not directly pertain to higher education but could have an impact on them. We selected and reviewed the 65 policy documents that were completely dedicated to higher education. Coding of the select documents was first done using the chapter themes as a priori coding categories. Second wave coding using thematic analysis informed a further breakdown of documents’ content and analysis process (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

During the data collection, it became immediately clear that not all regions have the same level of policy detail. For example, Quebec and Ontario, two of the most populous regions and largest education markets in Canada, had extensively developed and regulated their higher education sectors through policymaking. The same could be said, to a lesser extent, for British Columbia. A regionalized and consolidated market such as the Maritimes only had one overlapping common policy (i.e. the *Maritimes Higher Education Commission Act*). In that case, it appears that frames would not be put into action through policies, but rather through procedures and directives to institutions. Thus, while a lot more flexible for small regional markets, these procedures and directives are not on the same level of influence on decision-making as a policy, and therefore were not considered in this review.

In the following sections of this chapter, we begin with a brief description of each theme as it applies within the Canadian context and note where and how it may be different from other contexts, where possible. We then outline the relevant federal and provincial policy frames, with direct examples of how the frame manifests in the policy, strategic action plan, Act, By-Law, or rhetoric of the policy actors.

Finally, we provide an overview of how the academic scholarship frames the policies and conclude with our own reflections for each theme.

Access, Success, and Social Mobility

Following WW2, the United Nations signed The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes references to social rights, including the right to education. This frame has shaped different countries' perspective on accessibility (Conlon, 2006), especially in the aftermath of the war when the return of veterans encouraged both the American and Canadian governments to subsidize and, eventually, massify higher education (Trow, 1973). Between 1980 and 2010, undergraduate enrolment in Canada rose from 550,000 students to 994,000 (AUCC, 2011), and graduate enrolment went from 77,000 to 190,000. In 2018, 62% of 25–34-year-old Canadians obtained a tertiary qualification, compared to the 44% OECD average (OECD, 2019).

Right to Education

Across Canada, governments seek to increase access to more and higher education through establishing new institutions as well as the transformation of colleges, university colleges, and CEGEPS into universities. For example, in Quebec, following the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education and its observation regarding the elitist character of the classical colleges (*collèges classiques*) and universities, the government implemented multiple reforms with the general goal of supporting a “democratic access” to education and post-secondary education (CSE, 2008). The province established 48 general and vocational colleges (CEGEPs), which are free and accessible to all students who complete a high school diploma (L.R.Q., c. C-29), as well as the Université du Québec network and its 10 constituents (*Act respecting the Université du Québec*), partly to respond to the growing demand of students who had a college diploma. In Quebec, CEGEPs were created in all the province cities and have the mission to work with local partners to provide education and training to the largest number. In the *General and Vocational Colleges Act* (C-29), the expressions “region” and “regional” are found 101 times. There were also constituents of the Université du Québec in all the province’s major cities and a distance-education university (TELUQ).

In Ontario, while there were five publicly supported secular universities in 1960, since that time, 19 universities as well as 24 publicly funded colleges of applied arts and technology have been established (Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2013a). For instance, Article 5a-2 subparagraph c) states that the Minister may intervene to promote or protect the accessibility to education in the community where the college is located (*Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act*, 2002). Similarly, in British Columbia, providing access to

post-secondary education across the province was one of the core principles behind the creation of colleges, some of which became university colleges in the late 1980s and early 1990s (RSBC, 1996), and then universities in 2008 through the Campus 2020 initiative (University Presidents' Council, 2006). Most provinces also had an espoused concern for providing regional accessibility to higher education (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014). The effectiveness of these policies remains a question. Metcalfe (2009) provides a critical examination of these policies for attaining access aims in her analysis of the transformation of the university-colleges to universities as a pathway for increasing access.

While all of the policies we examined propose that every student should have access to higher education based on merit and capability of most promise, governments are also implementing initiatives and actions in order to remove barriers to entry. For example, said barriers can be financial or geographic. The former can be dealt with through financial aid programs or tuition control policies (such as the *University Funding Policy* in Quebec or the *Tuition Policy* in British Columbia), while the latter is often addressed with the regionalization of campuses or distance education.

The three-stage analysis suggests that, between the 1960s and the 1990s, policies supporting the massification of higher education relied on the frame “right to education” as well as “human resources” (e.g. Acai & Newton, 2015; Clark, 2009; Fisher & Rubenson, 2014; Fisher et al., 2009; Friesen & Purc-Stephenson, 2016; Jones, 2014), two frames also noticeable in policies related to skills and employment (see below).

Freedom of Choice

In the 1990s, the Government of Canada reduced transfers to provinces and replaced direct aid with tax expenditures, which created a fertile ground for the deregulation of tuition fees, tax credits (to compensate) competition between universities, degree-granting status for the private sector (Fisher et al., 2009; Metcalfe, 2010). In Ontario, the Premier and leader Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, Mike Harris introduced the *Common-Sense Revolution*, which would reduce the size and role of government and emphasize individual economic responsibilities. In higher education, it meant increasing tuition fees and granted the right to award degrees to private institutions (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014). Between 2004 and 2006, six provincial governments carried out comprehensive evaluations of their higher education system and all drew attention to students' individual returns in participating in higher education (Kirby, 2011). In Ontario, the development of key performance indicators (KPIs) for colleges and universities were partly motivated by a concern to provide students and their parents with transparent market information so they make an informed choice of programs and institutions (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2012; Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2013b). In British Columbia and Manitoba, deregulation of

tuition fees was framed as increasing accessibility since it expanded system capacity and reduced excessive selectivity for admission at the top universities (Rexe, 2015).

Concomitantly, provinces sought to influence student decision-making about where to attend by introducing student financial aid policies that reinforced attendance at local post-secondary institutions. These provincial policies were often coupled with discourses on providing increased access while also increasing retention (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). While during the same era, over a dozen U.S. states had similar policies, four provinces introduced this kind of residential student financial aid legislation: Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Saskatchewan (James-MacEachern, 2017).

Access in Canada has also been promoted through institutional differentiation policies according to which some colleges were able to offer applied degrees, others became universities, and universities were asked to offer “vocational” training in the form of continuing education (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014). While those policies were still permeated by a regional concern in British Columbia (and is still perceptible in the mission of British Columbia Council on Admission & Transfer – BCCAT), it was rather motivated by a concern to widen students’ freedom of choice in Ontario (*Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act*, 2000). The *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act*, 2002, renamed five CAATs into institutes of technology and advanced learning (ITALs) allowing them to offer degrees and reinforce competition in the post-secondary sector. With the emergence of quasi-markets came the need to monitor degree offerings from CAATs, ITALs, private and out-of-province institutions. The Ontario Government created in 2002 the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) and its *Ontario Qualification Framework*. In 2003, British Columbia also developed an *Accountability Framework* including 15 performance measures, such as student satisfaction, unemployment rates, first year retention rate or loan repayment (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, 2019).

With an interest in quality came a concern regarding “success”. In fact, every province has at least one policy or one set of regulations that specifically addresses student success. Once students are admitted, universities are viewed as responsible for providing the systems and structures for their success and are heavily incentivized to do so. Three areas are usually covered for that purpose. First, teaching quality is seen as a prerequisite for student success, and the quality of teaching is usually addressed by lowering the faculty-student ratio with targeted investments (Gouvernement du Québec, 2018b). The second area of policy intervention is the direct funding of student learning services and student academic success services. Third, technologies are often pinpointed as the key component of a global learning strategy for universities and, as such, often benefit from funding policies and initiatives. Quality frameworks also consider students’ integration into the workforce as a component of success often manifest in policies (Gouvernement du Québec, 2017).

For scholars examining these trends at the time, the increase in tuition fees, the development of quality assurance frameworks and institutional differentiation are all connected to frames such as “marketization” (Metcalfe, 2010), “deregulation” (Conlon, 2006), “neoliberalism” (Athina et al., 2015) and “utilitarianism” (Kirby,

2011). Chan (2015), Fisher and Rubenson (2014), Kirby (2011) and Lang (2009) noted, for instance, that, in Ontario, institutional differentiation was framed as promoting competition, widening students' freedom of choice and constituted cost-efficient mechanisms to increase participation. Since the 1990s, Skolnik (2010) observed that learning outcomes, student engagement, graduation and employment rates were of increasing interest for provincial governments and institutions required to report on their performance. It is also worth noting that, when the Ontario government implemented KPIs, the objective was not to modify institutions' behaviour through funding allocations (since there was initially no funding attached), but to influence student choice and correct for information asymmetry in the higher education quasi-market (Lang, 2009). For Fisher and Rubenson (2014), the issue of access was supplemented in the 1990s with a frame of "accountability" under which come together the phenomena of quality assurance and market information. Taking the example of Ontario, Piché and Jones (2016) also suggest that the issues of institutional diversity and quality assurance come together under this broader frame of accountability and cost efficiency.

Our understanding of the policies developed during the 1990s (on tuition fees, quality assurance, individual returns or competition) and the literature about those policies is that there has been, in Canada, a shift from a "right to education" frame, towards a frame we call "freedom of choice," supported by an explicit or implicit (depending on the province) ambition to create quasi-markets in higher education regulated by quality assurance frameworks.

We, however, note the initial "right to education" frame remained particularly salient in Quebec where it interacts with the social-democratic values and the concern for nation-building (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014) that shaped the development of the modern higher education system during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s (Fisher et al., 2009). This was particularly evident in the issue framing of the coalitions during the historic 2012 student strike opposing the increase of tuition fees. Since the 1990s, university administrators, along with the Quebec Federation of University Students (FEUQ), argued that their institutions were underfunded compared to the Canadian average and lobbied for more public funding. However, this coalition broke and the narrative took a turn in the mid-2000s, when university leaders argued that increasing tuition fees was an important part of the solution to the funding problem. The Premier took on the "quality" frame, suggesting "world class" universities served to partly justify the tuition increase. Another framing by administrators was rooted in the Carnegie Commission report of 1973, which suggests private returns on investment, where graduates receive private benefits from their education and should thus contribute proportionally to it. The two Quebec student federations (FEUQ and FECQ), on the one hand, followed a student-centrist ideology (Beaupré-Lavallée & Bégin-Caouette, 2019) and used a counter-frame of universities' mismanagement to undermine the underfunding argument (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014). The more radical Association for a Student Syndical Solidarity (ASSÉ), on the other hand, considered the strike as part of a broader social struggle against marketization ideology (Beaupré-Lavallée & Bégin-Caouette, 2019) and coalesced with other social organizations, such as the Quebec Women's

Federation, the Social Alliance and some unions and labour councils formed the Coalition Against Fee Increases (Rashi, 2011). The three student organizations successfully maintained a united front under the policy frame of the “right to education”. What is fascinating is that, during the strike (that the Government and opponents called “boycott”), students who opposed the strike also used the “right to education” frame to argue for court injunctions forcing universities and CEGEPs to continue to offer courses, despite strike votes. The collective “right to education” was challenged by an individual “right to education”. It is worth noting that the struggle ended with provincial elections, the replacement of tuition hike with an increase limited to the rate of inflation, and various policy propositions that have not yet been implemented. Our interpretation of this case is that, in the distinctive context of Quebec, the “right to education” frame resonates so deeply with the social imaginary that even commodification policies use it.

Skills and Employment

Skills and employment are taken up in three distinct policy arenas: economic transformation and training, demographic challenges and immigration, and the academic labour market.

Adapting to a Transforming Economy

With technological changes and the emergence of post-industrial economies, Canada transitioned from being resource-dependent country to one that depends to a greater extent on a highly skilled workforce (Bastien et al., 2014; Bataille, 2017; Bell, 1996). This transition has increased the pressure on higher education systems to provide the new economy with this type of workforce (Bartell, 2003). Buchbinder and Newson (1990) point out that universities and governments had agency in this shift. For Fisher and Rubenson (2014), the involvement of the federal government in vocational and technical training profoundly transformed provincial higher education systems. Trotter and Mitchell (2018) argue that colleges and university colleges also had a direct interest in this shift as prestige and legitimacy seeking enterprises. As explained, in the 1960s–1970s, the Canadian government’s grand design was framed as “human resource development” (manpower or human capital) and implied labour market training, adult training and even purchasing training courses or seats from provincial TVET institutions. With the reduction of federal transfers and youth unemployment, provincial policies in the 1980s–2000s focused on vocationalism and skill training.

The adaptable and high-tech labour force is usually produced through training that is relevant for employment in the workforce. In the early 2000s, across Canada, enrolment in higher education institutions was high, but so was youth

unemployment. In 2002, the Government of Canada released a “skills and learning” agenda and worked with the Conference Board of Canada (representing the largest corporations in the country) to identify employability skills (Heinz & Taylor, 2005). A particular framing that appeared (and continues to this day) in the public discourse was “People without jobs – Jobs without people” (see Flavelle, 2013; Miner, 2010; The Canadian Business Journal, 2019). This framing of the employment issues encouraged the successive Ontario governments to formulate various policies, budgets initiatives, and programs to make post-secondary education relevant to give Ontarians the support they need to “get the right skills and the right jobs.” Other provinces also require institutions to report on employment among their graduates and some continue to only fund the creation of new programs if institutions can demonstrate there is an unmet demand in the job market. Institutions are also pushed towards adopting approaches such as co-ops, internships, or experience in experiential learning. Founded in 1973 as the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE), Cooperative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL) count 100 post-secondary education as members (Qiubo et al., 2016). Ontario’s *Learning Through Workplace Experience Act* (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2014) states that the Government must ensure students have the skills to live productive lives and contribute fully to the province’s prosperity, and the Career Ready Fund helps institutions so all graduates in Ontario will have at least one experiential learning opportunity.

Demographic Challenges and Immigration

Canadian provinces have experienced a demographic conundrum similar to the rest of the Western world. A top-heavy population pyramid triggered concerns over a demographic shock in the labour market. One of the ways to solve this problem has been to rely upon the integration of highly skilled immigrant workers into the workforce. As such, skills and employment considerations often intersect with internationalization objectives. Ontario’s *International Postsecondary Education Strategy* (Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2018) provides an extensive illustration. In it, the Ontario government not only tasks the higher education system with increasing student mobility (both incoming and outgoing), it explicitly mandates that every effort is spent in order to increase the graduation rates of incoming international students (or “international talent”), as well as their retention in the province after graduation and their subsequent integration in Ontario’s labour market (Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2018). Similarly, Quebec’s *University Funding Policy* regards student mobility and retention as a solution to the demographic problem (Québec Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie, 2017). Alberta’s *International Education Framework* also lists the “attraction, retention and immigration of highly qualified personnel” (Alberta, 2009, p. 11) as one rationale for international education. Retention here connects to the above-mentioned policies regarding residency-based

student financial aid in four provinces. Universities are therefore seen as a gateway to adapt, both professionally and culturally, relevant immigrants' skills to the Canadian labour market needs. While it informs immigration policy, such a policy also has a direct effect upon universities program offer, as these institutions are incentivized to offer bridging curricula in targeted disciplines. Universities are also tasked with the responsibility to participate in the integration of immigrant workers into society.

Academic Job Markets

The third issue regards employment in academia. Unfortunately, while the literature is abundant, policies say nothing about this issue. Acker and Webber (2017), for instance, noted a long-term global decline in the proportion of doctoral graduates employed in academia and an imbalance between the number of job-seekers and available positions in academia. Etmanski et al. (2017) reported that a large proportion of doctoral graduates wish to become professors, but a considerably smaller proportion obtain such work, regardless of the field of study. Aspenlieder and Kloet (2014) note incongruity in what students' expectations, the public discussion of the value of graduate education and employment opportunities. Ross et al. (2018) found that planning PhD students wished they could establish external research partnerships and participate in professional development opportunities. The authors also note employers' misperception about the value and preparedness of PhDs when transitioning to careers outside academia. In addition to the literature on graduate unemployment, another body of literature focuses on the transformation of employment within academia. Acker and Haque (2017) for instance observe that neoliberalism has changed the academic labour market and that the proportion of positions offering security is declining. Their study revealed the growth of a secondary labour market of sessional and contingent faculty whose conditions are under the conditions offered to permanent job holders in the primary market. McAlpine and Austin (2018) also found high levels of unemployment and precarity for graduates. Academia seems, in fact, to rely increasingly on sessional and contingent faculty on short-term contracts to provide education (Field & Jones, 2016).

The three issues raised in this section have been framed similarly. Fisher et al. (2009) describe that the 1985 Canadian Job Strategy, the Canadian Labour Force Development Board, the Labour Market Development Agreements, and the strategies of co-management in five provinces all included provisions to foster collaboration between post-secondary institutions and businesses, and forge partnerships to meet markets' requirements. They argue the policy framing could be named "human resources" but our interpretation of the policies leads to a more precise label: the frame that has been pushed by governments, students and businesses seems to relate more specifically to a "mismatch" (on the negative side) between graduates' skills and businesses' demands for human resources, or the "relevance" (on the positive side) of post-secondary education for the job market needs. Whether policies imply

direct government involvement (such as in British Columbia) or the establishment of market structures (such as in Ontario), the framing often relies on expressions such as “skills mismatch” or “skills shortage” (Heinz & Taylor, 2005), and institutional responses are framed as increasing the “relevance” or “responsiveness” of higher education to communities (Lang, 2009; Massey et al., 2014).

Research, Innovation and Economic Development

For a long time, Canada’s economy has relied (and still relies to a large extent) on the extraction of natural resources and heavy industries. In this context, higher education occupied a marginal space in economic development policies, and as noted by Kavanagh (1993), academic research was slow to develop. The situation transformed in the 1980s with the globalization of the economy (Albert, 2003), the changing nature of the economy (Bell, 1996) and the instalment of a public discourse revolving around the idea of a knowledge society and/or economy (Doray & Dalpé, 2005). As Buchbinder and Newson (1990) observed, universities have served the interest of the economy in the past, but since the 1980s, post-industrial high-tech innovations have increasingly emerged from university research labs and aimed at responding to market demands. We agree with Doray and Dalpé (2005) and suggest that policy networks in Canada promoted two frames: responsiveness and collaboration.

Responding to Market Demands

When it comes to economic development, policies in Canada (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, 2019; Ontario, 2018; Gouvernement du Québec, 2018b) tend to include provisions regarding universities’ responsibility of responding to workforce needs, supporting Canada’s global competitiveness by producing marketable research and, increasingly, widening access to knowledge to empower citizens through knowledge transfer and commercialization. The *Innovate BC Act* (RSBC, 1996, Chapter 415), which creates the crown agency Innovate BC, states that it will formulate recommendations respecting the dissemination of knowledge to promote the industrial, economic, and social development of the province. A similar mandate was given to Innovation Saskatchewan (2019), a government agency created in 2009, and Research Nova Scotia, created in 2018 (ResearchNS, 2019). In Alberta, where the economy is largely based on the production of natural resources, the *Research and Innovation Action Plan* (Alberta, 2017) promotes collaborations between industries, government agencies and post-secondary institutions to, for example, diversify the economy.

But of all Canadian provinces, Axelrod et al. (2011) noted that it is in Ontario where market dynamics have had the strongest influence on the policy agenda. As

Fisher and Rubenson (2014) put it: “PSE policy in Ontario is a reflection of the government employing fiscal strategies that include market mechanisms and market principles to assist in resource allocation and revenue generation, to address issues of accessibility and accountability, and to meet labour market needs” (p. 339). This emphasis on economic development and innovation has reinforced the position of STEM fields and interdisciplinary programs and research within universities (Athina et al., 2015).

The scoping review revealed a diversity of names for the same frame, such as “corporate university” (Buchbinder & Newson, 1990), “entrepreneurial ethos” (Crespo & Dridi, 2007), “utilitarian” (Fisher et al., 2009), “competitiveness” (Nell, 1996) and “academic capitalism” (Metcalf, 2010). Different authors, however, agree on a common label: responsiveness. For Doray and Dalpé (2005), public investments in higher education would be legitimized if they are framed as responding and contributing to the technology change. Albert (2003) suggested that the involvement of economic and political actors in the definition of Canadian research priorities has resulted in policies whose objective was to make universities responsive to the needs of industries and businesses. By analyzing the cases of British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, Fisher and Rubenson (2014) observed that governments had followed a neoliberal approach to higher education, as promoted by the OECD, which aimed at strengthening universities’ responsiveness to market forces, either through the direct implementation of a quasi-market (such as in Ontario) or through an indirect public discourse that education leads to personal, provincial and national prosperity (such as in British Columbia). Sá et al. (2013) studied transformations affecting research councils and funding agencies in various countries (including Canada), and found that Governments increasingly required research councils to interact with a variety of stakeholders to make research more responsive to the government’s agenda, professional groups, and industries’ needs. In sum, according to the “responsiveness” frame, policies are intended to make universities respond to the global pressure of the knowledge society and the changing nature of the economy (Bell, 1996).

University-Industry Collaborations

It is also worth noting that, considering the resource-based and industrial nature of Canada’s economy, the higher education sector became, de facto, the biggest contributor to research; Canada remains the OECD country that invest the most in higher education research and development (HERD) in percentage of its GDP (Council of Canadian Academies, 2016). The policy analysis revealed that the strategies at the provincial and federal level were less focusing on strengthening research capacity in the private sector and more on encouraging collaborations between industries (generating capital) and academia (already producing research) (Gouvernement du Québec, 2018b). The 1980s and 1990s saw the creation of “new circuits of knowledge” (Metcalf, 2010) promoting collaboration between business

leaders, universities and government entities, such as the Corporate-Higher Education Forum (from 1984 to 1994), the Strategic Innovation Fund, the Science, Technology and Innovation Council (from 2007 to 2015), the Alliance for Commercialization of Canada Technology, and the National Centres of Excellence (since 1989). Metcalfe also reports that, in 2002, the Canadian Association of Universities and Community Colleges (AUCC) and the Government of Canada signed an agreement in which universities agreed to triple the amount of research commercialization by 2010. Quebec and Ontario also introduced a university research tax credit to encourage businesses to invest in applied research (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014).

Moreover, provinces also incentivize collaborations between university and industry agents through different initiatives. Analysis of current and past research and innovation policies point to the existence of two common types of initiatives: administrative support and funding. First, liaison offices are set up between institutions and market agents in order to foster partnerships and knowledge diffusion. They are at some point recognized and supported by government policies in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. Second, while the Government of Canada and the 10 provincial governments institutionalized university-industry collaborations to enhance Canada's competitiveness (Crespo & Dridi, 2007), Ontario was a precursor by implementing, in 1987, the first Centres of Excellence (CoE), the Premier's Council of Technology Fund, and the University Research Initiative Fund (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014). When Ontario launched its \$204-million CoE program, the objective was to advance scientific research, develop world-class researchers and facilitate technology transfers to industry (Nell, 1996). What is particularly interesting is that Ontario CoE were multi-university based and focused on fundamental research. Funding for fundamental research was legitimized in that it provided industries with "pre-competitive" knowledge (Ibid). The CoE fit the "collaboration" frames because funding was conditional to universities demonstrating how they are collaborating with business leaders (Bell, 1996).

The literature, however, suggests that the consensus on corporate-university research collaborations is not universal and remains contested by a majority of academics (Bell, 1996; Gopaul et al., 2016), and that not all university activities are geared towards market demands. Eastman (2007) argued that Canadian universities would lose their symbolic power (or reputation) if they had been perceived to be (only) motivated by economic rationales. Despite budget cuts in direct university funding, universities consequently continued to subsidize non-professional programs and fundamental research activities even though they did not immediately generate revenues. Following this race for reputation, provincial and federal governments also developed programs to foster excellence in research. Since the late 1990s, the Government of Canada has reinvested massively in academic research to rebuild infrastructure and staunch brain drain (Grant & Drakich, 2010). It has created the Canadian Foundation for Innovation to strengthen capacities for world-class research and the indirect cost of research programs (to relieve universities), as

well as the Canada Research Chairs and the Canada Excellence Research Chairs to stop the outflow of Canadian talent and attract global research stars. British Columbia also established its Chairs of Excellence, and Ontario developed a Research Excellence program.

Overall, our interpretation of the literature and policies suggest that the “responsiveness” (to market forces) frame is complemented by a “collaboration” (between universities and industry) frame, especially in the case of science, research and innovation policies. The assumption behind those policies is that when university and industry scientists interact, technology transfer takes place and industries become more competitive (Bell, 1996).

The scoping review and policy analyses, however, point to Quebec’s “exceptionalism” (Albert, 2003; Fisher & Rubenson, 2014; Metcalfe, 2010). Quebec attempted to build a parallel system of academic research and policies, which relied on the frames “scientific nationalism” and “catching up”. In 1936, the Premier Duplessis copied the National Research Council of Canada and put in place a provincial office for scientific research (Gingras, 2016). During the Quiet Revolution, policymakers observed that, except for McGill University, Quebec’s universities did not have research budgets. The government created research councils, encouraged networking between the few geographically distant academics, and supported graduate students. Quebec was the first province to have implemented team-based funding (Kavanagh, 1993), and the first to have developed a comprehensive science policy plan in 1980 (Lemelin & Limoges, 1993). Until the 1990s, Quebec’s universities benefited from this scientific nationalism and attempted to consolidate a “republic of science” (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014). Then, the frames used in the rest of Canada (and especially in Ontario) travelled to Quebec. The 2002 Quebec *Plan for Intellectual Property Management*, for instance, acknowledges universities’ missions and respects intellectual probity, but considers the public interest through the lens of a responsibility for academics to transfer their results to the public and, in some cases, this transfer involves appropriate commercialization practises (Crespo & Dridi, 2007). The focus would then be on innovation, but interestingly, innovation in Quebec extends beyond technological innovation and includes social innovation (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014). Quebec has a tradition of focusing on social sciences and humanities, and those disciplines are valued for their capacity to strengthen social cohesion and improve social programs (Albert, 2003). In sum, the level of decentralization in Canada has offered space for academics to offer some resistance to global pressures (Metcalfe, 2010).

Regional Integration and Internationalization

One important issue in the realm of higher education is the formation (or deformation) of sub-national and supranational clusters. These geo-spatial transformations can be analyzed through two issues: regional integration and internationalization.

Regional Integration

In Canada, “regions” refer both to the sub-national provincial integration, as well as the supranational grouping of Canada with its two North-American neighbours (Mexico and the United States). One may distinguish between five regions in Canada: the Atlantic Region, Central Canada, The Prairie Provinces, the West Coast, and the Northern Territories. The scoping review revealed that few studies have examined the process of higher education regional integration in Canada; however, a review of existing policies revealed two levels of regional integration.

The Eastern provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island have pooled their higher education markets and in order to alleviate market asymmetry, they created a regional coordinating (and quality assurance) agency, which led to the dissolution of the previous provincial intermediary bodies (Jones, 1997). This regional market was enacted through the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission Act. All three provinces conjointly mandated the Commission to carry out specific regional duties regarding tertiary education, notably ensuring program quality (art. 12, par. 1a and 1e), prior-learning assessment and credit transfer (art. 12, par. 1b), and equitable access to learning opportunities, including “geographical access” (art. 12, par. 1f).

In addition to province-level policies, agreements between institutions based on regional proximity or purpose are common across Canada. For instance, the colleges of the four Atlantic Provinces (including Newfoundland and Labrador) formed the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC) and implemented an agreement on credit transfers, and that there is now a Credit Transfer Portal. Universities of those regions also formed the Association of Atlantic Universities (Conrad, 2008). Albeit it is not a “policy” in the sense we have established in the introduction, it is worth noting that, in 1974, university leaders from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba signed the Western Dean’s Agreement in order to support the enrichment of graduate education through fee waiver for visiting students, distance education delivery and shared inter-university programs (WCDGS, 2019). Analyses regarding regional integration policies suggest that interprovincial collaborations are framed as “efficiency” (in a context of sparsely populated areas) and “quality” (regarding program improvement for instance).

Regional integration can also be defined as the formal agreements concluded between Canada and its two North-American counterparts. Relationships between Canadian and American universities are long-standing, and it is worth noting that, until 1926, McGill University and the University of Toronto were members of the Association of American Universities (Lacroix & Maheu, 2015). There are few federal level policies regarding regional integration in Canada, except the trade agreements. Before the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), representatives from Canada, Mexico and the United States met in Wingspread, Vancouver, and Guadalajara to facilitate trilateral exchanges in terms of higher education (Crespo, 2000). Annex 1210.5 of NAFTA asks contracting countries to

develop mutually agreeable criteria for professional certification, for equivalencies of foreign courses, mobility schemes for students and faculty, and expand the role of the private sector in research, education, and training. Crespo observed that despite general agreements, funding for trilateral projects was very small. As one would expect in the case of trade agreements, policies of regional integration have revolved around a frame of “economic utility”.

Internationalization

In addition to agreements with Mexico and the United States, Canadian higher education institutions are involved with the broader internationalization process, in which governance is somehow decentralized and uncoordinated (Trilokekar & Jones, 2007). Education being a provincial jurisdiction and international relations a federal jurisdiction, international education has long been a contested area. The involvement of the federal government was also limited by the conflicts between the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Human Resources and Skills Development, Canada (HRSDC), whose responsibilities overlapped. Those ministries were also challenged by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), which represented the provincial ministers of education.

Before presenting an analysis of current policies, it is worth presenting how the literature describes the evolution of the internationalization process in Canada. After WWII, Canada included education in its international diplomacy to position itself as a non-colonial middle power. International education was thus included in a “humane internationalism” frame (Pestieau & Tait, 2004), which corresponded to the country’s ethical responsibilities towards those who live in poverty. An international academic relation office was integrated to DFAIT to manage the Canadian Studies Program (ICR). Around the same time, CIDA created the Development Assistant Program (ODA), which supported higher education initiatives (Trilokekar, 2010). In 1995, the *Canada in the World*, a foreign policy review, was the first document to officially recognize international education as a pillar of Canada’s foreign policy (Government of Canada, 1995). While the 1970s and 1980s, was a period when international development (and CIDA) provided the biggest funding to international education initiatives; Knight (2008) suggests that the 1990s represents a shift “from aid to trade.” In Canada, the 1990s were a period of austerity, budget cuts, but also of the 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and NAFTA. In 1998, a mandate of “education marketing” was granted to DFAIT; in 2007, the Government of Canada allocated 2 million dollars to develop the EduCanada brand, and it reoriented ICR and ODA towards trade and revenue generation.

Knight (2004) distinguishes between multiple international activities, such as study abroad, internationalized curricula, institutional linkages, branch campuses, and the recruitment of international students. Canadian higher education institutions

are involved in most (if not all) of these activities, but none has generated more policy debate than recruitment. The 2014 International Education Strategy (Government of Canada, 2014) is almost entirely focused on the recruitment of international students and appears motivated by economic rationales; in 2012 international students spent \$8.4 billion (Government of Canada, 2014). International recruitment also addresses skilled labour shortages and relieves demographic pressures. As policies suggest, recruitment contributes to the prosperity of each province by compensating any demographic decline as well as bridging skill gaps present in the workforce (Ontario, 2018; Gouvernement du Québec, 2018b). Compared to other Western countries, international students in Canada are positively framed as potential immigrants who would secure the country's long-term prosperity (Stein & de Oliveria Andreotti, 2016). International students qualify for the Canadian Experience Class program and can benefit from the Express Entry, as pathways towards permanent residency and then citizenship. The presence of international students is seen as a key indicator of the provinces' performance in a competitive knowledge market (Ontario, 2018; Québec Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2018c).

Higher education institutions increasingly recruit international students since the 1990s in order to compensate for the reduction in provincial block funding (Fisher & Rubenson, 2014); and recent provincial policies further encourage the recruitment of (paying) international students by providing institutions with the means to increase revenue without increasing tuition fees charged to domestic students (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, 2019; Ontario, 2018; Québec Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2018a, b). The deregulation of tuition fees for international students can take many forms. In Quebec, fees charged to international students have recently been entirely exempted from regulation in certain academic disciplines (Québec Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2018a, b). The *Tuition Limit Policy* in British Columbia, which limits tuition increases to the rate of inflation, explicitly does not apply to international student tuition fees. Our interpretation is that deregulation policies have introduced market mechanisms in the setting of tuition fees according to two distinct markets, domestic and international, and institutions are encouraged to pursue international recruitment by being able to keep the lion's share of the additional tuition revenue.

When policies focus on study abroad, frames often revolve around the idea of development of global citizens (Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2018; Québec Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2018a, b). International education is then seen as a way to enhance the intercultural value of the student experience. The Ontario policy also suggests that institutions modify existing programs in order to include intercultural perspectives, thus allowing domestic students who do not have access to mobility programs to profit from cultural enrichment (Ontario, 2018). The Ontario (2018) *International Education Postsecondary Education Strategy* proposes that international students "bring cultural diversity to college and university campuses" (p. 5). While international education policies and strategies in most provinces initially focused on the

recruitment of international students, until 2017, Quebec's policies focused on promoting study abroad and, where policies addressed the issue of recruitment, the rationale was more political than economic (Bégin-Caouette, 2012). In Quebec, internationalization started in 1965 with the Gérin-Lajoie Doctrine, which states that the province can establish international relations in its fields of jurisdiction, including education. Similar to other provinces, the 1970s and 1980s were mostly marked by international development programs but, with the reduction of federal funding for development aid and the election of the Parti Québécois, the 1990s and 2000s saw the renewal of Quebec's knowledge diplomacy policies. In 2002, it published its *National Strategy to Succeed in Internationalizing Quebec Education* (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2002), which focused on outbound student and professor mobility, the exportation of Quebec's expertise in education, and Quebec's presence in international forums. Recruitment was then focused on French-speaking regions and fee exemption agreements. Quebec's (Quebec Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie, 2006; 2017) more recent international policies dedicated more attention to the recruitment of (fee paying) international students; thus, bringing Quebec closer to the other provinces.

Our analysis of provincial and federal policies suggest internationalization – and especially student mobility (both inbound and outbound) – is framed as having a positive economic impact on local economies, and fostering diversity on Canadian campuses and a global perspective in Canadian students.

The scoping review also reveals that different authors used different frames to discuss the above-mentioned issues. Stein and de Oliveria Andreotti (2016) noted that there are three social imaginaries framing international student recruitment in Canada: cash (international students as economic assets), charity (international students as beneficiaries of development aid), and competitors (international students as threats to Canadian students' entitlements); the last one being understood as the underside of the first one. If the "charity" frame might have emerged during Canada's "humane internationalism" period, multiple authors confirm that the "cash" frame – which we will here call "economic utility" – is now the most influential (e.g. Anderson, 2015; Kenyon et al., 2012; Nerad, 2010; Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013). While arguing for a global ethics of internationalization (to serve the global public good), Stein et al. (2019) note that internationalization practice and policy in Canada remains framed by neoliberal discourses and economic imperatives. For Guo and Guo (2017), Canada's strategy "endorses the narrative of international students as a source of 'cash' for universities and the country" (p. 854).

Policy analyses also suggested a fourth and lesser-used frame to promote internationalization– the "diversity" frame. As Bataille (2017) noted, multiple institutions argue they recruit international students to internationalize their campus, suggesting diversity would contribute to mutual understanding and develop Canadian students' intercultural competencies. The findings from the scholarship that examines this frame does not support the proposed aims (see Anderson, 2015; Calder et al., 2016; Guo & Guo, 2017; Kenyon et al., 2012; Larsen, 2015).

The literature analyzed for this chapter seems to converge with the policy analysis regarding the “economic utility” frame but it is significantly more critical regarding the potential contribution of internationalization to diversify Canadian campuses.

Two Canadian Realities: Indigenous and Francophone

It is said that the identity of Canada is represented by three histories: that of the Aboriginal,¹ the French, and the English people. Education is one domain in which those histories converge on several policy levels. Three periods in political policy outline the historical relationship between Canadian federal policies pertaining to Indigenous peoples and those whom it sought to govern. The first set of federal policies can be characterized as colonial and reflects a time when Canada was a British colony. The second period of policies illustrates an assimilationist perspective; and finally, in the third period, the federal government and Indigenous people are now collaborating on educational policies seeking to promote culturally appropriate instruction for Indigenous, and indeed, all students. In this chapter, we briefly provide an overview of the framing of Indigenous Postsecondary Education policies; this is in no way intended to be exhaustive nor comprehensive.

In order to provide some context for Indigenous participation in higher education in Canada, we briefly describe the higher education participation and academic employment rates. In 2016, there were 1,673,735 Indigenous people in Canada, an increase of 42.5% over 10 years (Statistics Canada, 2017). Within the Indigenous population, there are three identifiable attainment gaps related to this chapter: high school completion; postsecondary attainment; and employment, specifically faculty appointments. According to 2016 Statistics Canada CANSIM data (Statistics Canada, 2016; Table 477-013), 29% of the Indigenous population aged 25–64 have no high school diploma, while only 13% of the Non-Indigenous population do not graduate. 10.9% of Indigenous people aged 25–64 had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 22.4% in the general population (Ibid) and Indigenous students constitute 1% of PhD students (Smith & Bray, 2019). “Employment rates also varied with the level of education, with 77% of First Nations people with a university degree being employed compared to 56% of those who completed high school, and 29% of those with less than a high school diploma” (Statistics Canada, 2017). Within higher education, the gap in college and university teachers is closing with new target hires. However, in 2018, only 3% of college instructors, 1.4% of university professors, and 5% of university presidents were Indigenous. And, “[T]here is a significant—15 to 20 per cent—wage gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous professors” (Smith & Bray, 2019).

¹First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people of Canada are referred to by the Government of Canada as the “Aboriginal peoples”; in this work, we use the term “Indigenous”.

Policies Directly Related to Indigenous Education

While the governance of education is the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, governance of education for Indigenous people remains the jurisdiction of the federal government. The Indian Act was passed in 1876 as a Canadian federal law with respect to Indian status, bands and reserves. It is very controversial in that it has assimilationist purposes and gives to the federal government power over governance, political structures, health and education. In 1969, the Government of Canada released a White Paper on Indigenous Affairs, which was followed by an outcry across the country. In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood, which became the Assembly of First Nations, produced the *Indian Control of Indian Education*. In this document, the authors point out that closing reserve schools and integrating Indigenous students into non-Indigenous schools was a one-way process. They argued that, in order to be effective, “integration” had to blend aspects of First Nations and non-Indigenous traditions, foster local control, enhance school board representation, and provide instruction in students’ first languages. Concerning post-secondary education, the document calls for adjustments of entrance requirements, financial assistance, and participation in governance.

At the provincial level, in 1991, the New Democratic Party in British Columbia first developed policies to promote access to Indigenous populations and, in 2007, the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy* (Kirby, 2011). In 2005, following the Rae Report, Ontario reintroduced upfront grants for low-income students, and, in 2007, released its *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. In 2009, Saskatchewan created several grants for low-income students and, between 2015 and 2017, released various documents related to inclusive education mentioning First Nations communities. The British Columbia’s *Aboriginal Post-secondary Education and Training Policy Framework and Action Plan* (2018) and the Ontario *Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework* (2011) also propose concrete measures to increase participation of Indigenous populations.

These policies focused on the higher education and workforce participation of Indigenous people in Canada. Until the 1980s, these policies relied on a frame of “assimilation”, and then, on a frame of either “segmentation” or “inclusion,” depending on the political reality of the communities. For instance, since the mid-1980s, Inuit students from Nunavut, Labrador, and Northwest Territories have established regional college systems of their own (Rodon et al., 2015). Though if those students want to pursue university education, they must move south and face numerous challenges related to housing, funding, and culture shock. In 1976, The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations entered an agreement with the University of Regina to establish the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, which became the First Nations University of Canada (2019) in 2003. The principle behind the 2008 Saskatchewan *Act Respecting the First Nations University of Canada* was to establish an autonomous university to serve First Nations people.

This “segmentation” frame is also perceptible in Canadian research policies and ethics regulations. According to Ríos et al. (2018), Canadian ethics policies include

dedicated chapters that focus specifically on research involving Indigenous Peoples; Inuit and First Nations organizations produced prominent ethics guidelines of their own. Parallel systems coexist where Canadian policies would protect individual privacy principles, while First Nations' organizations would argue that a focus on individual privacy fails to prevent the misuse of collective information that may affect communities. Indigenous groups in Canada have also established separate organizations to provide guidance for partnerships in research and to protect the dignity of communities.

Similar to Australia and New Zealand, the Government of Canada has developed initiatives to increase the proportion of Indigenous scholars, such as the federal *Employment Equity Program* and the Aboriginal Research pilot programs of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The presence of Indigenous faculty mentors appears to be key in ensuring the retention and success of Indigenous graduate students in Canadian universities (Pidgeon et al., 2014). However, as the Indigenous scholars interviewed by Roland (2011) mention, it is futile to increase the proportion of Indigenous people in universities if the working environment is hostile, silences those who criticize systemic oppression, encourages ghettoization, and undervalues Indigenous knowledge. Gallop and Bastien (2016) also found that, in addition to smaller class sizes and Indigenous resources, the quality of relationships developed during their studies is paramount for facilitating or hindering success.

The second frame, i.e. "inclusion," has been used in the last decade to promote access for other underrepresented groups and appears as a response to this lack of collaboration. This frame has been used since the 1990s, but Canada's 2017 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report has served as a catalyst; and several universities recognize the land upon which they are built and actively attempt to incorporate Indigenous history and content into their programs (Ríos et al., 2018). Inclusion goes beyond "integration" in that it represents sensitivity to Indigenous students, an awareness of Indigenous cultures and culturally relevant teaching and working practices (Oloo, 2007). This "inclusion" frame goes beyond the "celebration of diversity" frame that has permeated multicultural policies at the federal level since 1971 (Roland, 2011); it requires universities to create inclusive spaces for those who wish to contest mainstream discourse. Following an Indigenous research design and a visioning methodology, Parent (2017) found that "youth who had not prior knowledge of their rich heritage were significantly impacted by [some universities'] provision of Indigenous knowledge and cultural understandings" (p. 164); and it facilitated their transition to the university.

Policies Directly Related to Francophone Education

Across Canada, approximately 7.7 million people speak French as their first official language, with nearly one million outside the province of Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2016). In the 1980s and 1990s, francophones had fewer years of formal schooling

than Anglophones (Cummins, 1997). However, in contrast to the response to the gap in postsecondary attainment for Indigenous people in Canada, provincial authorities reinforced the role of existing francophone universities and colleges, developed bilingual and programs in French in existing Anglophone institutions and/or created new francophone community colleges. As a result of these efforts, Quebec now has one of the highest post-secondary participation rates in the country (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Between 1871 and 1961, multiple provinces withdrew recognition of French, stopped funding French education, limited the teaching of French to the first cycle of elementary schools, and in Manitoba, even prohibited education in French. In the 1960s, the frame of “assimilation” was replaced by the frames of “integration” and “equality,” officially recognized in the 1969 Canada’s Official Language Act and, in 1982, the Constitution Act and its Charter of Rights and Freedom, § 23 guarantees the right to linguistic minorities (French or English) to be educated in their own language (Dupuis, 2017). This constitutional right led to two competing policy frames: “integration” and “segmentation.” The Ontario International Postsecondary Education Strategy (Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2018) notes the utility of French as an effective means to reach new international markets and seeks to increase enrolment in French-language or bilingual institutions, and to protect the vitality of French-language education in Ontario. However, Cummins (1997) noted a legacy of coercive relations of power between English-speaking majorities and French-speaking minorities across Canada, resulting either from the isolation of French-speaking rural communities or because of communities’ internalized critics of the majority group and the devaluation of their own schools and language. This situation leads to continuing “linguistic dropout” between the first year of elementary and the last year of high school. For Churchill (2016), pursuing programs in French within English-speaking institutions have put students at a disadvantage and make their cultural, social and economic development more difficult. The fruitful judicial campaigns of the 1980s–2000s in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario also resulted in policies allowing “segmental autonomy” to Francophone communities (Behiels, 2004). Francophones not only wanted instruction in French, they fought for the control and governance of their own institutions, separated from mainstream Anglophone institutions. In Manitoba the 2019 *Université de Saint-Boniface Act* states that one of the purposes of this autonomous francophone university is to contribute to the linguistic, cultural, social, economic and educational development of the francophone community. Similarly, the *Université de l’Ontario français Act* (Ontario, 2017) states that “The establishment of a university with a mission to serve the French-speaking community will help to promote a strong, vibrant, inclusive Francophone culture that further enriches civic life in Ontario” (Preamble). Articles then stipulate that it is the “special mission” of the University to promote the “linguistic, cultural, economic and social well-being” (Article 3) of students and the Franco-Ontarian community, and that it must support governance “by and for the French-speaking community” (Article 4c).

This is not simply about the coexistence of two languages. The historical organization of the Canadian federation, while recognizing equal status for Anglophones and Francophones, crystallized an uneven distribution of Francophones across

Canada. As an overwhelming majority of French-speaking Canadians reside in the province of Quebec, the federal protection of out-of-Quebec Francophones could not be backed by numbers, as they remained below numbers that could, in the eyes of provincial governments, justify the safeguarding of Francophone cultural institutions. Unlike other multilingual countries, this demographic distribution contributed to denigration-based assimilationist policies up until the 1960s. And those institutions networked across Canada through the Canadian Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities (FCFA), the Canadian Association of Education in French (ACELF) and the Association of Francophone Canadian Colleges and Universities (ACUFC). For the proponents of this frame, segmental autonomy would limit linguistic dropouts. The opposition to this segmental autonomy from Anglophone majorities often relies on the “quality” frame (Churchill, 2016; Cummins, 1997), in that there would be fewer (qualified) resources to staff those institutions, a shorter academic tradition and possibly fewer financial resources for the existing institutions.

It is also worth noting that, like in the case of Indigenous communities, majority rights in Canada are often expressed via the autonomy of provinces while minority rights are supported by the federal government (Behiels, 2004). One exception is the Ontario’s *Politique d’Aménagement Linguistique* (2004) aims at reinforcing francophone communities, promoting French in all areas of activities, improve schools’ and school boards’ capacity to contribute to the cultural and linguistic development of the Ontarian francophone community. While it includes very few provisions, it does mention that there is a need to provide a continuum of education in French, from preschools to universities.

In sum, the debates around Indigenous and Francophone minorities in Canada primarily are concerned with issues of access, but here, the “right to education” frame went from “assimilation” and “integration” to “segmental autonomy” and “inclusion.” One should add that some policies targeting marginalized populations also relied on a “human resources” frame in that, in an already massified higher education system, governments that wanted to widen participation had to focus on a small proportion of the population that were not already well represented.

The inclusion frame noted in our analysis also applies to other marginalized groups, such as racialized people, women, students with disabilities (see Quebec’s policy *Equals in Every Respect: Because Rights Are Meant to Be Exercised*). While we argued that the “right to education” frame had been replaced by a “freedom of choice” frame, we also hypothesize that the first frame has returned in the form of an “inclusion” frame, which is used to justify upfront targeted funding to underrepresented groups (Childs et al., 2016). It is also worth noting that, under the 2015–2019 Liberal Government in Ottawa, inclusion has served to frame multiple policies affecting higher education, such as the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Requirements and Practices (Canada, 2019) that have influenced the attribution of Canada Research Chairs so underrepresented populations would be better represented. Mitacs (2019), a national not-for-profit organization, but partly funded by the Government of Canada, also founded its innovation strategy on diversity

concerns. The frame has been adopted by all Canadian universities and their representative organizations, Universities Canada (2017), which has established ten principles on equity, diversity and inclusion.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to examine how Canadian public policies framed four issues related to higher education. A policy analysis and a scoping review revealed that, since the 1980s–1990s, most issues have been framed as economic issues and addressed by policies focusing on the economic utility of higher education. Whether it is access that has been framed as (students’) “freedom of choice,” employment framed as “relevance” (for the job market), research framed as “responsiveness” and “collaboration” (with private actors) or internationalization framed as “economic utility,” policies developed at the federal and provincial levels appear to frame higher education systems as economic engines. Our analyses, however, suggest that the underlying “right to education” frame has returned in the form of a broad “inclusion” frame, which permeates access, research, employment and even internationalization issues.

We have examined policy framing at the federal level and in all provinces; however, although the reviewed literature does not explicitly address this point, it appears not all provinces have the same weight or influence in framing higher education policies. Ontario is the biggest province, counts 42% of students and international students in the country (Usher, 2019), and produces almost half of Canada’s publications (Council of Canadian Academies, 2018); one could argue that policy frames developed in this province would be prominent in the public space. For instance, following the accountability frame, Ontario proposed to implement a performance-based funding for its universities in 2020, and shortly afterwards, similar Alberta and Manitoba, and then Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. On specific issues, other provinces might however have a stronger influence on policy framing (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2020). For instance, British Columbia and the Prairies were among the first to frame the issue of access to postsecondary for Aboriginal students and, as such, might have influenced the segmentation and inclusion frames we identified across the country.

There are however important caveats to acknowledge at this point. First, our policy analysis was limited by a narrower conception of what constitutes a policy. For instance, we did not include recommendations from consultative bodies, we did not include premiers’ speeches, and only included agencies’ by-laws and strategies to a limited extent. On the contrary, we relied extensively on an extensive body of literature, but we must acknowledge that scholars have their own personal frames and that there could be some discrepancies between the intentions of policymakers, the policy itself, its impacts and the interpretation that scholars develop about this policy process. However, we hope to have minimized this gap by focusing on points of convergence between the 139 scholarly documents.

There are finally other issues and frames a future study could analyze, such as open access policies, ethics regulations, but also sexual misconduct and freedom of speech on campus. Along the same lines, the accountability and quality frames have spread across the globe and have impacted Canadian public policies, though a comprehensive analysis of those frames would require its own chapter. Our work nonetheless constitutes a first review of Canadian discussion regarding policy framing in higher education.

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Chapter 13

Policy Framing in Canada, the U.S. and Western Europe – A Comparison



Bjørn Stensaker

Abstract The chapter compares how policy issues in higher education and how research in this area in Canada, the U.S. and Western Europe have been framed in a historical perspective. By interpreting policy framing as a sensemaking process, a de-construction of the specific elements of the framing process is offered, and a comparison is made with respect to similarities and differences in how policies have been framed in the three contexts. In addition, the chapters provide observations on framing as a means for analyzing policy formation, identifying advantages and disadvantages of the framing approach. Key points made include how framing approaches also may assist researchers in their communication of common observations in different empirical contexts and how framing may build bridges between different disciplinary traditions.

Introduction

The framing literature is, as underlined earlier in this volume, multifaceted (Rein & Schön, 1977; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). We can find distinct disciplinary footprints and a range of research traditions making this literature quite dynamic but also quite diverse. This diversity is very evident in the three contributions that have had a closer look at the framing of policy agendas in the U.S., Canada and Western Europe. Given the different political and cultural contexts and traditions, one could argue that such diversity is understandable and natural. For a contribution aimed at comparison, it is nevertheless a challenge.

The approach taken in this chapter is that framing is a concept that allows to make sense of a complex reality providing guideposts for knowing, analysing, persuading, and adapting. Applying this approach may also make particular sense in the area of higher education studies as the key characteristics of the classic contributions in the field always has been to coin situations and complex realities in ways

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that create meaning and understanding. Hence, when the legacies of universities were described as ‘sagas’ (Clark, 1972), the organizational fabric of the universities were seen as ‘loosely coupled’ (Weick, 1976), or when the internal decision-making processes were understood as ‘garbage can’ processes (Cohen & March, 1974), the concepts added value to the reader. As such, these descriptions should not only be seen as sense making concepts, they are in addition sense giving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) – concepts that may turn words into actions in transformation processes in higher education (Gioia et al., 1994).

The contributions analysed in this comparative chapter can be said to face a double challenge: While they are identifying the frames used to describe and make sense of policy changes in Canada, the U.S. and Western Europe, they are providing their own sense making of those frames – suggesting some sort of meta-analysis of the analytical process (Goffman, 1974). To avoid creating another layer of frames on top of that, this contribution will instead offer an attempt of de-construction of the frames applied – adding to the micro-processes involved in the framing process (Drori & Honig, 2013). It is the ambition that diving into the micro-processes of framing, the reader will also gain new insights on both similarities and differences of the policy processes playing out in the three contexts in focus.

To simplify the comparisons made, this chapter first and foremost focuses on the ‘federal’ policy developments taking place – with less focus on the policy developments at state/national level.

How to Make Sense of Policy Frames – A De-construction Attempt

In the introduction to this book, two key theoretical positions were outlined as an analytical points-of-departure. The first position suggested that policies – and the sense-making underlying the development of these policies – is driven by global rationalized assumptions about the means that will drive quality, effectiveness and relevance (Ramirez & Meyer, 2013). The consequence of adaptation to such rationalized assumptions would be more similarity in policy framing and policy content. The second position outlined was that policies may in fact be inspired by global trends, but that the specific history, legacies and other path-dependencies would lead to sense-making activities more characterized by translation than imitation (Meyer, 2008). Policies developed would, as a consequence, be more characterized by considerable diversity.

These two positions share some key elements, including the importance of the external environment and the globalization processes that has been unfolding during the latter decades. At the same time, they can also be seen as contradictory with different emphasis being put on elements such as external legitimacy or local history (Drori & Honig, 2013). Both positions are still somewhat silent on the actual processes that embed the potential rationalization or translation processes that plays

out, and the ambition with the current chapter is to add to our knowledge about how potential rationalization and translation processes has unfolded in the three empirical settings studied.

Karl Weick (1995: 17–62) – one of the key contributors to the field of sense making, has suggested that the process of sense making can be broken up into seven properties. In short, sensemaking is for Weick:

- Grounded in identity construction
- Retrospective
- Enactive of sensible environments
- Social
- Ongoing
- Focused on and by extracted cues
- Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

While Weick (1995) applied the concept of sensemaking to organizations, the framework provided is rather generic and is relevant to other contexts – including that of policymaking. In the latter utilization one could argue that policies also could be interpreted as a form of identity construction – and that policies are used to reaffirm who we are as a nation or a community (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The link to identity construction is a reminder of that policymaking also embed values and norms. It follows from this that the sensemaking process is retrospective – identities, values and norms derive from the past – with history being an important factor (Clark, 1970; Stensaker et al., 2012).

However, other properties in the framework are more related to and aligned with the assumptions derived from global rationalized assumptions. The weight being put on the environment and that sense-making is a social activity driven by plausibility rather than accuracy, provide hints as to how imitation processes plays out in practice. For Weick though, rationalization and translation processes are still very intertwined and complex, and while making the distinction between rationalization and translation more difficult, his framework could be useful for uncovering the nuts and bolts of policy framing.

Weick (1995: 30) argues that enactment is the process where the sensing is transformed into ‘making’. Hence, framing is an active process where policies highlight particular elements of the environment they try to capture, and as such, they create the environment by presenting it in specific ways. The active part of the framing process is further developed when policies are discussed, adjusted, fine-tuned and transformed through various social and ongoing processes. These properties underline the active but also the collective work involved in legitimizing policies. This collective process is not always about agreeing in the policy proposed, but having the opportunity to provide input and views on it (see also Czarniawska, 1997). As policies may not always present relevant problems, solutions, involve the right people or identify acceptable solutions (Cohen & March, 1974), the process of ‘making and framing’ a policy tends to be more ongoing than having a distinct start and end point.

To make sure that policies stand out from other policies and assist the sensemaking process, having an extracted cue is of high importance (Fiol, 2002). Extracted cues are ‘simple familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring’ (Weick, 1995: 50). They create the structure of context, or the frame as Goffman (1974) would have put it. It directs attention, evoke action, and create a material order of steps, logics, and sequences. However, these structures may not provide accurate details. They could be globalized assumptions. They work even better when they are plausible rather than accurate as too many details may distort rather than clarify, add complexity rather than simplicity and coherence.

It should be underlined that the propositions listed above should not be interpreted as a standardized sequential logic of the sensemaking process. The propositions are intertwined, interdependent and may have blurred boundaries between them. The advantage of the propositions is still that they offer insight into the micro-processes of framing, and allows for a more structured way to compare policy frames, and how rationalized assumptions and translations processes impact policy developments.

Canada, the U.S. and Western Europe – Framing Components Compared

The three contributions in question are all applying a perspective on framing closely intertwined with sensemaking. However, empirically the contributions differ substantially despite their historical approach. While in Canada the focus is on how four specific issues have been framed since the 1980 (access, student success; skills and employment; research and innovation; regional integration), the U.S. contribution (Orphan & McCoy-Simmons, [this volume](#)) compares how three federal administrations (Truman; Bush; Obama) framed the purpose of higher education since WWII. The contribution on Western Europe (Chou et al., [this volume](#)) starts out in the 1970s and looks specifically into how European level policy initiatives have developed, providing a few deep dives into two countries (Germany; Norway) along the way.

While all three cases are examples of federalism – the analysis also differs regarding the take on the concept: While the administrations play a key role in the U.S., we also learn a lot about the role of interest groups, media and social movements in the process (Vukasovic et al., 2018). In the Canadian contribution (Bégin-Caouette et al., [this volume](#)), the policy issues are highlighted, and the different provinces stand out as central part of the analysis. With respect to Western Europe focus is more on how a European policy level emerged over time, and where we only pay short visits to the national level. As indicated, the framing is quite different reflecting geopolitical characteristics, historical paths and the preferences and priorities of the authors. If we apply Weick’s seven sensemaking propositions some interesting comparative patterns still emerge.

Grounded in Identity Construction

In all three cases, we can clearly see that identity construction is a central part of the policy framing process. The questions of ‘who we are’ and ‘who do we want to be’ are implicitly present in creating and constructing Europe as a concept for the further development of higher education. In Canada (Bégin-Caouette et al., [this volume](#)), we learn about the ‘Canadian realities’ and how the identity linked to Indigenous and Francophone (and Anglophone) communities have shaped the context for policy developments over time. In the U.S. (Orphan & McCoy-Simmons, [this volume](#)) the analysis highlights how the balance between the democratic and the commercial purposes of higher education has always been a key to understand how policy frames have been developed, and also how this balance has shifted over time.

The big difference between the cases is still that while in the U.S. and Canada, much of the identity construction is backward looking, and where new policy initiatives are seeking legitimacy from the past, the Western European (Chou et al., [this volume](#)) case demonstrates a more forward looking identity construction process – perhaps more influenced by globalized assumptions of how higher education should develop. This is a finding in line with research suggesting that identity construction in higher education simultaneously involve backward- and forward-looking elements (Stensaker, 2015) – and in line with how sensemaking (what situation is this) sometimes can foster actions and become sensegiving (how should I respond to this situation).

Retrospective

For the Western European case (Chou et al., [this volume](#)), history is and historical legacies is often interpreted as ‘the European problem’ – that Europe is lagging behind and where policy solutions are not found in the past. The retrospective view is used as an argument for a different way forward. In Canada the retrospection is very visible as the concept of ‘right to education’ dominated the policy framing for more than three decades. In the U.S. case (Orphan & McCoy-Simmons, [this volume](#)), we learn about how interest groups through various initiatives and supported by powerful organized interest (including the Big Six institutional membership associations) also attempted to protect the higher education sector from what was perceived as unwanted federal influence on the system. Historical legacies is in this case used as a potential defense against global (federal) assumptions about what is the best way forward. For the latter two cases, the retrospective sensemaking is about highlighting the good, the strengths and the comparative advantages of the higher education sector, and its inherent cultural characteristics (Välilä & Ylijoki, 2008). The past needs to be preserved – especially the values and norms associated with higher education (Weerts et al., 2014).

Enactive of Sensible Environments

This proposition suggests that the world around us is a social construction – at least with respect to how we choose to interpret it – the making of what we are sensing. Thus, this proposition suggest that rationalized global assumptions are ‘selected’ rather than ‘imposed’ on various political constituencies. In the U.S. and Canada, this enactment process was central in coining a de-regulation and competition agenda. The framing activities were used to launch a ‘freedom of choice’ agenda in Canada and was also central in promoting MOOCs as a technological radical innovation that would disrupt and transform U.S. higher education.

While concepts such as the ‘Europe of Knowledge’ pointed to a seemingly different framing, also in Europe this frame had to compete with ideas of future knowledge economies, strategic public private partnerships, ideas of competition, student mobility (for the best of the economy) and being at the forefront with respect to innovation (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1997) – although the weight given to these various elements has differed in individual countries (see also Vukasovic et al., 2018). As such, there are many similarities between the three cases regarding the substance of the policies suggested. Framing promoting a neo-liberal policy agenda are rather dominating in all the cases.

Social

All cases also pay attention to how policy framing is shaped, edited and transformed in various social processes. The most illustrating example is perhaps the Canadian case (Bégin-Caouette et al., [this volume](#)) analyzing a student strike opposing increased tuition fees in Quebec – revoking an old frame (‘the right to education’) – using this frame to attack both the political leadership in the province and the institutional leadership of the universities.

The U.S. case (Orphan & McCoy-Simmons, [this volume](#)) also provides interesting illustrations of social processes – especially those related to social and racial injustice in the higher education system – and how policy frames may be used in quite effective ways by the ‘powerless’ to raise issues publicly. In both the U.S. (Big Six) and in Europe (E4), the role of interest organizations and associations are very distinct in framing processes (Fumasoli et al., 2017) – although they perhaps are more re-active than pro-active in the framing process – as illustrated below. An interesting observation though is that the three cases to a lesser extent report in how academic staff were involved in the discussions. While there are studies demonstrating how academic staff have been affected by policy changes and reform attempts (see Locke et al., 2011), there is far less information on how this interest group has been involved in the framing of policies.

Ongoing

The three cases illustrate that framing and reframing is a continuous process, where European level policy makers, province authorities or federal and state legislators in the U.S. and Canada play dominant roles as the key agenda setters (Kerr, 2001).

However, this does not imply that interest groups, political elites, media and social movements are powerless actors. All the cases illustrate how a range of policy actors uses frames as means to influence policy agendas. Not least is it visible in the U.S. case (Orphan & McCoy-Simmons, [this volume](#)) how intermediary public policy organizations often provide ‘solutions’ to the ‘problems’ defined by federal and state authorities. These solutions are often the starting point for a reframing of the dominant interpretations, indicating how the framing best could be described as an ongoing process.

Focused on and by Extracted Cues

Frames are meant to produce direction of the mind and need a point of reference to which sensemaking can be attached. The frame must be distilled and refined in attractive ways (Goffman, 1974). A good example of this is how the ‘completion agenda’ came to the forth in the U.S., and how powerful phrases such as ‘no child left behind’ are used for mobilizing support despite the many challenges related to the implementation of this policy. Similarly, the European ‘modernization agenda’ has also been an influential point of reference for a number of European countries in pushing a domestic reform agenda in higher education.

However, what is striking in the three cases is also how researchers in the field are central in producing meta-frames that compliment and provide context to the frames offered by policymakers. Concepts such as ‘academic capitalism’, ‘entrepreneurial’ or ‘corporate’ universities have been effective ways to shape research agendas in all three regions (see also Clark, 1998; Kirp, 2003; Huisman, 2009; Shattock, 2010), extracting meaning and adding complementary understandings of dominant policy shifts in the higher education sector.

Driven by Plausibility Rather than Accuracy

While extracted cues provide a sense of direction for the framing that goes on, it perhaps goes without saying that the extraction process is not characterized by accuracy and detail. On the contrary, too much detail and accuracy is not very helpful in framing process as it may open up for contestation and unnecessary questions (Weick, 1995). The ‘responsiveness’ agenda in Canada and the ‘modernization’ agenda in Europe are good examples of concepts that add value by signaling progress, a move to something better, a solution to a problem. They are socially and

credible concepts that are taken for granted as plausible and acceptable responses to challenging situations. They are also ‘global’ in that the solutions suggested are thought of as universal remedies and recipes regardless of context.

In federal higher education systems such as the U.S. and Canada, and in a quasi-federal higher education regions such as Europe where considerable power and authority is found at state level, province level, and within the individual European country, the attractiveness of frames becomes particularly important as a means to motivate states, provinces or countries to support the policies that are being framed.

Frames as a Tool for Analyzing Policy Change – Some Reflections

This de-construction exercise can be said to build on the insights from Rein and Schön (1977) when they argued that policy framing is a sense-making process that can be split up in various sequences such as selection, naming, and storytelling. The contribution of Weick (1995) has been to offer an even more detailed framework for understanding the micro-processes of policy framing – identifying seven key properties of the sensemaking process. This de-construction illustrates some common elements in the framing process; the emphasis on history and identity; the rhetorical attributes attached to reform attempts, and the characteristics of successful framing attempts (Drori & Honig, 2013).

The de-construction undertaken may also contribute to shed light on how global rationalized assumptions or translations processes plays out in practice, which may also provide new insights that can add to both sociological and historical institutionalism. One example is how European history and legacies were used to construct the political perceptions of a ‘European problem’ which was in need of ‘modernization’. This way of using history is interesting in a historical institutionalist perspective where path-dependency usually is thought of as a concept shaping what is acceptable solutions. Hence, it opens up for possibilities that change in a historical institutionalist perspective in principle may be more radical, and not so incremental as usually imagined. Another example from the empirical cases is more relevant to the sociological institutionalist perspective. The way various interest organizations operate and influence policy processes provide more detailed insights as to the specific mechanisms at play when global rationalized assumptions are spread. As Vukasovic (2017) has argued, these kind of organizations are important providers of policy content, although as the cases in the current book illustrate – it might still be an open question whether they are mediators of translators of global policy ideas.

While the cases in question are different, the way that the framing takes place in Canada, the U.S. and in Western Europe also points to empirical settings where some common shifts in policymaking have taken place over the decades. The major story told is one about a (perhaps too) glorified past embedded in concepts such as the right to education, democracy, academic freedom, followed by a period of

reform and an overarching policy agenda emphasizing more the role of higher education as a driver for economic growth, innovation and prosperity.

Policy framing has an important role in this transformation. While framing as such could be described as merely ‘symbolic’, frames may still exert much social and transformative power (Greenwood et al., 2011), not least if the frames provided also are embedded in governance arrangements such as funding, legal changes, accreditation and other accountability arrangements. While frames potentially may be characterized as hypocrisy, frames can also have practical implications for the higher education sector and for the university (Ramirez & Christensen, 2013). For example, ideas about ‘inclusion’ in higher education may be easily translated with respect to access procedures and how to develop learning environments.

The ontological dimension of framing is as such interesting to discuss. Just how real and relevant are the frames that are provided as carriers of meaning and direction – and how coupled or decoupled are the frames with respect to the dynamic developments of the higher education systems in question? While the big framing story is about a transformation from democracy and academic freedom to entrepreneurialism and innovation, there is also another story told more implicit by the frames provided in Canada, the U.S. and Western Europe. This story is about higher education systems expanding quite dramatically after WWII, and how elite systems with privileges for the few transformed into systems of mass higher education. As such, the interest in access and regional development that can be detected in all the three contexts are quite natural themes to address in the framing of the policies suggested. In this perspective, framing becomes a rather reactive process, as a retrospective attempt to make sense of empirical realities and demographical changes. What would be more interesting to know is how framing also had a proactive function as a vision of the future. This is, of course, a difficult question to research as sensemaking is so closely intertwined with the world as we experience it (Weick, 1995). Nevertheless, if framing is to become more than a specific form of discursive analysis – there is perhaps a need for further methodological advancements.

However, the three case studies on Canada, the U.S. and Western Europe also provide a valuable glimpse into how higher education researchers have analyzed the changes, and how they have played part in the process of trying to make sense of the unfolding policy changes. Frames are important for higher education researchers, and the case studies invite some observations on the research in this area.

First, an important role taken on by researchers is to act as independent interpreters of the policy frames that have emerged. Through providing a series of meta-frames, researchers in the field seem to have managed to establish a joint agenda – having impact on research not only within their own regions, but also globally. Many contributions from researchers in the field have focused on describing the organizational consequences of a more neo-liberal framing of higher education policy, and how such framing has triggered rationalization, standardization, bureaucratization, and professionalization, and a more market-oriented university (Kirp, 2003; Hazelkorn, 2011; Drori & Honing, 2013; Ramirez & Christensen, 2013). The frames coined by researchers have in this way functioned as means of research communication in the field.

A second observation is that researchers in higher education still could be accused of being too attentive to the agendas created by policymakers. This is perhaps an unintended consequence of policy frames as they can dominate the public agenda, making it difficult to identify other issues of importance. This is not to say that radically different framing attempts by researchers are nonexistent – but such attempts are often closely bounded to images of the university and the values and norms of the past (Shapin, 2012). As such, one could claim that alternative research sense-making attempts are embedded in the identity construction of the past, thus more retrospective than forward looking. Stylistic characterizations of universities as ‘historically embedded’ are, of course, not taking into account that organizations in general, and universities in particular, are complex and often carriers of multiple logics (Greenwood et al., 2011). Examples include how universities sometimes are characterized as bureaucracies, anarchies, loosely coupled organizations or professionalized institutions. All observations may be true for some part of the university – sometimes.

A third observation following as a consequence of the former two is then that there is a danger that framing as an activity engaging both policymaker and researchers easily can run the risk of turning into a stylistic and rather abstract activity. Frames are attractive and may simplify portraits, visions and ideals either linked to a ‘modernized’ future advocated by policymakers, or obituaries of the past offered by the researchers. In this way, one can argue that framing could be an activity that overlooks complexities, paradoxes and the possible ironies related to change processes witnessed (Fumasoli & Stensaker, 2013). While framing undoubtedly has advantages, we should nevertheless not forget the inherent tensions, inbuilt dynamics and the struggle for coherence that characterize both higher education, and its most significant institution – the university.

Thus, a fourth observation is that the idea of ‘framing’ perhaps is spreading to other areas of higher education, and higher education research. While universities perhaps are facing more demands and expectations than ever, and as a consequence, becomes even more complex as organizations – both universities and the students of universities as organizations – have engaged in a range of branding, marketing and profiling exercises and analysis thereof (Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Christensen & Gornitzka, 2017). Hence, in the same way as framing demonstrate the expressive side of politics and political analysis, it is possible to witness how universities also are becoming expressive organizations (see also Schultz et al., 2000) – in need of framing their activities in ways that make sense to their surroundings, opening up a new area of analysis for those interested in studying it.

In conclusion, it should still be underlined that the three contributions analyzing policy framing in Canada, the U.S. and Western Europe add value to the field of higher education studies in a number of ways. They are valuable as they not only point to issues that are ‘popular’ and on the agenda – but also highlight issues receiving less attention over time, adding a historical account to a field that often pays much attention to the latest policy fashion (Fumasoli & Stensaker, 2013). The studies also connect to research undertaken in political science and public administration – bringing these areas of study closer to higher education research.

The U.S. case is as such very interesting as it pays attention to intermediate public policy organizations, the role of policy elites and the dynamics of social movements in policy processes – representing an inclusion of important actors in the policy process – a tendency also observed related to European studies in higher education (Fumasoli et al., 2017). The framing approach is as such interesting as it draws our attention to policy formation processes – how policies emerge, and how they are shaped and transformed (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). As such, this approach is a much-needed add-on to the traditional interest in policy implementation in higher education.

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Part IV
Intermediary Organizations and Interest
Groups in Higher Education Policy

Chapter 14

Interest Groups and Intermediary Structures in Higher Education Policy in Western Europe



Martina Vukasovic

Abstract This chapter focuses on interest groups and intermediary structures in 17 higher education systems in Western Europe. With an aim to decrease the fragmentation of knowledge on these “new actors” in higher education governance, the chapter maps the actors in each of the systems and compares them across systems and across types. Implications of participation of actors from Western Europe in European level associations is also explored. The analytical framework used for the mapping builds on comparative politics/interest groups literature, while the empirical basis comprises various national level policy documents, national Bologna reports as well as descriptions of the various systems available through Eurydice or the ENIC-NARIC network, supplemented with secondary sources, expert consultations or data collected for related research projects by the author where necessary. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key trends identified and suggestions for further research.

Introduction

Various changes in governance of higher education have led to an increased importance of “new” actors. These changes include increasing marketization of higher education (Jongbloed et al., 2008), corporate-pluralist shifts in steering (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000; Vukasovic, 2018), as well as changes concerning the structures and instruments of the Evaluative State (Neave, 2009). These “new” actors constitute a rather varied group, ranging from student organizations, through professional associations and unions of academic and administrative staff, to employers’ associations, associations of higher education institutions, agencies responsible for various tasks, e.g. quality assurance (QA), recognition, funding, often at arm’s length from the state, as well as intermediary structures combining representatives of the government and representatives of non-state actors.

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Of course, some of these “new” actors can hardly be considered newcomers in higher education governance. As will be presented in this chapter, many of them, in particular in Western Europe, have a very long history and have been involved (one way or another) in decision-making concerning higher education for a long time. A more recent development concerns cooperation and coordination of these actors across governance levels, often in the form of European associations, and in response to the emergence of an additional governance layer on the European level (Chou et al., 2017; Fumasoli et al., 2018). Western European countries are clearly taking the lead in this respect, both concerning the presence of these organizations in the national policy arenas and in terms of supporting and facilitating similar developments in the rest of Europe, often through their European associations (Klemenčič, 2012b, 2014; Vukasovic, 2018).

That said, what definitely is new concerning these actors is the increasing research interest. Some of this stems from the focus on higher education stakeholders and the extent to which stakeholders’ views are considered in relation to specific aspects of higher education (see e.g. Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010; Kettunen, 2015; Mampaey & Huisman, 2016; Stensaker et al., 2015). Other authors focus on what happens when stakeholders are organized, on the system level and beyond, with attention thus far being on student organizations, academic associations and university alliances (see e.g. Elken & Vukasovic, 2014; Fumasoli & Seeber, 2018; Klemenčič & Palomares, 2017; Vukasovic & Stensaker, 2018). There are also studies that specifically focus on intermediary structures and various kinds of agencies, and their role in higher education governance (see e.g. Jungblut & Rexe, 2017; Persson, 2018).

Using these studies as the backdrop, the present chapter will map the landscape of interest groups, agencies and intermediary structures in higher education in Western Europe. Interest groups are, for the purposes of this analysis, defined as formal organization with an interest in influencing political processes and policy decisions (Beyers et al., 2008). The chapter will also focus on agencies – formal organizations set up by the government with varying levels of independence and given specific tasks related to higher education governance (e.g. QA, recognition, internationalization), as well as (often less formally organized) intermediary structures founded by the government or parliament of a specific jurisdiction comprising representatives of state and non-state actors (Goedegebuure et al., 1993a). In conceptual terms, the mapping will be informed by comparative politics/interest groups literature concerning the status and influence of these organizations and structures, with special attention put on institutional arrangements at the national and European level that constrain or enable these actors to take part in higher education governance.

The following section provides a review of existing research on interest groups and intermediary structures in higher education in Western Europe. This is followed by the analytical framework and the description of the methodological approach. The empirical section covers the situation on the system level and explores relationships between the actors on the system level and European higher education governance. The concluding discussion summarizes key trends in Western Europe, discusses implications these may have for other European countries and beyond, as well as outlines some possible avenues for further inquiry.

Review of Existing Literature

The review of literature presented in this section is based on scholarly journals, edited volumes and monographies published in English since the late 1990s onwards. The sources were identified through Google Scholar searches using the keywords designating types of actors – “trade union(s)”, “academic associations”, “student unions”/“student organizations”, “agencies”, “employers”/“employer* association”, “intermediary structure”/“buffer”, and “foundations” – combined with “higher education” or “universit*”. This resulted in a rather diverse set of studies, the majority of which (as will be indicated below), do not have interest groups and intermediary structures as their central focus, but still provide some reflections on their position and role in higher education governance. The review is organised by types of actors, beginning with studies that provide a more conceptual/theoretical take on the role of “new actors”, and ending with an overarching reflection of the state of knowledge and identification of knowledge gaps.

Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives

The presence of non-state actors in higher education governance is part and parcel of discussions about modes of steering and coordination. In most cases, the point of departure concerns the role of the state. For example, Gornitzka and Maassen (2000) start from the sovereign state model which concerns tight state control over higher education, and elaborate three other models with varying roles for non-state actors. In the institutional steering model, it is the responsibility of the institutions themselves to shield higher education from both the state and “*short term interests of interest groups*” (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000, p. 270), while the corporate-pluralist model allows for “*different organised interest groups in the sector, such as student unions, staff unions, professional associations, industry or regional authorities*” (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000, p. 271) to take part in higher education governance. The same approach is taken by Neave (2002) when discussing the “*rise of the Stakeholder Society*” (p. 18), Reale and Primeri (2015) when mapping various approaches to analysing higher education governance, Busemeyer and Trampusch (2011) in their review on higher education research from a comparative politics perspective, or by Meek (2002) as well as Ferlie et al. (2009) when highlighting the role of professions and professional associations. More recently, the presence of non-state actors in higher education governance has been discussed in relation to governance changes within higher education institutions (see e.g. Bleiklie et al., 2015 concerning ‘penetrated hierarchies’; or Paradeise et al., 2009a concerning changes in both system and institutional level governance), or as one of the structural characteristics of politico-administrative regimes in higher education (Bleiklie & Michelsen, 2017). The recent handbook on politics of higher education (Cantwell et al., 2018) dedicated an entire section to politics of stakeholder interests, including

a chapter exploring various conceptualizations of stakeholder organizations and proposing an extensive research agenda (Vukasovic, 2018). There have been special issues of journals focusing on non-state actors, in particular transnational ones (for introductions to these issues see Chou et al., 2017; Fumasoli et al., 2018), while an Oxford bibliography on education includes a section on higher education governance, with several entries specifically focusing on interest groups (Jungblut & Dobbins, 2018).

Studies Focusing on Student Organizations

With regards to specific types of non-state actors, the bulk of research thus far concerning higher education in Western Europe has focused on student unions. This is partly a reflection of long history of research on student movements, student protests and the role of students in democratisation of higher education in particular and society in general (Altbach, 1989, 2007; Brooks, 2017; Luescher-Mamashela, 2018). Most of the studies focus exclusively on student unions, and their participation in institutional, national and European level governance, including influencing specific policy developments, e.g. QA, social dimension, tuition fees (Brooks et al., 2015; Cardoso & dos Santos, 2011; Charonis & Santa, 2015; Day, 2012, 2018; Foroni, 2011; Genicot, 2012; Horsten, 2015; Jungblut & Weber, 2012, 2015; Kažoka, 2015; Klemenčič, 2011, 2012a, b, 2014, 2015; Klemenčič & Galán Palomares, 2018; Klemenčič & Park, 2018; Klemenčič et al., 2015; Luescher-Mamashela, 2010, 2013; Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume, 2014; Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011; Minksová & Pabian, 2011; Pabian & Minksová, 2011; Parejo & Lorente, 2012; Rodgers et al., 2011; Rodriguez-Amat & Jeffery, 2017; Schreiber, 2013; Stensaker & Michelsen, 2012; Weimer, 2015). Other studies consider the role of student unions in relation to other actors, such as academic associations and associations of higher education institutions, or in cases in which higher education reforms were resisted by students and their organizations (e.g. Bótas & Huisman, 2012; Boudard & Westerheijden, 2017; Dobbins & Knull, 2017; Nokkala & Bladh, 2014; Vukasovic, 2017; Yageci, 2014). Overall, most of the studies have focused on the external behaviour, positioning and influence of the student unions, with very few studies tackling the internal organizational dynamics (for the latter see e.g. Jungblut & Weber, 2012; Jungblut & Weber, 2015).

Studies Focusing on Staff Organizations

When it comes to higher education staff, the literature is characterized by a stronger focus on trade unions operating in earlier stages of education (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2011, 2012; Moe & Wiborg, 2016) than by unions of staff working in higher education. That said, there are some useful historical accounts concerning

the emergence and rise of higher education specific trade unions or education trade unions with a strong presence of academic staff (Nikolai et al., 2016; Nilsen, 2005; Välimaa, 2005; Wiborg, 2016). Moreover, academic staff trade unions appear as relevant actors in studies that provide a more general account of higher education policy changes. Here, the focus is primarily on how policy changes affect the position of unions and how unions resist these policy changes, including NPM-inspired reforms, commodification of higher education or specific assessment mechanisms (Askling, 2001; Coate & Mac Labhrainn, 2009; Ferlie et al., 2008; Fredriksson, 2004; Hazekorn & Moynihan, 2010; Kyvik, 2009; Leathwood & Read, 2013; Mercille & Murphy, 2017; Musselin, 2014; Walsh & Loxley, 2015; Wright & Williams Ørberg, 2009). Membership in trade unions or professional/disciplinary associations sometimes appears as one of the factors affecting academic careers and job satisfaction (Cavalli & Moscati, 2010; Culum et al., 2013; Enders & De Weert, 2009; Rebora & Turri, 2009; Sang, 2018; Strike & Taylor, 2009; Teichler et al., 2013). In particular in the Anglo-Saxon context, studies have also addressed how trade unions address stress in academia and resist the growing precariousness of academic staff (Badigannavar & Kelly, 2005; Bergfeld, 2018; Colling, 2006; Conley & Stewart, 2008; Hodder & Houghton, 2015; Tytherleigh et al., 2005).

When it comes to administrative staff, as far as this review could recognize, this group is not yet in the focus of higher education research, with one exception that concerns how they are perceived and how they want to be perceived by others, academics in particular (Sebalj et al., 2012). Apart from the focus on trade unions, a few studies have focused on academic associations in general (see e.g. a typology of transnational academic associations by Fumasoli & Seeber, 2018), and how discipline focused associations may be supporting or facilitating some developments on a global scale, e.g. the proliferation and increasing importance of impact factors, as well as changing attitudes towards and practices of open access publishing (Bull, 2016; Hall & Page, 2015). In general, the large majority of these studies does not put various staff associations front and centre, but rather considers them as one of the aspects in their accounts of more general developments in higher education.

Studies Focusing on Associations of Higher Education Institutions

Similar to academic staff trade unions, associations of higher education institutions are often considered as just one of the actors contributing to or resisting higher education policy changes on the national level (de Weert & Leijnse, 2010; Kyvik & Lepori, 2010; Luijten-Lub et al., 2005; Middlehurst et al., 2009; Mohrmann et al., 2008), or on the European level, including provision of information and expertise (Geuna & Martin, 2003; Gornitzka, 2015; Huisman, 2015; Nokkala & Bacevic, 2014). As indicated above, some of these studies reflect on the changing power dynamics between associations of higher education institutions and other actors, e.g. academic staff unions (Hall & Page, 2015; Paradeise et al., 2009a; Rebora &

Turri, 2009). Other studies also report on individual higher education institutions bypassing their associations in order to influence national level policy changes. In the late 1990s and early 2000s several studies have offered typologies of these associations and other forms of HEI cooperation (Beerkens, 2002; Wächter, 1999), with new typologies being developed also more recently, comprising both national and transnational associations (Brankovic, 2018; Fumasoli & Seeber, 2018). There are also studies analysing characteristics of specific transnational associations, both with regards to their internal organization and with regards to their policy positions and strategies (Beerkens, 2005; Vukasovic & Stensaker, 2018). Overall, while the bulk of the earlier studies considered these associations only in relation to specific policy developments, there seems to be a growing interest in studying these organizations in their own right.

Studies Focusing on Organizations of Employers

Employers and their perspectives on higher education feature prominently in higher education literature, in particular in studies focusing on the extent to which higher education provides graduates with skills and competences needed by the labour market or perceived as necessary by the employers. Such attention to researching graduate employability has been rather strong in the UK (Helyer & Lee, 2014; Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Little, 2005; Mason et al., 2009; Morley & Aynsley, 2007), but also in other countries (see e.g. Thune & Støren, 2015 for a study focusing on Norway), as well as cross-nationally (see e.g. Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Schomburg & Teichler, 2011). What is common for these studies is that they consider employers not as an organized policy actor, but rather as a somewhat ambiguous group, that in some cases strengthened their position in the policy arena at the expense of other groups, e.g. students or higher education institutions (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). The studies that do refer to employers' associations (including chambers of commerce, associations of small and medium enterprises, etc.), consider them as one of the actors contributing to overall policy developments (Graf, 2017; Matherly & Tillman, 2015; Rebora & Turri, 2009; Trampusch, 2009), but do not put them centre stage.

Studies Focusing on Agencies and Intermediary Structures

Research on various kinds of higher education agencies is, on the one hand, part and parcel of a broader focus on changes in public sector governance and agencification, both at the national and the European level (Bouckaert et al., 2010; Egeberg & Trondal, 2017; Lægread & Verhoest, 2010; Trondal, 2011). In that vein, M. Beerkens (2015) analyses the process of and challenges in agencification in the area of QA in four Western European countries, while Gornitzka and Stensaker (2014); Stensaker

et al. (2010) focus on the relationship between national level QA agencies and the European developments triggered by the Bologna Process, such as the existence of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG). Emergence, strengthening and positioning of national level agencies, both those tasked with QA, as well as those tasked with other aspects of higher education (research funding, internationalization, recognition of qualifications) have also been touched upon, often as part of more general accounts of changes in governance and steering of higher education (Geuna & Martin, 2003; Hansen, 2014; Lyall et al., 2013; Musselin, 2014; see also empirical chapters in the volume edited by Paradeise et al., 2009b). It is important to note that part of the research focuses on the tension between agencies and the relevant ministries (e.g. Coate & Mac Labhrainn, 2009; Friedrich, 2019), as well as that in a number of publications agencies established by the state are considered to be the same (or similar) type of actors in higher education steering as intermediary structures (e.g. Paradeise et al., 2009a).

Such terminological ambiguity may stem from early research interest in intermediary structures, who were seen to have various functions: influencing government policy, taking over (part of) policy implementation from the government and/or providing services (Goedegebuure et al., 1993a), and who were often labelled as 'buffer bodies', protecting higher education institutions from undue influence by the state (see the 1992 special issue of *Higher Education Policy* 5(3)). These labels – 'intermediary structures/bodies' and 'buffers' – have been used in reference to various system level actors, such as funding councils, associations of higher education institutions, and state agencies (see e.g. empirical chapters in the volume edited by Goedegebuure et al., 1993b). Yet, a strand of literature is concerned with a different kind of intermediaries, those linking higher education institutions and industry, and uses this label to refer to what Clark (1998) termed academic periphery of an entrepreneurial university, i.e. technology transfer offices, science parks, university incubators, industry liaison offices (e.g. Etzkowitz, 2003; Hansson et al., 2005; Hayter, 2016; Heinzl et al., 2013; O'Kane et al., 2015; Seppo et al., 2014; Vestergaard, 2007). As will be clarified below, for the purposes of this chapter, a narrower definition of intermediary structures will be adopted.

In sum, it seems that the "new actors" in higher education governance – interest groups, state agencies and intermediary structures – are usually not the main focus of higher education studies, but are predominantly considered as yet another piece of the overall puzzle of governance and policy changes. The usual point of departure for such analyses is the relationship between the state and higher education institutions and "new" actors appear on the stage concerning specific aspects of higher education, such as quality assurance, internationalization, research funding etc. The resulting impression is one of fragmentation of knowledge, with regard to which "new" actors are studied, which policy issues these "new" actors focus on and which higher education systems are analysed. There seems to be an imbalance concerning geographical coverage as well, where (in the context of Western Europe), the UK in particular is exceptionally well covered, with France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Scandinavia being also often in the focus, while countries such as Belgium, Portugal or Spain have thus far received only occasional attention. Another

challenge is that few studies open up the black box of these actors, so not much is known about their internal dynamics. In light of this, this chapter addresses particularly the fragmentation of knowledge and therefore maps these “new” actors in a systematic manner.

Analytical Framework

As highlighted in the literature review, the presence of interest groups and intermediary structures in higher education governance arrangements and continuing agencification are clear indications that the state is far from being the sole actor involved in decision-making at various governance levels. These actors differ in their composition and their relationship to the state, as well as in their role in governance. Interest groups and intermediary structures primarily exist in order to facilitate interest intermediation in higher education. The focus for interest intermediation reflects a clear acknowledgment of the inherently political nature of higher education governance, i.e. that the functioning of a certain part of the public sector (in this case higher education) is a salient issue for various societal actors, that these actors often have competing or even conflicting interests, and that they may be inclined to influence decisions through direct lobbying or public pressure, as well as through participation in intermediary structures. Agencies are primarily tasked with policy implementation, though their work can also be subjected to influence by interest groups and they may have complex relationships with intermediary structures.

The first type of actors that are in the focus of this chapter are interest groups. There is a rather developed literature within comparative politics that focuses on the types, status, lobbying strategy and influence of these organizations. A generally accepted definition of interest groups stresses that these are formal organizations that have an interest to influence politics and policies (Beyers et al., 2008). The definition stresses the ‘formal organization’ aspect in order to distinguish interest groups from social movements, which have a more fluid and temporary character and which often have a different approach to influencing politics than direct lobbying.¹ The focus on influencing politics and policies in the definition is an acknowledgement that the main task of these organizations is to advocate for the preferences of their members. That said, some of these organizations might have been established for other reasons and they may not always focus on advocacy, in which case they are considered to be *latent interest groups* (see Beyers et al., 2008 for a conceptual reflection on this issue).

There are several ways of classifying interest groups, depending on what kind of interests they are representing and what kind of membership structure they may have (see e.g. Beyers, 2008; Dür & Mateo, 2016; Greenwood, 2011). A distinction

¹As will be discussed in this chapter, some of the student organizations exhibit also some characteristics of social movements.

of particular use for this study is between (1) public interest groups active on issues of general concern, such as the environment (e.g. Greenpeace) or human rights (e.g. Amnesty International), and (2) sectoral interest groups active on issues of immediate concern for a more narrowly defined group, specific profession, consumers or workers (Binderkrantz, 2009). Despite its increasing salience, higher education is not yet an issue of general concern, so sectoral interest groups – formal organizations advocating for interests of specific stakeholders in higher education – are of importance here. These include student unions, staff trade unions (academic and/or administrative), academic and/or disciplinary associations, employers' organizations, and associations of higher education institutions (Vukasovic, 2018).

These organizations are, in most cases, formally rather independent from the state, i.e. they are usually not established by the state and the state representatives have very limited or no influence in their operations. That said, some of these organizations receive state funding (indirectly and directly) and this may have an influence in their positions concerning policy issues (see e.g. Fraussen, 2013 for a more general account on the 'visible hand of the state'). Moreover, in some cases the assessment of the extent of independence of these organizations from the state is complicated, given the specificities of legal status of various actors in the system. For example, staff in public higher education institutions may be considered to be state employees (i.e. civil servants) and higher education institutions may be labelled as state agencies. That said, some of the agencies founded by the state to address specific aspects of higher education (recognition, quality assurance, funding) may have varying degrees of independence from the state as well and may, at times, act as interest groups themselves, i.e. attempting to influence policy makers.

Another issue to consider when analysing sectoral interest groups in higher education in various countries concerns their position in the higher education policy arena, specifically concerning how recognized they are by decision-makers. This is often analysed in terms of the position of the organizations on a continuum between being a complete outsider, i.e. not at all recognized by the relevant decision-makers, and being a complete insider (Fraussen et al., 2014). The recognition by decision-makers depends to some extent on the characteristics of the organization itself, i.e. its resources, level of staff professionalization etc. (Beyers, 2008; Klüver, 2012). However, the position of interest groups in a policy arena is also a reflection of the overall interest intermediation approach. Concerning this, various typologies have been developed, depending on the number of actors involved, their position in relation to the decision-makers, their involvement in policy implementation etc., the most common distinction being between statism, pluralism and corporatism (Eising, 2004; Schmitter, 1977). While these distinctions concern the overall interest intermediation approach in a particular polity (e.g. France is often seen as predominantly statist, while Denmark as predominantly corporatist), it is also important to look into the specifics of interest intermediation in a particular policy domain. For example, as will be demonstrated below, France also exhibits pluralist characteristics in its approach to interest intermediation in higher education.

Apart from affecting the recognition of various interest groups by the decision-makers, these interest intermediation approaches also affect the presence, tasks and

composition of intermediary structures. These structures have been introduced in higher education, in many cases with direct government or parliament involvement, as a more specialized arena of interest intermediation. This was in particular characteristic for systems in which there was a strong presence of the academic oligarchy and in systems which are characterized by predominantly corporate/pluralist or market-like approaches to steering (Clark, 1983; Goedegebuure et al., 1993b; Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000). Similar to aforementioned agencies, some of these intermediary structures have been given specific tasks, such as funding allocation (e.g. University Grants Committee, later Higher Education Funding Council in the UK). The main characteristic of these structures is that they are formally established by a governmental or parliamentary decision to act as a link between the government and other organizations. As such, they represent an additional forum for interest intermediation.

For interest groups, agencies and intermediary structures, the underlying institutional set-up provides both opportunities and constraints. Interest groups that are insiders in the policy arena and/or have representatives in intermediary structures have the opportunity to influence both agenda-setting and policy formation. Moreover, depending on (a) the task of intermediary structures they are part of or (b) the structure and tasks of agencies, interest groups may also be able to influence policy implementation. However, there is a flipside to these opportunities. Those groups that are not able to dominate the policy arena or the workings of the intermediary structures may be faced with policy developments that go against their policy preferences, despite their insider status and their participation in the policy process. While they technically have an option to act as outsiders, e.g. exert pressure through demonstrations and strikes, these may not be always seen as entirely legitimate or even possible to organize, in particular if the group has focused too much on lobbying and losing the connection with its members (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999). At the same time, interest groups that are outsiders or do not have representatives in intermediary structures are constrained, first of all, to using public pressure as their strategy to influence decisions. Moreover, even if they have the resources necessary to professionalize their staff and improve their position in the policy arena, it may be difficult to be recognized as an insider in a predominantly corporatist system, if that position is already taken by a 'competitor' organization. Agencies and intermediary structures are constrained by their relationship to the government or parliament, both with regards to their composition and with regards to their functioning and tasks. The composition can, in particular, be a constraining feature, if internal decision-making procedures and balance of power between interest groups leads to decisional lock-in.

Methodological Approach

The mapping of interest organizations and intermediary structures presented in this chapter starts from a rather wide understanding of what constitutes Western Europe and includes 17 higher education systems: Austria, Belgium (Flanders and

Wallonia), Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. Germany and the UK are, for the purposes of this overview understood as one system each, primarily because the key interest groups representing higher education institutions and students operate on the federal/national level.

The key sources for the mapping are various national level policy documents, national Bologna reports as well as descriptions of the various systems available through Eurydice or the ENIC-NARIC network. Where necessary, these are supplemented with secondary sources, expert consultations or data collected for related research projects by the author. In light of the analytical framework presented above, the mapping provided in this chapter focuses on the main organizations advocating for interests of various groups in higher education. In all cases, the mapping identifies organizations representing students, academic and administrative staff, employers and higher education institutions. With regard to intermediary structures, the mapping highlights their specific role in higher education governance. Agencies responsible for various higher education tasks are included as well, with an indication (where possible) of how close to the state they are. In cases where there are other important actors in a system (e.g. private foundations, ad hoc commissions), the mapping includes them as well. Based on the mapping, comparison across countries and types of actors is provided, including a discussion of similarities and differences concerning interest intermediation approaches in higher education. Similarly, the mapping of European/transnational level actors relies on European level policy documents and secondary sources.

System Level Mapping

Table 14.1 presents the mapping of the key system level actors in higher education in the Western Europe. The mapping is organized according to the type of actors (see the section above), with an additional category “Other” that reflects specificities of some of the systems.

Focus on Higher Education Systems

In almost all of the higher education systems, there are interest groups representing the main stakeholders, agencies, as well as intermediary structures. The sole exception is Luxembourg that does not have a state level agency, unlike other systems where there is at least an agency responsible for quality assurance. This can be linked to the small size of the system as well as the fact that the University of Luxembourg (the only one in the country) was established only in 2003. It was externally evaluated several times by a committee of experts appointed by the ministry responsible for higher education. Accreditation of specific study programmes is done through

various agencies and accreditation bodies, either from other countries or which operate internationally. Recognition of qualifications and internationalization, task that are sometimes the mandate of state agencies (e.g. before 2021 NOKUT in Norway or NUFFIC in the Netherlands), are in the mandate of the ministry.

As can be seen in Table 14.1, most of the higher education systems exhibit corporatist characteristics when it comes to interest intermediation in higher education. This includes both those that are marked as clearly corporatist (Austria, Denmark and Sweden), and those that are labelled as ‘towards corporatist’ (Belgium – both Flanders and Wallonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and Norway). In clearly corporatist systems, a particular stakeholder is represented by either one interest group or by several groups who are not in direct competition with each other. For example, in Austria, there is only one staff trade union and only one student union. While there are several associations of Austrian higher education institutions, they all represent distinctly different types of institutions and are thus not competing with each other for recognition. The systems that are labelled as ‘towards corporatist’ exhibit limited competition, usually concerning staff or student unions. For example, in Flanders there are several staff unions with clear political affiliations, in Finland the distinction primarily concerns academic rank, while in Norway there are several unions that higher education staff can be a member of, with one of them being dominant (FF – Forskerforbundet, see Table 14.1). Going towards more pluralism, the number of organizations increases and competition between them intensifies. Thus, the Netherlands is labelled as ‘towards pluralist’ given the competition between both the staff and the two student unions, while France is considered as clearly pluralist, given that it has a higher number of staff and student unions competing for being recognised as representatives.

It is also interesting to note that the structure of the system, in particular concerning the relationship between different types of higher education institutions (specifically university and non-university institutions), is reflected in various ways in the presence of interest groups. In most countries, these distinctions are primarily visible in the existence of separate associations of higher education institutions (e.g. Austria, Flanders, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland). In Finland, the distinction between universities and the polytechnics is also signalled through the existence of two separate student unions. However, in some cases these differences are not visible, e.g. Germany has only one association for both the universities and non-university institutions, and one national student union.

Another aspect worth commenting concerns the relationship between the state structure, the organization of higher education and the organization of various interest groups. Here, the comparison between (1) two federations – Belgium and Germany, (2) two unitary parliamentary monarchies with complex internal structures – Spain and the United Kingdom, and (3) a confederation – Switzerland, is particularly illustrative. In Belgium, the competencies concerning higher education reside on the level of Flanders and Wallonia. These two systems operate completely separately from each other and there are no overlapping interest groups, agencies or intermediary structures. Cooperation on the federal level is limited to intermediary

Table 14.1 System level actors in higher education in Western Europe

HE system	Associations of stakeholders (acting as interest groups)					Agencies	Intermediary structures	Other actors	HE interest intermediation approach
	HEIs	Academic staff	Admin. staff	Students	Employers				
Austria	Uniko – public universities; FHK – public universities of applied sciences; ÖPUK – private universities; ROPH – teacher education HEIs	GÖD – for academic and administrative staff at public HEIs	Admin. staff	ÖH – all students	IV – federation of industries; WKO – chamber of commerce; LK – chamber of agriculture	AQ – QA and accreditation; OeAD – mobility	Hochschulkonferenz – advisory role (education); FWF – funding role (research)		Corporatist
Belgium – Flanders	VLIR – universities, VLHORA – universities of applied sciences and arts	ACOD – socialist trade union; COV and COC – christian unions; VSOA – liberal trade union		VVS – most of the students	VOKA – chambers of commerce and industry	NVAO – joint QA agency with Netherlands; VLUHR – external QA; AHOVOKS – LLL	VLOR – advisory role (education); FWO – funding role (research)	King Baudouin Foundation and other various foundations – funding role (research); KVAB – academy of arts and sciences (Flanders); BELSPO and FRWB/CFPS – advisory and funding role (research)	Towards corporatist
Belgium – Wallonia	CRef – universities; ARES – all HEIs	CSC – christian trade union; SLFP liberal trade union		FEF – most of the students, Unécof – minority of students	CCI – chamber of commerce	AEQES – QA	F.R.S.-FNRS – funding role (research)		Towards corporatist
Denmark	DKUNI – universities; DP – professional HEIs; Danske Erhvervsakademier – business HEIs	Djøf – social and economic sciences; DM – master and PhD graduates;		DSF – majority of students	DA – employers' association	AKKR – QA and accreditation; EVA – evaluation; Studievaig – regional education and career guidance	DFIR – advisory role (research); DFP – advisory and funding role (research); DG – funding (research)	Ad-hoc expert committees – advisory role	Corporatist

(continued)

Table 14.1 (continued)

HE system	Associations of stakeholders (acting as interest groups)						Intermediary structures	Other actors	HE interest intermediation approach
	HEIs	Academic staff	Admin. staff	Students	Employers	Agencies			
Finland	UNIFI – universities; ARENE – universities of applied sciences	FUURT, YLL – teachers + researchers; FUUP – professors	Trade Union Pro – and tech staff	Syl – all university students; SAMOK – most university college students	EK – confederation of industries	FINEEC – QA	AKA – funding role (research)	Corporatist	
France	CPU – rectors' conference; CDEFI – engineering schools; CGE – grandes écoles	UNSA – HE and researchers; SNETAA – professional education; SNESUP – HE; FERCCGT – education, research and culture	UNSA – HE and researchers; SNETAA – professional education; SNESUP – HE; FERCCGT – education, research and culture	FAGE and UNEF – main organizations; Parole étudiante, UNI – minor organizations	CPME, MEDEF – SMEs	CTI – QA and accreditation in engineering; ANR – funding role (research)	OVE – student welfare; HCERES – QA (both education and research); CNESER – overarching	Towards corporatist	
Germany	HRK – universities, universities of applied sciences and other HEIs	GEW – teaching and research staff	Verdi – admin staff in public HEIs	fzs – approx. 1/3 of students	BDA – employers association	ZEVA, ACQUIN, AQAS, evalag – QA and accreditation; DAAD – internationalization (education and research); ASIIN, FIBAA, AHPGS, AKAST – accreditation (field specific)	Various foundations funding role (research); Helmholtz, Leibniz, MPG, Fraunhofer-Foundation – funding role (research)	Towards corporatist	

Ireland	IUA – universities; THEA – technical HEIs; HECA – independent colleges	IFUT , TUI – teaching staff	Fórsa , SIPTU – admin staff	USI – most of the students; NUS-USI – students in Northern Ireland	IBEC – employers’ association	QQI – QA and QF; HEA – oversight and funding	T&L – advisory role (education); IRC – funding role (basic research); SFI – funding role (applied); HRB – funding role (health)	Towards corporatist
Italy	CRUI – rectors’ conference; CODAU – university directors	FLC CGIL , UIL , USB , CUB , CSIL FSUR – all staff	CNSU – national council, UDU – student union	CONFINDUSTRIA – chamber of commerce	ANVUR – QA (education and research)	CUN – university council; CNAM – council for HE in arts and music	Various foundations funding role (research)	Towards pluralist
Luxembourg	UL – the only university in LU	APUL – professors at UL, SEW – teaching and research staff	UNEL – all students studying or living in LU; ACEL – LU students abroad	FEDIL – federation of industries	None	FNR – funding role (research)		Towards corporatist
The Netherlands	VSNU – universities; VH – non-university HEIs	FNV – public HEIs, AC-HOP – universities, AOB – non-university HEIs staff; CNV – christian trade union	LSVb , ISO – main organizations, together representing most of the students	VNO-NCW – employers’ association	NVAO – joint QA agency with Flanders; NUFFIC – internationalisation (all levels of education)	Education inspectorate – accountability and advisory role; NWO – funding role (research), KNAW – Funding and advisory role (research)	Ad-hoc expert committees on specific aspects of HE (advisory role); various foundations funding role (research)	Towards pluralist

(continued)

Table 14.1 (continued)

HE system	Associations of stakeholders (acting as interest groups)					Intermediary structures	Other actors	HE interest intermediation approach
	HEIs	Academic staff	Admin. staff	Students	Employers			
Norway	UHR – accredited universities and university colleges	FF, UF – academic staff; Akademikerne – also includes administrative staff		NSO – main organization, almost all students; ISU – international students; ANSA – NO students abroad	NHO – business confederation	NOKUT – QA, accreditation, QF, recognition; DIKU (from 2021 part of HK-dir) – internationalization and QA; NORAD – development aid (co-funding some research projects)	Ad-hoc expert committees (advisory role); various foundations funding role (research)	Towards corporatist
Portugal	CRUP – universities; CCISP – polytechnics; APESP – private HEIs	SNESUP , FENPROF – teaching and research staff		FAIRE – existing primarily for international representation; otherwise HEI level unions	CIP – industry association	CCES – advisory body (HE); CNCT – advisory body (research); FCT – funding role (research)	Various foundations funding role (research)	Towards pluralist
Spain	CRUE – public and private universities	FEUSO – universities; FESP – public sector employees, including HE; STES , CCOO , CSIF – universities		CREUP – association of student councils of 31 universities	CEOE – confederation of employers' organization	CSIC – funding role (research)		Pluralist

Sweden	SUHF – universities and university colleges	SULF – teachers and researchers; ST – all staff	SFS – most of the students	SAGE – public sector; Svenskt Näringsliv – private sector	UKÄ – QA, UHR – recognition; MYH – vocational HE; VINNOVA – funding applied research	VR – funding role (research); FORMAS , FORTE – funding role (field specific)	Ad-hoc expert committees on advisory role; various foundations funding role (research)	Corporatist
Switzerland	Swissuniversities – all HEIs; SHK-CSHE-CSSU-CSSA – universities of applied sciences	Actionuni – research staff (also outside HEIs); swissfaculty – all types of HEIs; HES-CH – professional HEIs; SSP – VPOD – public HEIs (admin staff included)	VSS-UNES- USU – most of the students	Economiesuisse – business association; SGV-USAM, UPS – SMEs	Schweizerischer Akkreditierungsrat/ AAO – QA and accreditation	SSC – advisory and evaluatory role (stronger focus on research); FNS-SNF – funding role (research)	Various foundations funding role (research)	Towards pluralist
The UK	Universities UK – vice-chancellors of universities; AOC – tertiary colleges in England; GuildHE – various HEIs; Colleges Scotland	UCU/UCU-Scotland – admin and academic staff; NEU – support staff in HEIs; EIS-ULA – university lecturers in Scotland	NUSUK/ NUS- Scotland/ NUS-Wales/ NUS-USI – most of the students	CBI – business confederation	QAA/QAA-Scotland – QA, access; SQA – QF and accreditation in Scotland; BAC – accreditation of private HEIs; RCVS – HEIs educating veterinarians	Office for students, SFC, HEFCW – funding of education; UKRI – association of field specific research funding councils	Leadership Foundation for HE – supporting leadership development, established by Universities UK and GuildHE; various foundations and academies – funding role (research)	Towards pluralist

Source: Author

structures and other actors supporting research. In Germany, where the main responsibility for higher education policy is at the level of *Länder*, all of the interest groups are also integrated at the federal level, and other actors have the federal level as the main locus of their operation. In Spain, which is comprised of autonomous communities, the interest groups and intermediary structures are also integrated at the level of the whole country, but there are quality assurance agencies operating both at the level of autonomous communities and at the national level. Interest intermediation in the United Kingdom is rather complex, mirroring the complexities of higher education arrangements. The Scottish higher education system operates rather separately from the rest of the UK, including differences with regard to funding and the structure of its qualifications frameworks. However, Scottish staff and student unions as well as its quality assurance agency operate within national umbrella organizations. Two of the four main higher education associations operate across the entire UK, while intermediary structures responsible for funding operate independently in England, Scotland and Wales (in Northern Ireland, the funding responsibilities lay with the ministry). A specific peculiarity in the UK concerns student organizing in Northern Ireland, where the student union is affiliated both to NUSUK (National Unions of Students in the United Kingdom) and to USI (the Union of Students in Ireland). Switzerland, although being a confederation in which most universities are the responsibility of cantons, has a rather integrated system of higher education governance, in which all of the interest groups, agencies and intermediary structures operate at the level of the whole country.

Focus on Types of Actors

Compared to other interest groups, student and staff unions are characterized by most competition and fragmentation. When it comes to staff unions, this can, to a large extent, be linked to the more general situation concerning industrial relations and the position of trade unions as such. These arrangements have strong historical roots; for example, the political and or religious distinctions between higher education staff unions in Flanders and Wallonia exist also in other sectors. When it comes to student unions, various explanations have been put forward. In the case of France and Italy, Genicot (2012, p. 63) linked it to the “*conflictual culture in a weak national system of intermediation of interests, and a mimetic relationship with national conflictual party politics*”. In the case of the Netherlands, based on ongoing research by the author, the distinction between the two main organizations specifically concerns organizational identity and thematic focus. LSVb sees itself to have significant similarities to a social movement and focuses in particular on issues related to access and equity in higher education, while ISO stresses its role as an internal member of the policy arena and focuses in particular on issues related to quality. Similar diversity of organizational identities of student unions has also been identified in the case of Germany, albeit within one organization exhibiting a hybrid

identity (Jungblut & Weber, 2012), and can be considered part of a more general phenomenon (Klemenčič, 2012b).

Associations of higher education institutions are, together with employers' associations, the most insider interest groups. Even though in two thirds of the countries there are more than one association of HEIs, boundaries in almost all cases (apart from Wallonia and the UK) are drawn clearly in relation to types of institutions. Thus, as indicated earlier, the competition between associations is very limited. Such a strong position of associations of higher education institutions in the process of interest intermediation is, arguably, linked to the fact that they have long been considered as key actors and that their relationship with the state is the point of departure for discussions about higher education governance, by policy-makers and researchers alike. As indicated in the review of research thus far (see above), intermediary structures were initially (and some still are) understood as representatives of higher education institutions.

When it comes to other actors that are relevant in the governance of higher education, these come in two basic types: foundations and ad-hoc committees. Specifically, in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, apart from research funding awarded by intermediary structures (usually research councils), public and/or private foundations also have their own research funding programmes, including those focusing on specific research topics (e.g. cancer research).

Ad-hoc committees are an important part of higher education governance specifically in Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. These ad-hoc committees are formed by governments or ministries with specific task of producing advice and input for more long-term policy development. These committees are comprised of individuals who are, due to their research or their practical experience, considered to be experts in a particular area. This would often include former leadership of higher education institutions and prominent business leaders. In most cases, individuals appointed to these committees are seldom considered to represent a particular stakeholder group; they act in their own capacity.

Interest Groups in Western Europe and Their European Counterparts

Interest groups on the national level have their European level counterparts. For national higher education associations, there are two European umbrella organizations – the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). EUA represents the universities, while EURASHE represents the non-university sector. EUA and EURASHE have both national associations and individual institutions as their members. While having the most encompassing membership (e.g. EUA has more than 800 universities as members), there are also smaller associations of institutions with a narrower

profile, such as the League of European Research Universities (LERU), the Guild, the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA) (Brankovic, 2018; Vukasovic & Stensaker, 2018).

The main student unions in Western European countries are all members of the European Students' Union (ESU). Although there are several other student associations on the European level, only ESU is recognized as the student representative by various European institutions (Klemenčič & Galán Palomares, 2018). Most of the identified staff trade unions are affiliated with the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), who is also considered to be the representative of higher education staff on the European level. The same is the case for BusinessEurope, who has many of the identified employers' associations as their members. While not, strictly speaking, interest groups, quality assurance agencies also have their umbrella organization – the European Association for Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA), and the same goes for research funding councils who are affiliated with Science Europe.

All of these organizations act as interest groups on the European level, seeking to influence decision-making, both within the various EU institutions, as well as concerning the pan-European Bologna Process. However, the European level dynamic does not actually mirror the national level dynamic. The key distinction concerns the difference between national and European level competences. While domestic authorities – be that at the level of constituent units (e.g. Flanders, Wallonia, German *Länder*) or at the level of the whole country (e.g. Germany and the UK) – have specific and significant competences concerning regulation, funding and organization of higher education, the competences of European level institutions are much more limited. Specifically, when it comes to the education function of higher education the EU can only “support, coordinate or supplement Member States' actions” (Article 6 of the TFEU (or Lisbon) Treaty). That said, while the EU does not have a strong policy-making mandate, it does possess significant power of the purse through higher education and research cooperation programmes developed and administered by the European Commission and its agencies (Batory & Lindstrom, 2011), and it can push for policy coordination between the Member States through its Open Method of Coordination (Gornitzka, 2014). Governing structures developed in relation to the Bologna Process are even weaker, lacking the administrative and financial apparatus of the EU and its institutions, but they do provide further opportunities and impetus for policy coordination.

Existence of European level associations for national level interest groups is relevant both for influencing developments on the European level, as well as for affecting interest intermediation in other European countries. Namely, European level associations, by virtue of being organizations, provide opportunities for communication and socialization and can thus act as platforms for both horizontal and vertical policy transfer (Vukasovic, 2018). Western European interest groups, be that associations of higher education institutions, staff or student unions, are generally better resourced than their counterparts in other parts of European. As such, they have more opportunities and more resources to decisively shape the policy agendas of their European associations (in a processes that is mirroring uploading of policy

preferences by the Member States to the EU level, see e.g. Börzel, 2003), as well as to influence the organizational development and policy agendas of their counterparts in other European countries. This has been recently recognized as an important focus for a more general research agenda on stakeholder organizations (Vukasovic, 2018), which in the case of Western European interest groups in higher education is of particular interest given their resources and, in most cases, insider positions in their national policy arenas.

Conclusion

This chapter, with an aim to decrease the fragmentation of knowledge concerning the “new” actors in higher education governance, mapped interest groups, state agencies and intermediary structures in 18 higher education systems in Western Europe. In almost all systems, all types of actors are present, with the exception of Luxembourg where, at present, there are no state level agencies.

Systems vary significantly with regard to density of interest groups. There are clearly corporatist systems where a single actor represents a specific stakeholder (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Iceland), as well as pluralist systems where there is intense competition for representation. This pluralism is particularly visible when it comes to representation of students and staff, such as in France and Italy. Apart from having various interest groups, agencies and intermediary structures involved in higher education governance, few countries (Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) also rely on ad-hoc expert committees when it comes to policy-making advice. The overall higher education governance set up does not always reflect the division of competences with regards to higher education. While in the case of Belgium there is almost complete separation between the Flemish and the Walloon actors, many actors in Germany, Switzerland and the UK do operate primarily on the national/federal level despite the fact that this is not the main locus of decision-making.

Although there may be diversity with regard to actual influence of various actors concerning particular policy issues, the very developed systems of interest intermediation in Western Europe provide ample opportunities for these actors to be involved in policy development at the system level. Moreover, given (a) the fact that most of the Western European stakeholder organizations are resource-rich, in particular compared to many of their counterparts in the rest of Europe, and (b) that they are all affiliated with European level associations, the influence of Western European stakeholder organizations may travel across boundaries and also affect the status and preferences of their peers in other European countries. In other words, facilitated by communication and socialization within European level associations, interest intermediation in Western Europe could impact interest intermediation elsewhere, both with regards to which organizations are involved as well as with regards to what kind of policy preferences are being put forward by these organizations. That said, the current state of knowledge on these “new” actors in higher education

governance is too limited to provide solid insight into the complex relationship between domestic and Europe an interest intermediation, and horizontal and vertical policy transfer that may be taking place.

The first comprehensive mapping of various actors in higher education governance in Western Europe provided in this chapter sets the foundations for several lines of further research. One possibility is to compare in more detail the organizational characteristics of these actors, (a) across systems but focusing on the same type of actors as well as (b) across actors within one higher education systems. This could be complemented with a systematic analysis of influence these actors have on policy and governance, given that the Western European systems exhibit an interesting mix of similarities and differences, as well as a range of interest intermediation approaches that provide a fertile empirical ground for analysis of interest intermediation. If combined with similar analysis focusing on other parts of Europe, such studies would provide not only a contribution to higher education research but also to comparative politics, given that interest intermediation in knowledge intensive policy domains is rather understudied. Finally, it would be interesting to open the black box of these “new actors” in higher education governance and explore their membership, organizational identities, and internal decision-making dynamics, as well as how these organizational characteristics affect their external political positioning and influence. Not only would this allow for a more comprehensive understanding of politics of higher education, but it would also demonstrate the benefits of complementing a political perspective on higher education governance with an organizational one.

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Chapter 15

Interest Groups in Higher Education in the U.S.



Erik C. Ness and Sean M. Baser

Abstract The purpose of this chapter is to present the ways in which interest groups influence higher education policymaking in the United States. The chapter begins with a review of the literature on interest group activity at the federal and state level. We give more attention to the role of interest groups in the state-level policymaking arena because of the formal authority accorded to the states by the U.S. Constitution. We preface each of the federal and state literature reviews with a brief description of the key interest groups to provide context to the different settings. In a subsequent section, we present a case to illustrate the evolving role of interest group activity in higher education policymaking. We draw upon lobbying disclosures and media reports to analyze the Alabama Association for Higher Education and the University of Alabama System's dark money scheme in order to depict the shifting landscape of institutional-based lobbying. The chapter ends with a brief discussion about the implications of stakeholder-based governance in higher education policy and practice.

Introduction

The environment for higher education policy in the United States has undergone considerable change over the past two decades. In recent years, for example, the rising costs of college and the growing dependence on student loans has attracted significant interest from policymakers, media, and families. Broadly, policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and the public have demanded that institutional leaders improve graduation and retention rates, lower student debt and default rates, and leverage higher education to drive economic and workforce development. Indeed, college affordability and student success have been at the forefront of both federal and state policymakers' discussions over the past decade. Normally

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considered outside the purview of higher education policy, sweeping federal actions such as the Affordable Care Act and the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act as well as the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010) have also transformed the higher education policymaking arena.¹ State policymakers have tussled with stagnant revenue growth and a volatile economy following the Great Recession, forcing higher education leaders to adapt to the "new normal" of higher education finance and pursue alternative revenue streams to maintain institutional quality, competitiveness, and funding (Doyle & Delaney, 2009; Hearn, 2013). In addition, concerns about immigration, guns on campus, campus sexual assault, and free speech have been among the most contentious issues debated at state capitols and on college campuses across America (AASCU, 2008–2019).

Higher education policymaking is a complex and dynamic process in the United States, influenced by a multitude of political, social, and economic factors. It exists within a multi-layered and fragmented system of governance where many governmental and non-governmental actors seek to influence policy, from formulation through implementation and evaluation. Governmental actors are public officials who hold statutory or constitutional authority in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of local, state, and federal government. This diverse group of actors includes elected officials as well as non-elected officials such as agency staff and other bureaucrats. It is also worth recognizing that colleges and universities are uniquely positioned in American politics and policy. Faculty, administrators, and staff employed at public colleges are considered government actors as the institutions in which they are employed are funded and operated by the state, in addition to the fact that these individuals exercise authority pursuant to state law. While most private colleges receive little public funding for operations, nearly all of these institutions and the employees who serve within them receive significant funding from government sources (e.g., student financial aid and research grants), which requires compliance with state and federal laws. On the other hand, the people, advocacy organizations, foundations, political action committees (PACs), media, and political parties are a few of the key non-governmental actors who are active participants in the policy process but historically have lacked legal or formal authority. The higher education landscape is convoluted by competing interest groups that hold varying degrees of influence in different policy arenas.

Recent policymaking events—at both the state and federal level—illustrate the growing influence of non-governmental actors in higher education policy, namely interest groups and intermediary organizations. Intermediary organizations are "boundary spanning" groups with specific interests that translate, mediate, and connect two principal actors, such as state policymakers and school district personnel (Guston, 2001). Often in lieu of traditional research produced by academics that would be featured in peer-reviewed academic journals, intermediary organizations have assumed a heightened role in education policy by "gathering, interpreting, and packaging particular research for policymakers" (Lubienski et al., 2011, p. 2). In

¹The *Citizens United* decision reversed restrictions on campaign spending by corporations and other special interest groups. Although contributions directly to candidates or political parties are still regulated, this decision allows for unlimited spending on political action committees (PACs).

education circles, intermediary organizations have generally encompassed foundations, think-tanks, research consortiums, political action committees (PACs), trade associations, government agencies, consulting firms, advocacy groups (e.g., student and issue-based organizations), and the media (Malin & Lubienski, 2015; Ness et al., 2015; Scott et al., 2017). The growing prominence of intermediary organizations and other interest groups in policymaking has led a number of scholars to maintain that the policy process has become increasingly privatized as non-governmental actors have assumed a more expansive role in providing government services (Ball, 2009; Ball & Junemann, 2012).

Studying the influence of interest groups in state and federal policymaking is a perennial topic in political science and public administration. Although the scholarship around interest group activity in elementary and secondary education is rather rich, literature at the post-secondary level remains underdeveloped. In higher education policymaking, the role of interest groups, and more specifically intermediary organizations, has garnered some attention in the literature and media (Gandara et al., 2017; Ness & Gándara, 2014; Ness et al., 2015; Parry et al., 2013). Much of the early work was descriptive and positioned interest group activity in higher education policymaking in a federal context (Cook, 1998; Hannah, 1996; Murray, 1976; Parsons, 1997). Over the past three decades, scholars have produced a number of descriptive case studies (Blackwell & Cistone, 1999; Dougherty et al., 2014b; Ferrin, 2003, 2005; Frost et al., 1997; Ness, 2010). More recently, a line of empirical research using panel data analysis has emerged at the state level (McLendon et al., 2009; Ness & Tandberg, 2013; Tandberg, 2008, 2010a, b; Tandberg & Ness, 2011; Tandberg & Wright-Kim, 2019). Federal and state policy scholars alike generally attempt to explain the ecology of interest groups in their respective setting, how these interest groups interact with other aspects of the policymaking environment, and the level of influence these non-governmental actors hold in making decisions on key policy issues. In light of these developments, the scholarly literature remains relatively scant in regard to interest group activity in higher education policy.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the ways in which interest groups influence higher education policymaking in the United States. The chapter begins with a review of the literature on interest group activity at the federal and state level. We give more attention to the role of interest groups in the state policymaking arena because of the formal authority accorded to the state. We preface each of the federal and state literature reviews with a brief description of the key interest groups to provide context to the different settings. In a subsequent section, we present a case to illustrate the evolving role of interest group activity in higher education policymaking. We draw upon lobbying disclosures and media reports to analyze the Alabama Association for Higher Education and the University of Alabama System's dark money scheme in order to depict the shifting landscape of institutional-based lobbying. We end the chapter with a brief discussion about the implications of stakeholder-based governance in higher education policy and practice.

Key Concepts and Terms

To better understand interest group activity in higher education policymaking, it is important to first acknowledge federalism as a defining characteristic of the American policymaking environment. That is, governance responsibilities are shared between the federal government and state governments. The “reserve clause” of the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution stipulates that powers not explicitly entrusted to the federal government are the responsibility of the states. Because education is not mentioned in the Constitution, state governments hold formal authority over higher education. This has generally meant that states are responsible for governing public colleges, holding institutions accountable, setting the public agenda for higher education, and allocating state funds for operations, financial aid, and capital projects. In its secondary role, the federal government provides financial support directly to students in the form of student financial aid and to institutions in the form of research dollars. The federal government also influences higher education through comprehensive tax policies and the administration and enforcement of regulations such as Family Educational Rights and Privacy (FERPA), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Title IX, and the Clery Act.

Any discussion about interest group activity, whether at the federal, state, or local level, should begin with a definition of interest groups. Interest groups have also been referred to as “pressure groups,” “special interest groups,” and “organized interests.” A universally accepted definition of interest groups has yet to emerge in the political science literature. Definitions vary significantly, with some scholars narrowly defining interest groups as those organizations that are required to formally register by state lobbying laws and others broadly defining interest groups as “an association of individuals or organizations or a public or private institution that attempts to influence government decisions” (Newmark & Nownes, 2018, p. 100). This chapter is based on the broad political science definition in conjunction with the sociological definition of the conceptually similar “social movement organizations” and “intermediaries” (Burstein, 1998). In this sense, interest groups should be thought of as an inclusive term, composed of intermediary organizations, governmental relations staff at public institutions and systems, faculty and student associations, and private college associations.

While a host of classification systems exist, interest groups in the United States can generally be organized into traditional membership groups, institutional interests, and associations (Newmark & Nownes, 2018). Traditional membership groups refer to groups comprised of individuals that aim to promote economic, social, or political concerns. These groups would include environmental and gun groups as well as labor unions and professional associations. On the other hand, institutional interests refer to non-member organizations, such as business firms, government agencies, and colleges and universities. Associations refer to entities that represent and promote other organizations. Examples of associations include trade associations, such as state and local chambers of commerce and coalitions of labor unions (e.g., AFL-CIO). These different interest groups engage in lobbying—that is, the

process of attempting to influence governmental decisions and policy outputs. Lobbying is carried out by lobbyists, both those required and not required to register by law, who represent and promote the interests of their respective interest group to decision makers.

Theoretical Approaches for Interest Group Activity

Conceptualizing Interest Group Activity at the Federal Level

Scholars have posited several approaches to explain interest group power and the influence of organized interests on society. Notably, theories have included pluralism, elitism, and the many forms of neopluralism (Hecl, 1978; Lowi, 1969; McFarland, 1987; Olson, 1965; Schattschneider, 1960; Truman, 1951). Two traditions have emerged to conceptualize the role of interest groups in American politics. These approaches have typically been theorized in a federal context (Gray & Lowery, 2002). The first perspective, made up of classic pluralism and reiterations of it, “emphasizes the increasing diversity of interests in the federal government policy circles and the positive role that groups have in the development of better citizens of the state” (Mawhinney, 2001, p. 208). An alternative to this perspective has been proposed and holds that the power of interest groups is tilted toward the elite, business, and corporate interests.

Classic pluralist scholars contended that an effective democracy depended upon active, competitive, and balanced group activity (Mawhinney, 2001). These scholars argued that interest groups were central to society, serving as an important link between the people and the government. In a pluralist perspective, interest groups emerge and mobilize as a natural consequence of people’s political interests. In turn, multiple interest groups vie for influence in the policymaking process. Early pluralists argued that the balance of power between interest groups remains near equilibrium, maintaining that as one group gained more power, other competing interest groups would mobilize to restore the balance of power (Truman, 1951). Early pluralist scholars found that interest groups primarily served the role of providing technical information to decision makers. It should be recognized that many pluralists acknowledged that business and corporate interests possessed the most influence in the federal lobbying landscape, though they insisted this power tilt should be considered a temporary phenomenon (Truman, 1951). Reiterations of pluralism were posited as a response to some criticisms, notably in Robert Dahl, who argued that interest groups did not share power equally, but rather power was dispersed among the organizations (Dahl, 1956).

Nevertheless, classic pluralist scholars faced early and significant criticisms from political scientists and sociologists on the basis that pluralism neglected to adequately address the structural advantages possessed by the nation’s economic and political elite (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Domhoff, 1978; Dye & Zeigler, 1970;

Olson, 1965; Schattschneider, 1960). Multiple-elite theory emerged as the primary framework to counter pluralism (Lowi, 1969; Olson, 1965). The *Logic of Collective Action* by Mancur Olson and the *End of Liberalism* by Theodore Lowi are considered two of the landmark texts of multiple-elite theory. This tradition of scholarship, which some scholars have noted as anti-pluralism, contends that politics and interest groups are “largely controlled by multiple separate elites, each dominating a particular area of public policy” (McFarland, 2004, p. 47). In a famous rebuke of pluralism, Schattschneider (1960), a leading elite theorist, insisted that “the flaw in pluralist heaven is that heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent” (p. 53). Several scholars have noted that Olson (1965) and other anti-pluralist, elitist theorists shifted the focus from how interest groups influence policy outcomes and instead focused on the internal functions and organization of interest groups (Gray & Lowery, 2002; Mawhinney, 2001).

Neopluralism has developed into the foremost approach used in the study of interest group activity in the United States (Gray & Lowery, 2002). If one considers the theoretical approaches to interest group activity on a spectrum with classic pluralism on one end and elitism on the other, neopluralism rests somewhere in between. Neopluralist scholars argue “that organized interests are only imperfectly constrained by other actors and forces in the democratic process. In other words, neopluralists believe that we live neither in a pluralist heaven nor in a pluralist hell” (Gray & Lowery, 2002, p. 392). Scholars in this vein of research framed policymaking as a network of subgovernments in which decisions are the result of a symbiotic relationship between interest groups, government agencies, and politicians in a policy domain where each actor possesses considerable influence in the policymaking process. The iron triangle, which is a rigid schema that represents policy outputs as the result of a close arrangement between politicians, interest groups, and bureaucrats, remains a popular depiction of interest group activity in the broader political context. Other neopluralist scholars expanded upon the subgovernment work, with policy communities and the issue network school of thought emerging to understand interest group influence in policymaking. Issue network scholars suggested that policymaking occurs in a web of loosely related actors, including politicians, interest groups, and bureaucratic agencies (Hecklo, 1978; McFarland, 1987).

Interest Group Activity in State Policymaking

Scholars studying interest groups at the state level have generally examined “what lobbyists do and how and why they do it, the factors facilitating group mobilization, and the impacts of interest groups on governmental behavior” (Hearn et al., 2017, p. 333). The state interest group system is an important concept for our discussion and refers to the broad structure in which interest group activity rests, from organized interests and their lobbyists to the array of governmental actors. Certainly, “the characteristics of an interest group system—its size, development,

composition, methods of operating, and so on—affect a state’s political power structure, the public policies that are pursued and the nature of representation and democracy” (Newmark & Nownes, 2018, p. 101). Prior to the 1980s, few scholars had conceptualized interest group activity in state policymaking, with most attention given to the Washington D.C. policymaking arena (for notable exceptions, see: Morehouse, 1973; Zeller, 1937, 1954). Zeller (1954) emphasized the political party as the primary force in state politics in her examination of pressure groups in New York. Notably, there was no mention of Truman’s (1951) *The Governmental Process* in her analysis. Reflecting on the evolution of state-level literature on interest groups, Gray and Lowery (2002) note that “state politics scholars seem more heavily influenced by the state literature on interest groups than by the national-level literature” (p. 396). Zeller’s influence on the study of interest groups in state policymaking cannot be overstated, perhaps best evidenced by the fact that her party versus group power classification scheme and interest group power ratings featured prominently in the interest group chapter of the many editions of the hallmark text on state politics research, *Politics in the American States* (Gray & Lowery, 2002). Beginning in the late 1980s and continuing through the 1990s and 2000s, policy scholars have made noteworthy progress in building upon these early works on interest group activity in state policymaking (Browne, 1985; Cigler & Kiel, 1988; Gray & Lowery, 1996a; Hrebenar & Thomas, 1987, 1992, 1993a, b; Lowery & Gray, 1993; Morehouse, 1981; Rosenthal, 1993, 2001). These scholars and others have drastically improved the understanding of interest group activity in state politics. In particular, they have described the types of interest groups in each state, the strategies and tactics used by groups and lobbyists, and the power and influence interest groups possess in the public policy process. Simply put, policy scholars examining interest groups have been interested in who lobbies, how they lobby, and to what effect.

Significant gains have been made in conceptualizing interest group system power since Zeller and Morehouse’s early efforts, notably through Ronald Hrebenar and Clive Thomas’s collection of articles and series of books about state-level interest group activity in different geographic regions of the United States (Hrebenar & Thomas, 1987, 1992, 1993a, b; Thomas & Hrebenar, 1990, 1999, 2004). They have periodically updated their rating system of interest group power. Thomas and Hrebenar (1999) offered three perspectives of interest group power, distinguishing between single group power, overall individual interest power, and interest group system power in the states. Single group power, the easiest perspective to assess, refers to the ability of an interest group or coalition of groups to achieve its policy goals as it defines them. Garnering the media’s and public’s attention, the second perspective, overall individual interest power, refers to the most effective interest groups overall in the state over a specified period (e.g., 5 years). Finally, group system power refers to the collective strength of interest groups relative to other organizations and institutions that influence the policymaking process. In sum, rich description and comparison studies have been produced in the state-level literature, especially in regard to the strategies, tactics, and tools of influence employed by interest groups. Indeed, this tradition of literature provides further evidence of the

significant variation that exists among states. While notable gains have been made in understanding the role of interest group influence in public policy, the field of study remains underdeveloped and rather disconnected from the national-level research, especially regarding theoretical developments around pluralism, elitism, and neopluralism (Gray & Lowery, 2002).

To position this theory within the higher education context, higher education interest group activity has reflected the pluralist approach of many institutions, systems, associations, and organizations seeking to influence higher education policy activity at federal and state levels. However, as neopluralist and elitist scholars might suggest, some interest groups are active players wielding more influence in certain government subsystems, especially at the federal level. As such, interest groups possess varying degrees of power and influence in certain policy circumstances, and in turn, policymakers prioritize particular interests. In the next two sections, we review the literature regarding interest group activity at the federal and state level, paying special attention to the state-level context because states hold formal authority over higher education.

One Dupont Circle: Interest Group Activity in Federal Higher Education Policymaking

The absence of centralized control at the federal level has been a hallmark of the American higher education system. However, the federal policymaking arena for higher education has grown in importance over time as the federal government's role in higher education has increased in terms of appropriations and regulations. Federal policymakers have used education as an instrument to achieve national economic and policy objectives. At the federal level, higher education policymaking occurs in several ways in the United States. The primary avenues for federal policymaking occur through legislation passed by Congress and the rulemaking process within the U.S. Department of Education (Cook, 1998; Natow, 2015; Parsons, 1997). Congress has enacted key legislation that has expanded the federal government's role in higher education policy, notably with the passing of the Morrill Land-Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890, which provided significant funding for what became large public universities, the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which provided funding for and national priority of STEM training and expertise, and the authorization and subsequent reauthorizations of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which most notably created and expanded the student financial aid programs, including need-based Pell Grants and government subsidized student loans. While it has received less attention than the activities of Congress, rulemaking represents another important arena for federal policymaking (Natow, 2015). It refers to the process used by federal agencies, primarily the Department of Education in our case, to promulgate rules and regulations for the legislation passed by Congress. In recent years, higher education interest groups have been active in the rulemaking

process, which has had important implications for student financial aid, sexual misconduct policies, and accreditation. In addition, federal policymaking occurs through presidential executive orders. For example, President Donald Trump signed an executive order related to free speech, transparency, and accountability at colleges and universities in 2019.

A host of policy actors jockey for influence in the different arenas of the federal policymaking process. To understand the politics of higher education policymaking, it is crucial to understand who these actors are and how they create and shape policies in different policymaking environments. The primary governmental actors include Congress,² the White House, the staff of the Department of Education, the federal courts, and other federal and funding agencies (Cook, 1998; Murray, 1976). Non-governmental actors also exert immense influence over the policy process. In higher education, non-governmental policy actors have included the media and different education interest groups, such as the various and growing number of institutional-based higher education associations, in-house lobbyists, contracted lobbyists, special interest groups, and foundations. Political parties, political consultants, and other interest groups may also have an indirect influence over higher education through lobbying for competing sectors or setting the policy agenda for politicians. Of the non-governmental policy actors, the coalition of institutional associations known as the “Big Six” are integral actors in federal policymaking (Bloland, 1985). The Big Six is led by the American Council on Education (ACE), which serves as the umbrella association that has long been a leading voice for the higher education sector. Yet, because the higher education sector is so diverse, five other associations in this coalition represent a subset of institutions to better advocate for their distinct missions: (1) Association of American Universities (AAU), which represents 62 of the most research-intensive public and private universities; (2) the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU),³ an advocacy association representing 241 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations; (3) the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), which represents more than 1000 private, nonprofit higher education institutions; (4) the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), which represents more than 400 public college and university members; and (5) the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the primary association that represents nearly 1200 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions.

Because national level policies attracted much of the attention of policy scholars prior to the 1980s, a rich collection of literature about the position of interest groups in federal higher education policymaking has emerged (Bailey, 1975; Bloland, 1969, 1985; Cook, 1998; de Figueiredo & Silverman, 2006; Murray, 1976; Natow, 2015; Parsons, 1997). Myriad scholars have developed schema to describe interest

²In this context, Congress refers to the chambers as well as the congressional committees and subcommittees that most often deal with colleges and universities (See: Cook, 1998).

³In 2009, the organization changed its name from the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) to APLU.

group activity in the federal policymaking arena (Cook, 1998; Finn, 1980; King, 1975; Murray, 1976; Parsons, 1997). King (1975) provided one of the earliest descriptions of interest groups, sorting the associations in a hierarchy by major associations (later classified as the “Big Six”), special interest or satellite associations, and individual offices and small associations. Murray (1976) reframed King’s hierarchal classification system of federal interest groups as a system of interconnected clusters of core, satellite, and peripheral lobbies. The core lobby was composed of the “Big Six” associations; the satellite lobbies included graduate program and religious associations such as the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States (CGs), the Association of American Medical Schools (AAMC), and the National Catholic Education Association; and the peripheral lobby was made up of individual institutions or systems, small associations, and discipline organizations. Yet, other scholars have characterized education interest activity along the lines of political ideology or “liberal consensus” (Bailey, 1975; Finn, 1980). Parsons (1997) provided a thorough review of how the scholarship about classification systems of the federal higher education community has evolved.

To date, Cook’s (1998) description of federal lobbying in the 1990s provides the most in-depth description of education interest groups, including a figure that identifies the inter-connections of the policy actors in the Washington higher education community. While many institutions have long relied on representation from the Big Six, one significant development that Cook highlights is the rise of Washington, D.C.-based campus lobbyists. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the number of U.S. colleges with their own lobbyist rose as institutions sought representation on issues that the associations failed to address. Certainly, earmarks served as an important catalyst in the growth of federal relations staff at institutions (Cook, 1998; McMillen, 2010).⁴ Between 1998 and 2008, earmark spending for higher education, primarily in the form of academic research grants, increased from \$528 million to \$2.25 billion, (Brainard & Hermes, 2008, March 28).

Considering the substantial amount of money spent and the influence of money in politics, relatively few scholars have studied the role of lobbying expenditures in federal policymaking (Cook, 1998; de Figueiredo & Silverman, 2006; Ferrin, 2003, 2005; Hannah, 1996; Marsciano, 2019; Parsons, 1997). This is somewhat surprising considering the amount of money higher education interest groups spend on lobbying each year. Over the past two decades, for example, education interest groups have spent more than \$2 billion lobbying Congress, with private non-profit and public institutions spending nearly \$1.3 billion collectively (Marsciano, 2019). Aligning with concerns of the media and some policymakers, private for-profit institutions have also been among the biggest spenders in lobbying efforts at the federal level, though the \$183 million spent between 1998 and 2017 paled in

⁴Earmarking is the practice of allocating federal funds to a specific project, program, or institution without using the traditional grant-making process. Earmarks were often viewed as a way for individual legislators to include allocations for local projects. The practice of Congressional earmarks was temporarily banned by the House of Representatives in 2011 after the Republican Party gained a majority. The ban was lifted in 2021 under a Democratic Party majority.

comparison to the money spent by non-profit institutions. In addition to descriptive efforts, a limited number of researchers have employed panel data designs to better understand the influence of policy actors in federal policymaking. Examining the returns of lobbying to universities relative to academic earmarks, de Figueiredo and Silverman (2006) employed ordinary-least-squares (OLS) and instrumental variable designs and found that the amount of earmark funding an institution received was determined by the university's lobbying efforts, political representation, and characteristics.

Interest group activity has evolved in the federal policymaking arena as the federal government has assumed a heightened role in higher education through legislation, court decisions, and significant funding for academic research. Much of the literature in the federal context has focused on describing the policymaking environment and the key actors. This tradition of scholarship has mapped out the federal policymaking community and the critical policy actors. More recently, scholars have attempted to understand how and to what effect lobbying has on federal policymaking using more sophisticated statistical techniques. Throughout the literature, the Big Six associations, unions, public and private non-profit institutions (in-house and hired guns), and private for-profit institutions have been identified as the key interest groups in the federal context. In light of these developments, interest group activity in higher education at the federal level remains understudied. In Table 15.1, we present a selection of interest groups that are active in national and state higher education policy discussions. Two important caveats relate to the absence of lobbying by institutions and governing boards as well as the potential overlap between the categories given the United States' complicated tax code as it relates to nonprofit organizations. Further, many of these national organizations are active in state policymaking (e.g., Complete College Georgia).

The Landscape of Interest Group Activity in State Higher Education Policymaking

The states occupy an important space in higher education, generally responsible for governing and funding public education. Although many states are funding a smaller proportion of institutions' total budgets, the past few decades have paid witness to the states' growing influence in shaping higher education policy (McLendon, 2003a). States have employed myriad approaches to control the rising costs of higher education, lower the debt assumed by students, and improve student outcomes. For example, state policymakers have pursued several tuition innovations, such as tuition guarantee programs ("Fixed-For-Four"), block-rate tuition ("15 to Finish" or "Finish-in-Four models"), tuition caps/freezes and other limitations on annual tuition increases, and 529 plans (prepaid tuition plans and saving plans) (Delaney et al., 2016; Deming & Walters, 2017; Harnisch, 2014). Many states have instituted, or at least considered, numerous governance reforms to reorganize the

Table 15.1 Selected interest groups in U.S. Higher Education

Description	National	State
Institutional Membership Organization	American Council on Education (ACE) Association of American Universities (AAU) Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) Association of American Medical Schools (AAMC) Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCFF) Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO)	Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (TASFCAA) Ohio Association for Institutional Research and Planning (OAIIRP) Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities (OAIICU)
Faculty/Employee Union and Association Federations	American Association of University Professors (AAUP) National Education Association (NEA) American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Service Employees International Union (SEIU)	New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) California Faculty Association (CFA) Alabama Education Association (AEA)
Student Unions, Associations, Federations	United States Student Association (USSA)	California State Student Association (CSSA) Florida Student Association (FSA)
Business Interfaces	Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEFF) Business Roundtable (BRT) The Business Council U.S. Chamber of Commerce	Texas Association of Business (TAB) Georgia Chamber of Commerce

(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

Description	National	State
Think Tank/Policy Research Organizations	Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) RAND Corporation Education Commission of the States (ECS) Education Advisory Board (EAB) American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)	John Locke Foundation (NC) Freedom Foundation (WA) Texas Public Policy Foundation (TX)
Private or Non-governmental Foundations	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Charles Koch Foundation Lumina Foundation Kresge Foundation	Belk Foundation (NC) Woodruff Foundation (GA) The Greater Texas Foundation (TX)
Formal State, Regional, and Institutional Collaboration	National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Strong Start to Finish (SSTF) Complete College America (CCA) Education Commission of the States (ECS) Oklahoma’s Course Equivalency Project (CEP)	

governance structure over the past 50 years (McLendon, 2003b). In many states, policymakers have also considered accountability reforms like performance-based funding. Further, state policymakers have considered policies related to state-funded financial aid. Beginning in the early 1990s, an increasing number of states enacted financial aid programs that distributed aid on the basis of academic merit, most notably with Georgia’s HOPE scholarship (Cornwell et al., 2006; Ness, 2010; Zhang & Ness, 2010). Social issues have captured the attention of the public, media, and state policymakers. These have included policies related to LGBTQ and undocumented student populations, freedom of expression, affirmative action, and sexual misconduct on campus. These different policy issues have important implications for students and families, colleges and universities, and the economic longevity of the state. Naturally, there are a plethora of policy actors maneuvering to influence the policy process in their favor.

While the issues detailed above are framed in a broad sense, we must acknowledge that states employ different approaches to these different issues. Significant variation exists in the political, socio-economic, and demographic makeup of a state as well as how each state organizes its respective higher education system. The differences between the states make them ripe for research and cross-state analysis. In this section, we describe interest group activity in the state context, considering the

policy actors and the structures in which they operate. Next, we briefly describe a recent framework developed specifically to understand state-level interest group activity for higher education (Ness et al., 2015). This includes a description of the key interest groups and the “the lobbying tactics and strategies that they employ” (Ness et al., 2015, p. 161). We end the section with a review of the scholarly literature that addresses states’ interest group activity.

Interest Group Activity in State Policymaking for Higher Education

The literature related to conceptualizing interest group activity in state higher education policymaking is growing but remains underdeveloped. Drawing upon the state politics and interest group research as well as borrowing from national-level interest group theories, Ness et al. (2015) developed a comprehensive conceptual framework to better understand how interest groups influence higher education policy outcomes. The conceptual framework is made up of nested layers: state political/social/economic/demographic characteristics (outer layer), interest group ecology (middle layer), and higher education interest group landscape (inner layer). The outer layer refers to the contextual factors that influence interest group activity and policy outcomes. Borrowing from political science, higher education scholars have noted that there are numerous political factors that influence higher education policy outcomes, including the interest group climate in a state as well as the higher education demography (e.g., enrollment trends and percent of college-age population), socioeconomic climates (e.g., educational attainment rates, state GDP, and unemployment), political culture and ideology, legislative organization and membership, gubernatorial influence, and party strength and control of government branches (McLendon & Hearn, 2007; Ness et al., 2015). The middle layer, state interest group ecology, refers to the density and diversity of interest groups in a state, situating higher education interest group activity within the broader interest group activity in the state. Central to the framework, the inner layer describes the landscape of higher education interest groups and the strategies and tactics employed by obvious and less obvious actors (Fig. 15.1).

In the remainder of this section, we review the state-of-the-art literature on interest group activity in state higher education policymaking. We pay special attention to the literature that has emerged over the past decade or so. It should be acknowledged that the literature discussed is certainly not inclusive of all state-level studies on interest groups in higher education. For a more comprehensive review of the literature on interest group activity in state policymaking, see Ness et al. (2015). This literature review largely serves as an update to their extensive review of the literature and conceptualization of interest group activity.

Broadly speaking, research about state-level politics and interest group activity has lagged behind national-level politics in the policy process, drawing the ire of

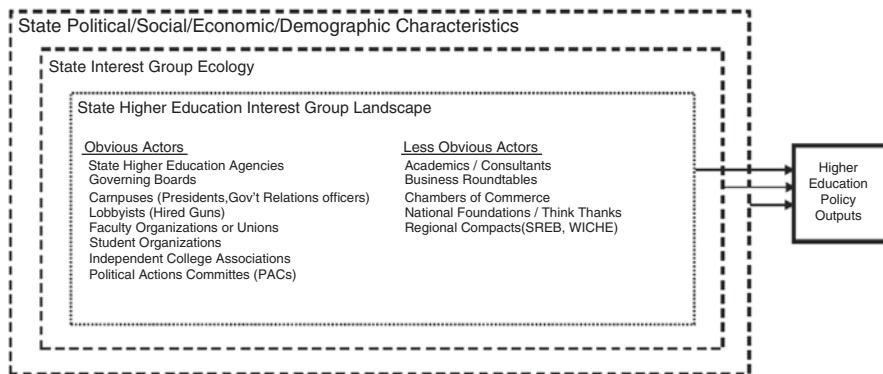


Fig. 15.1 State interest group framework. (This figure originally appeared as Figure 4.1 on page 157 in Ness et al. (2015))

myriad policy scholars (Arnold, 1982). However, a steady stream of literature about interest group activity in state higher education has emerged over the past couple decades (Hearn et al., 2017). Generally, two approaches have been used when studying interest group activity in higher education. The first approach has featured interest groups as the focus of the study. These scholars emphasize a specific interest group or coalition of groups and consider how these groups mobilize and organize, as well as the strategies of their lobbyists and their role in the policymaking process. Other scholars have positioned interest group activity within the state’s broader political context, hoping to illuminate “the relationship between state political characteristics and certain policy outcomes” (Ness et al., 2015, p. 153). Scholars have primarily employed qualitative approaches (namely, descriptive and case studies) to better understand the role of interest groups in state higher education policymaking. However, the past decade has witnessed the rise of scholars using panel data in an attempt to quantify how interest groups influence policy outcomes in higher education.

Early analyses of interest group activity in higher education at the state level were descriptive in nature (Ferrin, 2003, 2005; Goodall, 1987; Murray, 1976). Although his primary focus was at the federal level, Murray (1976) briefly discussed how state higher education systems acted as an “internal lobby,” a lobby that pressured policymakers to support their interests. In addition to the power of state agencies, Murray maintained that flagship and land-grant institutions wield significant power in state policymaking. Outside of institutional actors, Murray found that organizations like the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and National Governor’s Association (NGA) shaped higher education policy in states via policy reports and policy recommendations. Goodall’s (1987) edited volume, *When Colleges Lobby States*, represented the first comprehensive descriptive work on interest group activity at the state level. The volume addressed numerous topics that remain relevant today, including how lobbying interplays with state constitutions, the executive branch, and the legislature as well as budget and planning policies.

Ferrin (2003) used surveys with university presidents and campus-based lobbyists to describe the characteristics and backgrounds of in-house lobbyists. Following up on his 2003 study, Ferrin (2005) found that campus-based lobbyists employed different strategies than other sectors such as the health or gun lobbies. The descriptive research on interest group activity in state higher education policymaking highlighted who the key actors were and their general lobbying activities and strategies. Ness et al. (2015) argued one weakness of the early descriptive work on interest group activity was that there had “been few efforts to systematically collect and analyze data for the purpose of examining, testing, elaborating or revising theories, or even hypotheses, on the possible impacts of lobbyists and lobbying in state policy formation for higher education” (p. 154).

There has been significant progress in producing empirical analysis over the past two decades. Numerous scholars have used case studies to conceptualize interest group activity in state higher education policymaking. Several of them have used interviews to focus on the broader influences of interest groups in higher education, particularly regarding how interest groups form coalitions and alliances to influence policy outcomes (De Give, 1996; De Give & Olswang, 1999; Harnisch, 2016; Tandberg, 2006). De Give and Olswang (1999) developed a conceptual model to explain the policy process around Washington state’s decision to create a branch campus system. The authors depict how different actors, such as campus and system leaders, legislators, state agency personnel, and powerful business and civic community groups employed coalition-building strategies to mobilize and advocate for shared policy interests. In an analysis of alliance formation in a large mid-Atlantic state, Tandberg (2006) contended that structural and environmental factors influenced the degree to which institutions formed alliances. These factors included the characteristics of the institution (e.g., size), the distribution of power within the legislature, and the level of autonomy public institutions possessed. Tandberg (2006) found that “alliances appear to have the potential to increase the influence institutions have on the political process” (p. 46). Harnisch (2016) used interviews with policymakers in Virginia and Michigan to examine business-led advocacy coalitions and found that economic instability facilitated their development. These coalitions pushed a policy agenda tied to economic and workforce growth, increased public awareness for higher education, and advocated with state lawmakers. Blackwell and Cistone (1999) surveyed government and campus leaders in Florida to understand the relative power and influence of different policy actors in higher education policy. Legislators, key legislative staff consultants, the chancellor of the state system of higher education, and the board of regents were found to be the most influential actors, while the least influential actors were faculty and student interest groups and education research organizations (Blackwell & Cistone, 1999).

Scholars have included interest groups as a part of a broader examination of the political dynamics of state higher education policymaking in numerous case studies over the past few decades. Some of these studies have focused on a single state, with prominent examples including analyses about the “manifest and latent tensions” related to a policy that limited out-of-state student enrollment in North Carolina (Frost et al., 1997) and the restrained role of in-house lobbyists in the formulation

of higher education policy in Pennsylvania (Sabloff, 1997). Over the past decade, multi-state case study analyses have emerged. Notable examples include Dougherty et al.'s (2010) study on the politics of in-state tuition eligibility for undocumented students in Texas and Arizona, and an examination of the political origins of performance-based funding in eight states (Dougherty et al., 2014a) where the scholars briefly discuss the role of interest groups in competing advocacy coalitions. Further, in a three-state case study, Ness (2010) examined the influence of Tennessee's private college lobby, New Mexico's casino gaming industry, and West Virginia's video-poker machine owners in determining the eligibility criteria for merit-based scholarships in each state.

Over the past decade, scholars have increasingly employed panel data sets to analyze interest group activity across all 50 states. There has been a general consensus that interest group activity is an important influence in state higher education policy, often finding a positive effect on state appropriations (McLendon et al., 2009; Tandberg, 2010b) and capital spending (Ness & Tandberg, 2013; Tandberg & Ness, 2011). In several studies, Tandberg (2008, 2010a, b) developed a set of indicators to empirically examine how different characteristics of his fiscal policy framework affected higher education appropriation decisions in all 50 states. A central component of his framework was interest group activity, which was measured by the higher education interest ratio and interest group density in the state. Tandberg's (2010a, b) findings indicate that "as the higher education lobby increases in number relative the rest to the state lobby, the state tends to increase its support for public higher education relative to their available tax base" (Tandberg, 2010a, p. 760). Distinguishing itself from previous panel data analyses that focused exclusively on general appropriations, Ness and Tandberg (2013) built on their previous study (Tandberg & Ness, 2011) that demonstrated the positive effect interest group activity had on capital expenditures, and determined that interest group activity had a larger effect on capital spending than on appropriations. Moreover, Brackett (2016) conducted a panel data study on 534 two- and four-year colleges in 15 states over a 10-year period. Brackett found that institutional lobbying increased by 80% in real terms over the period, while noting that research universities spent, on average, 10 times more on lobbying than community colleges, and, perhaps most importantly, institutional lobbying did not have a statistically significant relationship with state appropriations. More recently, drawing upon Gray and Lowery's (1996b) Energy-Stability-Area (ESA) model, Tandberg and Wright-Kim (2019) examined the relationship between higher education interest group density and the economic, demographic, political, and policy conditions of states. They found that a variety of factors influence the density of higher education interest groups in a state, including unemployment as well as the presence of a Republican governor and a centralized governing board. Tandberg and Wright-Kim (2019) observed that the direction of influence of these factors may diverge from the overall interest group density because of higher education's unique context in state politics. Taken together, these studies suggest that the effect interest groups have on state higher education policy-making varies by policy and the context of the state.

Several emerging topical, theoretical, and methodological trends have emerged in the scholarly literature. Myriad studies have focused on the growing role intermediary organizations (Gándara & Ness, 2019; Gandara et al., 2017; Ness & Gándara, 2014; Ness et al., 2018; Orphan et al., 2021) and foundations (Haddad, 2021; Haddad & Reckhow, 2018) play in the policymaking process. Haddad (2021) used network analysis and interviews to examine advocacy philanthropy practices at 15 foundations that provide significant grants to institutions and systems. Moreover, scholars have increasingly included interest group activity in conceptualizations of state policymaking (Hearn & Ness, 2017; McLendon & Hearn, 2007; Tandberg, 2008). Indeed, one can take comfort in the significant progress made toward better understanding how interest groups develop, organize, and influence state higher education policymaking. However, much remains unclear or unknown about how these actors behave in different contexts and the level of influence they hold in various policy settings.

Cloaked in Darkness: Alabama Association for Higher Education

In addition to traditional lobbying efforts to sustain state allocation levels, an emerging strategy in K-12 and higher education has been the use of “dark money” in state and local politics. Dark money “refers to political spending meant to influence the decision of a voter, where the donor is not disclosed and the source of the money is unknown” (Center for Responsive Politics, 2018a, para. 1). The near-exponential rise of dark money in American politics and higher education can be traced back to the U.S. Supreme Court’s decisions in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and the *SpeechNow.org v. Federal Election Commission*. In short, the two landmark decisions enabled corporations, unions, and individuals to contribute an unlimited amount of money to political organizations with nonprofit status, as long as those organizations abstained from coordinating with campaigns or with the candidate. Independent expenditure-only committees, better known as super political action committees (PACs), and dark money groups have grown in prominence in federal and state political campaign finance as a result. Super PACs, which are required to disclose donor contributions, have been a significant part of the historic rise in political spending by outside groups each election cycle (Center for Responsive Politics, 2018b). This disclosure has been a concern for some benefactors hoping to conceal their financial influence in politics from the public. *Citizens* and *SpeechNow* also allowed for the source and contribution amount to remain undisclosed to the public if the donation was made to 501(c)(4), 501(c)(5), or 501(c)

(6) nonprofit organizations (Center for Responsive Politics, 2018a).⁵ These nonprofit organizations are supposed to serve primarily as social welfare organizations under Federal Election Commission (FEC) guidelines, which have been interpreted by these organizations to mean that no more than 49% of expenditures can be used for political advocacy. On the other hand, 501(c)(3) organizations (e.g., charities, universities, and hospitals) are supposed to be barred from any politicking.

Much of the attention around dark money has been positioned in a federal context, but it has arguably had more influence at the state level. For example, Kansas, North Carolina, and Arizona have all experienced the influence of dark money as corporate interests lobby and support state legislators enacting a pro-business, limited government agenda (Keefe, 2018; Llopis-Jepsen, 2017; Mayer, 2016; Saul, 2018). However, some media and scholarly reports have depicted how colleges and universities have employed a strategy of using dark money to directly influence state lawmakers through political contributions.

To that end, this vignette provides a glimpse of the activities of the Alabama Association of Higher Education (AAFHE). As Sheets (2016, August 7) first reported, the AAFHE was a dark money organization with strong connections to the University of Alabama (UA) System, which made campaign contributions to powerful lawmakers in Alabama via a PAC. Sheets (2016, August 7) reported that these contributions were made primarily to influence deliberations about the recession-stricken Education Trust Fund, the source of state-level funds for education in Alabama. We include this case to highlight an example of a unique and direct political strategy used by institutions in Alabama—primarily the UA System—to increase state support for higher education. This vignette extends Sheets' reporting and previews the early activities of the AAFHE and the intricately connected Innovation PAC.

Sweet Home Alabama: Political and Governance Characteristics

There are 40 public nonprofit colleges in Alabama, which includes 14 public 4-year institutions and 26 public 2-year colleges. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) is the coordinating agency for four-year public postsecondary education, while the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) oversees the management of community, junior, and technical colleges. The ACHE has a relatively limited role in managing the state's postsecondary institutions. At the four-year level, most power resides in the institution-level boards of trustees, which is perhaps best observed through the proportion of state allocations these boards receive relative to the ACHE (Alabama Legislative Services Agency, 2019). In 2017, public 4-year institutions in Alabama enrolled roughly 150,000 students. The

⁵For clarity, 501(c)(4) organizations include civil leagues, social welfare organizations, and community associations; 501(c)(5) organizations include labor and agricultural organizations; and 501(c)(6) organizations include trade associations, business leagues, and chambers of commerce. Dark money groups are generally classified as 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(6) organizations.

two largest public university systems in the state, University of Alabama System and the Auburn University System, enroll 40% and 21%, respectively, of all students attending four-year public colleges. Together, they enrolled 45% of the approximately 200,000 students enrolled at public colleges in 2017. The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), home to the state's largest medical school, represents the only institution in Alabama with a Carnegie classification of Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity.

Democrats historically held unified control of the state legislature until 2011 when control of the state government changed parties and the state became unified under Republican control. State politicians work within a complex political system, dominated by interest groups. Newmark and Nownes (2018) note a moderate number of interest groups (600–999) active in Alabama, while Thomas and Hrebener (2004) described the interest group power in Alabama as dominant, which indicates interest groups have an “overwhelming and consistent influence on the policy-making process” (Thomas & Hrebener, 2004, p. 121). Examples of interest groups in the state are the Alabama Education Association (AEA), the Alabama Power Company, the Alabama Farmer's Federation, and the Business Council of Alabama. Additionally, the Higher Education Partnership of Alabama, the Alabama Association of Colleges and Employers, and the Alabama Association of Higher Education Officers represent a few of the higher education interest groups in the state.

The AEA, which serves as the professional association representing public educators in Alabama, was long considered the most powerful interest group in the state under the guidance of Dr. Paul Hubbert. A long-time lobbyist and executive of AEA, Hubbert played a pivotal role in guiding education policy in Alabama by funding Democratic campaigns and lobbying state politicians. His retirement in 2014, along with a shift in political power in the state legislature, had important implications for education policy and the power of the AEA. The now-unified Republican government passed legislation that banned automatic check-off dues for associations representing public employees. As a result, the AEA was no longer guaranteed its largest source of revenue. Additionally, despite AEA and AEA-connected PACs contributing millions to political firms and campaigns during the 2014 election cycle, fewer than 10 AEA-supported candidates won their elections (Lyman, 2014, July 09). Since then, the AEA has ended its practice of making direct political contributions to candidates and shifted its focus to policy advocacy.

Education funding has been the central policy posture for higher education institutions in Alabama. The state has a few distinct characteristics of education funding. First, Alabama is one of three states to have a separate budget for general appropriations and education. All state money provided to public P-20 institutions in Alabama originates from the Education Trust Fund (ETF), which largely operates using the revenue from the state's income tax and sales tax (Arise Citizens' Policy Project, 2015; Perez, 2008). Second, because income and sales tax revenues often signal the health of an economy, the ETF's financial stability tends to mirror the health of the state's economy. Even so, the Alabama State Legislature has historically possessed relatively little budgetary discretion regarding revenue generated from state taxes,

which leads to the third characteristic: earmarks. On average, the proportion of state tax revenue earmarked by state legislatures in 2005 was about 25% (Perez, 2008). In that same year, 84% of Alabama's state tax revenue was earmarked, which far exceeded every state in the U.S.

The economic downturn following the Great Recession strained the state's budget and funding for education. In the two fiscal years (FY) preceding the recession (FY07 and FY08), ETF expenditures exceeded \$8 billion after adjusting for inflation (Crain, 2019, May 28). Between FY09 and FY18, ETF expenditures ranged from \$5.95 billion to \$6.97 billion, bottoming out in FY13 (Crain, 2019, May 28). The drastic reduction in revenue forced lawmakers into transferring funds—\$437 million in total—from the Alabama Trust Fund, the state's rainy-day fund based on oil and gas royalties, to offset the effects of the economic downturn. Expenditures from the ETF have slowly recovered over the past decade.

Data

The realization of transparency policies targeting campaign finance and public agency spending that occurred in Alabama around 2010 provided an opportunity to illuminate how political nonprofit organizations operate. Building on Sheets' (2016) dark money exposé, we collected data from a combination of news articles, the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, and online, publicly available databases.⁶ We began by collecting the Alabama Association for Higher Education's (AAFHE) annual Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990 available on the IRS and ProPublica's websites. This form contains information about the activities of nonprofit organizations, including revenue, expenses, other financial information (assets and liabilities), the board members, consultants, and whether the organization made direct or indirect political contributions. We identified board members as well as determined when the AAFHE was established and eventually halted operations. With this information, we first followed the money out of the AAFHE to determine where political contributions were made.

We collected the AAFHE and other relevant organizations' political contributions using the Alabama Electronic Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA) Reporting System and the Alabama Ethics Commission website. This state-level reporting system provides extensive information about campaign finance in Alabama, including a searchable and downloadable database for contributions, expenditures, and filings for PACs. Knowing when the AAFHE made political contributions, we used the FCPA Reporting System to track the flow of money from the AAFHE to several PACs, and from these PACs to political campaigns. Due to the absence of disclosure requirements for political nonprofit organizations, determining who made the contributions to the AAFHE proved a greater challenge. Sheets (2016, August 7)

⁶ Authors are willing to share data upon request.

provided one solution in his article: public universities and colleges' expenditures databases. Because of transparency laws passed in Alabama, public agencies are required to publicize any expenditures. Through these expenditures databases, we have confidently identified the UA System's contributions to the AAFHE. We have less confidence in other public institutions because of naming conventions in the institutional databases.

The Case

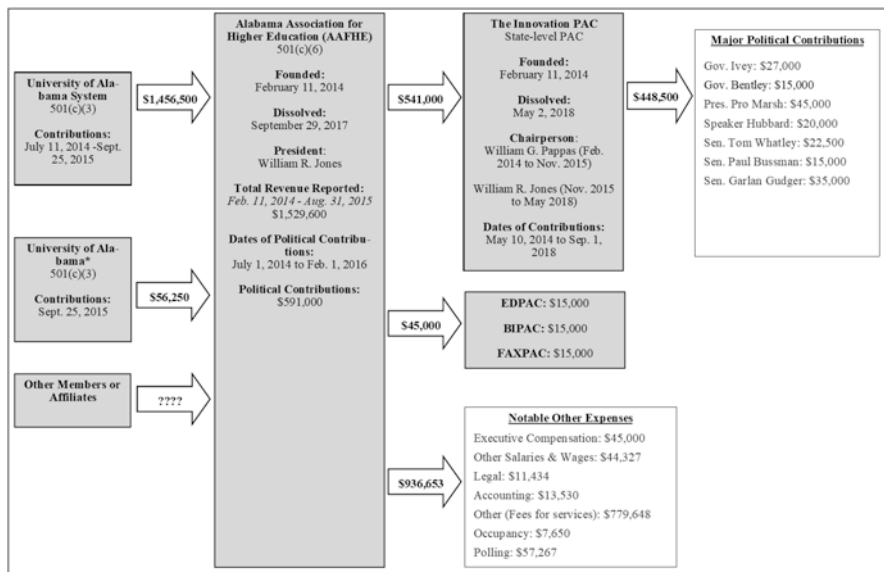
The Alabama Association for Higher Education (AAFHE) was established as a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization in early 2014 and terminated operations in fall 2017. The AAFHE was created "for the purpose of promoting the common business interests of all nonprofit institutions of higher learning in the state of Alabama along with their respective affiliated organizations in the health care, research and service sectors" (Internal Revenue Service, 2013–2017, p. 1). The AAFHE accompanied the more traditional state-level institutional association, the Higher Education Partnership, which was created in 1997 as a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization to advocate for four-year public colleges in higher education and host the annual Higher Education Day at the state capitol. This analysis focuses on the factors that led to the founding of the AAFHE, who was behind its founding, and AAFHE's benefactors and beneficiaries when the organization made political contributions. Figure 15.2 provides a conceptual model of how the AAFHE received money from the UA System and how AAFHE donated it to a closely connected PAC, which in turn donated to key political figures in the state.

Factors Several factors led to the creation of the AAFHE, from the decreasing political influence of Alabama's leading interest group for education to the tightening of budgets and the reduction of state appropriations to higher education. According to Kelle Reinhart, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Communications and Community Relations of the UA System, the AAFHE's purpose was to acquire and maintain funding for nonprofit institutions in Alabama:

In the aftermath of recent turmoil surrounding the Alabama Education Association and repeated efforts in the past few years by some state leaders to take money from education to spend on other state services, AAFHE was founded to promote the interests of all non-profit higher education institutions and their affiliates, including the protection of the Education Trust Fund from further raids. (as cited in Sheets, 2016, August 7, para. 24)

The demise of the AEA's political influence created a political vacuum in Alabama and the AAFHE filled this void in an effort to protect its interests, primarily state appropriations.

The AAFHE and UA System Leadership: One and the Same While the AAFHE declared itself as a membership organization representing the interests of all nonprofit institutions in Alabama, many of the AAFHE's officers were former or current



Source: Alabama Electronic Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA) Reporting System, Open UA Expenditures, IRS/ProPublica

Notes: This diagram focuses on the political contributions of the AAFHE and its activities between February 2014 and February 2016. As such, important organizational activities that occurred after the AAFHE ended its practice of making explicit political contributions are not addressed (e.g., consultants).

The AAFHE's fiscal year starts on September 1 and the UA System and its institutions' fiscal year begins on October 1. While there are discrepancies between the fiscal years, we include institutional contributions made in September 2015 because we believe this was an intentional strategy to blur connections between the UA System and the AAFHE.

*The ALABAMA ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER CORP was used in the database. This has not been confirmed with the University of Alabama. The organization name, the amount of contribution, and the date of contribution have similarities with the UA System's donations. There is a small chance it belongs to another organization, though the Alabama Association for Higher Education in Business, another interest group with a similar name that appeared in the database, received \$400 from the University of Alabama between 2014 and 2016.

Fig. 15.2 AAFHE's political contributions: follow-the-money diagram

employees of the UA System. As Sheets (2016, August 7) reported and according to the AAFHE's inaugural tax exemption (990) form, William (Bill) Jones, former Director of Government Relations for the UA system, served as the president, Charles E. Adair as the vice-president, and Dr. Robert E. Witt as the secretary/treasurer. Jones and Adair served in their respective roles throughout the organization's existence (2014–2017), while the secretary/treasurer role was also filled by Cooper Shattuck, former general counsel for the UA system from 2012 to 2016 (WBRC Staff, 2016, December 1), and Thomas W. Moore Jr. in subsequent filings. The connection to the UA System is perhaps most pronounced with Dr. Witt, who served as president of the University of Alabama (2003–2012) and chancellor of the UA System (2012–2016).

The “Early” Benefactors of the AAFHE: The UA System The UA System was the principal benefactor of the AAFHE, especially during the first 2 years of the organization's existence. Between February 2014 and August 2015, the AAFHE reported that it received about \$1.53 million in membership dues on its IRS filings, which represented the only source of revenue for the organization. According to the UA System's public expenditure database, the AAFHE received \$1.46 million from

the UA System between July 2014 and September 2015.⁷ When one includes the month of September, more than 95% of the total revenue received by the AAFHE in its first 2 years was contributed by the UA System. There is evidence to suggest that the University of Alabama made three \$18,750 donations on September 25, 2015—the last Friday before the fiscal year ended. Thus far, we have been not been able to confidently track down other due paying members or public institutions making substantial donations (<\$800) to the AAFHE, which is perhaps to be expected as it is consisted with dark money group strategies. While the UA System remained the primary benefactor to AAFHE, the proportion of membership dues paid by the system dropped significantly over time from 95% in the first 2 years to a little more than 50% when AAFHE folded in 2017.

The “Early” Beneficiaries of the AAFHE: The Innovation PAC Between July 2014 and January 2016, the AAFHE donated \$586,000 to four PACs. The AAFHE contributed \$541,000 to the Innovation PAC and \$15,000 to three other education PACs: BIPAC, EDPAC, and FAXPAC. BIPAC, EDPAC, and FAXPAC were established in 1990 by Fine, Geddie and Associates, an influential state lobbying firm, to promote business and education causes.⁸ While these PACs received contributions from other associations, Innovation PAC received all the revenue it ever received from the AAFHE. The Innovation PAC was founded as a state-level PAC “to support candidates committed to good government” (The Innovation PAC, 2014, April 08). According to campaign filings, it was founded by William G. Pappas in April 2014 and dissolved in May 2018. Pappas served as the chairperson and treasurer of the organization until November 2015. At that point, William Jones, the president of the AAFHE, became the chairperson and treasurer—posts he held until the PAC dissolved.

To fulfill its purpose, the Innovation PAC made contributions to politicians’ campaigns between May 2014 and May 2018. Rather than making one-time contributions to novice politicians, the Innovation PAC contributed to seasoned politicians in senior positions. For example, Del Marsh, the President Pro Tempore of the Alabama State Senate, received \$45,000 in donations from the Innovation PAC. Governor Kay E. Ivey received \$27,000 from the organization, which also contributed \$20,000 to then-Speaker of the House Michael Hubbard, who has since been convicted and sentenced for campaign and ethics violations. Before Ivey assumed the governorship, the Innovation PAC contributed \$15,000 to then-Governor Robert Bentley, who was forced to resign after impeachment proceedings

⁷The AAFHE and the UA System have different fiscal years, which complicates matters. The AAFHE’s fiscal year starts on September 1 and the UA System’s fiscal year begins on October 1. Considering the spokesperson for the UA System was overly familiar with the AAFHE’s financial standing (Sheets, 2016, August 7), this may have been a strategy to blur political activities. Consequently, the proportion of revenue is difficult to pinpoint without knowing all due-paying members.

⁸The PACs listed here are the official organizational names, not acronyms. See this article for more information: <https://birminghamwatch.org/pacs-whos-behind-pacronyms/>

about an extramarital affair led a special counsel to campaign finance law violations. The Innovation PAC also targeted members of the standing committees responsible for education funding. Half of the 14 politicians who received at least \$10,000 from the Innovation PAC have served on the Senate's Finance and Taxation Education committee.

Significance

This brief descriptive account of the AAFHE provides several insights into interest group activity in higher education policymaking in the United States. First, the case represents one of the first publicly available cases of an institution employing a dark money strategy. The founding of the AAFHE also illustrates the willingness of institutions and stakeholders to adapt their lobbying and politicking strategies to current federal legal frameworks and in response to certain policy postures and political dynamics in the state.

Transparency was key to debates regarding the *Citizens* decision and was an integral component in this case too. Our analysis suggests that the UA System attempted to conceal political contributions through closely connected political nonprofit organizations and PACs. The case also demonstrates how dependent public institutions in Alabama are upon state resources, and the different strategies employed to mitigate reductions in state appropriations (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Our findings provide an additional perspective to Ferrin (2005), whose interview data showed that “in-house lobbyists generally would not even consider giving university funds for political campaign contributions” (p. 189). This belief is understandable as political contributions from public entities present ethical, legal, and practical challenges.

While the UA System and other nonprofit institutions in Alabama did not give directly to the campaign because their 501(c)(3) status forbids them from engaging in such activity, the UA System appears to have circumvented these guidelines through the AAFHE and the Innovation PAC. Indeed, there are both ethical and legal concerns with a 501(c)(3) organization using a dark money organization to funnel institutional resources to political campaigns, hoping to bring favorable outcomes to their stake in the Education Trust Fund. As the AEA learned after an unsuccessful 2014 political campaign, making direct contributions can also impact an organization's financial stability and future political standing. Further, political contributions by education stakeholders are not earmarked for favorable decisions, though Alabama would undoubtedly be the first state to try. Politicians will inevitably make controversial votes or decisions, which may open up associations and institutions to criticism.

Certainly, the inherent secrecy behind dark money organizations provides challenges in researching their effectiveness as an institutional strategy. This study offered a glimpse into the evolving nature of the politics of higher education and interest group activity. While political nonprofits have received more media and

scholarly attention in recent years, they continue to hold a periphery role in the grand scheme of campaign finance and interest group activity. Even so, our findings extend beyond political nonprofits' influence in higher education, with specific implications for how to study and discuss interest group activity in higher education policymaking.

Conclusion

Interest groups are an integral component of American higher education as this diverse set of organized interests jockey for influence on a slew of issues related to higher education at the state and federal levels, some directly and others indirectly. In recent years, intermediary organizations, foundations, and even political nonprofits have assumed heightened roles in higher education politics and policy discussions. However, relative to the role interest groups play in American higher education, publications concerning interest group activity in local, state, and federal higher education arenas are limited. There are a multitude of promising areas of study regarding interest groups, lobbying, and the influence of organized interests in state and federal policy debates as well as institutional practices. For example, future work should examine the causes and mechanisms of the increased activity by philanthropic foundations at state- and federal-levels (Haddad & Reckhow, 2018) and by “dark money” organizations, such as the Alabama case discussed above. These trends suggest that path dependence (Pierson, 2004; Thelen, 1999) could offer a conceptual explanation for what looks to be institutional change in U.S. higher education interest group activity and possibly in Canada and Western Europe too.

In this chapter, we examined a number of studies conceptualizing different facets of interest group activity in higher education in the United States. These scholars have used a variety of theoretical frameworks, methods, and data sources to partially fill the significant gap in research. The increased scholarly attention afforded to interest group activity in recent years is certainly an encouraging development in the quest to better understand the crucial role organized interests play in higher education.

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Chapter 16

Intermediary Organizations and Organized Interests in Higher Education Policymaking in Canada



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Abstract The Canadian post-secondary policy landscape consists of an array of multi-level and multi-actor organized interests, including both state and non-state actors organized at the national and sub-national level. This chapter contributes new insights through describing the features of intermediary organization and organized interests in both English and French Canada, describing in what capacity they participate in the policy formation process, and concludes with a characterization of these actors in this policy field. The Canadian context has features of both pluralist and corporatist interest group systems; the Quebec tradition of the *assises* illustrates a more corporatist tradition of participating in government policy making than found in other Canadian provinces.

Introduction

Canadian post-secondary policy formation, including agenda-setting, implementation, and evaluation, is undertaken by a complex array of multi-level and multi-actor organized interests, including both state and non-state actors. These interests are organized at the national and sub-national level, sometimes in multi- or trans-provincial bodies, or national networks, and, in some cases, connect to transnational interests. Organized interests at the federal and provincial level perform several key functions in the policy process: leveraging authority to activate or influence policy-making processes, articulating policy problems and options, and mobilizing information into the policymaking arena (Hillman et al., 2015).

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Canada's provinces have political autonomy on many matters under the Constitution including education; the federal provincial relationship on post-secondary education has been described as *soft federalism* (Fisher et al., 2006; Jones, 1996). Governments have developed a variety of mechanisms to convene policy interests, socialize policy problems and solutions, and mediate interest group representations.

Further, as a result of institutional arrangements, organized interests must gain policy attention from both cabinet members and members of the civil service in order to influence policy outcomes (Pal, 1997; Smith, 2005, 2014).

This paper undertakes a systematic review of the landscape of organized interests shaping post-secondary policy formation in Canada, giving attention to the publicly funded university and community college sector in Canada's 10 provinces. We seek to address the following three questions: (a) What are the features of the post-secondary intermediary organization and organized interest landscape in Canada? (b) In what capacity do they participate in policy formation process and are there observed changes over time? and (c) How can this array of functions and interests be characterized?

Canadian Organized Interests in the Literature

There is a relatively small body of knowledge on the nature, behaviour, and impact of Canadian organized interests, in the form of interest groups (often termed *pressure groups* in the Canadian literature (Pross, 1992; Young & Everitt, 2004)). Some interest groups interact with government through strategic action to influence policy directly; other interest groups have sought to cooperate or *puzzle through* policy problems with government to develop optimal policy (Montpetit, 2009). The choice of insider tactics or outsider tactics by interest groups has been found to be contingent upon a number of factors, including availability of group resources, nature of group membership, the degree of conflict over the policy issue, and issue salience (Gais & Walker, 1991).

Questions remain as to whether higher education policy change can be attributed to specific organized interests, the strategy or organizational features of a social movement, or the exogenous financial and political context of advocacy (Axelrod et al., 2012; Robbins-Kanter & Troup, 2018; Rexe, 2015). In the broader literature, Canadian interest groups have been found to have an influence on policymaking through the production of knowledge, and through lobbying, including strategically transmitting asymmetric information (Potters & Van Winden, 1992), political framing (Schaffner & Sellers, 2009), and supply of expert knowledge (Beyers & Braun, 2014). Pross (1992) found that the effectiveness of interest groups was contingent upon a politically salient group of characteristics, including characteristics of membership, tangible and intangible resources, and capacity in organizational structure and outputs, in addition to policy capacity. Montpetit (2009) found that some interest groups most likely to have their preferences adopted into government policy are those "that have the possibility to end their cooperation—to exit—at a cost to government" (p. 269). Other factors found to influence interest group effectiveness in

Canadian studies include the ability to mobilize resources, ideological alignment with the governing political party, capacity of the civil service or government agencies, access to policy-makers, expertise within the group, size and representativeness of the group, and public opinion (summarized by Young & Everitt, 2004).

Landscape of Higher Education Organized Interests – Intergovernmental Organizations within the Federation

Given the constitutional arrangements of Canada, coordination bodies have developed with features of intergovernmental organizations. These organizations are formed with signed agreements by state authority, have permanent secretariats, and support multilateral co-operation on a focused policy area; institutions of intergovernmental relations in Canada are observed to be “relatively ad hoc and under-institutionalized” (Cameron & Simeon, 2002, p. 50).

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

At a national level, CMEC is a voluntary national body created in 1967 by the provincial education ministers, providing a single framework for inter-provincial and territorial cooperation in all levels of education. CMEC is a moderately institutionalized and voluntary coordinating body, an instrument responding to the unique challenges of horizontal self-coordination and information exchange in the federation with a division of responsibilities between the federal and the provincial governments (Jungblut & Rexe, 2017). CMEC focuses on issues arising from members, however the largest four provinces tend to dominate agenda-setting and have closely coordinated policy positions, including resisting federal involvement in higher education and limiting policy coordination with the federal government (Hug, 2011). As a result, CMEC policy positions are a product not only of provincial political processes, but also of a national consensus across provinces and the political parties forming those governments. Significant past initiatives include the *CMEC Ministerial Statement on Credit Transfer* (2009) and the *CMEC Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* (2007).

Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET)

The only other intergovernmental organization focused substantively on education, this was established to support cooperation “by working on common issues to improve learning for all Atlantic Canadians, optimize efficiencies, and bring added value to provincial initiatives and priorities in public and post-secondary education”

(CAMET, n.d.). Through CAMET, the Council of Atlantic Premiers established an intermediary body for post-secondary education, the Maritime Higher Education Commission (MHEC).

Intermediary Bodies

Traditional Sub-National Intermediary Organizations

Most provincial governments in Canada have created coordinating mechanisms to manage increasingly complex arrangements associated with rapid growth and substantial changes to government-university relations. These were designed to provide advisory services to government on policy issues while supporting institutional autonomy (Jones, 2014; Rounce, 2013). These have shifted over the past few decades (Shanahan & Jones, 2007) and there have provincial and regional differences both in adoption and abandonment of university-sector intermediary bodies (Jones, 2014; Trick, 2015). With few exceptions, most provinces eliminated their traditional intermediary bodies: British Columbia (closed in 1987), Alberta (closed in 1973), Saskatchewan (closed in 1983), Manitoba (closed in 2014), Ontario (closed in 1996), Quebec (closed in 1993), and Nova Scotia (closed in 1996). The lone traditional intermediary that remains intact, MHEC, continues to provide policy advice and program approvals to Maritime provinces.

While originally designed to facilitate allocation of funds among institutions, collection of institutional data, formulation of academic master plans, approval of new programs, discontinuance of existing programs, review of institutional budgets, and the coordination of post-secondary institutions, these bodies were found to be ineffective in contributing long-term planning (Skolnik & Jones, 1992; Southern & Dennison, 1985). Canadian approaches to intermediary organizations have tended to reflect an ongoing preference for legislatures to assign limited advisory powers to standing bodies, and for a historical stance of non-intervention into areas of university autonomy (Jones, 2014). This is consistent with empirical evidence elsewhere, in that there is an association between decentralized decision authorities and individual campus autonomy (McGuinness, 2003; McLendon et al., 2005).

Specific-Purpose Sub-National Intermediary Bodies Traditional intermediary bodies have been replaced with specific-purpose intermediary bodies and direct governmental decision-making (Lafortune et al., 2016; Smith, 2015). Building on Tandberg's assessment of U.S. state-level higher education governance arrangements (Tandberg, 2013), there is evidence that these emergent intermediary bodies described here in the Canadian context function as boundary-spanning organizations in support of the some of the problems as the older, more traditional organizations also attempted to mediate. In examining the landscape of specific-purpose intermediary bodies, two major coordination themes emerge.

Degree Quality

Canada does not have a national accreditation or degree quality assurance mechanism, largely due to the decentralization of policy authorities to provincial governments, a strong history of institutional autonomy and sector self-regulation through its membership organization, and the lack of a compelling quality gap arising from current arrangements (Weinrib & Jones, 2014). As a result of increased demand for new programs and the emergence of new institutional types, almost all provinces have developed arms-length intermediary bodies responsible for the quality assurance process for approval and oversight of new degree programs (see Fig. 16.1). Other provinces rely to a greater extent on academic self-regulation in established universities, but have approval processes for new providers. For example, in Ontario, the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board reviews applications to offer degree programs or use of the term “university” from new providers including private institutions, public bodies, and Ontario colleges however those public universities established by legislation are exempt, using a self-regulated review process established by the university presidents, the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Goff, 2013).

Student Mobility: Transfer Credit

The Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT) was formed in 2006 to facilitate the voluntary implementation of policies and practices to support transfer credit and student mobility both within and among provinces and territories. In Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec, the college or CEGEP system was intentionally designed to provide clear university-transfer pathways (Skolnik, 2010). Other provinces have struggled to develop transfer credit systems; as of 2018, one half of all Canadian provinces have established public agencies to facilitate student mobility.

Organized Interests

Institutional Membership Organizations

With the exception of Saskatchewan, all provinces have formal institutional membership organizations focussed on the provincial policymaking (see Fig. 16.2), typically formed along institutional type. Unusually, British Columbia has three membership organizations representing research-intensive universities, institutes and teaching universities, and colleges, reflective of major institutional and system restructuring in the last two decades (Rexe, 2014).

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB NS PEI	NFLD
Intergovernmental Organizations	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) (1967)							
							Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) (1972, with NFLD added in 2004) Council of Atlantic Deputy Ministers of Education and Training (CADMET)	
Intermediary Organizations	<i>Degree Quality</i>	Degree Quality Assessment Board (2002)	Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (2012)		Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (2000) Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance (2010)	Commission d'évaluation des projets de programmes (1988)	Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (1974)	
	<i>Credit Transfer</i>	BCCAT - British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (1989)	ACAT - Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (2010)		Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) (2011)		CATNB - Council on Articulations and Transfer of New Brunswick (2010) NSCAT - Nova Scotia Council on Admission and Transfer (2016)	

Fig. 16.1 Intergovernmental and formal intermediary organizations in post-secondary education in Canada, by province, 2018 with date of establishment

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NFLD
Institutional Membership Organizations	Research Universities' Council of British Columbia (RUCBC) BC Association of Institutes and Universities (BCAIU) BC Colleges (BCC) British Columbia Teaching and Learning Council (BCTLC)	Alberta Universities Association (AUA) Alberta Association of Colleges & Technical Institutes		Council of Presidents of Universities of Manitoba (COPUM)	Council of Universities (COU) Colleges Ontario (CO)	Fédération des Cégeps (FC) Bureau de coopération interuniversitaire (BCI)		Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP)		
	Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC)									
Faculty Unions and Federations	Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC (CUFA) Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE)	Alberta College and Institutes Faculties Association (ACIFA) Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA)	Saskatchewan Association of University Teachers	Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations (MOFA)	Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)	Fédération Québécoise des Professeurs et Professeurs d'Université (FQPPU) Fédération nationale des enseignants et enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ), affiliated with the Centrale des syndicats nationaux (CSN) Conseil provincial du secteur universitaire, affiliated with the Canadian Union of Public Employee (CUPE)	Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations / Fédération des associations de professeurs et professeurs d'université du Nouveau-Brunswick	Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT)	No provincial federation	No provincial federation
Student Union and Association Federations	BC Federation of Students (BCFS) Alliance of BC Students (ABCs) Alma Mater Society - UBC (AMS)	Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) Alberta Students' Executive Council (ASEC) Canadian Federation of Students - Alberta	Canadian Federation of Students - Sask	Canadian Federation of Students - MB	Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) College Student Alliance (CSA)	Union étudiante du Québec (UEQ) Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec (FECCQ)	New Brunswick Student Alliance La Fédération des étudiantes et étudiants du Campus universitaire de Moncton (FEECUM) Canadian Federation of Students	Students Nova Scotia (Students NS), formerly Scotia Student Associations (ANSSA) Canadian Federation of Students - NS	Canadian Federation of Students - PEI	Canadian Federation of Students - NFLD

Fig. 16.2 Provincial organized interests in Canada, by province, by type, 2018

At the national level, membership organizations also reflect priorities of institutional types; some institutions belong to more than one membership organization, and some organizations are selective and closed to new membership. All are quite institutionalized with permanent secretariates, mostly in the national capital Ottawa.

Universities Founded in 1911, Universities Canada is the major voluntary membership association representing the interests of 96 public and private not-for-profit Canadian universities. There are three further specialty organizations representing universities. The U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities is a collective of research-intensive universities initiated in 1985 by five Ontario universities seeking to influence provincial research funding. It expanded to a national membership of 15, with a stated purpose to “serve as a Canadian equivalent to the Association of American Universities” (U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities, n.d.). The Maple League of Universities is a consortium established in 2013 as an association of four small, residential, primarily undergraduate universities in Eastern Canada focused on liberal education. Finally, the Association of Colleges and Universities of the Canadian Francophonie (ACUFC) represents 21 colleges and universities of the Canadian Francophonie.

Colleges Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), known previously as the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, was founded in 1972, and is the national voluntary membership organization representing publicly supported colleges, institutes, CEGEPs, and polytechnics. The Réseau des Cégeps et des Colleges Francophones du Canada was established in 1995 and is a network to support the development of the Canadian Francophonie and give visibility to Francophone college education to various governments, particularly the federal government (RCCFC, n.d.).

Polytechnics Polytechnics Canada was originally established in 2003 by eight institutions, and now represents 13 research-intensive, publicly funded polytechnics, colleges, and institutes of technology.

Faculty Organized Interests

University faculty and college/polytechnic faculty are employed by individual institutions, and are almost entirely unionized (Jones & Weinrib, 2012); those that are not unionized are typically represented by a faculty association that has entered into a collective employment agreement (Jones, 2002). There are, however, some exceptions; for example, in Quebec, only two universities are not unionized (McGill and HEC Montréal), and McGill’s faculty association does not negotiate a faculty collective agreement. Individual institutions may have more than one bargaining unit (Field et al., 2014). The majority of individual associations regularly monitor provincial policies and attempt to influence provincial government policies, however

political activity of Canadian faculty organizations is steered more by provincial federations than institutional bodies (Anderson & Jones, 1998). Individual institutional unions and associations are commonly associated with a provincial level faculty federation and, in the case of university faculty, a national federation. Each of the provincial faculty federations is affiliated in some way with Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). Employees outside the tenured or tenure-track faculty are often represented by unions who affiliate nationally.

CAUT is the “national voice” for academic staff representing 72,000 teachers, librarians, researchers, general staff, and other academic professionals at 125 universities and colleges. Government lobbying is an important priority to national organizations such as CAUT and the Fédération québécoise des professeurs et professeurs d’université (FQPPU), which plays a similar role in Québec. CAUT’s specific activities include coordination support on national campaigns and support for local mobilization campaigns on key issues, lobbying federal politicians and senior government officials, preparing briefs to parliamentary committees, and coordination support for individual organizations to meet elected officials. The national office also works internationally. Priorities include promoting academic freedom, protecting shared governance, defending civil liberties, and advancing professional rights, and offers membership services in research and political action, collective bargaining, and legal services (CAUT, 2018). CAUT has been known to intervene successfully on these policy areas even in institutions where the faculty are not CAUT members (for example, see Loxley, 2009).

Student Organized Interests

Student organizations are incorporated entities consisting of student members, with exclusive rights of representation, and are embedded in the legal frameworks of higher education in Canada (Beaupré-Lavallée & Bégin-Cauette, 2019; Jones, 1995; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999). Canadian student organizations function as the vehicle for student politics; following the conceptualization by Klemenčič and Park (2018), these organizations reflect two forms of student politics, representation and activism, through “political activities associated with the governance of the student body and its influence on both the higher education institution and society to which they belong” (p. 468). The student movement reflects activism undertaken by a broader social network of student governments, associated federations, and allies, on shared goals or issues through forms of social mobilization, including protests. Student organizations are not formally associated with specific Canadian political parties, however coalitions are formed from time to time in specific policy areas, or during specific episodes. Student organizations have traditional ideological divisions, however these have been overcome in various policy episodes (Dufour & Savoie, 2014).

Students participate in formal institutional governance through elected student governments, and in formal channels of public body lobbying and advocacy through those governments and associated broader student organization networks. These

student governments (unions or associations) and networks (federations) are highly institutionalized with defined relational structures for interest representation. Student organizations prioritize monitoring and influencing institutional policy as well as provincial government policy (Jones, 1995), and to improve university governance (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999). In English Canada, it is relatively common for graduate and undergraduate students to be represented by different organizations within one institution, however not in Quebec, where smaller or special-purpose interest groups have developed as extensions of the student union or as non-profit organizations; one example is the *Comités universitaires pour le travail étudiant* (CUTE), which promotes labour standards for mandatory internships in degree granting programs.

Formal student organization networks exist at both the provincial and national level (see Fig. 16.2). There are two major national student federations, diverging in their political allies, political orientation, and choice of political communication and tactics (Rexe, 2015). At the provincial level, student federations have been noted to be successful advocates on some provincially regulated policy issues, such as tuition (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Rexe, 2015). At the national level, student federations focus on policies under the jurisdiction of the federal government (student financial aid, for example) or provide institutionalized support through campaign formation, lobbying, mobilization, and advertising to member provincial and institutional associations (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014).

Quebec: Distinctive Student Organized Interests Within the Federation

The history of student unions in Quebec is closely tied to the history of tuition fees and related strikes. It is also relatively independent of the two major student federations. Uniquely in Quebec, there have been several major episodes of student strikes; unsuccessful attempts in 1986 and 2007, and three successful attempts in 1996, 2005, and 2012. The 1986, 1996, 2007, and 2012 attempts corresponded with government intent to increase tuition fees, and the 2005 strike was related to student aid. The 1986 episode was triggered when the Quebec government floated the idea to increase tuition fees. It was led by one of the provincial student unions of the time, the *Association nationale des étudiantes et étudiants* (ANEEQ), which attempted a student strike. ANEEQ was characterized by an *ethics of principles*. The strike failed, which led to a tuition increase, the death of ANEEQ, and the birth of both the *Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec* (FEUQ) and the *Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec* (FECQ). In 1989, ANEEQ died because of repeated and unsuccessful call to demonstrations (Cauchy, 2005; Lacoursière, 2007). The new federations, FEUQ and FECQ, focus on specific policy results rather than means or radical principles, characterized as *ethics of results* (Bédard, 1994), choosing to engage with government if it is likely to make their issue progress. They will also use strikes and demonstrations if the issue warrants it (Cauchy, 2005).

In 1995 the Quebec government had to consider new funding sources as a result of cuts in the federal transfers to provinces. A tuition fee increase was publicly considered, which resulted in a 10-day student strike led by a new and competing organization, *Mouvement pour le droit à l'Éducation* (MDE), which was constituted by several individual student unions (SOGÉÉCOM, 2019). MDE was founded on an ethics of principles, and died in 2000 or 1999, due to the unpopularity of that position at the time (Lacoursière, 2007). In 2000, the Quebec government led a summit on higher education in which both the major student federations, FECQ and FEUQ, decided to participate. In opposition to FEUQ and FECQ's participation in the summit, in 2001 the *Alternative pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante* (ASSÉ) was born, the term *alternative* referring to ASSÉ's *ethics of principles* versus the stance of the two other student federations (Marion, 2001). ASSÉ refused to negotiate with the government (Lacoursière, 2007). A student strike was attempted by ASSÉ in 2007, but failed to gain any traction (Le Devoir, 2007). ASSÉ was however at the forefront of the 2012 student strike (Le Devoir, 2007; Breton, 2012). That strike, now known as the *Maple Spring*, lasted roughly 6 months and transformed into a social movement (Simard, 2013). It was initiated by an announced 83% tuition fee (+\$1625) increase over 5 years. As an outcome, the government was defeated in a general election, and the new government implemented indexed tuition fees based on household disposable income. This policy seems to have the tacit agreement of existing student unions (Government of Quebec, 2018).

Because it was perceived by some members as unsuccessful, FEUQ imploded in 2015 (Cambron-Goulet, 2015) and was replaced by a smaller organization, the *Union étudiante du Québec* (UEQ). The new organization is like the FEUQ in many aspects, with an ethics of results. ASSÉ ended its activities too, but for different reasons. It is partly because its governing body attempted to push positions down to its members, and partly because it hardly had any relevance after the 2012 strike; it imploded in 2017 and dissolved itself in 2019 (Agence QMI, 2019; Ocampo, 2017). Concurrently, a student strike was attempted in 2019 by a temporary faction of the student movement on the matter of student internship pay. The government maintained dialogue with students organizations and, following electoral promises, announced \$30 million annually in grants to support internships in specific disciplines.

What should be learned from ANEEQ, MDE, and FEUQ is a form of cycling pattern induced by the presence or absence of dialogue in the policy making process. Similar organizations may arise and thrive again if a strike-inducing (e.g., sudden and unpopular) policy shift is publicly announced. Conversely, organizations such as UEQ and FECQ seem to excel when there exists a channel for dialogue that leads to acceptable policies. They also seem to arise from an excess of call to demonstrations. Based on their impact at shaping tuition policies (and, more recently, student aid), it should be recognized that the student movement is an incredibly powerful force, most often reactive, that shapes the policy process. It has led commentators in Quebec to call them the (free translation) "most powerful lobby in Québec" (Boileau, 2005).

Formal Practitioner Networks

Networks function as boundary spanners through which policy ideas and information about innovation are disseminated and mediated (Tandberg, 2013). Within Canada there are substantive provincial and trans-provincial practitioner/professional networks operating with varying levels of institutionalized coordination capacity, longevity, and impact. Examples of these formal networks within higher education are associations of various administrative roles (such as registrars, university secretaries, senior financial officers, student affairs, financial aid, institutional researchers, public affairs) as well as academic roles (such as deans, provosts/senior academic officers, senior research officers) and their discipline/cognates (such as business, medicine, law, engineering, science, education). In Ontario alone, there are 32 such networks formally associated with the university sector (COU, n.d) and seven associated with the college sector (CO, n.d.).

The impact of these professional networks is increasingly of interest to researchers; Tamtik (2018) found that Vice Presidents of Research were influential policy actors in the formation of Canadian innovation policy, and El Masri et al. (2015) identified that the most cited source of knowledge for changes in government policy was professional networks and colleagues. Jones (2013) notes that in the case of Ontario universities, the Council of Ontario Universities functions as the secretariat to these networks, and as a result that organization is both informed and strengthened in terms of its government relations capacity.

Third Types

Commissions, Inquiries, and Reviews

Government consultations appear in various forms, with the goal to collect information, engage stakeholders, assess the impact of policy decisions, solicit input on policy ideas (Young & Everitt, 2004) and potentially cultivate agreement through involvement in decision-making or lend legitimacy to government decisions. Canadian governments have a long history of ad hoc reviews or commissions as a catalyst for policy formation processes (Aucoin, 1990; Rollins, 2019); in fact, commissions of inquiry pre-date Confederation (Inwood & Johns, 2014). Public inquiries include government-appointed commissions, task forces, parliamentary committees, statutory investigative and advisory agencies, and departmental studies (Trebilcock & Hartle, 1982). Public inquiries have been seen to be the instrument of choice when governments “decide to re-think their approach to large issues” (Stutz, 2008, p. 502).

This is true in the education policy arena; indeed, many current provincial systems have been shaped substantively by provincial reports, including Ontario’s

Wright Report (1972), Quebec's Parent Commission (1966), and British Columbia's MacDonald Report (MacDonald, 1962). Although the format has shifted over time, these policymaking venues continue to be popular. Between 2004 and 2008, six of Canada's 10 provinces carried out comprehensive reviews of their whole post-secondary systems: Ontario, Newfoundland, Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick (Hall, 2017; Rexe, 2014). In addition there have been more focussed commissions such as Manitoba's review of colleges (undertaken in 2017) and Nova Scotia's review of the university system (undertaken in 2010). These reviews were conducted by government or legislative commissions, or by external, independent commissioners appointed by government. Comprehensive province-wide public consultations were central to these exercises (Kirby, 2007).

One recent federal commission was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada. Its purpose was to uncover, acknowledge, and make recommendations on the injustices against Indigenous peoples in the colonial educational regime (Sinclair et al., 2015); the final recommendations included 34 calls to action for various levels of education. Although some found that the commission had a modest influence on public policy (such as Miller, 2019), there are some observable impacts, such as shifts in federal research funding programs (see for example SSHRC, n.d.) and at the institutional level, some shifts in university governance through the establishment of Indigenous advisory and/or reconciliation committees (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). CICan developed an Indigenous Education Protocol order to reaffirm the importance of Indigenous education (CICan, 2014) and Universities Canada developed a set of principles for Indigenous education (Universities Canada, 2015).

In their study of policy impacts of nine special advisory commissions in higher education in Ontario, Clark and Trick (2006) identify that the success of special-purpose advisory commissions is dependent on several environmental variables (such as the economy, fiscal situation, and political cycle), process variables (such as reporting to the premier or the minister), skill, experience or energy of the commissioners, approach to stakeholder engagement, and the "political acuity with which the commission develops recommendations that can command broad public support" (p. 182). Notwithstanding the mixed track record of policy adoptions from commissions and reviews in higher education, the commission model offers value as a "site of sense-making" (Inwood & Johns, 2014, p. 8), providing an opportunity for public consultation and stakeholder engagement (Inwood & Johns, 2014) and serve to overcome challenges associated with limited in policy-analytic capacity (Howlett, 2009). Further, they function to diffuse political controversy and support policy learning, problem definition, and policy legitimation (Rexe, 2014, 2015; Stark, 2019). Howlett (2009) notes Canada's weak policy capacity at the provincial level, leading policy analysis to be often undertaken by consultants rather than paid staff; this was the case most recently in Manitoba (Usher & Pelletier, 2017).

Advisory Bodies

Distinct from the time-limited advisory commissions and the intermediary bodies discussed previously, several Canadian governments have established higher education advisory bodies. The most significantly institutionalized such body is the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), established under its own legislation, and mandated to conduct research, evaluate the post-secondary education system, and provide policy recommendations to government. HEQCO has a formal protocol in communicating with the department, and has a substantive permanent secretariat in addition to its appointed board.

The Assises: A Unique Institution for Policymaking

The *assises*, or *summit*, is a government-organized event that aims to bring together various interest groups around a specific policy question, with the goal of reaching a consensus that will (hopefully) then be translated into public policy by the government. Usually, between 50 and 300 different groups may be included in this consultation process, launched with a reflection document including solicited comment from the different groups (usually provided at distance). After that, the government organizes the ideas and trends submitted to the representatives of groups who will attend the final summit event. This event usually ends with common public declaration that will be turned into policy. On university policy, the interest groups can be rectors, unions, student associations, or economic organizations (such as chamber of commerce, employers' councils), or research organizations. When the focus is Quebec policy on research, the number of different groups may increase significantly.

The *assises* approach to policymaking and organizing interactions between Quebec's government and pressure groups has been dependent upon which party is in power, and if the policymaking focus is a broad policy question or a narrower one. When questions are fairly technical (e.g., student loans regulations), the nature of the topic lends itself more to smaller groups where expertise is shared. In all cases, the government has attempted to set the agenda and the approach could be best characterized as an attempt to control pressure groups in exchange for influence over the policy process. The left-wing Parti Québécois has a history of undertaking these policymaking summits with all organized interests and actors involved (2000, 2012). The Liberal party of Quebec embraces this approach much less, although it did it once (2004). With the election of a new government in 2018, there appears to be a move away from use of the *assises*; this government seems to prefer using continued exchanges with the different interest groups. This approach opens up possibilities to understand group needs and mitigate risks in the public policy process.

Academy-Industry-Government Interfaces: Emerging Intermediary Bodies?

It has been noted that there is an increase in the number and role of organizations that operate in the “interstitial spaces between institutions of higher education, industrial firms, and government agencies” (Metcalf, 2010, p. 503). Complex societal problems of knowledge-based economies increasingly require collaboration across boundaries, including researchers, policy-makers and the public sector, and business and industry, characterized as a *triple helix model*; within the higher education policy arena, universities and colleges are undergoing change in modes of knowledge production, models of innovation, and integrating economic development as part of an academic revolution (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1998; Jessop, 2017; Sam & Van Der Sijde, 2014).

In Canada there has been recent policy-oriented activity associated with a number of these new interfaces. For example, the Business/Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) was launched in 2015 and is comprised of some of Canada’s largest companies and post-secondary institutions, with a substantive permanent secretariat. It frames its mission as “coordination”. Tamtik (2018) notes that the policy landscape for innovation invites non-state actors, that is, business and industry, to actively participate in national policy discussions amid complex intergovernmental relations and overlapping policy interests.

Discussion

In this review of the landscape of organized interests in Canadian post-secondary education, we observe that there are several notable features. First, we note the importance of formal units of representation in terms of key constituencies; there are significant permanent administrative capacities in organized interests and with intermediary organizations. Second, there are differences between constituencies in their institutionalized forms. On one hand, faculty and students articulate their interests through nested, multi-level associated organizations, often showing reciprocal benefit of each others’ participation in policy arenas at the institutional, provincial, and federal levels. Institutional interests, on the other hand, are increasingly differentiated at the national level, with potentially competitive representation or conflicting interests. Third, we note the importance attached to lobbying attention on the federal parliament, and that many actors focus on operating in national level policy arenas; indeed, many pursue a policy goal of nationalizing post-secondary policy (CUPE, 2018; Harden, 2017). Fourth, given observed low levels of policy analytic capacity within administrative functions of governments, organized interests function as policy knowledge suppliers, even if policy decisions are politically determined through the centre of elected government. However, formal influence of organized interests is limited by decision structures of government (Shanahan et al.,

2016). In that sense, it may be that institutions of government provide opportunity structures for social movement development in education policy arenas.

Fifth, although there is a diversity of approaches in interest articulation, lobbying is a dominant strategy. The two most common forms of *direct contact* between groups and governments are direct lobbying of decision makers and participating in formalized government or legislative consultation processes (Young & Everitt, 2004). Canadian post-secondary interest groups overall tend to pursue a semi-institutionalized lobbying process, which serves longer term strategies beyond immediate policy outcomes; these include developing internal expertise and developing and sustaining political networks and visibility to ensure longer term influence.

However, other tactics are also pursued, including litigation, protest activities and public relations actions during elections, and other approaches to shape public opinion. Advocacy groups in Canada, particularly equality-seeking groups, have been increasing use of the courts to achieve policy outcomes (Young & Everitt, 2004). Interest group intervention in elections is typically through involvement in one political party, includes use of the campaign to highlight issues (including election advertising), or targets individual legislators for their record in office (Carty et al., 2000).

While there are some active think tanks, consultants, policy research outfits, and foundations active in the post-secondary policy space, unlike in the United States, national and transnational actors are limited (see Fig. 16.3). There are, however, increasingly influential and emerging intermediary bodies who function at the interface of government, business, and higher education and use funding as steering mechanisms. Federal research funding agencies also introduce policy steering into academia through the values and priorities expressed in their competitive processes. These intermediary bodies, their internal policymaking processes, and relationship to public policy processes provide an opportunity for further empirical, policy process research.

In characterizing this landscape, it becomes clear that the Canadian context has features of both pluralist and corporatist interest group systems. Since the mid-1990s, both the student and institutional landscapes of organized interests show increased fragmentation and differentiation, and exhibit competitive behaviours in terms of both membership as well as for political attention. Institutional membership organizations are voluntary, which allows for institutional choice and for individualistic and collective lobbying behaviour; both Constantinou (2010) and Jones (2013) found evidence in support of pluralism, replicating results found elsewhere in high education lobbying research in the United States (Knorowski, 2001). First, while student organizations at the local level can choose to affiliate with a particular national federation or not, historically students on a campus are required to pay fees and are automatic members of an established student union or association. Second, organized interests need to focus on lobbying and influence strategies, as they have no particular standing in relation to formal decision-making within government (in English Canada). However, the relatively small number of organized interests, and the relative monopoly that some established groups have over policy issues appears more similar to a corporatist interest group system than the pluralist system of the

	National	Transnational
Institutional Membership Organizations	Universities Canada Polytechnics Canada Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) L'Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC) Réseau des Cégeps et Collèges francophones du Canada (RCCFC) U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities Maple League of Universities Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE)	Association of American Universities (AAU) Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) Conference of the Americas on International Education (CAIE) Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) Universitas 21 International Association of Universities Canadian Virtual University-Université Virtuelle Canadienne Consortium Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design Association of Theological Schools World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics (WFCP) Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE)
Formal Institutional Collaborations	Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT) Canadian Association of Research Libraries	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education Council for Higher Education Accreditation Groningen Declaration Network University of the Arctic (UArctic) Internationale de l'éducation (IE)
Faculty Union and Association Federations	Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)	
Student Unions, Associations and Federations	Canadian Alliance of Student Associations Canadian Federation of Students National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) Business/Higher Education (BHER) Roundtable MITACS Royal Bank of Canada - RBC Future Launch C. D. Howe Institute's Human Capital Policy Council Canadian Apprenticeship Forum Conference Board of Canada	
Business Interfaces		
Think Tank/ Policy Research Organizations	Education Policy Research Initiative, University of Ottawa Higher Education Strategy Associates Academicca Group	The NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice
Private or Non-Governmental Foundations	None are exclusively or primarily focused on higher education	Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Government Funded Intermediary Research Granting Agencies	Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Canada Research Chairs (CRC) Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (CCGHR) Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (CFHSS) Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)	

Fig. 16.3 National and transnational bodies in Canada primarily focused on post-secondary education, by type, 2018

United States. The Quebec tradition of the *assises* illustrates a more corporatist tradition of participating in government policy making as insiders, in which there is an exchange of ability to negotiate with acceptance of final policy decisions. Finally, Canadian organized interests demonstrate willingness and ability to cooperate with each other on particular policy preferences and venues.

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Chapter 17

Interest Groups and Intermediary Organizations in Higher Education Policy in Western Europe, United States, and Canada



Jean Bernatchez, Martin Maltais, and Émanuelle Maltais

Abstract In this comparative chapter, we compare the three regions (Western Europe, the United States, and Canada) that were in the focus of the analysis in the three previous chapters. We present the methodology used by the authors, we outline their definitions of interest groups and intermediary organizations and compare the state of knowledge related to each of the cases. We finally present the dynamics of interest groups and intermediary structures in the development of higher education policies in the three regions, present the major issues to consider, and outline the similarities and differences between contexts.

Introduction

The purpose of the previous three chapters is to present and analyze the dynamics of interest groups and intermediary structures in higher education policymaking in Western Europe, the United States, and Canada. In this comparative chapter, we highlight and compare the ideas that emerge from each chapter and present their differences and similarities. First, we define the three regions considered in the analysis. Second, we present the methodology used by the authors of the three chapters for their analysis. Third, we outline their definitions of interest groups and intermediary organizations and compare the state of knowledge related to each of the cases. Still in a comparative perspective, we finally present the dynamics of interest groups and intermediary structures in the development of higher education policies in three regions, present the major issues to consider, and outline the similarities and differences between the three cases.

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Regions

The regions considered in this analysis reflect 77 different higher education systems. Western Europe, as defined in Vukasovic's, [this volume](#) chapter, consists of a sample of 17 Western European countries (Great Britain, France, Germany, etc.) or, in the case of Belgium, the regions of Flanders (Dutch-speaking Belgium) and Wallonia (French-speaking Belgium). Most of these countries belong to the European Union (apart from Great Britain, Norway, and Switzerland). In terms of higher education systems, Europe is a less integrated territory than the United States and Canada, but the Bologna Process, which began in 1998, helped bring the higher education systems of the 48 signatory countries closer together. This process aims to harmonize the national higher education systems by generalizing the degree structure into three cycles with diplomas configured in a comparable manner (bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctoral degree), by proposing a system of recognition of prior learning (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) and by proposing common standards for quality assurance. The Bologna Process also aims to make Europe a competitive area in the global context of the knowledge economy. The open method of coordination, a non-binding public policy coordination tool, is used as a mode of governance. Inspired by the principles of soft law, it allows sharing of good practices, peer review, stakeholder involvement, and benchmarking.

The United States are a federated country which consists of 50 States, the District of Columbia, and several territories. Ness and Baser ([this volume](#)) write that American federalism is a defining characteristic of the higher education policymaking environment, which shapes interest group activity. Higher education is the responsibility of the States, while the federal government also intervenes in this area through comprehensive policies. Canada is also a federation, with 10 provinces and three territories, and similarly, these sub-national entities are responsible for higher education. Rexe et al. ([this volume](#)) focused on the 10 provinces, but not on the territories which are special cases in terms of public policy. The relationship between federal and provincial governments in higher education takes place in the context of flexible federalism, in the case of Canada. Provincial autonomy over higher education has led to policy and institutional differentiation in Canada. The authors point out that the concentration of executive power in the cabinet is a feature of Westminster-type political systems; where parliamentarians outside of cabinet can lack influence within policy processes.

Methodologies

The authors of all three chapters used mainly a literature review of articles and scholarly works published over the last three decades (1990–2020), mainly in English. A total of more than 400 references were used. Vukasovic ([this volume](#)) conducted her analysis on a literature review based on scientific journals, edited

volumes and monographs published in English since the late 1990s. The sources are identified through searches with *Google Scholar* using keywords that correspond to the different actors. In most cases, these references do not have interest groups and intermediary organizations in higher education as their primary focus, but they do provide relevant information and data. Some authors wrote several articles on the same topic and are consequently the experts on these issues, e.g., Fraussen on interest groups; Jungblut on governance; Altbach, Klemenčič and Luescher-Mamashela on student's associations. The literature review is organized by types of actors, beginning with studies that offer a conceptual and theoretical approach. Ness and Baser ([this volume](#)) organized their analysis on 113 titles identified in the bibliography, including Hrebenar and Thomas's series of studies on interest group politics in states' aggregations in the Western, Eastern, and Southern United States, and McLendon and Hearn's contributions on states higher education politics. In their chapter, Ness and Baser ([this volume](#)) detailed a case, the *Alabama Association for Higher Education* (AAFHE) which was used to highlight an example of a unique and direct political strategy used by institutions to increase state support. Rexe et al. ([this volume](#)) based their analysis on 163 titles listed in the bibliography. These include scientific articles, organizational documents, official reports, newspaper articles and grey literature. The main researchers whose work is included are Jones on public policy analysis of higher education; Savoie on political governance; and Axelrod on issues and challenges in higher education. For the purpose of their analysis, the three authors of the chapter also used the strategy of participant observation, considering their own experience in three different provinces.

Definitions

As Ness and Baser ([this volume](#)) note, there is yet to be a universally accepted definition of interest groups, and though the authors of the three chapters offer different definitions, they nevertheless allow for comparison. Vukasovic ([this volume](#)) defines interest groups as formal organization with an interest in influencing political processes and policy decision (see also: Beyers et al., 2008). This definition emphasizes the formal aspect of the group concerned to distinguish interest groups from social movements. It presents a mapping of the main formally organized actors: student organizations; staff organizations; organizations of higher education institutions; organizations of employers; agencies and intermediary structures. In Western Europe, interest groups and intermediary organizations in higher education are present at the European level, at the national level, and often also at the local level.

In the United States, interest groups operate in the context of a complex and dynamic higher education policymaking process influenced by a multitude of political, social, cultural, and economic factors. Ness and Baser ([this volume](#)) conceptualize interest groups as inclusive of intermediary organizations, governmental relations staff at public institutions and systems, faculty and student associations, and private college associations, and situate intermediary organizations as

“boundary spanning” groups with specific interests that translate, mediate, and connect two principal actors, such as state policymakers and school district personnel (Guston, 2001). Often in lieu of traditional research produced by academics that would be featured in peer-reviewed academic journals, intermediary organizations have assumed a heightened role in education policy by “gathering, interpreting, and packaging particular research for policymakers” (Lubienski et al., 2011, p. 2). This governance of higher education is reflected in a fragmented, multi-layered system. Interest groups are organized into traditional membership groups, institutional interest groups, and associations: (1) Traditional membership groups are composed of individuals who aim to promote economic, social, or political concerns (environmental groups, unions, professional associations, etc.); (2) Institutional interest groups are organizations such as business enterprises, government agencies, colleges, and universities; and (3) Associations are entities that represent and promote other organizations (professional associations such as State and local chambers of commerce and labor union coalitions).

Rexe et al. (this volume) conceptualize intermediary organizations and organized interest groups by drawing on the notions of *policy communities* and *policy networks*. Higher education actors are simultaneously concerned with multiple policy issues at both the federal and provincial levels. The three authors include in their analysis the entire higher education policy community. This covers the *attentive public*, including the media and the academic community whose role is to maintain a perpetual policy-review process. Within a policy community, interests are advanced by interest groups that seek to influence government policy, but do not seek to govern (Montpetit, 2009; Pross, 1992; Young & Everitt, 2004). In their proposed mapping of interest groups, the authors differentiate the intergovernmental and formal intermediary organizations, provincial organized interests, and the national and transnational bodies primarily focused on post-secondary education.

State of Scientific Knowledge

In both the political and higher education arenas, the presence of interest groups is a feature of the new mode of governance of higher education that is unfolding in the three regions observed, for at least the last three decades. To study this phenomenon, Ness and Baser (this volume) draw on one of the greatest traditions of American political science: the pluralist approach. Classical pluralism emphasizes the increasing diversity of interests and the positive role of groups (Mawhinney, 2001). Thus, effective democracy depends on active, competitive, and balanced group activity. Interest groups are at the heart of democratic societies and serve as a link between the people and the government. Proponents of classical pluralism face criticism because they neglect to consider the structural advantages of the economic and political elite. Multiple-elite theory then presents itself as an alternative; the logic of *collective action* (Olson, 1965) and the theory of the *end of liberalism* (Lowi, 1969) are important contributions to this scholarly tradition. This tradition contends that

politics and interest groups are “largely controlled by multiple separate elites, each dominating a particular area of public policy” (McFarland, 2004, p. 47) Neopluralism falls in the middle of these two perspectives and becomes the theoretical approach used primarily in the United States to study interest group activity.

In their chapter, Ness and Baser ([this volume](#)) assert that this particular literature frames policymaking as a “network of subgovernments in which decisions are the result of a symbiotic relationship between interest groups, government agencies, and politicians in a policy domain where each actor possesses considerable influence in the policymaking process.” Several scholars have focused on interest group activities in higher education in the United States over the past two decades (see e.g. Hearn & Ness, 2017). Predominantly, two approaches are used in this context, one with interest groups as the focus of the study, which considers how groups mobilize and organize, as well as the strategies of their lobbyists and their role in the policymaking process, and another which positions interest group activities within the broader political context, hoping to illuminate “the relationship between state political characteristics and certain policy outcomes” (Ness et al., 2015, p. 153). Ness and Baser also present an original conceptualization of interest groups in American higher education policymaking, developed by Ness et al. (2015), reflecting nested layers that influence interest group activity and policy outcomes (see Fig. 17.1).

In examining Western Europe, Vukasovic ([this volume](#)) refers to Neave (2002) who links the relevance of interest groups to the rise of the *stakeholder society* and the concept of *penetrated hierarchies* from the work of Bleiklie et al. (2015). She observes that interest groups are sometimes created for purposes other than defending the interests of the actors concerned. In this case, they are considered *latent interest groups* (Beyers et al., 2008). There are several ways to classify interest groups, based on their interests or membership structure (Beyers, 2008; Dür & Mateo, 2016; Greenwood, 2011). Binderkrantz (2009) proposes this distinction: (1) public interest groups active on issues of general interest, such as the environment (e.g. *Greenpeace*) or human rights (e.g. *Amnesty International*); and (2) sectoral

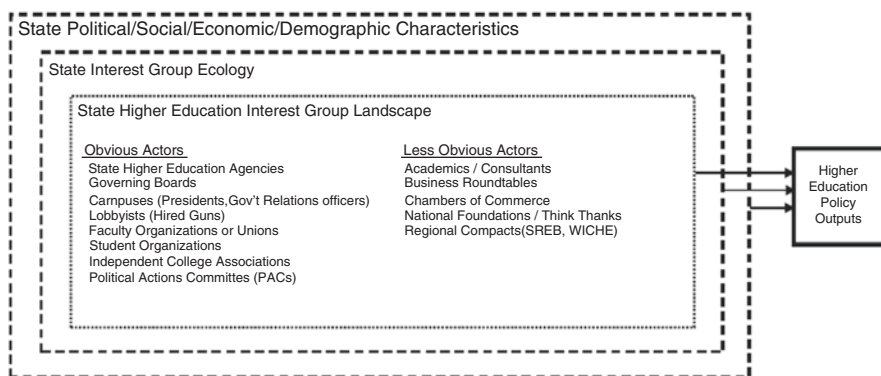


Fig. 17.1 State interest group framework. (Ness et al., 2015)

interest groups active on issues of immediate interest to a narrowly defined group, such as a specific profession, consumers, or workers.

Vukasovic ([this volume](#)) notes that most of the research concerning interest groups in higher education in Western Europe focuses on student associations. According to Altbach (1989, 2007), Brooks (2017) and Luescher-Mamashela (2018), this is due to the long historical tradition of these associations. Using Klemenčič and Park's (2018) conceptualization, the author argues that student unions adhere to two distinct forms of action: representation (of their student members) and activism (linked to strong political values). Vukasovic observes that some student organizations in Western Europe also exhibit characteristics of social movements. Rexe et al. ([this volume](#)) refer to a theory of the sociologist Max Weber (1919) and to the distinction between the ethics of principles and the ethics of results to explain the logic that conditions the struggles of student unions in Quebec in particular. They recall the 2012 *Maple Spring* where a student strike against tuition increases led to a social movement (Simard, 2013) that resulted in the election of a new government.

Vukasovic presents another element to consider when analyzing sectoral interest groups in higher education: how they are recognized by policymakers, on a continuum between being a complete outsider and being a complete insider (Fraussen et al., 2014). In this, she highlights the point that the recognition by decision-makers depends to some extent on the characteristics of the organization itself, i.e. its resources, level of staff professionalization, etc. (Beyers, 2008; Klüver, 2012).

Dynamics

Several typologies are developed in the literature to describe the number of actors, their position in relation to decision-makers, and their involvement in the implementation of policies, with the most common distinction being between statism, pluralism and corporatism (Eising, 2004; Schmitter, 1977). In the three chapters, we find a cartography of the actors involved in the dynamics of the realization of policies in higher education. These actors are very numerous in all territories concerned. They intervene in global spaces (Europe, countries) but also in local spaces (states, provinces, and linguistic territories, as in Belgium and Canada). From a comparative perspective, the cartographies proposed in the three chapters constitute a very rich collection of data, allowing a better understanding of a complex phenomenon.

The dynamics of action of interest groups in the three regions are characterized by lobbying, which is the process of influencing government decisions and policy outputs. Lobbying is carried out by lobbyists, who represent and promote the interests of their respective interest group to decision makers. Lobbyists who try to influence higher education programs and policies are present in Western Europe, the United States, and Canada. In Western Europe, there are interest groups representing key stakeholders and intermediary organizations in all higher education systems. The only exception is Luxembourg, where the country's only university was created very recently, in 2003. Most higher education systems have corporatist

characteristics. National interest groups in Western Europe have their European counterparts. For example, for national associations of higher education institutions, there are two European organizations: the *European University Association* (EUA) represents the universities; the *European Association of Institutions in Higher Education* (EURASHE) represents the non-university sector.

Article 6 of the Lisbon Treaty states that the European Union can only “support, coordinate or supplement member states’ actions. However, the influence of the European Commission’s programs and policies is real and contributes to the standardization of national higher education policies through normative documents or the dissemination of good practices (Batory & Lindstrom, 2011). It can push for policy coordination between member states through its Open method of Coordination (Gornitzka, 2014). In this process, interest groups can also play an important role as they can use the European level to influence policy-making in the national arena.

In the United States, empirical studies suggest that the effect of interest groups on state higher education policymaking varies depending on the politics and context of a specific state. For example, Brackett’s (2016) study of 534 colleges in 15 States over 10 years provides a measure of the extent of the institutional lobbying phenomenon. In addition to these usual lobbying strategies, Ness and Baser ([this volume](#)) highlight the use of dark money in state and local politics. Dark money is “political spending meant to influence the decision of a voter, where the donor is not disclosed and the source of the money is unknown” (Center for Responsive Politics, 2018a, b). Two landmarks of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decisions (*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and *SpeechNow.org v. Federal Election Commission*) allow corporations, unions, and individuals to contribute unlimited amounts of money to non-profit organizations, and as a result, independent expenditure-only committees, better known as political action committees (PACs), and dark money groups have grown in prominence in federal and state political campaign finance. It is in this perspective that the case study proposed by Ness and Baser (*Alabama Association for Higher Education*) is relevant to illustrate the phenomenon in a tangible manner.

The Canadian context has the characteristics of pluralistic and corporatist interest group systems. Unlike lobbying activities, government consultations are initiated by governments and take a wide range of forms: public consultations, royal commissions, task forces, legislative hearings, or parliamentary committees. These processes “collect policy-relevant information, involve groups, gauge the impact of policy decisions on particular groups, solicit input on proposals” (Young & Everitt, 2004, p. 95) and potentially cultivate agreement through involvement in decision-making or lend legitimacy to government decisions. Groups benefit from the opportunity to influence policy as well as building closer connections with policymakers and reinforce government recognition of them as an influential stakeholder. Student associations are major players in Canada, and their influence is very strong (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Rexe, 2015), based on their demonstrated influence in shaping tuition policies (and, more recently, student aid). It has led commentators in Quebec to call them the “most powerful lobby in Québec” (Boileau, 2005).

Issues

Various changes in higher education governance are both the causes and consequences of increased importance of new actors in higher education policy in Western Europe, the United States, and Canada. Here we present the main issues that emerge from the previous three chapters. In Western Europe, Vukasovic ([this volume](#)) refers to three main aspects related to higher education policies: marketization of higher education (Jongbloed et al., 2008); corporate-pluralist shifts in steering (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000; Vukasovic, 2018); and changes concerning the structures and instruments of the Evaluative State (Neave, 2009). In the United States, according to Ness and Baser ([this volume](#)), the main issue that mobilizes interest groups in higher education systems is the high cost of tuition for students and the high debt load that it creates. In addition, there are concerns about immigration, campus violence (guns, sexual assault) and free speech. Rexe et al. ([this volume](#)) note that the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, a voluntary national body created in 1967 by the provincial education ministers, proposes five priorities for higher education that reflect a consensus in Canada: access and affordability, higher education and the labour market, learning outcomes, post-secondary sustainability and accountability, and student transitions. In addition, there is a concern for Indigenous peoples, because of the work of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, active from 2008 to 2015, which was established to address injustices against Indigenous peoples in a colonial educational system.

Similarities and Differences, Trends, and Lessons

The comparative analysis of the three cases illustrates that there is no universally accepted definition of interest groups in higher education, but some characteristics of the different definitions can be combined to better understand the phenomenon. First, there is the formal nature of the organization and its purpose to influence policy processes and decisions. These organizations are increasing in number, and their interests are very different. These interests can be general and concern the main principles and modalities of higher education policies. They can also be specific and concern one or very specific aspects of these policies, or even a very specific policy. It is also possible to consider as interest groups, political communities and political networks, including the *attentive public*. All this contributes to the emergence of very different political activities and behaviours. For example, the strategy of a student association that advocates for greater affordability of higher education is very different from that of an employer organization that wants to orient university training more to the needs of the labor market. Also, these organizations act in global spaces (a country or a group of countries) or in local spaces (a state or a province, a geographic or linguistic region). The issues that motivate the action of interest groups can thus be general or specific.

In general, the instrumentalization of higher education systems to better serve the interests of the labor market is a major issue since it concerns the purposes of higher

education and the three main missions of the university (Racine-St-Jacques & Maltais, 2016). In terms of teaching, there is an important movement to ensure that the training offered at universities is better adapted to the needs of the labor market and to the development of skills useful in this context, to train highly qualified personnel. In terms of research, higher education policies tend to focus on problem solving and responding to socio-economic needs or grand societal challenges. The mission of service to the community, which is increasingly important in Western universities, is directly linked to the desire to make the university more “useful” in private and public spaces, and to make the university a more visible and active actor in society in general.

In relation to these fundamental issues, not all members of the same interest group necessarily have the same opinion. For instance, some faculty and students may embrace this movement to instrumentalize higher education because they share this view and have an interest in having this view guide public policy. Other faculty and students feel that this view betrays the principles that guide the traditional mission of the university. Thus, interest groups are not monolithic organizations, and their internal tensions can make it difficult for them to act and influence policy processes as organizations have to balance their desire to influence policy with the demands of their members. This situation illustrates a more important social trend observed in the context of the deployment of neoliberalism: the gradual abandonment of the great societal projects that motivated collective action and their replacement by a constellation of interests specific to individuals. In this perspective, formal or informal alliances between actors associated with different interest groups may emerge creating a differentiated arena of interest representation.

How do universities respond to this broad movement to instrumentalize higher education? University administrations (presidents and rectors, boards of directors, etc.) generally tend to adhere to the principles and modalities of public policies in higher education because financial resources are often associated with them. The more the universities’ actions are in line with these policies, the better the possibility is to gain resources from public and/or private organizations. To obtain the support of members of other internal interest groups, different strategies are deployed by the universities’ administrations with a view to transform governance mechanisms. A greater place is being given to external actors in university governance bodies, to the detriment of the traditional collegial management of university activities. The university is ever more considered in terms of socio-economic needs for the society than in terms of the principles of institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the disinterested quest for knowledge.

Several specific higher education policy issues are also considered by interest groups. Often these are societal issues such as financial and geographic accessibility of higher education, campus violence, or freedom of expression. For both specific and general issues, the position of interest groups is not monolithic. Even an issue like the fight against the increase of tuition fees – for example the 2012 *Maple Spring* in Quebec – shows that students were divided between two groups: the “red squares” that were opposing to the increase of tuitions (and for some, any tuition at all) and the “green squares” that were embracing the government proposal. Moreover, nobody, of course, supports violence on campus, but the strategies to deal with it are different. Law and order advocates argue for imposing more and

stricter standards and rules on the university, thereby increasing safety but decreasing individual and collective rights. Progressive members of interest groups instead advocate for fundamental social changes to address this problem, through increased gun control, addressing poverty, social exclusion, etc. With respect to freedom of expression, there are many phenomena that contribute to making it a public policy issue in higher education: questions of trigger warnings, microaggressions, cultural appropriation, disinvitation, safe spaces, etc., often associated with the woke movement that has gained momentum in recent years. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic helped to put other issues on the agenda, particularly that of distance learning and the institutionalization of hybrid teaching. For these issues as well, the positions of interest groups might differ.

What lessons can we draw from the analysis of interest groups in higher education policy in Western Europe, the United States and Canada? Firstly, it is a complex phenomenon characterized by the multitude of actors and interests and characterized by uncertainty. Secondly, we must consider that interest groups act and interact in a global environment characterized by competition between individuals, between states considered as economic entities, and between universities. Thirdly, Universities are increasingly seen as businesses and managed as such creating or amplifying tensions that can directly affect interest groups and their members.

Conclusion

A social phenomenon of any kind can never be too well documented. The authors of the three previous chapters studying interest groups in higher education policy point to a lack of scientific knowledge about the phenomenon of interest groups and intermediary organizations in higher education systems and, paradoxically, base their analyses on a corpus of over 400 scientific references. They are right, however, to point out that several aspects of the issue remain poorly documented. As Vukasovic ([this volume](#)) writes, there is more to learn on membership, organizational identity, and internal decision-making dynamics, to open the black box of these increasingly important actors in higher education governance and understand their organizational characteristics, political positioning and influence. The three chapters from which we have drawn ideas propose original cartographies of the actors in higher education governance in Western Europe, the United States and Canada. Their work is an important contribution to the advancement of knowledge and it helps us get a better understanding of the dynamics that characterize the role of interest groups in higher education policy.

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Part V
Policy Transfer and Diffusion in Higher
Education

Chapter 18

The Bologna Process as a Multidimensional Architecture of Policy Diffusion in Western Europe



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Abstract We look at the Bologna Process as a process of policy diffusion and regional convergence across Western Europe. We focus in particular on the issue of quality assurance in HE because it not only affects the core competence of national decision-making and is a hard case for the impact of soft governance through policy diffusion, but also remains under-researched in the literature. The Bologna Process created a multidimensional architecture of policy diffusion, as its contents need to be translated into subnational levels (e.g. in federal systems) and into individual institutions.

First, we review the policy diffusion literature and point out current trends, before defining and exploring other concepts closely linked to diffusion research, which may also help to understand the Bologna Process. We then scope the literature on the Bologna Process and the EHEA and show how both bodies of literature (policy diffusion and Bologna Process research) increasingly relate to each other. Second, we explore how transnational communication can serve as a theoretical framework for examining cross-national vertical as well as horizontal HE policy diffusion in the absence of legally binding agreements. In the empirical section, we outline some basic features of the Bologna Process as a process of policy diffusion before focusing on quality assurance and its diffusion across different countries. To illustrate our arguments, we explore the cases of Germany, France, and Italy, three of the four founding countries of the Bologna Process if counting the 1998 Sorbonne declaration as a pre-condition for the ensuing Bologna Process and the EHEA. In view of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, which have further evolved over the past 15 years, we then show how the multidimensional

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architecture of HE systems across Europe has led to the transnational diffusion of new quality assurance policies into entirely different historical contexts.

Our analysis shows that the foundations for quality assurance were set in the 1990s in all three countries, driven largely by domestic problem pressure and a shift towards New Public Management. The Bologna Process then provided the thrust for the further institutionalization and systematization of all three systems. It appears that international policy promotion initially served as the main diffusion mechanism, as the objectives of all systems were largely based on Bologna guidelines. Yet critical differences still exist in the institutional configurations of the systems, which can be explained by both pre-existing institutional peculiarities as well as “differential policy emulation” in the more recent phase. Specifically, we show that diffusion of a primarily bilateral nature is taking place between countries, triggering the transfer of policies and institutions which are not necessarily of Anglo-American inspiration.

Abbreviations

AERES	Agence de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur
ANVUR	Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group
CIVR	Comitato di Indirizzo per la Valutazione della Ricerca
CNE	Comité National d'Evaluation
CNRS	Centre national de la recherche scientifique
CNVSU	Comitato Nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitario
DS	Diploma Supplement
DEQAR	Database of External Quality Assurance Results
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area; was launched in 2010. It is based on the so-called Bologna Process which was inaugurated in 1999 with the Bologna Declaration and adopted by 29 European education ministers. The Bologna Process aimed at the creation of a European Higher Education Area with comparable and compatible higher education structures. Since the accession of Belarus in 2015, the EHEA consists of 48 member states.
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance
EU	European Union
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services

HCERES	Haut Conseil de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HRK	Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (German Rector's Conference)
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany)
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LRC	Lisbon Recognition Convention
NFQ	National Qualifications Frameworks
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
QA	Quality Assurance
QF	Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Introduction

The reforms of higher education (HE) policies in Europe in recent decades cannot entirely be explained by political developments originating from within individual countries. To understand the cross-border spread of policies, international institutions, in particular international governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as international policy programs have to be taken into account as catalysts of change. Bi- and multilateral agreements between states, international programs like the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) or transnational think tanks and NGOs active in HE communicate and disseminate ideas and concrete policies across borders, influence states' preferences, and establish forums for mutual exchange and cooperation. As a result, national HE systems have increasingly adapted to external processes and pressures. Due to these developments of uploading policies on the international level and downloading them to the national level (Börzel & Risse, 2003), we observe ambiguous change: on the one hand, processes of policy diffusion and convergence have occurred and explain why states have introduced similar reforms of their HE systems. At the same time, processes of divergence occur as states interpret and implement impetuses from the international level in different ways.

An example of this is the Bologna Process, the major international stimulus for HE policy diffusion across Europe in the last 22 years (see Broucker et al., 2019). It is a unique HE policy harmonization process taking place outside the policy-making framework of the European Union (EU), and originates from the Sorbonne Declaration (1998). The Sorbonne Declaration, which was signed by the education ministers of France, Italy, Great Britain and Germany, aimed for the harmonization of the architecture of the European HE systems via horizontal policy creation and

exchange. Even though it was criticized as an isolated attempt by a few countries (Teichler, 2012), the concept found widespread support in other European countries. Thus, in June 1999, the ministers of 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration. Its basic aims are the creation of a European higher education area (EHEA) to enhance the comparability and compatibility of HE structures and degrees in Europe, to increase cross-border student mobility, and to institutionalize quality assurance mechanisms.¹

Creating a counterbalance to the U.S. as the largest HE market, the Bologna Process and resulting policy diffusion and convergence processes were strongly driven by economic motives. Subsequently, the national HE policies of now nearly 50 countries, which also encompass Eastern Europe and Russia, are increasingly influenced by non-hierarchical multilateral agreements. The Bologna Process has essentially functioned as a regulatory standard for policy diffusion by coordinating the structure of HE programs, degrees and quality assurance mechanisms in the region. Although the process was initiated two decades ago and most signatory states already adopted Bologna-style policies in the 2000s, the follow-up initiatives undertaken in the realm of the Bologna Process persist up to today. The process of diffusing ideas of how HE in Europe should become more alike and the implementation of policies are far from complete (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020). However, nearly all European countries have re-calibrated their HE policies with regard to degree and program structures. Importantly, the diffusion processes have affected not only the core areas of HE by the Bologna guidelines (e.g. study structures), but also had significant side-effects on other areas of policy like HE governance (Dobbins & Knill, 2014; Chou et al., 2017). Some countries have even gone as far as to redefine the HE polity and thus the distribution of territorial competences over HE (Dobbins et al., 2018).

Today, HE systems have to react to two almost opposing dynamics, namely cooperation on the European level and competition for individual students, academics and research funding; they coordinate their study programs and structures in order to facilitate mobility across institutions and national borders while at the same time they need to be distinct from others in order to attract national as well as international students, researchers and sponsors. Even non-European countries follow the Bologna model individually to increase their HE systems' compatibility with the EHEA, thereby facilitating cooperation. These countries might simply feel pressured to comply with the standards set by the EHEA, which is the largest comprehensive HE area in an increasingly globalized education market. Thus, Bologna as a process of policy diffusion has expanded beyond (geographical) Europe and has attracted attention and imitations on global scale; it has become a template for regional coordination processes in HE in other world regions (Vögtle & Martens, 2014).

¹For a detailed overview of the genesis, objectives and governance mode of the Bologna Process, see Vögtle (2019).

The harmonization processes in the realm of the Bologna Process are largely driven by mechanisms of soft governance, such as policy diffusion, transfer, and emulation. The degree of systemic change, however, depends very much on the starting point before joining the Bologna Process. Nearly all European countries now operate a HE system with three cycles of qualification including a bachelor's and a master's degree, followed by doctoral training. However, even structural issues such as ECTS credit points and length of study for each cycle still vary across countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020; Viðarsdóttir, 2018).

In this chapter, we look at the Bologna Process as a process of policy diffusion and regional convergence across Western Europe. We focus in particular on the issue of quality assurance in HE because it not only affects the core competence of national decision-making and is a hard case for the impact of soft governance through policy diffusion, but also remains under-researched in the literature (for exceptions see Serrano-Velarde, 2008; Gornitzka & Stensaker, 2014; Vukasovic, 2013 and the edited volume by Hazelkorn et al., 2018). Most previous studies on the Bologna Process either compare different countries and its policy implementation stage or look at international-national and thus vertical interactions. The Bologna Process created a multidimensional architecture of policy diffusion, as its contents need to be translated into subnational levels (e.g. in federal systems) and into individual institutions. It cannot be seen as a simple one-dimensional process of policy diffusion from the top and to nation states leading to a convergence of HE systems across Western Europe. National peculiarities come into play and the theoretical framework of historical (neo-) institutionalism helps to grasp why states reacted differently to the stimuli of the Bologna Process.

First, we review policy diffusion literature and point out current trends, before defining and exploring other concepts closely linked to diffusion research, which may also help to understand the Bologna Process. We then scope the literature on the Bologna Process and the EHEA and show how both bodies of literature (policy diffusion and Bologna Process research) increasingly relate to each other. Second, we explore how transnational communication can serve as a theoretical framework for examining cross-national vertical as well as horizontal HE policy diffusion in the absence of legally binding agreements. In the empirical section, we outline some basic features of the Bologna Process as a process of policy diffusion before focusing on quality assurance and its diffusion across different countries. To illustrate our arguments, we explore the cases of Germany, France, and Italy, three of the four founding countries of the Bologna Process if counting the 1998 Sorbonne declaration (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998) as a pre-condition for the ensuing Bologna Process and the EHEA. These three countries are comparable in terms of synchronic external pressure and the influence of other exogenous events. In view of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, which have further evolved over the past 15 years, we then show how the multidimensional architecture of HE systems across Europe has led to the transnational diffusion of new quality assurance policies into entirely different historical contexts.

Policy Diffusion and Related Concepts

Broadly speaking, the concept of policy diffusion is based on the basic idea that “policy choices in one country affect the policy choices in other countries” (Meseguer & Gilardi, 2005, p. 528). Thus, diffusion studies generally explore patterns of dissemination of political innovations, structures and practices across national borders, while seeking explanations for the degree, speed and magnitude of policy diffusion. Of primary importance is the aspect of interdependence in policy-making beyond territorial boundaries, which facilitates cross-context communication, learning and potentially policy dissemination.

American diffusion research has its origins in the observance of policy exchange processes between American federal states. Already 50 years ago, scholars analyzed the diffusion of technologies and innovations across the states (e.g. Walker, 1969) and pinpointed a series of independent variables to explain the speed of adoption of policies. Generally early diffusion studies highlighted both socio-economic and political independent variables, the former encompassing population, urbanization, industrialization, economic prosperity and education, while the latter comprises political factors such as partisan competition, change in government, but also political communication between territorial entities. Berry and Berry (1990) provided a significant new impetus to policy diffusion research by further theorizing the internal determinants of the policy adaptors, i.e. states, and patterns of regional dissemination of policies. They broke down diffusion patterns into four general models – the national interaction model, regional diffusion model, leader laggard model, vertical influence model –, each of which grasps the different dynamics of the spread of policies.

The age of globalization and emergence of transnational governance platforms, in particular through international organizations such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), combined with the rapid expansion of cross-border interactions through modern communication technology have heralded a new era of research on the mechanisms, forms and outcomes of transnational communication. In the context of the Bologna Process, the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and partly the European Commission are actors involved in policy diffusion that have an effect even on countries outside the EHEA. Based on the notions of *policy diffusion*, *convergence*, and *policy transfer* (see below), a growing body of research explores how policies, institutions and ideas existing in one system shape the development of policies in other systems (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). Despite their joint focus on transnational communication, learning, competition and social emulation (Gilardi, 2010), each of these terms is conceptually distinct.

Policy transfer primarily addresses the process by which knowledge about policies, institutions and ideas from a political system influence the design of policies and institutional arrangements of another system (Holzinger & Knill, 2005). Scholars focus above all on individual transfer processes, which can be either voluntary or coercive (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, p. 344). Transfer studies are generally

more concerned with the import or export of individual policies and their characteristics than how they are socially mediated and dispersed. This enables a strong focus on the “agents of transfer” such as parties, bureaucrats or policy entrepreneurs (see Stone, 2004).

Policy diffusion studies pay much greater attention to the socially conveyed dispersion of policies across and within political systems and the socio-economic and political forces driving it (see Strang & Meyer, 1993). Diffusion researchers trace the patterns, degree, speed and magnitude of dissemination of political innovations, but often overlook how policies, practices, and programs are potentially altered along the way (Stone, 2004, p. 547). Thus, policy diffusion can bring forward valuable answers to questions concerning how and why policies travel across similar units, regardless whether they are subunits of federal states or cross-nationally.

Convergence studies, by contrast, generally explore the approximation of policies over time, hence the result and not the process leading to it (Holzinger & Knill, 2005). In other words, convergence researchers are more interested in the actual content of disseminated policies, while diffusion scholars generally dissect the process, not the outcome. Transfer and diffusion may certainly lead to convergence (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Rose, 1993). Yet convergence may also result from processes external to policy diffusion or transfer such as parallel problem pressure (Heichel et al., 2005). Or, as elaborated by Obinger et al. (2013):

Both policy diffusion and policy transfer refer to interdependencies among political systems in the policy-making process. The main difference is the relevance of knowledge and the role of intentional processes (agency) that are emphasized in the policy transfer literature. In contrast, diffusion often includes structural, interest-based and non-intentional processes. (p. 113)

Each body of research has firmly established itself in political science in the past 15–20 years (for an overview of convergence research, see Heichel et al., 2005; policy transfer research Benson & Jordan, 2011; diffusion research Graham et al., 2013). Diffusion scholars have explored policies spanning from economic and political liberalism (Simmons et al., 2008), to same-sex marriage (De Vries Jordan, 2018), on to sustainable energy portfolios (Chandler, 2009). Particularly noteworthy are the diffusion studies conducted by Gilardi and colleagues, as their work extracted factors why policies diffuse or do not. The study on hospital funding reform (Gilardi et al., 2009) shows that the likelihood of policy change is contingent on the (in) effectiveness of the existing policies in both the home country and other country, whereby veto-players may significantly aggravate the prospects of change. A 2010 study on the retrenchment of unemployment benefits contends that not all policy-makers are equally sensitive to new information, as prior beliefs and ideological convictions constitute crucial variables (Gilardi, 2010). He also shows that right-wing governments are generally more sensitive to the electoral consequences of policy change via diffusion, whereas left-wing governments are more sensitive to the effects of diffused policies.

Policy diffusion research has not only become more clearly defined and elaborate, but also has been applied to a wide range of policy fields and to various

political levels. While it has its origins in American federalism, it is now an essential tool to analyze international and transnational processes of policy exchange and harmonization diffusion, including the HE sector.

The Bologna Process from the Diffusion and Convergence Perspective

In the 2000s, scholars began to analyze whether and how the European HE agenda facilitates national reforms (e.g. Huisman & Van der Wende, 2004). Inspired by the Europeanization literature, researchers focused on the national implementation of policies defined on the European level. For example, Pechar & Pellert (2004) analyze the harmonization of study structures and the integration of the “European dimension” into study content and structures in Austria, while Malan (2004) describes the Bologna-related reforms in France (see Moscati, 2009 for Italy; Fátima & Abreu, 2007 for Portugal). However, most analyses of Bologna-related policy diffusion and related concepts remained at the descriptive level (see Rakic, 2001; Bleiklie, 2001).

Johanna Witte’s “Change of degrees and degrees of change: Comparing adaptations of European HE systems in the context of the Bologna process” is arguably the starting point of academic research on the impact of the Bologna Process (Witte, 2006). From a comparative perspective, her study covers in detail the historical paths of Germany, England, France and the Netherlands regarding their participation in the Bologna Process as well as the implementation of policies related to the institutional and degree structure, curricular, access and transition to employment and funding. She highlighted not only the different motives of the countries but also their diverse obstacles and demands towards implementation.

Also during the 2000s, other scholars began to theorize the interplay between international and national-level governance structures. In another key contribution, Heinze and Knill (2008) draw on several political science theories to develop hypotheses on the potential impact of Bologna on national HE policies and in particular cross-country convergence. They argue that linguistic and cultural similarity, preferences of governing parties, pre-existing policy similarity, similar problem pressure and veto players are crucial determinants of the transnational diffusion and convergence of HE policies in Europe. An edited volume by Martens et al. (2010) also theorizes the Bologna Process as an international governance platform and its impact on national policy-making in Germany, Switzerland, the UK, New Zealand and USA as a contrasting case. Their central argument is that the role of the state in governing education has changed tremendously, but embedded ideals on the role and function of education as well as national veto-players are decisive variables in explaining change and inertia.

Dobbins and Knill (2009) systematically analyzed the convergence of HE policy in Central and Eastern Europe during the Bologna Process. They argue that the

spread of market-oriented governance instruments is heavily dependent on external pressure and transnational communication with western European countries as well as pre-communist and communist traditions (e.g. Humboldt model, state-centeredness). Drawing on similar indicators, their 2014 book (Dobbins & Knill, 2014) explores how historical legacies and transnational communication have channeled the impact of 'soft Europeanization' into new governance constellations in Italy, France, Germany and the UK.

Processes of policy diffusion and the degree of transnational policy convergence during the Bologna Process have also been analyzed with quantitative methods. For instance, Vögtle and Martens (2013) explore how Bologna-driven transnational communication has fostered the convergence of policies in Europe and beyond. They focus on study structures and quality assurance and show, based on an analysis of country dyads, that the degree of policy convergence among Bologna participants is stronger than for non-participating countries. While exploring convergence of HE degree structures as well as QA systems, Vögtle (2014) defines three indicators for measuring the factual implementation of policies and cross-national convergence: the adoption of policies, their instrumental design, and the degree of policy implementation. For convergence in instrumental design, integration into transnational communication networks is decisive, particularly regarding study structures. She concluded that the degree of HE policy convergence is greatly overestimated if analyses merely focus on policy adoption, while disregarding the actual similarity in instrumental design of the degree of implementation (Vögtle, 2014).

In sum, the Bologna Process is a goldmine for diffusion and convergence research. Its premises and processes make it not only a favorable case for diffusion and convergence approaches, but preexisting theoretical heuristics themselves have also been developed further due to their application to this case.

The Bologna Process as a Platform for Policy Diffusion Through Transnational Communication

The concept of transnational communication has served as a framework for observing the occurrence of cross-national policy diffusion in the absence of legally binding agreements (for instance in Holzinger et al., 2008). But how does transnational communication induce cross-national policy diffusion and domestic policy change? Particularly useful are the four sub-mechanisms of transnational communication, each of which may trigger voluntary policy diffusion: *lesson-drawing*, *transnational problem-solving*, *policy emulation* and *international policy promotion* (Holzinger & Knill, 2005). These mechanisms denote four different processes through which policies become more alike in the absence of coercive procedures.

Lesson-drawing (Rose, 1993) denotes a process where one state learns from another one what has to be done or omitted when certain problems occur. The concept implies the existence of a 'best option' or policies perceived as such. Following

this reasoning, the most effective and cost-efficient way to reform policies is to align oneself with examples and models developed elsewhere. By contrast, *transnational problem-solving* focusses on how solutions are searched for and found in what Haas (1992) defines as “epistemic communities”. These transnational elite networks, which may include international organizations as transfer agents, enable actors to develop shared perspectives, which ultimately may trigger international harmonization. *Policy emulation*, by contrast, describes one-directional policy transfer, a process of copying foreign policies and implementing them. Inherent in this concept is the idea that reformers imitate rather than innovate, and thus often fail to appropriately adapt policies to national circumstances (Brunsson & Olsen, 1993). *International policy promotion* describes how organizations operating in a certain area actively promote certain policies and thereby specify objects and standards for countries to align themselves with (Holzinger & Knill, 2008). Subsequently, countries whose pre-existing policies diverge from these policies may feel pressured to either justify their diverging policies or adapt them to the ones promoted internationally (Holzinger & Knill, 2005), which can be viewed as a cost-efficient way of inducing policy change.

In sum, the Bologna Process can be defined as an institutionalized structure for the exchange of information among participating countries that is linked to all of the mechanisms of transnational communication. First, it structures and fosters communication among participants which increases the likelihood of cross-national transfer in the form of lesson-drawing. Second, it has created a network of actors possessing the potential to establish an international policy culture concerning HE policies, and thus can be conceived as a transnational problem-solving network. Third, with increasing numbers of participants and involved non-governmental stakeholders, the emergence of diffusion dynamics and thus emulation of policy choices from other countries becomes more likely. Lastly, the Bologna Process displays all the characteristics of international policy promotion, with the European Commission as a policy promoter (Stone, 2004), lowering information costs for participating countries or additionally legitimizing preferences of involved governmental and non-governmental actors. Thus, the Bologna Process can be regarded as a normative intent to define appropriate operational logics for European universities (Vögtle, 2014) and has evolved into an international platform for information exchange and policy transfer (Vukasovic, 2014; Elken, 2016).

Historical Institutionalism as an Explanatory Approach for Variation in Policy Implementation of Bologna Provisions

However useful transnational communication may be to explain cross-national policy convergence, it lacks an explanation for national idiosyncrasies and deviant developments amid processes of diffusion. *Historical institutionalism* offers clues on why a similar impetus may result in a range of different consequences (Pierson

& Skocpol, 2002; Thelen, 1999). In other words, reactions to transnational challenges are digested through respective national institutions, hence bringing about a variety of outcomes. The configuration of national institutions has major consequences for the outcome of reforms, as they decisively structure the behavior of actors and channel collective action (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Steinmo, 2008). Importantly, institutions create path dependencies in the sense that they moderate upcoming factors of influence within the context of past events. When there is a certain degree of leeway for implementing multilateral agreements, national institutions may mediate external influences by shaping policy alternatives as well as actors' preferences and decision-making behavior (Steinmo, 2008).

These premises clearly hold true also for HE policy and the Bologna Process. National HE systems and their underlying governance structures have continuously developed along historically chosen pathways – for example the Humboldtian system of academic self-administration. Christensen et al. (2014) argue that universities and HE systems do not respond identically to reforms that aim at changing their structures and cultures. National policy-makers thus react differently to reform stimuli based on national peculiarities and experiences, whereby national education policy traditions and characteristics of national policy-making (e.g. veto-points, consensus orientation or federalist structures) are crucial variables in this respect.

Along these lines, reforms can be blocked, weakened or postponed by actors with veto power or facilitated by a consensus-oriented political culture. Moreover, informal institutions, such as historically entrenched traditions or social understandings and perceptions of education, influence the dynamics and possible ranges of implementation of international norms by evaluating new issues in the light of existing norms and values (Martens et al., 2010). If external reform impetuses starkly contradict traditional views on education policy, reforms are more difficult or less likely and may require a broader change in thinking or normative paradigms.

Against this background, the Bologna Process has been a windfall for researchers wishing to link analytical approaches based on policy diffusion, transnational communication and convergence, etc. with institutionalist approaches. After all, Bologna presented a strong impetus for reforming national HE education governance, but it did not specify how national regulatory arrangements, which are a deeply entrenched core competence of nation states, should be redesigned. Hence, one strand of research explores the mechanisms of transnational communication and patterns of governance emerging at the transnational level. For example, Martens et al. (2007) focus specifically on so-called “New Arenas of Educational Governance”, in which international organizations function as key catalysts of national-level reforms by means of transnational policy promotion, the joint coordination of benchmarking activities and discourse dissemination. Similarly, Maassen and Olsen (2007) explore how different visions of the purpose, mission and governance structures of European universities are floated at the transnational level and pressure national governments to better equip universities for the knowledge society (see also Corbett, 2005). Along these lines, Ravinet (2008) traces empirically how an increasing sense of obligation among Bologna members to efficiently implement the Bologna guidelines took form. She analyzes the development of the so-called

follow-up mechanisms, which were increasingly linked with formal tools and procedures as a basis for cross-country comparison, socialization and imitation. They in turn have coercive effects on national policy-makers.

Other authors (e.g. De Ruiter, 2008) focus on how the *open method of coordination*, which underpins the Bologna Process, assists member states in systematically developing their own coherent and transparent policies in areas in which common policies are not feasible. Instead of generating clear-cut legislation, actors pinpoint and define joint objectives to be reached by setting common benchmarks (statistics, indicators) and employing comparative tools to stimulate innovation. Within this framework, the Bologna platform functions as a loosely-coupled system for the exchange of expertise, know-how and the promotion of concrete principles, approaches, and policy strategies (see Knill & Lenschow, 2005, p. 595; see also Teichler, 2005, p. 22).

Dobbins and Knill (2014) argue, for example, that the Bologna Process has created a platform for *comparative cooperation* or *cooperative competition*, enabling the identification of advanced performers. This falls in line with the increasing international trend towards “governance by comparison” (Martens, 2007) through international HE rankings and national reform activism. Thus, Bologna as a platform for learning increases pressures on national HE policy-makers to assert the legitimacy of national policies amid transnational scrutiny. This is likely to stimulate processes of policy diffusion and convergence.

Yet these horizontal mechanisms of transnational exchange have increasingly also been complemented with more top-down policy diffusion instruments. Through its ever-increasing involvement since 2001, the European Commission made use of its financial and coordinative capabilities to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the stipulated Bologna goals in the participating states (Walter, 2005; Batory & Lindstrom, 2011). Newly developed evaluation procedures have put significant pressure on states lagging behind in implementing goals. Although the European Commission cannot enforce sanctions for non-compliance, it can “name and shame” countries who failed to implement specific policies properly. A significant study in this vein is Vukasovic (2013) who conceptualizes the very notion of Europeanization in HE. She distinguishes between a social learning perspective based on sociological institutionalism, which presumes that actors are persuaded to follow European rules and thus follow a “logic of appropriateness”, and a rational perspective according to which the Bologna Process transforms the opportunity structures for national-level actors through external incentives.

The Bologna Process as a Catalyst for the Diffusion of Quality Assurance

We now shortly highlight why the development of quality assurance systems during the Bologna Process is an especially apt area for policy diffusion, transfer and convergence studies. Quality assurance has been on the Bologna agenda almost since its onset and became a cornerstone in aligning European HE systems since quality

assurance was seen as one of the main tools to strengthen trust between them. The primary aim remains to ensure confidence in the quality of educational provision, to safeguard standards of awards, to assist higher education institutions in improving and enabling international comparability and student mobility (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020:64).

In 2001, collaboration by means of a common framework of reference for Quality Assurance (QA) was agreed (Prague Communiqué, 2001) and in 2003, criteria for national QA systems were defined. These include a definition of responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved in the evaluation of programmes or institutions (including internal assessment, external review, participation of students, and the publication of results), a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, and international co-operation (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). In 2005, standards and guidelines proposed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) for QA in the European Higher Education Area were adopted (Bergen Communiqué, 2005); thus during the Bologna Process, a structured peer support approach was created to ensure implementation. Since 2009 ministers have paid particular attention to the improvement of teaching quality (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009) and a revision of the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance (ESG) was decided in 2012 (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012) which were again adopted in 2015, together with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015). In the 2018 Paris Communiqué, the promotion of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes within national HE systems was welcomed and along with the development of a Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR) (ibid, 2018). Thus, the Paris Communiqué has coalesced the developments of the Bergen, London and Yerevan Communiqués into one key commitment of ‘quality assurance in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area’ (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020, p. 70).

Due to the definition of common criteria for internal and external QA systems, the development of the ESG can be regarded as the main Bologna ‘QA achievement’. Since HE institutions were called on to set standards for programs and degrees and to periodically monitor these against predefined standards, the ESG stipulated the creation of internal information systems and the publication of all QA-related information. Additionally, systems for student and teaching staff assessment were set up. It was also agreed that external QA systems be established to evaluate the effectiveness of the internal QA, to define and apply explicit quality criteria and to publish individual outcomes. Follow-up procedures, cyclical reviews as well as system-wide analyses back up the quality assessment. In addition, complying countries and agencies are listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), guaranteeing that the standards and guidelines (ESG) are respected and implemented.

Although the ESG define fundamental structures for QA, the comparatively loosely formulated ESG leave some leeway for national implementation of diffused policies and institutions. At this point, country-specific idiosyncrasies come into play to explain differences in national QA mechanisms. National QA systems can vary regarding *actors and institutions* exerting control over the process. For

example, in some cases QA is conducted by the state/ministry or a quasi-state body, in others the actors most present in the body are high-ranking academics instead of state bureaucrats; external stakeholders, for example from business and trade unions or students, may be present. Moreover, the *areas* QA covers vary: This may be the quality of teaching or research, university infrastructure and other issues of institutional capacity. In addition, QA *procedures* can have a large span: from internal review and self-assessment to external review and peer review. Furthermore, a distinction is frequently drawn between QA systems focusing on the *ex ante* capacity of HE providers to carry out programmes and *ex post* control which focuses on institutional output, often based on comparative performance indicators (see Perellon, 2005).

Figure 18.1 depicts how far quality assurance systems have developed in alignment with the agreed Bologna commitments. Systems in the dark green category possess a fully functioning, nationwide quality assurance system working with quality assurance agencies that have been evaluated to show that they are working in accordance with ESG, and this is demonstrably proven through registration on the EQAR. Countries in the light green category also operate a system with quality assurance agencies evaluated to ensure that they comply with the ESG, or declaring that they are fully aligned with the ESG; but have not registered on the EQAR. The countries in yellow have only some higher education institutions or programmes required to undertake regular quality assurance procedures with an agency working in compliance with the ESG. For those countries shown in orange, the QA system has undergone no external evaluation to ensure compliance with the ESG; Belarus (red) has not yet produced evidence of having established a reliable QA system. In sum, according to the latest Bologna Process Implementation Report, 36 participant countries' higher education systems find themselves in the dark or light green categories (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020, p. 73).



Fig. 18.1 Stage of development of the external quality assurance system in 2018/19 according to the 2020 Implementation Report. (Data source: Bologna Process Implementation Report 2020, map created with the *rworldmap* package in R)

After providing this broad picture of the stage of implementation regarding QA measures in Bologna Process member countries, we turn to compare the development of quality assurance in Germany, France, and Italy. These comparisons show how transnational policy recommendations have been implemented on the national and institutional level against the background of idiosyncratic pre-existing arrangements. While comprehensive QA systems as conceptualized in the Bologna Process diffused into all three countries, they remain heavily contingent on national institutions and path dependencies.

Germany

Before the Bologna Process, German universities did not operate a formalized or even standardized QA system. Weakly institutionalized norms of academic scholarship informally served to secure teaching and research quality, while each ministry of the 16 *Bundesländer* exerted hierarchical legal control over procedural decisions. Into the 1990s examinations and study regulations were approved by the *Länder* ministries through the General Examination Regulations (*Rahmenprüfungsordnungen*) drawn up by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, KMK²) and the German Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz*, HRK). Within this framework and according to the fundamental principle of freedom of research, lecturers were able to autonomously determine teaching content without any oversight, while research output was not formally monitored by institutions or the government.

However, in parallel with the Bologna Process, new institutions, norms and instruments of quality assurance have diffused into all levels of German HE at an unprecedented pace. Focusing on matters of assuring the quality of teaching, the process kicked in early with the setup of the national Accreditation Council (*Akkreditierungsrat*) in 1998, responsible for decisions on the accreditation of individual study programs and university quality assurance systems (so-called system accreditations). The first step best reflects the diffusion mechanism of lesson-drawing: Based on previous developments in other countries (e.g. the USA) German HE policy-makers came to identify *ex ante* study program accreditation as the most viable quality assurance approach. Reflective of German federalism, the Accreditation Council had, however, no direct authority to directly accredit study programs, but rather merely accredits decentral accreditation agencies. Several mainly non-profit agencies (QA agencies) with actual accreditation

²The KMK coordinates processes concerning the education system in Germany. It describes itself as “a consortium of ministers responsible for education and schooling, institutes of higher education and research and cultural affairs, and in this capacity formulates the joint interests and objectives of all 16 federal states”. <https://www.kmk.org/kmk/information-in-english/standing-conference.html> (retrieved August 22, 2019).

competences were established and structured similarly to the Accreditation Council.

The assessment panels of the QA agencies comprise both professors and students, as well as business representatives and other public stakeholders who – in contrast to the German tradition of academic oligarchy – contribute external expertise and aim to secure minimal standards and the labor market relevance of study programs across all *Länder*. The decentralized agencies in turn conduct discipline-specific evaluations of study programs. However, the majority of the panel members were always from within HE institutions, thus reinforcing the German tradition of professional accountability in a path-dependent manner.

One key development stimulated by Bologna in Germany according to international policy promotion was the gradual shift towards institutional evaluations of universities' internal QA mechanisms instead of detailed accreditations of individual academic study programs. In other words, if a university's QA system is deemed acceptable, the institution may evaluate its own teaching and study programs based on principles equivalent to those applied to QA agencies. In line with the Bologna recommendation for cyclical reviews, these institutional accreditations are then subject to re-accreditation after a number of years. Hence, the system functions on both an *ex ante* and *ex post* basis. Germany partially doubled-down on its preexisting emphasis on academic self-governance to the extent that institutions organize their own QA mechanisms, while including both internal and external experts. Thus, this duality reflects German path dependency and policy diffusion at the same time. As a result, successful accreditation is a pre-requisite for universities to carry out study programs.

In 2018, the Bologna-inspired system was reformed and competencies between *Länder*, agencies and the Accreditation Council were newly arranged. The *Länder* established the so-called Interstate Study Accreditation Treaty (*Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag*) on the organization of a common accreditation system to secure the quality of studies and teaching at German HE institutions. The major novelty with this Interstate Treaty is that the new Foundation Accreditation Council (*Stiftung Akkreditierungsrat*) decided on the accreditation of a study program or system accreditation, and no longer the individual agencies with accreditation competences.³ Furthermore, the Accreditation Council's competence to set rules was transferred to the *Länder* and the material examination of the agencies carried out so far by the Accreditation Council was moved to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) (Bartz & Mayer-Lantermann, 2017). The execution of the accreditation process, however, still lies with the now ten different agencies. Thus, structural and institutional tasks for providing universities with means to enable study program are still carried out by the *Länder*, while criteria and process rules for accreditation are laid down in the Interstate

³The newly established Foundation Accreditation Council consists of four representatives of the universities and four representatives of the *Länder*. In addition five business stakeholders, two students, and two representatives from abroad with experience in accreditation are members. One representative belonging to the Accreditation Council with advisory function.

Treaty. This reflects the historical principle of shared responsibilities between the federal and the *Länder* level.

Simultaneously, it is an explicit task of the Foundation Accreditation Council to foster international cooperation with regard to quality assurance and the establishment of a European Higher Education Area. Therefore, universities can also commission agencies for accreditation, which are not based in Germany. Such agencies have to be registered by the EQAR and accredited by the Accreditation Council. Currently, only one Swiss and one Austrian agency fulfil these criteria as final reports have to be written in German. In addition, the Accreditation Council has to ensure that the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) are taken into account in accreditation processes. Thus, European norms and principles are diffusing into the German system as a whole, while education policy as a field – with the exception of regulations regarding HE entry guidelines and graduation degree – remains decentralized after the federalism reforms and remains with the individual *Länder*.

France

France looks back on an even stronger tradition of state-centered HE governance than Germany, both in terms of the regulation of individual universities as well as territorial competencies. Universities were only declared autonomous institutions in 1984, but still were strongly vertically steered by the centralist state. The steady increase of university autonomy in recent decades heralded the evolution of an extensive and multilateral QA regime, which maintained a stronger state-centered character than its German counterpart. Even before the onset of Bologna, the 1997 Bayrou Reform institutionalized mandatory, yet relatively “soft” evaluation of universities by the national *Comité National d’Evaluation* (CNE) (Paivandi, 2017). This is a striking analogy to the German pre-Bologna reforms and also reflects lesson-drawing from other states. In the 2000s, however, the Bologna Process coalesced with a series of other factors, most notably France’s repeated poor performance in international rankings (Dobbins, 2012). In line with the centralist French tradition, pre-existing evaluation bodies for different types of HE institutions were merged into the *Agence de l’évaluation de la recherche et de l’enseignement supérieur* (AERES) in 2007 which operated as an independent administrative authority. Like the more decentralized German evaluation bodies, it externally evaluated study programs, but in strong contrast to Germany, it also provides reviews of entire HE institutions and research institutions. Its membership is also arguably more diverse than German accreditation bodies, as it consists of not only French and international academics and researchers, but also student and university management representatives and members of the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS).

What also differs from Germany is its strong emphasis on the evaluation of academic “products” and output, as reflected in a relatively broad range of indicators

such as research and teaching performance, study offers, student satisfaction and quality of student life, to relationships with external research institutes, and management of human resources. While quality assurance in HE was previously characterized by curricular control by the state (Chevaillier, 2007), AERES quickly aligned itself with the idea of “governing by numbers” or New Public Management in general, arguably to a greater extent than its German counterparts. Specifically, it was one of the few HE evaluation agencies in Europe to rely on bibliometric indicators such as the impact factors of journals in which French academics publish and to make all evaluation results public. France also systematically institutionalized linkages between AERES and university management to the extent that evaluation results for individual academics are passed on to university management, which in turn may formally reward or sanction individual researchers. In a marked shift away from state-centrism, France also introduced the internal evaluations of universities, which are organized by governing bodies within universities (*conseil d’administration*). Another interesting feature going beyond Bologna recommendations is that AERES regularly had its own operations evaluated by European experts. Thus, in line with European trends, French HE quality assurance has become highly internationalized and driven by *ex post* criteria for the evaluation of teaching and research.

Yet like Germany, France underwent a significant “post-Bologna” reform of quality assurance, reflecting to some extent a “strike back” by historical institutions and the academic community. In 2013, the responsibilities of AERES were transferred to the *Haut Conseil de l’évaluation de la recherche et de l’enseignement supérieur* (HCERES). AERES was regarded as being detached from the academic world and overly intrusive. It was also deemed as problematic that the President of the Republic appointed the President of AERES, who in turn appointed the accreditation and evaluation experts without any open elections. Moreover, substantial critique was expressed regarding the excessive diffusion of Anglo-Saxon concepts of academic merit into the French context and the inflexibility of the evaluation criteria (Boure, 2019). These perceived affronts to the principle of academic collegiality gave rise to a new agency that purportedly caters more to the sensitivities of the academic community. Unlike AERES, which was seen as more of a controlling authority, HCERES places a heavier emphasis on the career progression and pathways of academic researchers. Altogether, it focuses to a larger extent on developing potential, not only of individual academics and institutions, but also regional networks of universities and research institutes based on the principle of cross-fertilization (Paivandi, 2017). However, academic interest organizations have also directed similar critique at HCERES as previously towards AERES, namely that its assessors are not elected and not independent from the state (Sauvons l’Université, 2013).

Italy

Driven by early attempts at modernization, the foundations of a culture of quality assurance were, like in Germany and France, laid in the 1990s in Italy with the establishment of the *nuclei di valutazione* and a government committee for the evaluation of research performance (National Research Evaluation Committee – the *Comitato di Indirizzo per la Valutazione della Ricerca* (CIVR). The *nuclei di valutazione* essentially conducted self-assessments of university teaching and research. However, the assessments turned out to be rather ineffective due to lacking transparency in university management structures and resistance by the academic community. The Bologna Process as a mechanism of international policy promotion delivered a strong impetus to the institutionalization of more multilateral quality assurance mechanisms. The *Comitato Nazionale la valutazione del sistema universitario* (CNVSU), which is in operation since 1999, took on the task of reviewing the self-evaluation reports drawn up within the *nuclei di valutazione* as a prerequisite for state funding of universities. Students are also involved in the evaluation of teaching activities through questionnaires, the results of which are published within institutions and then transmitted by the *nuclei di valutazione* to the CNVSU. Beyond this, the CNVSU sets general criteria for evaluating university performance, drafts an annual report on the state of the Italian university system and student life, while also providing recommendations for system funding and drawing national development plans.

In line with Germany and France, CNVSU aimed to introduce study program accreditation in Italy based on numerous minimum requirements (classroom size, number of lecturers, etc.). However, the accreditation mechanisms failed to take effect and stimulate curricular modernization. This resulted in the enhancement of the role of the *nuclei di valutazione* in quality assurance and essentially a more collegial approach. Specifically, the evaluation units were chosen by university senates without state influence, but in turn were entrusted by the state with ensuring that the internal operations of universities are in compliance with the law (Capano, 2017, p. 206). Thus the *nuclei* became important providers of information on university workings for the state-operated CNVSU.

Towards the official end of the Bologna Process in 2010, Italian quality assurance – similarly to Germany and France – experienced a significant institutional transformation. A new national quality assurance body – ANVUR – *Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca* – replaced the two preexisting state bodies mentioned above – CNVUS and CIVR. The creation of ANVUR can be considered an extreme case of policy diffusion, as major parts of its mode of operation were modeled after the French AERES and the British Research Assessment Exercise (Nosengo, 2013).

The ANVUR is endowed with operational, managerial as well as budget autonomy and relatively shielded off from “academic capture”. This is interesting because research has shown that other Italian HE governance institutions have been particularly prone to takeovers by academic oligarchies (e.g. the *Consiglio di*

amministrazione) (Dobbins & Knill, 2014). ANVUR holds a wide range of task and responsibilities spanning from the accreditation of both universities as institutions and degree courses, defining funding parameters for university operations, and evaluating research quality. It takes a middle-ground between evaluating entire departments and individual researchers to the extent that the quality of university departments' research is evaluated on the basis of three "products" of each individual affiliated academic (Capano, 2017). What is also notable is that evaluation teams may opt between peer review and bibliometric criteria and in contrast to the German case, ANVUR prescribes standard methods and criteria for the national harmonization of internal self-evaluation procedures at universities.

Comparison

In sum, our analysis showed that the foundations for quality assurance were set in the 1990s in all three countries, driven largely by domestic problem pressure and a shift towards New Public Management. The Bologna Process then provided the thrust for the further institutionalization and systematization of all three systems. It appears that international policy promotion initially served as the main diffusion mechanism, as the objectives of all systems were largely based on Bologna guidelines. Yet critical differences still exist in the institutional configurations of the systems, which can be explained by both pre-existing institutional peculiarities as well as "differential policy emulation" in the more recent phase. Table 18.1 depicts the historical and pre-Bologna situation, while also providing insights on the (post-) Bologna policies based on Perellon's (2005) dimensions of quality assurance (see above).

Since education policy in the Federal Republic of Germany has always been highly decentralized and the *Länder* have formal authority in autonomously governing most aspects of HE, the introduction of the standardized HE QA system was strongly shaped by this historical principle and the QA system later became entangled in the intricacies of German federalism. The *Länder* opposed a strong commitment of the *Bund* and pushed for the decentralized approach with multiple accreditation agencies instead of one central accreditation body. Another longstanding feature of the German HE system was the strong emphasis on academic self-management (according to the Humboldtian principle). This historically established pathway is also reflected in the design of the German QA system where members of universities play a prominent role in the accreditation process while state representatives are not represented in the decentralized accreditation agencies.

The new French accountability regime is multipolar and aims to safeguard both internal accountability (i.e. university management and internal stakeholders) as well as external accountability (i.e. towards the state) in the provision of services to students, the research community and civil society stakeholders. Thus, the French quality assurance system overshoot the Bologna Process as its centralized system enables it to install institutions comparatively easily. This was also reflected in the

Table 18.1 Comparing developments of QA in HE in GER, FRA, and ITA

	Germany	France	Italy
Traditional	No standardized QA, Humboldtian academic freedom paired with hierarchical state control of framework legislation	State-centric HE governance and supervision by centralist state	No standardized QA
Pre-Bologna	Accreditation Council (1998): external expertise & secure minimal standards	Mandatory but soft evaluation mechanism by CNE (1997)	<i>Nuclei di valutazione</i> and CIVR (1998) conduct self-assessments of university teaching and research
Bologna and Post-Bologna	Actors/Institutions First decentralized QA agencies dominated by academic profession; since 2018 shift to common accreditation system operated by 10 agencies; also commissioned agencies mainly from Austria/Switzerland; increasing external stakeholderhip	Actors/Institutions First independent administrative institution (AERES, 2007); since 2013 HCERES (State-appointed) French and international academics with student, university and CNRS representatives	Actors/Institutions State-operated CNVSU (1999) with heavy academic participation Independent ANVUR (2010) with weaker academic participation
	Procedures External accreditation, but shift to internal evaluation	Procedures External evaluation (including bibliometrics)	Procedures External accreditation and evaluation; ANVUR opts between peer review or bibliometric criteria
	Areas Study programs	Areas Study programs and entire universities; new emphasis on French academic traditions and career progression of researchers	Areas Evaluation of research quality; ANVUR criteria for university self-evaluation:
	Time Ex ante accreditation & ex post re-accreditation	Time Ex post evaluation	Time Ex post

various institutions and practices emulated from more market-oriented contexts (bibliometric data, strong ex post orientation of evaluations, etc.). However, there has been a recent rollback, leading to a modified framework that better accommodates the sensitivities of the academic community. The main area of change in Italy appears to have been within the state, which has strongly embraced the concept of the “evaluative state” (Neave, 1998). Thus, the idea of installing a functioning quality assurance system diffused to Italy with the Bologna model, but the

institutionalization of mechanisms remained difficult due to the Italian actors' constellation. More recently, the government attempted to overcome these challenges by directly emulating key elements of the now dismantled French AERES and the British Research Assessment Exercise.

Thus, while in all three countries the idea of QA in HE was diffused through the Bologna Process and all three countries implemented QA procedures accordingly, the national idiosyncrasies in HE policies can account for divergent developments and central actors within the national QA systems. Besides formal institutions of the domestic political systems (e.g. federalism vs. centralism) ideological, informal institutions also influenced the implementation of national HE QA mechanisms, whereas newer QA developments and experiences within individual Bologna members themselves have also more recently provided fertile ground for new efforts at policy emulation to optimize existing configurations.

Summary and Discussion

In its early years, the Bologna Process was characterized by a constant move towards widening with regard to number of participating countries and stakeholders as well as for the included policies, which present a mixture of tangible measures and mere statements of intentions. From the point of transnational communication scholars, it is not surprising that the Bologna Process was highly successful in its first 10 years and that it attracted so many countries. Due to the adoption and integration of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in national practice, quality assurance is an example of the Bologna Process' "success" with regard to cross-national policy convergence; yet in some countries there is still (ample) room for improvement (see Fig. 18.1), also when it comes to the involvement of students as equal partners (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, 2020).

However, the issue of non-implementation or persistent national idiosyncrasies even if applying the same regulatory framework, is something for which transnational communication cannot easily provide explanations. For instance, degree structures still considerably vary across the EHEA. Workloads behind qualifications differ largely between education systems and programs that fall completely outside of Bologna structures are still offered in some countries. This presents an obstacle to the full and automatic cross-border recognition of degrees and qualifications (Viðarsdóttir, 2018). Lately, this implementation deficit both between policy areas and countries has evolved into a major topic of concern (Paris Communiqué, 2018).

Since most of the Bologna-promoted policies and tools have been around before the process was launched, as in the case of QA, the Bologna Process has combined and concentrated policies rather than developed them; it bundles HE policies perceived as best practices and structures how they should be implemented (Vögtle,

2014). Especially this ‘product control’ approach (in contrast to the harmonization of contents and processes) might lend the Bologna Process its attractiveness, as there is no legal framework to enforce the implementation of agreed upon reforms. The Bologna model can thus be called a framework – for it only prescribes the *structure*, not the content, of HE programmes and their provision, leaving enough leeway for signatory states to reform HE policies according to national contexts and political preferences. Due to incomplete or even failed policy transfer, after 20 years, the EHEA still remains a patchwork, where HE systems have adopted similar structural reforms at the macro-level, but there is less convergence with regard to the degree of implementation of the adopted policies (see Vögtle, 2014; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). This is also evident in the area of QA; by 2020, over 300 external quality assurance activities were offered by agencies registered in EQAR (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020). Thus, the evaluation instruments of quality assurance agencies and by extension the quality assurance systems where they operate are more complex and diversified than ever. While progress towards convergence has been made in the basic methods and procedures among quality assurance agencies – hence on the structures – there is still large diversity in the forms and types of activities carried out within the European quality assurance framework.

Summing up, transnational communication alone cannot provide explanations for implementation deficits or diversity in, for instance, QA systems even if common procedures are applied. Transnational communication does not provide explicit assumptions about conditions favorable for furthering the adoption of policies; thus further analyses of policy implementation in the realm of the Bologna Process should delve deeper into the specific national and organizational contexts HE institutions are embedded in. Such analyses are needed to detangle the specific national or regional contexts, to identify legal responsibilities and which path-dependencies on the political, cultural or organizational level may cause spurious implementation. Identifying national-level actors and organizations influencing or determining HE policy implementation is crucial in order to explore how and why HE institutions can resist top-down political pressure for reform. Focusing on resource distributions and dependencies as well as contradictions and conflicts in HE governance might shed light on why some transnationally diffused HE policies are (fully) implemented and why others are only superficially implemented, rejected or seemingly ignored.

As our analysis also highlights, bilateral diffusion is taking place between countries. The Bologna Process appears to have elevated new diffusion platforms between nations, triggering the transfer of policies and institutions which are not necessarily of Anglo-American inspiration (e.g. the French AERES). This finding falls in line with other research that shows that bilateral learning and diffusion processes have gained speed in Europe (e.g. Dobbins, 2017a, b). Future research should therefore focus on these new arenas of policy diffusion potentially inspired by, but now functioning outside the realm of Bologna.

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Chapter 19

Policy Diffusion in U.S. Higher Education



Denisa Gándara and Cameron Woolley

Abstract Policy ideas are seldom original; they are often borrowed from other jurisdictions and sometimes adapted to the local context. This chapter reviews research on policy diffusion within the U.S. higher education context, with a focus on the diffusion of higher education policies across states. In addition to reviewing existing literature on U.S. higher education policy diffusion, we present findings from a study that examines newspaper language related to state-level performance-based funding policies for higher education. We focus on two states that considered performance-based funding but were among the few states that did not implement this higher education funding approach. By examining these two states, we are able to explore reasons for non-implementation and shed light on the phenomenon of resistance to policy diffusion.

Introduction

Policy ideas are seldom original, and policymakers often look to other governments for solutions to problems. Sometimes, they pursue policies that seem attractive even before they identify the problems that might need those solutions. This dearth of inventiveness in policymaking is evidenced by the proliferation across many U.S. states of certain policies for higher education, including policies for in-state resident tuition (ISRT) for students with undocumented status, permission to carry guns on campus, and college credit earned while students are in high school (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2018). Two prominent, contemporary manifestations of such policy diffusion in the U.S. are “promise” or “free-college” policies and performance-based funding, which link state

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appropriations for public institutions of higher education to certain performance metrics. As of 2018, promise programs were implemented in 16 U.S. states, with eight of those programs adopted in 2017 alone, signaling their momentum (Mishory, 2018). Performance-based funding policies are even more widespread; as of 2018, they were operating in roughly 30 states (Li, 2018; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). Illustrating the dissemination of policy across national borders (Phillips, 2005), both free-college and performance-based funding policies are also present in other countries (Broucker et al., 2019; de Boer et al., 2015; Haake & Silander, 2021; Hicks, 2012; Jongbloed, 2001; Leišytė & Dee, 2012; Murphy et al., 2018).

Within the U.S., one way in which higher education policies spread across the states is through national and regional organizations (Balla, 2001). For example, Complete College America (<https://completecollege.org>), a national single-issue organization, has proposed specific policy ideas over the past decade for improving college-completion rates. Formerly known as “Game Changers,” Complete College America’s “Strategies” are now widespread across U.S. states (Gándara et al., 2017). This organization has been central in the diffusion of policies related to college completion by working directly with governors and state legislators (Gándara et al., 2017; Rubin & Hearn, 2018).

Other national organizations develop and disseminate repositories of state policies, some of which are intended for higher education. The National Conference of State Legislatures (2015) hosts an interactive database with policies for state post-secondary governance and finance. The Education Commission of the States, an organization specific to education, provides “State Education Policy Tracking” on its website, where users can filter policies by year and issue for postsecondary financial aid, campus safety, and affordability and finance, among other topics (Education Commission of the States, n.d.). These websites present similar ideas across multiple states, thus illustrating the spread of policy ideas or *policy diffusion*.

Policy diffusion occurs when one government (e.g., a state government) adopts a policy similar to a policy of another government (Walker, 1969). The concept of policy diffusion builds on Rogers’ (1962, 1995) more general theory of the diffusion of innovations, which seeks to explain how and why ideas, behaviors, or products spread across a population. Applied to policies, diffusion can occur horizontally (across governments of the same level) or vertically (across governments of different levels) (Shipan & Volden, 2008). This is also known as *policy borrowing* and *policy transfer*, terms more common in the comparative policy literature. Policy borrowing, which is studied primarily in comparative education, focuses on the cross-national emulation of a policy from one context to another (Phillips, 2005). On the other hand, policy transfer encompasses voluntary and involuntary processes that lead to an existing policy’s emergence in a new context (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Marsh & Sharman, 2009; Stone, 2004). In contrast to policy borrowing, policy transfer is more attuned to the political components of policymaking and to the processes by which decisions are made (Marsh & Sharman, 2009; Stone, 2004).

In the literature on higher education in the U.S., *policy diffusion* is the preferred term for the spread of policy ideas (Hearn et al., 2017). Given its dominance in the higher education literature, in this chapter, we review the research on policy diffusion—on whether, when, and how policies spread from one jurisdiction to another. We consider the key tenets of policy diffusion and its application in studies of U.S. higher education policy. Our focus is on governmental (mostly state) policy, although we recognize other types of diffused innovations in U.S. higher education. Many of the diffused innovations that we do not touch on precede the examples that we will present (e.g., the standardizing trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, influenced largely by the creation of academic disciplines and national associations such as the Association of American Universities and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; Geiger, 2016). In particular, we focus on the following models of policy diffusion: regional diffusion (diffusion to nearby states); leader-laggard (when states follow another state viewed as a leader); vertical diffusion (top-down diffusion, such as by federal mandate); and national interaction (diffusion through cross-country interactions). For each model of diffusion, we discuss the degree to which it has been applied in research on higher education.

Finally, we present findings from our study of higher education policy diffusion, in which we examine language related to performance-based funding in local newspapers in two states that had not yet implemented such a funding model as of March 2019. These states, Iowa and West Virginia, represent maximum variation in relevant state characteristics and constitute two of just 15 states without performance funding at the time of data collection. Higher education leaders and observers in both states considered performance funding for several years without ultimately implementing that policy. These cases provide a unique opportunity to explore reasons for non-implementation, or resistance to policy diffusion.

Our exploratory study of performance-based funding in Iowa and West Virginia extends the literature on policy diffusion in higher education in several ways. First, we build on a small literature that uses qualitative research methods to examine how policies spread (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2008; Gándara et al., 2017; Ness & Mistretta, 2010). Second, we draw our data from an underutilized source, text from local newspapers. These data provide unique insights into policy diffusion because the language in local newspapers captures the public framing of policy issues (for another example, see Boushey, 2016). Third, by focusing on non-implementing cases, this study sheds light on rationales for resistance to policy diffusion in the U.S.

In the following section, we outline the primary models of policy diffusion and their application to higher education research in the U.S. We then provide a summary of the primary ways in which the study of policy diffusion in the U.S. has evolved. Next, we present our example of newspaper language related to performance-based funding in non-implementing states. We conclude with potential avenues for future research on higher education policy diffusion.

Models of Policy Diffusion and Their Application in Higher Education Research

Policy scholars have long been interested in the factors that influence the adoption of specific policies. Those factors are the subject of extensive literature on policy innovation, which occurs when a government (e.g., city or state) adopts a non-incremental policy that is new to that government (Berry & Berry, 1990; Walker, 1969). Hearn et al. (2017) have provided a broad, thorough review of the research on policy innovation in higher education.

Early studies of policy innovation examined internal determinants or characteristics within a particular political system, such as a state, that might influence the adoption of a particular policy (Berry & Berry, 1990). However, although internal pressures certainly drive the adoption of policies in states, decisions may also be influenced by external forces, including the adoption of a similar policy by another state. That scenario describes policy diffusion, namely, the process in which the actions taken by another government or governments influence the policy decision in question (Berry & Berry, 1990).

Over the past few decades, scholars of policy diffusion have enhanced our understanding of diffusion processes by advancing models of diffusion, which posit various channels of influence that lead to the convergence of policy across governments (Berry & Berry, 1990). The first and most studied model of diffusion is *regional diffusion*, in which policy decisions are influenced by previous actions of policymakers in geographically proximal states (Shipan & Volden, 2012). Employing regional diffusion models, researchers examine how a given state's adoption of a particular policy depends in part on the policy actions of neighbors. Neighbors are typically operationalized as either adjacent states or states in the same geographic region (e.g., the Southeast). In the U.S. higher education literature, most studies have employed the regional model (Doyle, 2006; Hearn et al., 2008; Johnson & Zhang, 2020a, b; McLendon et al., 2006, 2007, 2011). These studies vary in the extent to which they find evidence of regional diffusion. Still, regional diffusion forces are generally less influential than internal state characteristics, particularly factors of politics and governance.

Second, the *vertical* model of diffusion captures the spread of policies that result from top-down or bottom-up influences. Vertical diffusion occurs when a supra-government influences the activity of a sub-government (e.g., the federal government influences state government) or vice versa (e.g., Boeckelman, 1992; Karch, 2003). In their work on academic capitalism, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) have documented the vertical diffusion of conflict-of-interest policies from the federal government to states and university systems. Their work reveals that beyond disseminating policy, federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation play a critical role in facilitating the spread of capitalistic academic knowledge and learning regimes. An example of bottom-up vertical diffusion is that of free-college or

“promise” programs, which started in municipalities, spread to states, and are being considered by the federal government (Miller-Adams, 2015, 2019).

The third model of diffusion, the *leader-laggard* model, explains how states perceived as leaders in a given policy area are more likely to be emulated (Crain, 1966; Grupp & Richards, 1975; Volden, 2006; Walker, 1969). For example, some states in the U.S. view Tennessee as a trailblazer in higher education policy, including performance-based funding for higher education (Gándara et al., 2017). In quantitative studies, researchers often operationalize states that are wealthier and larger as leader states, citing prior research in which these characteristics have been associated with early policy innovation (Volden, 2006; Walker, 1969). Yet Tennessee is neither one of the wealthiest (total or per capita) or most populous states, so those characteristics are not always good proxies for policy leadership. Qualitative research can go a long way in illuminating which states are truly viewed as leaders and more likely to be emulated in certain policy areas.

Last, according to the *national interaction model*, policy actors are members of a national communication network (Gray, 1973). Contact among policy actors across the country facilitates diffusion (Gray, 1973). Furthermore, this contact can be catalyzed or furthered by intermediary organizations (Gándara et al., 2017). Many intermediaries function as formal institutional arrangements and provide platforms for the congregation (physical or virtual) of policy actors (Orphan et al., 2020). Through these gatherings, policy actors can share policy ideas, resulting in the diffusion of policy innovations.

A few notable exceptions to the overwhelming focus on regional diffusion in the higher education literature are studies that examine national interaction (e.g., Cohen-Vogel et al., 2008; Gándara et al., 2017). Although early studies of national interaction’s influence on diffusion were quantitative (Gray, 1973), the higher education studies that use a national interaction model of diffusion employ qualitative research methods to garner policy actors’ perspectives on policy processes. Cohen-Vogel et al. (2008) were among the first to move beyond regional models of policy diffusion in examining higher education policy diffusion. Their study of statewide merit-based aid programs found that interpersonal contact across state policymakers and higher education agency staff contribute to policy diffusion by transferring policy knowledge.

Nearly a decade later, Gándara et al. (2017) explored how college completion policies diffused across three states in the U.S. South. Their study revealed that intermediary organizations could play coercive roles in promoting the diffusion of preferred college completion policies. Those organizations can also promote—and hinder—policy learning by serving as gatekeepers of policy-relevant information, including research evidence.

Developments in the Study of Policy Diffusion in the United States

Recent developments in the study of policy diffusion in the U.S. are largely absent from the higher education literature (Hearn et al., 2017). We discuss them here to delineate possibilities for an expanded research agenda to address policy diffusion in higher education. Scholarly interest in policy diffusion originated with the desire to understand why states adopt certain policies, leading to a body of literature on policy innovation. Early research tended to focus on how various state characteristics (e.g., political party control and economic variables) were associated with the adoption of new policies (e.g., Filer et al., 1988; Regens, 1980). Separately, researchers had begun to examine diffusion influences on policy adoption (Gray, 1973; Walker, 1969).

In 1990, Frances Stokes Berry and William D. Berry published a foundational study of state lottery adoptions. In it, they introduced a new way to study policy innovation and diffusion that would allow researchers to simultaneously consider both internal state characteristics and regional diffusion influences. Their method, *event-history analysis*, originated in biostatistics, where it is known as *survival analysis* (Allison, 1984). Here we provide a brief overview of event-history analysis; we refer the reader to Berry and Berry (1990) for an introduction to this method and its application to policy diffusion. Event-history analyses rely on longitudinal data to model the probability of an event (e.g., policy adoption) at a particular time (Allison, 1984). To study policy diffusion, researchers can use event-history analysis to examine the effects on policy adoption of various state characteristics and of a variable that represents whether neighboring states have adopted the policy in question (Karch, 2007). This neighboring-states variable has generally taken one of two forms, (1) a variable counting the number of adjacent states with the policy in question or (2) a variable capturing how many states in a prespecified geographic region (e.g., the Pacific Northwest) have adopted the policy under analysis (e.g., Johnson & Zhang, 2020b).

The policy diffusion literature in the U.S. has overwhelmingly followed Berry and Berry (1999), who concluded that event-history analysis is the “gold standard” for policy diffusion research. Using quantitative methods—primarily event-history analysis—this research has focused on patterns of policy adoption (Stone, 2004). In other words, policy diffusion research has examined whether and when policies spread from one government to another.

Notwithstanding this overwhelming methodological and conceptual emphasis in policy diffusion research, scholars have extended this research in important and informative ways in recent years. First, researchers are moving beyond the study of regional diffusion to examine other models and mechanisms of policy diffusion (Shipan & Volden, 2012; Volden, 2006). Second, some research on policy diffusion acknowledges the influence of intermediaries, including interest groups, during the policy process (Balla, 2001; Gándara et al., 2017). Third, some studies of policy

diffusion acknowledge that diffusion occurs at various stages of the policy process and entails more than just policy adoption (Karch, 2007; Karch & Cravens, 2014). Finally, a growing body of research uses qualitative methods to examine *how* rather than *whether* policies diffuse (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2008; Starke, 2013).

Different Models of Diffusion

Historically, researchers have focused on the regional diffusion of policies, often neglecting other mechanisms (Karch, 2007; Shipan & Volden, 2012). The primary assumption undergirding this research is that states are more likely to emulate the policies of geographically proximal states. However, there are many reasons why states might not turn to their neighbors but rather to other non-neighboring states (e.g., national leaders in a policy area or states with similar political characteristics) in soliciting or borrowing ideas about policy (Shipan & Volden, 2008). Reasons for the historical emphasis on regional diffusion are largely methodological: traditional event-history analysis does not allow comparisons of other characteristics between states, such as political ideology. For instance, traditional event-history analysis can include a variable that captures how many adjacent states have adopted a policy in question. However, they cannot add variables that capture whether a state (i.e., a potential adopter) has a governor in the same party as a governor in another state that has adopted a particular policy.

In the past decade, researchers studying policy diffusion have begun to employ a variant of event-history analysis known as *dyadic-year* event-history analysis (Gilardi & Füglistler, 2008; Volden, 2006). Gilardi and Füglistler (2008) have provided an excellent, practical overview of this approach. In dyadic-year event-history analysis, data from dyads, or pairs of states, are examined, allowing researchers to compare states directly on various characteristics that may affect policy adoption (Boehmke, 2009). These characteristics include different mechanisms for diffusion, such as policy learning, competition, imitation, and coercion (Shipan & Volden, 2008). Moreover, scholars can examine the similarity of adopted policies between states rather than merely whether a state adopted a specific policy. To our knowledge, only one study (Li & Kelchen, 2021) has employed dyadic-year event-history analysis to study higher education policy diffusion in the U.S.

The Role of Intermediaries in Facilitating Diffusion

A second area of development in the study of policy diffusion involves attention to intermediaries—actors and organizations that bridge policymakers and other entities. In education, intermediaries include advocacy organizations, philanthropic foundations, think tanks, and interest groups (Scott et al., 2015). In 2001, Steven

Balla published a paper on states' reforms of health maintenance organizations, which focuses on interstate professional associations. Prior to this publication, attention to intermediaries in the study of policy diffusion was limited. Despite the importance of Balla's work, however, diffusion research over the decade following this publication paid scant attention to the role of intermediaries (Allen, 2005). This omission is problematic because many intermediaries "view the dissemination of policy-relevant information as a key component of their organizational mission" (Karch, 2007, p. 65). In one of the few examples of research on the role of intermediaries in policy diffusion, Gándara et al. (2017) examined the role of organizations such as Complete College America and philanthropic foundations such as the Lumina Foundation in the diffusion of college completion policies. Findings from that study indicate that intermediaries can play coercive roles in promoting policies, providing both incentives and punishments for adoption. Gándara et al. also showed how intermediaries facilitate, but sometimes also limit, policy learning by serving as gatekeepers for research evidence.

Beyond Policy Adoption

A third development in diffusion research involves attention to the diffusion of policy processes beyond policy adoption and to policy artifacts other than legislation (Hays, 1996; Mossberger, 2000). In 2007, Andrew Karch urged researchers to examine "what is being diffused" in addition to policy ideas (p. 69). He argued that "ignoring the question of policy content, as most state policy diffusion research has done, fails to address an important aspect of variation across space and time that has both theoretical and practical implications" (2007, p. 69). For example, Karch and Cravens (2014) have studied how "three strikes laws" for regular criminal offenses were modified as they diffused across states. A forthcoming paper in the higher education domain likewise focuses on the diffusion of one component present in some performance-based funding policies for higher education, equity metrics that seek to encourage institutions to serve historically underserved populations (Li & Kelchen, 2021).

Beyond policies' components, research on policy diffusion has begun to examine the diffusion of other aspects of the policy process, including rationales and justifications for policies. These elements have been discussed in the literature on policy transfer but remain underexamined in policy diffusion research (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). In one of few studies focusing on policy diffusion preceding policy adoption, McLendon et al. (2011) studied the diffusion of "agenda setting," or the introduction of legislation related to in-state resident tuition for students without legal immigration status. More recently, Johnson and Zhang (2020b) have examined both the introduction and enactment of bills allowing guns on college campuses.

Examining How and Why Policies Diffuse

Policy diffusion research has focused primarily on *whether* policies diffuse, especially because event-history analysis best suits this type of research question. More recent studies have built upon that foundational research to examine *how* and *why* policies diffuse. In these studies, researchers primarily use qualitative research methods (Cohen-Vogel et al., 2008; Dougherty et al., 2013; Gándara et al., 2017; Ingle et al., 2007; Ness & Mistretta, 2010; Weyland, 2007), which are arguably more useful for identifying mechanisms of diffusion (Starke, 2013).

One example in higher education is the adoption of statewide merit-aid programs, which award financial aid to all students within a state who meet certain criteria related to academic achievement. Cohen-Vogel et al. (2008) asked policymakers in states with merit-aid programs why they had chosen to adopt merit-aid policies, inquiring specifically about influences from other states. Their study revealed that state policymakers were partly influenced by neighboring states' adoption of merit-aid policies: competition led to diffusion. In addition, intermediary organizations, including professional associations, played an essential role in disseminating policy ideas across states. Cohen-Vogel et al. urged education researchers to use qualitative methods to study policy diffusion. In our own study, we respond to that call by using qualitative methods to examine text data from newspapers.

Resistance to Diffusion: Examining Performance Funding Hold-Out Cases

Performance-based funding policies for higher education are appropriate for analyzing policy diffusion because they are nearly ubiquitous across the U.S. (Li, 2018). Performance-based funding constitutes one method that states use to fund public higher education institutions, linking state appropriations to institutions' performance on certain metrics (Burke & Minassians, 2003). This policy was first adopted in Tennessee four decades ago (Banta et al., 1996), and it has been introduced in nearly every state since (Dougherty et al., 2016). Some states eventually abandoned their performance-based funding, but in some cases, states reintroduced the policy in a different form after abandoning it (Dougherty & Natow, 2015). As of 2018, approximately 35 states employed some version of performance-based funding (Li, 2018).

In this chapter, we examine Iowa and West Virginia, which are anomalous in that neither state implemented performance-based funding for higher education despite considering such a policy. The other 13 states that had not implemented performance funding as of December 2018 were Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Nebraska, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming. Nearly half of those states are clustered in the Northeast. Beyond this regional clustering, the only major similarity across those

states is the relatively low number of students enrolled in the states' public higher education institutions (State Higher Education Executive Officers [SHEEO], 2019). We focus on Iowa and West Virginia in our analysis because these states exhibit maximum variation in relevant state characteristics (Patton, 1990). In addition, policymakers in both states chose not to implement performance-based funding after thoroughly considering this policy as a funding model.

Previous Research

In studying Iowa and West Virginia, we build on two critical studies that examined why states “hold out” on adopting statewide merit-based financial-aid programs (Ingle et al., 2007; Ness & Mistretta, 2010). These studies identified both internal (within-state) and external (diffusion) factors that account for non-adoption. Ness and Mistretta (2010), in their case-study analysis of North Carolina, concluded that “it seems that internal characteristics of North Carolina trumped the regional diffusion effect” (p. 725). Unlike neighboring states that had adopted a merit-aid program, North Carolina's institutions had low tuition, and the state housed a prestigious flagship institution. The liberal political context in North Carolina when the policy was being considered also differed from the political context in neighboring states.

With respect to external influences on non-adoption, Ness and Mistretta (2010) concluded that the presence of North Carolina's renowned flagship institution prevented the competitive pressures that neighboring states faced in their attempt to attract or retain talent. Similarly, Ingle et al. (2007) found that non-adopting merit-aid states felt less pressure to compete with neighbors. Both studies also found that non-adopting states had limited contact with organizations advocating for merit-aid adoption (Ingle et al., 2007; Ness & Mistretta, 2010). Moreover, Ness and Mistretta (2010) found that North Carolina preferred in-state sources of information and was less receptive to out-of-state influences in higher education policymaking. In summary, previous research on the non-adoption of merit-aid programs has found both internal influences (e.g., low tuition in the state, a renowned flagship institution) and diffusion influences (e.g., preference for in-state information over external sources, limited intermediary influence, limited competition) in the decision to “hold out” on merit-aid program adoption (Ingle et al., 2007; Ness & Mistretta, 2010). Building on this previous scholarship, the present study examines the internal and diffusion influences on decisions not to implement performance funding.

Data and Methods

We employed qualitative research methods to explore why the states of Iowa and West Virginia resisted the diffusion of performance-based funding policies. Using content analysis, we examined 123 local newspaper articles that mentioned

performance-based funding. We followed Krippendorff's (2013) multi-stage method of analysis. First, we *sampled* the data by identifying articles related to performance funding using Google Alerts. We then reviewed each document identified by Google Alerts to ensure that it discussed performance funding. Next, we *unitized* the texts by identifying excerpts within each article related to performance funding. We then *coded* these excerpts, both deductively and inductively. We began with a priori codes based on policy diffusion research (e.g., models of diffusion, mechanisms for diffusion; Berry & Berry, 2018; Shipan & Volden, 2008) as well as codes based on performance-based funding research (e.g., rationales for adopting performance-based funding; Austin & Jones, 2016; Dougherty & Natow, 2015). Inductive coding allowed us to identify new themes, which led to additional codes such as reasons for opposition to performance-based funding and the role of intermediary organizations.

We selected Iowa and West Virginia from the pool of non-implementing states for two main reasons: differences in state characteristics, in line with a maximum-variation design (Patton, 1990), and a large number of newspaper articles covering our topic, which provided abundant data and signaled broad interest in the policy in those two states. This study is a part of a broader project that includes articles on performance-based funding across the U.S., for a total of 1198 articles from 45 states. The articles were captured using Google Alerts for 5 years, from November 2013 through March 2019. Among the 15 non-implementing states in the dataset, Iowa and West Virginia exhibited maximum variation on several state characteristics relevant to policy innovation (Hearn & Ness, 2017). This variation allowed us to explore commonalities in the phenomenon of non-implementation across two different contexts (Patton, 1990).

With respect to variation, Iowa and West Virginia are in distinct geographic regions, with Iowa in the Midwestern part of the U.S. and West Virginia in the East. The states differ in the size of their public higher education enrollments. Nearly twice as many students enroll in public higher education institutions in Iowa as in West Virginia (SHEEO, 2019). Iowa and West Virginia also have different higher education governing structures (Education Commission of the States, n.d.). Iowa's Board of Regents governs 4-year institutions, and its State Board of Education oversees K-12 education and community colleges. In contrast, West Virginia has two higher education coordinating boards, one for 4-year institutions and one for community and technical colleges. Unlike Iowa, each 4-year institution in West Virginia has its own local governing board. Concerning political characteristics, both states are under legislative and gubernatorial Republican Party control. One key difference in these states' political context is historical: whereas Iowa has fluctuated among Democratic, Republican, and mixed political party control in recent decades, West Virginia was a solidly Democratic state until recently. In 2015, Republicans gained control of both legislative chambers in West Virginia for the first time in decades (Ballotpedia, n.d.).

In Iowa and West Virginia, the local media covered performance-funding discussions widely, indicating that this issue received ample public attention. Despite this public interest in the policy, state leaders elected not to implement it. In the dataset

for our larger project, Iowa and West Virginia had the most articles mentioning performance-based funding in the pool of non-implementing states (see Gándara & Daenekindt, 2022).

In Iowa, policymakers considered performance funding as early as January 2014, and policymakers continued to discuss this model through 2015, when legislators rejected a performance-based funding model that members of the Board of Regents had developed. In West Virginia, discussions of performance funding can be traced back to December 2014. Most discussions of performance funding in West Virginia took place during 2017 and 2018. In 2018, the West Virginia legislature passed a budget that did not include performance funding for higher education. As of March 2019, neither Iowa nor West Virginia had implemented performance funding.

These two cases and the local newspaper data from each state (123 articles total) provide a unique opportunity to understand how and why these states resisted influences on performance-based funding policy diffusion. Questions include: (1) What rationales were given in support of performance-based funding? (2) Which actors were involved in performance-based funding discussions? (3) What were the sources of opposition to performance-based funding? (4) To what extent were these states' holding-out behaviors driven by in-state characteristics on the one hand and by (limited) diffusion influences on the other? The answers to these questions should illuminate why the two states were one of few across the country to "hold out" against performance-based funding policy implementation.

Findings

Iowa Case The Iowa Board of Regents developed a performance-based funding model in 2015. The governor, Terry Branstad, publicly endorsed the proposed model, but legislators ultimately rejected it. Although the legislature did not vote on the model itself, they omitted language about performance funding from the funding bill during that budget cycle.

The primary rationale for transitioning to a new higher education funding model was internal. Apart from one article, all data from Iowa indicated that the rationale for pursuing the proposed performance-based funding model was to tie state funding to in-state resident-student enrollment. Both supporters and opponents of the new model acknowledged that the model would link state appropriations to the number of in-state students each university enrolled. The single exception to this finding was one document quoting the business officer for the Board of Regents, who rejected the idea that the review of the funding model was motivated by "a local outcry against the current system." Instead, she argued that "the national trend toward PBF is behind Iowa's review of its own funding methods." She continued by saying, "according to Education Advisory Board Executive Director Miller, 29 states have approved or are planning to implement some type of outcome-based funding model." Thus she alluded to other states' pursuit of the model, signaling normative pressure as the reason for Iowa's consideration of performance-based funding.

The only intermediary mentioned in the data from Iowa was Education Advisory Board (now called EAB). The Iowa Regents' business officer's reference to other states and potential normative pressures to adopt performance-based funding was the only evidence of diffusion influences in the 68 articles from Iowa that we reviewed. Instead, all other data suggested that the proposed funding model change was motivated chiefly by a desire to resolve historical funding inequities across institutions. In particular, the new model sought to tie funding more closely to in-state resident student enrollment. Proponents of the new model believed that Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa, which served high numbers of in-state resident students, were underfunded. The primary source of opposition to the proposed model was the University of Iowa, which would lose funding under the model, followed by concerns from 2-year and private institutions in the state. Under the proposed model, funding allocated to the University of Iowa under the current model would be redistributed to the other two 4-year institutions in the state: Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa. Private institutions and community colleges worried that by tying funding to in-state resident enrollment, the new model would incentivize 4-year public institutions to recruit more in-state students, which could negatively affect their enrollments. Business community members echoed this argument in opposition to the performance-based funding model.

With only a few mentions of the "performance" incentive embedded in the new model, the most prominent rationales for adopting a new funding model in the articles we analyzed were related to enrollment. Even though the model was labeled a performance-based funding model, the word "enrollment" appeared twice as often (24 mentions) as "performance" (12 mentions) in the documents that we reviewed.

To illustrate how leaders viewed tying funding to enrollment and to performance interchangeably, the presidents of Iowa State University and the University of Northern Iowa (supporters of the proposed performance-based funding model) wrote in a guest editorial, "In the nearly one year since the Board of Regents adopted the plan, objections have been raised, but no one should be against linking funding to performance... It would be irresponsible to do otherwise. To have Iowa tax money *follow Iowa students* is the right thing to do [emphasis added]."

West Virginia Case In West Virginia, legislators initiated the development of a performance-based funding model in 2017 by passing a law that charged the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC), the state's higher education coordinating board, with crafting the new model. Following the legislature's directive, the HEPC drafted a model that tied the majority of state appropriations to each institution's in-state student enrollment. As in Iowa, enrollment was a critical component of the new funding model. In West Virginia, the words "enrollment" and "performance" appeared with equal frequency in the data (177 times).

In West Virginia, as in Iowa, the flagship—West Virginia University—would lose the most funding under the proposed model. For that reason, officials at those institutions were the primary opponents of the HEPC's funding model. The president of West Virginia University, Gordon Gee, was especially vocal in his opposition. In response to Gee's suggestion, Governor Jim Justice developed a Blue Ribbon

Commission to address higher education governance in 2018, which Gee co-chaired. In this role, Gee sought to dismantle the HEPC. Numerous articles linked these efforts to dissolve the HEPC to Gee's opposition to the performance-based funding model that the HEPC had created. One article, for example, reported that "West Virginia University President Gordon Gee, the co-chair of the full Blue Ribbon Commission, has been an outspoken opponent of HEPC ever since the body was mandated by the Legislature to develop a performance-based funding model for higher education."

Similarly, the president of Marshall University, who also served on the Blue Ribbon Commission, was quoted as stating, "If we all are honest with ourselves, the only reason we have the Blue Ribbon Commission today is because of the opposition to the original formula." In another article, a critic of the Blue Ribbon Commission's work noted, "If nothing else, the Blue Ribbon Commission gives WVU an opportunity to thwart the efforts of the Legislature to put the performance-based funding model in place." Yet another article alluded to some critics' perception that the Blue Ribbon Commission was in fact created to "circumvent" the HEPC's work on the funding model. Governor Justice's chief of staff did not explicitly deny this claim, noting, "I don't know if I'd use that word ['circumvent'] or not."

Cross-Case Findings In our analysis of local newspaper data from Iowa and West Virginia, we identified three cross-case findings related to the two states' resistance to the diffusion of performance-based funding for higher education. The primary finding is that there was limited evidence of policy learning as a mechanism for diffusion in the two non-implementing states. The two secondary findings are as follows: (1) reasons for pursuing performance funding were primarily internal and disconnected from neoliberal discourse, and (2) the proposed funding models would have harmed flagship institutions.

Limited Diffusion Influences In both states, we found limited mentions of other states or intermediaries in relation to the consideration of performance-based funding. Most mentions of other states discussed *negative* experiences with performance-based funding, signaling policy learning that led to reverse policy diffusion (Li, 2017). Opponents of performance-based funding cited such evidence of failure in other states to delay or ward off performance-based funding implementation in their own states. For example, one article in West Virginia reported the following:

[Universities in Kentucky] have complained because they got no part of \$31 million in state funding that was determined by a new performance-based funding model... And in Tennessee and Florida, performance-based models have reduced how much money the states allocate to their flagship HBCUs, making it harder for the institutions that cater to marginalized student groups to implement new programs or provide scholarships.

Similarly, one article in Iowa reported as follows:

Retired Maytag CEO Len Hadley says that, of the more than two dozen states that have tried PBF, about half have dropped it. He believes an Iowa plan to base 60 percent of university funding on in-state enrollment is out of line with other states' experience with PBF.

In Iowa, only one article alluded to policy learning as a potential mechanism for performance-based funding policy diffusion. The article, titled “Iowa Looks Nationally in Considering Performance Funding for Universities,” referred to Tennessee’s experience of performance-based funding, with Tennessee described as a leader: “Tennessee—the first state to base higher education funding entirely on outcomes, such as graduation numbers—has become a bellwether of the new funding metrics. And Iowa and other states are paying close attention.”

The same article included a section on the “challenges and hiccups” associated with performance-based funding. Specifically, the article reported on one intermediary, EAB, which “interviewed officials in those states trying new funding models.” The article noted that EAB officials found that “many said it can be tricky to design metrics that are both fair and effective.” An additional challenge identified by an EAB official was “how to strike the right balance between stability—not changing too quickly—and making sure the formula has enough teeth to change something.” The article also noted, “States have tried performance-based funding before, and it hasn’t lasted,” although an EAB consultant is quoted as saying that “this time might be different.” Indeed, EAB—the only intermediary mentioned in Iowa documents—chiefly served as an information provider rather than as an advocate for performance-based funding, sharing both successes and challenges across states with performance-based funding. This group is not one of the most prominent voices in the diffusion of performance-based funding policies, according to previous research on intermediaries and performance-based funding policy adoption (e.g., Gándara et al., 2017; Miller & Morphey, 2017).

In West Virginia, only one intermediary was mentioned: a state-level conservative think tank. One article noted that officials at the think tank advocated for performance-based funding, pointing out that “More than 30 states already fund their colleges through some sort of performance-based formula at least in part, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. West Virginia lawmakers and higher education officials have considered adopting similar policies in recent years.” This suggests normative pressures exerted by the think tank, by citing the ubiquity of performance-based funding models.

Reasons for Pursuing Performance Funding As illustrated by our first finding regarding Iowa and West Virginia, both states faced limited external influences when considering performance-based funding. Instead, the reasons for pursuing performance-based funding were primarily internal. The second major cross-case finding in our analysis is that in both states, the justifications for pursuing performance funding were not rooted in neoliberal narratives related to performance accountability and incentives, as has been common in the adoption of performance-based funding policies in other states (Austin & Jones, 2016; Dougherty & Natow, 2015). Instead, the language surrounding performance-based funding in local newspaper articles emphasized fairness and equity in funding rather than performance accountability. Indeed, the proposed models in both states would have tied the majority of state appropriations to enrollment rather than performance. The primary rationale for adopting performance-based funding in Iowa and West Virginia was

that some institutions that serve higher shares of in-state students were underfunded on a per-student basis because neither state was using a higher education funding formula and instead used ad-hoc funding methods.

Losing Flagships Related to public rationales for considering performance-based funding, our third cross-case finding captures the distributional impacts of the proposed policy. Because the performance-based funding models in Iowa and West Virginia emphasized in-state resident enrollment, the flagship institutions would have emerged as losers in funding distribution under the proposed performance-based funding models. In both states, the flagships (the University of Iowa and West Virginia University) were the primary opponents of the proposed performance-based funding model. These institutions exerted their political power to obliterate the proposed model. In what might be an extreme case, the president of West Virginia University sought to dismantle the entity that proposed the model that would have yielded lower appropriations for his institution.

The literature on higher education policy has overwhelmingly examined policies that have culminated in adoption. As a result, little has been known about policies that are never implemented. Our work therefore examines cases of failed performance-based funding and contexts surrounding their failure, drawing on public narratives from local newspapers. Our analysis suggests that the performance-based funding policies that are never implemented are distinct from those that are operational, in both their motivation and design.

Conclusion

Researchers in higher education have contributed significantly to the broader literature on policy diffusion. Studies have examined the influence on policy adoption of internal state characteristics and other states' actions. As we have suggested, there are opportunities to expand the research on the diffusion of policy for higher education. We have outlined four primary developments in the broader literature on policy diffusion that are largely absent from studies of higher education.

First, the understanding of policy diffusion would be enhanced by attention to other models beyond the regional model (e.g., leader-laggard, vertical, and national interaction). Across these models, a fruitful avenue for further study of policy diffusion would entail closer attention to power dynamics. Which states are viewed as policy leaders and why? What are the determinants of state resistance to vertical policy diffusion? Within the national interaction model, what are the characteristics of individuals and organizations with the greatest influence in facilitating policy diffusion? What are the most effective mechanisms for promoting the diffusion of policy (e.g., incentives, shaming or applying normative pressure, funding for implementation, sharing research evidence)?

Along the same lines, researchers should continue to explore the role that intermediaries play in promoting the diffusion and eventual convergence of higher education policy. For instance, studies examining the role of intermediaries in disseminating policy ideas and knowledge regimes, have improved our understanding of how policies diffuse via the national interaction model (Gándara et al., 2017; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Future studies might ask, To what extent do the values espoused by intermediaries condition their influence over policy diffusion? Future work in this area could also pay closer attention to the channels of influence sought through these organizations. Complete College America, for example, worked with governors and, to a lesser extent, legislators. In contrast, organizations such as Achieving the Dream also aid in policy diffusion but work directly with campus officials. Unlike Complete College America, which focuses on agenda setting, organizations like Achieving the Dream play an important role in promoting the diffusion of policy at the implementation stage.

As the previous example illustrates, researchers should attend to policy diffusion at various phases of the policy process, not just policy adoption (e.g., agenda-setting, policy implementation). Scholars should also expand their focus beyond legislation. Following Karch's (2003) recommendation that we pay attention to policy content, researchers in higher education have begun to study the diffusion of specific components of policies (Li & Kelchen, 2021). We also urge researchers to examine the diffusion of narratives related to policies as well as their accompanying values, both stated and unstated (Broucker et al., 2019). This has been the subject of research on policy transfer, but it is largely absent from policy diffusion research (exceptions include Dougherty & Natow, 2015; Miller & Morpew, 2017). Our study of the non-implementation of performance-based funding suggests that the language surrounding policy consideration in states that opted out of this popular policy may have been distinct from that in states that implemented the policy. The understanding of policy diffusion could be strengthened by considering how public narratives about a policy spread across jurisdictions. Finally, an additional line of research could examine how discourses (e.g., nationalistic) shape the spread of policies. For instance, in the U.S., what role do national discourses play in the closures of Confucius Institutes at universities across the states? Such inquiries could begin to address the question posed by Douglass (2021), "when are universities agents of social and economic change or agents reinforcing and supporting an existing social and political order?" (p. xii).

The aforementioned opportunities for expanding our understanding of the diffusion of higher education policies all focus on why and how policies diffuse. The use of qualitative research methods has great potential to advance policy diffusion research beyond the limited literature discussed in this chapter. Using an approach similar to our own and the work of Ingle et al. (2007) and Ness and Mistretta (2010), researchers can study why some states hold out on adopting or implementing popular policies, effectively resisting policy diffusion influences.

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Chapter 20

Post-secondary Policy Innovation in Canada: Provincial Policy Adoptions, 1990–2015



Deanna Rexe, Kathleen Clarke, and Eric Lavigne

Abstract Drawing upon ideas of policy diffusion, transfer, and convergence, this exploratory study uses panel data to explore patterns of post-secondary policy adoptions in Canadian provinces, and identifies opportunities for further understanding explanatory factors associated with policy diffusion. The study examines the period from 1990–2015, focussing on episodes of tuition policy change, changes in governmental coordination approaches, changes to institutional mandates, institutional mergers, creation of new institutions, institutional splits (where the parts become autonomous institutions), establishment or changes to undergraduate degree authorization, and establishment of quality assurance bodies. Results included observations of policy convergence, horizontal diffusion, and raised questions regarding vertical diffusion, negative cases, and the role of partisanship and political orientation.

Introduction

During the past three decades, a defining feature of Canadian post-secondary policy has been the various efforts of provincial governments to affect change in their post-secondary systems and institutions. While the direct causes of these policy changes remain largely unexamined, all provinces have demonstrated motivation to engage in policy innovation. Given that provincial systems and contexts are very different, their ongoing and periodic policy changes provide an opportunity to closely examine patterns of policy adoption. Drawing upon ideas of policy diffusion, transfer, and convergence, this exploratory descriptive study explores patterns of

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post-secondary policy adoptions in Canadian provinces to identify the ways in which provincial characteristics shape policy adoption and identifies opportunities for further understanding explanatory factors associated with policy diffusion.

There is a keen interest in understanding the mechanisms by which policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and policy ideas are transferred from one political jurisdiction to another jurisdiction (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, 2012). Policy diffusion occurs through vertical and/or horizontal mechanisms; horizontal mechanisms include learning, competition, or emulation (Dobbin et al., 2007) while vertical mechanisms include coercion and mechanisms of federalism (Shipan & Volden, 2008, 2012). Policy transfer can reflect a variety of voluntary or involuntary mechanisms, such as voluntary lesson-drawing or emulation of policy ideas (Rose, 1993). Canadian studies in the Anglophone literature on largely focus on vertical policy effects of the federal government on provincial higher education decisions (see Fisher et al., 2006; Shanahan & Jones, 2007; Wellen et al., 2012).

Policy convergence, or the observation of increasing policy similarity, can be conceptualized as a process of rationalization (see Bromley & Meyer, 2015) and there is a general trend of decreasing variation in policy over time (Knill, 2005, 2013). Common structural or institutional arrangements and conditions can give rise to similar policy adoptions (Bennett & Howlett, 1992; Knill, 2013), however there are remaining questions on the distinct causal mechanisms that result in cross-jurisdictional policy convergence. One factor in policy convergence is emulation, a result of lesson-drawing from others' experiences and therefore a result of policy learning (Bennett, 1991). It has been observed that policy borrowing in Canadian higher education is "not uncommon" as Canada's decentralization allows for policy experimentation to "observe and learn from policy experiments in other provinces" (Jones & Noumi, 2018, p. 122–123). Adding to factors identified by Banting et al. (1997), Wallner (2014), in studying Canadian provincial K-12 policy convergence, identified other factors of presuming interdependence, connectivity, common organizations structures among political and societal actors, and establishing a policy climate.

In the Canadian context, there are a few features of the federation that are likely to shape policy transfer. First, regionalism is an important feature of the federation, with some clusters of provinces aligned in policy preferences (Henderson, 2004; Simeon & Elkins, 1974); citizens of different regions have been seen to hold different policy preferences and provincial governments have also had regional variations and political cultures (Henderson, 2010). In a 30-year study, Anderson (2010) found non-trivial levels of regional variation in public policy preferences, concluding that region is an important source of heterogeneity in Canadians' public policy preferences. Wallner (2014) argues that formal organizations and strong cultural ties increase activities leading to policy convergence, and weaker bonds deter results. Second, there is evidence of bottom-up social policy diffusion, as social policies adopted at the sub-state level can impact policy agendas and decisions at the national level (Beland et al., 2018). Third, while both competition and coercion are often implicated in studies of policy diffusion, Wallner (2014) demonstrates that, in the case of Canadian education, neither

competition nor coercion feature largely in this area of policy convergence. Finally, the historical and institutional divisions of responsibility within the federation feature in Canadian scholarship on higher education policy (Jones & Noumi, 2018; Jones & Young, 2004); federalism presents challenges to the formulation and adoption of public policy because of multi-level and multi-actor coordination challenges (Boyd & Olive, 2021; Jungblut & Rexe, 2017).

Politics and Higher Education Policymaking

Given that policymaking is a political process (Howlett et al., 2009), the political dimensions of decision-making in terms of both partisanship and ideology are important to consider. Informing this broad conceptualization is a rapidly growing international body of knowledge. A growing European empirical literature examines ideological preferences, political parties, and education policy, yielding mixed results in establishing the influence of ideological differences and policy preferences of parties as well as electoral motives in higher education policy. One strand within this literature focuses on understanding the relationship between partisan politics and specific education policy outputs such as spending. Recent comparative European research has found that partisan competition over education has become more contested over time (Busemeyer et al., 2013). Other research on the partisan hypothesis suggests a relationship between political ideology, as expressed through political parties, and tuition policy (Busemeyer, 2009). Bräuninger (2005) makes a useful distinction between partisan composition of government and its ideological identity, questioning which aspect plays a role in policy selection and policy outcomes.

Similarly, in the United States, there is a growing empirical literature that sheds light on the influence of political and institutional factors on higher education policy formation (Bushouse & Mosley, 2018; Doyle, 2012; Gándara et al., 2017; Hearn & Ness, 2017; McLendon, 2003; McLendon et al., 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009; McLendon & Ness, 2003; Ness, 2008; Tandberg, 2008, 2010a, b; Tandberg & Fowles, 2018). There is some limited evidence that higher education policy serves broader political goals, including political differentiation, in which politicians evaluate issues or policies in terms of competition and electoral appeal (Cohen et al., 2007), and symbolism, in which higher education policy supports a political narrative attractive to political parties seeking instrumental and symbolic value in broader political or electoral contests (Pusser, 2004; Rexe, 2014). However, how to account for variation in policy adoption, including non-adoption, as well as the mechanisms of isomorphism in higher education policy, remains unclear.

Chamanfar (2017) found that much of the existing political science literature on education, in Canada and elsewhere, fails to provide a nuanced, causal explanation of education policymaking that takes into account the role of politics. The lack of central or federal planning combined with provincial autonomy resulted in some policy and institutional differentiation; the political contribution to this policy diversity is not well understood or is yet to be fully described (Jones, 1997, 2004; Rexe,

2015a, b). Within political science in Canada, a few studies on partisan politics and electoral cycles have informed a limited literature on higher education policy formation, notably Blais and Nadeau (1992) and Kneebone and McKenzie (2001). A few Canadian studies have examined aspects of the politics of higher education policy-making (Neill, 2009; Rexe, 2014; Rounce, 2010) although there is a lack of empirical Canadian work analyzing political parties' higher education policy preferences. There is a growing but small empirical literature on the influence of other political factors on provincial education policy in Canada, and post-secondary education financing decisions in particular; recent publications analyze the impact of politics on tuition policy specifically (Neill, 2009; Rexe, 2014, 2015a, b; Rounce, 2010). Illustrating the interest of this field, a number of contributors have explored the broader forces influencing higher education policymaking in different Canadian provinces (Axelrod et al., 2011, 2012; Jones, 1997; Padure & Jones, 2009); others have focussed on Ontario specifically, reflecting a specific interest in that province (Axelrod et al., 2012; Boggs, 2009; Charles, 2011; Clark et al., 2009; Constantinou, 2010; El Masri, 2019; Shanahan et al., 2005; Young, 2002).

Approach

This paper employs an empirical approach to explore policy adoption patterns within Canada. The approach conforms to comparative within-country analyses, in which historical research is undertaken to allow comparative questions to be framed and developed (Peters, 1998). Comparative approaches benefit from the multiple political and policy laboratories at the subnational level afforded by constitutional arrangements (McLendon, 2003). Our approach is motivated by the multidisciplinary theoretical framework outlined by Hearn et al. (2017), grounded in this growing American body of knowledge focused on subnational policy innovation and diffusion, and employs panel data to answer policy questions and to test for theoretically informed relationships (Zhang, 2010). The longitudinal panel data used in this study incorporates annual indicators of conditions hypothesized by the literature to influence policy adoption in Canadian provinces. The particular period of 1990–2015 was chosen because substantive policy change appeared in Canadian provinces during this time period. The cases selected represented a range of provincial financial investments as well as a range of intrusiveness on institutional autonomy, and the specific areas of policy attention were identified from the Canadian scholarly and grey literature.

The longitudinal dataset of panel data was developed using a variety of reliable secondary data sources to accommodate both spatial and temporal dimensions of policy adoption. Spatially, panel data cover all Canadian provinces. Temporally, the data cover the period 1990–2015. New fieldwork was completed to assemble the data. The fieldwork involved gathering documentary evidence to identify, inventory, and classify provincial policies and relevant political information. The unit of observation is the province and the fiscal year. A systematic review of documentary

evidence was undertaken using document gathering strategies (George & Bennett, 2005), which primarily involved government sources and official documents. The final panel dataset covers 260 budget years, 66 elections, and ten provinces.

To test the questions of this study, a series of political and geographic data were collected and included as independent variables (see Fig. 20.1) for each respective province and year. The dataset included both cross-sectional observations (provinces) and time-series observations (fiscal years). The data for the dependent variables were assembled for each province and each year of the study period. In most cases, the dependent-variable data reflect years of announcement or enactment into law, and not the year a particular policy became fully operational (McLendon et al., 2005).

Consistent with the conceptualization of policy diffusion in Hearn et al. (2017), we considered policy innovation as substantive policy change in the province adopting it, regardless of whether that policy had previously been adopted in another jurisdiction. Further, particularly when looking at some contentious areas of policy, such as tuition policy, we examined all substantive policy change including changes that re-introduce policy choices that had been made in the past—choices that are not completely new to the jurisdiction, but are a substantive change from the immediate past (Table 20.1).

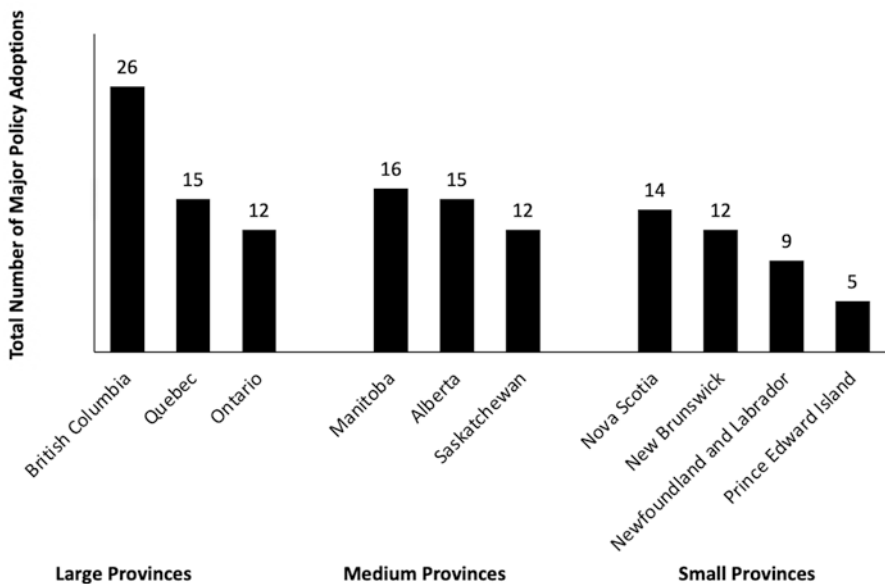


Fig. 20.1 Number of major policy adoptions, by province and size, 1990–2015

Table 20.1 Variable description and source

Variable	Description	Source
Province	There are two types of subnational governments in Canada: ten provinces and three territories. This study focuses on provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Labrador and Newfoundland, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan.	Canadian Parliamentary Guide (2018).
Partisan influences	<p>Partisanship is often identified as a key cause of policy differences. To understand the effect of partisanship, analysis was undertaken using political parties as the variable. Each fiscal year was given a code assigning one of the following: Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party, the Progressive Conservative Party, BC Social Credit Party, BC Liberal Party, Saskatchewan Party, and the Parti Quebecois, depending on which party formed government for the majority of the year.</p> <p>Canada’s political systems can be considered a two party plus system; it has historically operated under a two-party system in which the centre-right Conservative Party has alternated with the centre-left Liberal Party (Blake, 1985). However since the 1990s, there have been an increasing number of additional and regional parties. Some provinces have quite a long history of region-specific parties, such as British Columbia and Quebec. During the study period, the two most dominant governing parties were the Progressive Conservative party, a centre-right party, (34% of cases) and the Liberal party, a centrist party (31% of cases). The overwhelming majority of cases were majority governments, with only 4% of cases being minority governments.</p>	Canadian Parliamentary Guide (2018).
Ideological influences / Political orientation	Canadian politics is generally divided between right-wing versus left-wing dichotomy in the Anglo-American tradition. To understand if there are systematic differences in the policy choices of Canadian provincial governments according to their political orientation, and given that political party policy positions are not consistent across provinces and across time, we employed dummy variables defined at two levels of aggregation. We coded all political parties into three categories: CENTRE_RIGHT (Progressive Conservative, Social Credit, BC Liberal, Saskatchewan); CENTRE_LEFT (NDP and PQ), and CENTRE (Liberal).	We have followed the approach taken by Neill (2009). Adapted and reduced number of categories from Campbell and Christian (1996) and Gibbins and Nevitte (1985).
Provincial size	To understand the relationship to jurisdictional size, analysis used three variables for size: small, medium, large.	We have coded provincial size as a factor in policy diffusion (Shipan & Volden, 2008).

(continued)

Table 20.1 (continued)

Variable	Description	Source
Region	Regional identities may generate unique patterns of policy diffusion within a federation. To understand the relationship with region, analysis used five variables to reflect geographic area: Atlantic (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador), Quebec, Ontario, Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba), West (British Columbia).	We have coded regions as regional effect is a factor in policy diffusion (Mooney, 2001).
Institutional merger	To analyze patterns of policy adoption, we created a dummy variable for a merger of public post-secondary institutions announced in that year (1 = yes, null = no); count of number of mergers.	Data were retrieved and compiled from various provincial government sources and news releases.
Change in institutional mandate	To analyze patterns of policy adoption, we created a dummy variable for major change to the mandate of a public post-secondary institution or institutions announced in that year (1 = yes, null = no).	Data were retrieved and compiled from various provincial government sources and news releases.
New public institution	To analyze patterns of policy adoption, we created a dummy variable for a newly funded public post-secondary institution or institutions announced in that year (1 = yes, null = no).	Data were retrieved from various provincial government sources and news releases.
Institutional split	To analyze patterns of policy adoption, we created a dummy variable for a split of public post-secondary institutions announced in that year (1 = yes, null = no).	Data were retrieved and compiled from various provincial government sources and news releases.
Change in provincial government coordination	To analyze patterns of policy adoption, we created a dummy variable for a change of provincial government approach to coordination of public post-secondary institutions implemented in that year (1 = yes, null = no).	Data were retrieved from various provincial government sources and news releases.
Provincial undergraduate degree regulation	To analyze patterns of policy adoption, we created a dummy variable for provincial government enactment of changes to regulation of undergraduate degree authorities in that year (1 = yes, null = no).	Data were retrieved and compiled from various provincial government sources and news releases.
Major tuition policy change	To analyze patterns of policy adoption, we created a dummy variable for provincial government major tuition policy change in effect in that year (1 = yes, null = no). In identifying significant policy change, we looked to cases where there was a change in category in our policy taxonomy: Restricted, Reduction, Frozen, or No stated policy.	Based on Rexe (2015a, b), changes in tuition policy categories stated policy.
New body for undergraduate degree quality	To analyze patterns of policy adoption, we created a dummy variable for establishment of provincial quality bodies for undergraduate degrees in that year (1 = yes, null = no).	Data were retrieved from various provincial government sources and news releases.

Results

What Attracts Policy Attention?

Table 20.2 shows the frequency of policy adoptions, by policy focus. Of the 136 policy adoptions that took place during the examined time period, 52% were policies applicable at the system or provincial level, while 35% were focused at the institutional level. Tuition policy, a system-level variable, attracted the most policy attention by far, accounting for 40% of all policy adoptions in the study. However, beyond tuition policy, the other four of the top five most frequently occurring innovations were focussed on institutions.

Where Do Innovations Take Place?

Figure 20.1 shows the number of policy adoptions, by province and by size. Thirty-seven percent of policy adoptions occurred in large provinces, 32% in medium sized provinces, and 29% in small provinces.

We also examined the frequencies of each policy type by size of province.

Apart from major tuition policy changes, larger provinces undertook the greater number of policy innovations during the study period. This finding is consistent with the American literature on policy adoption, which reveals that states with larger populations are more likely to adopt more complex policies (Berry & Berry, 1990). Beyond province size, we also examined the regions within which these policy adoptions took place. Table 20.3 details the number of innovations that took place for each policy type, based on the five regions of Canada that we identified.

Table 20.2 Major policy adoptions, by policy type and focus, 1990–2015

Policy type	Policy focus	Number of cases
Major tuition policy change	System	54
Major institutional mandate change	Institutional	17
Change to undergraduate degree authorization	Both	17
Institutional merger	Institutional	13 ^a
New public institution	Institutional	14 ^b
Substantive change in government coordination	System	12
Establishment of quality oversight bodies for degrees	System	5
Public institution split	Institutional	4

^a12 cases had a single merger and one additional case had 2 institutional mergers

^b13 cases had one new institution introduced and 1 case had 4, for a total of 17 new institutions founded during the examined time period

Table 20.3 Major policy adoptions, by policy type and province region, 1990–2015

Policy type	West	Prairies	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic
Major tuition policy change	6	20	2	7	19
Major institutional mandate change	6	5	2	0	4
Change to degree authorization	3	7	1	0	6
Institutional merger	5	2	0	1	5
New public institution	4	3	3	2	2
Change in government coordination	0	4	1	4	3
Quality oversight body for degrees	1	2	1	1	0
Public institution split	1	0	2	0	1
Total excluding tuition policy change	20	23	10	8	21
Overall total	26	43	12	15	40

Table 20.4 Major policy adoptions, by political orientation of government, 1990–2015

Policy type	Centre-left	Centre	Centre-right
Major tuition policy change	19	7	28
Major institutional mandate change	6	0	11
Change to degree authorization	5	2	10
Institutional merger	3	3	7
New public institution	8	3	3
Change in government coordination	5	1	6
Quality oversight body for degrees	0	0	5
Public institution split	2	1	1
Total excluding tuition policy change	29	10	43
Overall total	48	17	71

Excluding tuition policies, it is clear that Quebec and Ontario, the two most central and two of the three most populous provinces, show the least amount of policy change, by a significant margin. This goes against predictions that would anticipate that larger, wealthier, and more economically developed jurisdictions tend to be policy innovators (Walker, 1969). Based on available data in this study, the effect of interparty competition on policy innovation is unknown (Mintrom, 1997).

Which Political Parties and Political Orientations Innovate?

Table 20.4 shows the distribution of government political orientations across the 260 cases in the time period of this study; 50% were enacted by ideologically centre-right governments, while 26% were by centre-left governments, and the remaining cases, 24% were by centrist governments. Centre-left governments were more likely to make multiple major policy changes in a single year.

At the institutional level, mergers and mandate changes were more likely to be directed by centre-right governments, and institutional divisions and new public institutions were more likely to be created or funded by centre-left governments. At the system level, changes in provincial coordination of education were slightly more likely to be directed by centre-right governments as were changes in undergraduate degree authorization and establishment of provincial quality bodies.

Are There Patterns in Timing?

Overall, the total number of policy adoptions in Canada was variable across the different years examined, ranging from one year with a total of one adoption (in 2009), to a high point of 11 in one year (2005). Further, total policy adoptions increased during the period from 1990 to 2000, tapering off in a less distinct pattern from 2001–2015 (Fig. 20.2).

Table 20.5 reveals that the major policy types show different patterns of policy adoption, with some being relatively consistent over time, and some showing fluctuating attention. The time period from 2000–2010 showed the greatest number of policy innovations in total, of the policy areas studied.

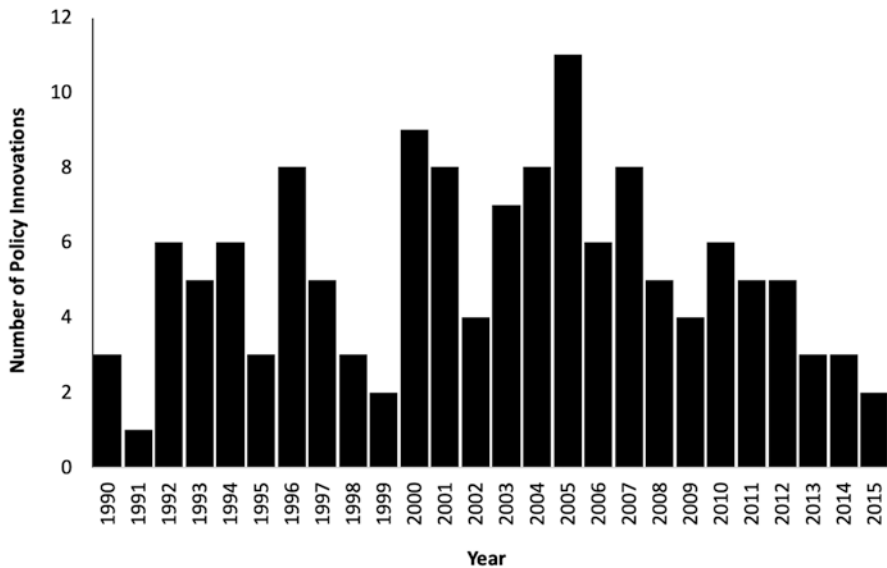


Fig. 20.2 Sum of major higher education policy adoptions in Canada between 1990–2015

Table 20.5 Major policy adoptions, by policy type and grouped by year, 1990–2015

Policy type	1990–94	1995–99	2000–04	2005–09	2010–15
Major tuition policy change	5	8	16	12	13
Major institutional mandate change	4	1	4	4	4
Change to degree authorization	1	3	4	6	3
Institutional merger	2	2	3	5	1
New public institution	4	4	3	2	1
Change in government coordination	2	3	1	5	1
Quality oversight body for degrees	1	0	3	0	1
Public institution split	2	0	1	1	0
Total	21	21	35	35	24

Discussion

Tuition Policy

Affordability and access are key themes in Canadian policy debates. In the Canadian context, tuition policy and tuition fee rate changes are closely monitored; changes in fees are announced by both provinces and institutions to their respective stakeholders, with an attentive media. In Quebec, changes to tuition policy have led to important student mobilisation that, in turn, have shaped policy decision (Bégin-Cauette & Jones, 2014; Dufour & Savoie, 2014). Consistent with expectations, tuition fees attracted the most substantive policymaking attention across all provinces during the study period. Empirical scholarship on the politics of tuition fee policy change is relatively scarce, with a few exceptions (Moussaly-Sergieh & Vaillancourt, 2007; Neill, 2009; Rexe, 2015a, b). More commonly, scholars approach this policy area with a critical sociology perspective or an economic lens, or focus on impact of fees on access and affordability.

During this timeframe, we found a high degree of policy activity, with 54 significant changes to provincial-level tuition policy. There is also a relatively high level of policy convergence. During the study period, tuition was frozen for about a quarter of the cases ($n = 61$), and tuition fee increases were restricted for an additional 42% of the cases. Cases that permitted unrestricted tuition increases represented about a tenth of the cases, showing little appetite for market-based pricing. All provinces had frozen tuition for some duration, with small, medium and large provinces almost equally doing so. The Atlantic and Prairie regions enacted tuition freezes more often than the others, for about a third of the study period, in addition to Quebec. Centre-left governments were more often responsible for tuition freezes, at 48%, but centre-right governments were also choosing this policy option at almost equal levels, in 40% of the cases. While there were regions more inclined toward strong tuition fee controls, there was little case for an argument that political orientation played a part in tuition policy adoption and as a result, partisanship was not a useful explanatory frame for understanding the politics of tuition fee policy

formation. This is consistent with similar findings in a recent study of partisanship in provincial K-12 education policy (Chamanfar, 2017).

Change in Government Coordination

Canadian provincial government approaches to coordinating mechanisms is described in more detail elsewhere in this volume, including the role of intermediary bodies (see Chap. 16 in this volume, Rexe et al.). In this study, we identified 12 cases of substantive change in government coordination during the study period. The character of these changes range from creating, adjusting, and eliminating traditional intermediary bodies to shifting performance, accountability, or steering mechanisms. These cases of change were found in eight provinces.

Jones (2014) identifies regional differences in adoption and abandonment of traditional intermediary bodies, which was confirmed in this study, although those differences were diminishing over time, with all provinces eliminating these bodies but for one. This pattern, combined with the emergence of alternative forms of governmental steering mechanisms, such as variations of performance funding and accountability mechanisms, reflect an almost pan-Canadian interest in coordination policy innovation seemingly irrespective of provincial size, political party, or time period. The two provinces without policy change in this study, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, presented interesting negative cases. As one of Canada's three large provinces, British Columbia has a unique post-secondary sector in the federation in terms of the amount of overall policy innovation, array of institutional types, and positive history of voluntary and involuntary system-wide coordination activities. Saskatchewan is one of the smaller provinces, also with a unique set of institutional types.

As a result of no clear association with the independent variables used in this study, further research is required to develop greater understanding of the politics of policy change in this area. There is an observation that organized interests have replaced key policymaking functions formerly associated with traditional coordinating body functions. An editorial from a popular Canadian commentator described provincial higher education policy processes as secretive, political, and centralized, with institutions and their membership organizations functioning as complicit "backroom" influencers outside public scrutiny (Usher, 2020). These ideas have yet to be empirically assessed.

New Quality Assurance Bodies

Historically, voluntary quality assurance has been an important feature of Canadian higher education. However, within the context of increased institutional diversity and differentiation and the increase in applied degrees offered outside of traditional

universities during this study period, provinces began to adopt new policy arrangements to oversee quality assurance (Skolnik, 2016b; Weinrib & Jones, 2014). A variety of mechanisms for quality assurance have been implemented throughout the federation, shaped by institution type, credential type, and provincial context. Skolnik (2010) argues that quality assurance is a political process, with several factors responsible for the new interest of governments in the quality of institutions, including growing interest of the public and the government in educational outcomes relative to resources. This has involved greater interest in how quality is defined, and the public reporting of institutional performance.

During the study period, we found five cases where provinces established, through legislation, an arms-length intermediary body responsible for quality assurance regarding approval and oversight of academic programs – some focussing on the undergraduate degree specifically, some focussing on the non-university sector, and others focussing on new programs or new institutions. Three of these cases were enacted in large provinces and two in medium-sized provinces, suggesting that the scale of a post-secondary system may be an important feature in issue attention. Also of note, all five cases were adopted by centre-right governments. Since conservative governments have activated each of these quality steering mechanisms in this study, there would appear to be support for a political orientation hypothesis.

Mandate Changes

There has been a fair amount of scholarly attention to mandate changes in Canadian post-secondary systems, given the large amount of policy activity in this area. Earlier research focussed on the impact of changes to institutions and stakeholders (Andres, 2001; Skolnik, 2004), while later research focussed on aspects or dynamics of institutional change, often using a historical or sociological lens (Dennison, 2006; Fleming, 2010; Hall, 2017; Levin et al., 2016, 2018; Yeo et al., 2015). Another area for scholarship has been to understand and situate these institutional changes within changing higher education systems in Canada (Chan, 2005; Cowin, 2018; Dennison & Schuetze, 2004; Dennison & Gallagher, 2011; Fleming & Lee, 2009; Fisher et al., 2014; Jones, 1991, 2009; Levin, 2003, 2017). Notwithstanding this growing body of knowledge, there are gaps in our understanding of the political processes and decision-making regarding these public policy changes.

In our study, there were 17 cases of major policy adoptions in seven provinces, with a total of 33 institutions affected by these mandate changes. Six of the 17 cases affected more than one institution in that year; the largest single event occurred in 1995, when British Columbia changed six institutions' mandates in one year. British Columbia's enthusiasm for mandate change is perhaps the most dramatic example of similar transformations that have occurred elsewhere in Canada. Early in the study period, British Columbia changed a number of two-year community colleges into four-year degree-granting university-colleges, and then again in 2008,

established five new “teaching” universities through changing the mandate of those institutions plus a few others. These new teaching universities were distinguished from the established research-oriented universities in both policy and funding.

While cases of mandate changes were found across all regions, British Columbia alone accounted for just over one third of the cases, and large provinces accounted for just under half of the cases. Overall, centre-right political parties were responsible for 65% (11/17) of the cases of mandate change, suggesting support for a political orientation hypothesis. However, the individual political parties primarily responsible for these cases were equally divided between the centre-left New Democratic Party and the centre-right Progressive Conservative Party, each responsible for six cases of policy change. As a result of no clear association with the independent variables used in this study, further research is required to develop greater understanding of the politics of policy change in this area.

Mergers

While there is a fair amount of public discourse on higher education mergers and increased development of conceptualization in the international literature (Cai et al., 2016; Goedegebuure, 2012; Rocha et al., 2019), there has been limited scholarly attention to this phenomenon in Canadian post-secondary education, since the early mergers in this study period (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Lang, 2002, 2003, 2005). In the study period, there were 13 cases of single mergers of public post-secondary institutions in six provinces and one additional case of multiple mergers in the same year (British Columbia), for a total of 14. The mergers represented a wide range of activities, including voluntary and involuntary mergers, and consolidations of similar institutions as well as take-overs of smaller institutions by larger ones. Some regions showed more activity in this policy area, with British Columbia and Atlantic Canada each accounting for just over one third of all mergers. Canada’s two westernmost and Atlantic provinces accounted for 10 of 14 cases. Mergers were found most frequently in large provinces and small provinces. No single political party was associated with merger activity. However, there were more mergers undertaken under centre-right governments (7) than centre (3) or centre-left (4). While this might suggest some support for a political orientation hypothesis, further research is required to develop greater understanding of the politics of policy change in this area.

New Publicly Funded Institutions

The development of Canadian institutions and systems of post-secondary education has been well documented by historians and sociologists, notably the development of Canadian universities (Axelrod, 1997; Harris, 1976; Jones, 2012a, b) and the

historical evolution of college systems (Dennison, 1995; Dennison & Gallagher, 2011; Gallagher & Dennison, 1995). However, these histories have yet to be updated, given the ongoing creation of new publicly funded institutions and the diverse ways by which these institutions come into existence. A few exceptions examine recent institutional developments through a critical lens. Levin (2017) undertook a critical sociological analysis of both types of institutions and their more recent evolution, and Hendrigan (2017) used a similar lens to examine the development and closure of a new university in British Columbia. Similarly, McCartney and Metcalfe (2018) critically evaluate new pathway colleges in Canada, an organizational innovation to support international student transfer into Canadian universities.

In this study, we found 14 cases of policy enactments creating new, publicly funded institutions in seven provinces. The cases of policy change established 17 new institutions during the study period. While most cases only introduced one institution, British Columbia introduced four new institutions in 1995. There is some variation in the pathways taken for the creation of new publicly funded institutions; some were newly developed while others represent funding changes to existing institutions. For example, Royal Roads University was a federal military college that shifted its academic profile when it became a provincially funded university. These cases were found most frequently in large provinces (9/14), perhaps indicative of both need for access and financial capacity. New institutions were also created more frequently under centre-left governments (8/14). The centre-left New Democratic Party alone was responsible for half of the cases, suggesting support for both a political orientation hypothesis and a political party tendency toward these policy choices.

Division of Institutions

The phenomenon of institutional dissolution into independent parts is sufficiently rare in Canada and has been overlooked as an area of serious scholarly attention; the British Columbia examples are mentioned briefly in Cowin (2007). There were fewer examples of institutional divisions than creation of new institutions during the study period. There were four cases of single institutions dividing into multiple institutions found in three provinces. For example, in Ontario, two small, federated university colleges gained independence from their universities to become independently chartered universities. Of these four cases, three cases were in large provinces and one in a small province. Two cases were undertaken by a centre-left government, with one centre and centre-right government each responsible for the other two. Two policy adoptions occurred under the centre-left New Democratic Party, one under the centre Liberal party, and one under the centre-right Progressive Conservative party. With such few cases, it is difficult to reach any strong conclusion. However, combined with the creation of new institutions and other institution-level policy innovations, it does appear that the centre-left new Democratic Party is

the most active political party in policy change that directly steers individual institutions.

Undergraduate Degree Authorization Legislation

In Canada, the authorization to grant degrees is given by the provinces. In some cases, these changes apply to individual institutions and in others, groups of institutions, or at the provincial or system level. Provincial government regulation of degree granting authority has historically served as a “de facto accreditation process” (Marshall, 2004). While largely the purview of publicly funded institutions, Canada also has a history of private faith-based institutions granting undergraduate degrees. More recently, provinces have approved the granting of applied baccalaureate degrees from community colleges as well as an increasing number of private and non-profit providers have been approved in some provinces. The changes in institutional mandates and the introduction of applied degrees in a number of provinces may signal a need, as some suggest, for more flexible access to degrees (Weinrib & Jones, 2014). However, this shift towards privatization may also signal a shift towards market logics.

Concurrent to this expansion of authority, provinces have modified existing regulatory frameworks, which traditionally used university legislation to establish both legitimacy and quality. Governments have moved monitoring and approval processes into intermediary agencies, either housed within government departments or to independent bodies. These particular policy innovations have attracted growing Canadian scholarship, particularly on the community college baccalaureate (Floyd & Skolnik, 2005; Levin, 2004; Panacci, 2014; Skolnik, 2008, 2016a, b; Skolnik et al., 2018; Wheelahan et al., 2017) as well as questions of degrees, quality, and system design (Marshall, 2004, 2008). This scholarship explores key questions related to institutional mission, focus, and performance, and questions of how the applied or community college degree fits into both the labour market and the transfer arrangements in Canada. Others focus on the questions of government policy (Hurley & Sá, 2013; Marshall, 2004, 2008; Weinrib & Jones, 2014) or as a field of study (Skolnik, 2016a, b).

We found a high degree of policy convergence in implementing changes to provincial regulations on undergraduate degrees. During the study period, a total of 17 cases of changes to provincial degree authorization legislation took place. All provinces, with the exception of Quebec, adopted significant changes to undergraduate degree authorization during the study period. Several provinces revised this authorization more than once. In terms of regional preferences, the Prairies engaged in the largest number of policy innovations in degree authorization (seven out of 17 cases), followed by the Atlantic (six out of 17 cases), with the provinces west of Ontario responsible for well over half of the cases. Small- and medium-sized provinces were more experimental than large provinces, with large provinces accounting for almost one quarter of the cases, suggesting that smaller provinces may be

motivated to seek new ways to create access to baccalaureate education. In terms of partisanship, centre-right parties were responsible for 59% of the cases, followed by the centre-left with 30%; the Progressive Conservative party alone was responsible for 47% of the cases, followed by the NDP at 29%, suggesting some support for a political orientation hypothesis. In this study period, overall there were relatively few cases of minority government policy innovation; there was one case of degree regulation by a minority government.

Conclusion

Policy Convergence

We observe that in some policy areas, such as tuition policy, there appears to be evidence of a national system of emulation, as Walker (1969) might have predicted. Further, we found evidence of institutional isomorphic change in both institutional mandate changes, the establishment of new institutions, and the introduction of new intermediary bodies (Meyer et al., 2007). Some of these new bodies represent new types of organizations and a blurring of traditional governance arrangements (Bromley & Meyer, 2017).

Horizontal and Vertical Diffusion

All cases of potential horizontal policy diffusion in this study were voluntary. While there was no clear evidence of regional diffusion, certain provinces and regions did emerge as leaders and laggards in certain policy areas, which raises questions on what factors or contexts give rise to provincial or regional tendencies, including policy leadership. Given the nature of the federation, voluntary horizontal cooperation across provinces may function as institutionalized boundary control mechanisms to support provincial resilience to federal education policy intrusion (Broschek, 2021). Not considered in this study were the potential horizontal diffusion effects of government-initiated reviews of post-secondary systems; this would be a natural extension of this study. The majority of provinces have undertaken some form of formal review of their post-secondary systems. There are also potentially other formal mechanisms for policy learning and transfer established in the working processes of provincial departments of advanced education, including governmental intermediary organizations, demonstrated to have an effect elsewhere (Gándara et al., 2017). Other policy actors may be key; for example, Wallner et al. (2020) highlight the role non-governmental actors in sub-national education policy migration. Montpetit and Foucault (2015) found stronger relationships, policy attention, and collaboration between provinces than between the provinces and the

federal government, and suggest that intergovernmental relations shape policy agendas. Given that there are a number of opportunity structures for provincial intergovernmental relations in education, these may be functioning to support policy transfer.

The design of this study did not include factors exogenous to the provincial policy systems. However, the timing and density of some of the policy adoptions identified in this study raise questions of vertical policy diffusion, as some appear potentially related to the timing of identifiable federal activities, including federal finance decisions to cut fiscal transfers to provinces, or policy work undertaken through intergovernmental relations activities of the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC). A clear opportunity for further empirical study are the effects of policy learning or transfer from national bodies, or the federal government to provincial governments, ranging from causal to conditioning factors (Voegtle & Vögtle, 2014). An examination of state steering effects would more closely connect with the European literature, a benefit identified by Rubin and Hearn (2018).

Negative Cases and Clustered Innovation

There are contrasting patterns of policy innovation found over time. We identified clear areas of non-attention; of the 260 cases examined, 62% had no major policy innovation, suggesting tendencies toward path dependencies in both jurisdictions and policy areas, and illustrating limits to policy convergence. Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Ontario had the least amount of major policy innovation in this period, with greater than 70% of the case years having no major policy change. In contrast to the negative cases, there are examples of intensive policy innovation. It was most typical for provinces to have one major policy adoption in any given year (75 cases). However, there were 17 cases of provinces enacting two major policy change, and 8 cases of three or more in one year. We observe that there were identifiable time periods when policy innovation appeared more active, suggesting pan-Canadian policy influence. More research is needed to more fully understand the potential policy filtering processes associated with cases of non-adoption (Ingle et al., 2007; Ness & Mistretta, 2010). There may be differences in policy feedback mechanisms, policy decision efficiency, or factors of path dependency (Harmsen & Tupper, 2017), which manifest in those provinces. Similar dynamics may be influencing provinces and cases enacting clustered innovation.

Partisanship and Political Orientation

Consistent with similar research in other aspects of education policy in Canada, partisanship is not consistently useful as an explanatory variable (Chamanfar, 2017). The strongest example of this is in tuition policy, which showed a limited usefulness

of a partisanship lens in understanding provincial policy adoptions. However, other policy areas such as degree authorizations, mergers, new public institutions, and quality bodies suggest an association with political orientation of government.

Opportunity for Further Research

Comparative Canadian post-secondary research is hindered by a number of factors, including a significant lack of policy-analytic data to explore variations in policy decisions across different provinces over time. This study addresses part of this gap by introducing a new set of pan-Canadian higher education policy data, and exploring policy adoption patterns across all provinces. Further, the Canadian Comparative Agendas Project has begun to assess evidence of horizontal and vertical policy diffusion in Canada (Gauvin & Montpetit, 2019). Together, these present opportunity for greater empirical examination of national-provincial policy interaction, specifically the effects of steering from national bodies (institutionalized or emerging), the federal government, and government reviews. Further field research might also provide a greater understanding of the roles of provincial cultures and features in shaping tendencies towards policy innovation, and to explore conditions associated with different types of policy adoptions. This study did not fully explore temporal analyses which might reveal greater evidence in support of specific diffusion hypotheses with the addition of exogenous data, such as fiscal and economic data; a national evolutionary step would be to follow advice from Kelchen et al. (2019) to: (1) identify the first sub-national jurisdiction to adopt a certain educational policy; (2) identify natural “break points” when provinces change commitment levels to specific policies; and (3) develop measures of intensity or “dosage” of a policy in order to capture important variations.

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Chapter 21

Emerging Work on Tertiary Policy Diffusion in Western Europe and North America



James C. Hearn  and Ijaz Ahmad

Abstract Employing a neo-institutionalist lens derived from the work of John Meyer and his colleagues, we examine in this chapter (1) the extent to which the three preceding chapters show consistent spread of rationalist policies across governmental borders, (2) the role of intermediary factors in policy diffusion, and (3) the ways “filters” at borders shape whether and how fully individual polities embrace policies already adopted elsewhere. We assay apparent differences across settings and provide some concluding comments on critical implications. Notably, we endorse moving away from earlier quantitative work’s dominant focus on only the adoption/non-adoption decision rather than the full timeline of diffusion processes, and we stress the benefits of working toward greater consensus and consistency regarding both the conceptual and empirical definitions of policy diffusion, emulation, transfer, learning, and related ideas.

Introduction

The concept of policy diffusion is more complex than might be initially assumed. The literature presents differences among and across disciplines, settings, and methodological traditions. Those fundamental differences are compounded by “naming” differences: how best to distinguish policy transfer, emulation, convergence, and diffusion, not only definitionally but also operationally in empirical analyses? Analysts of the topic are products of their own training, experiences, and values, and that is reflected in the research.

Thus, a positionality statement seems warranted. While we draw on numerous sources in our reflections in this chapter, we primarily base our perspective in neo-institutional theory (Scott & Meyer, 1991), and most specifically in the “world society” or “world polity” literature, as exemplified most prominently by the work of John Meyer and colleagues (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer & Bromley, 2013;

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Bromley & Meyer, 2015). As Pope and Meyer (2016, p. 281) argue, from Western cultural traditions have evolved shared “world models” infused with what they term “dominant scripts” or “foundational cultural assumptions,” such as rationalization, universalism, science, professionalization, progress, and individualism. In this context, across-border influences can create pressures on organizations’ traditional structures and processes, i.e., their internal technical logics.¹

Higher-education systems and institutions comprise a prominent exemplar for this perspective, in that they exist in highly institutionalized and increasingly globalized environments. External forces cannot easily be resisted in the increasingly porous, interconnected context of twenty-first century higher education. Visions of universities as faculty-driven organizations societally chartered to provide havens for learning and scholarship ring increasingly less true. Institutions’ strategic and managerial choices are becoming less a product of local campuses’ independently chosen academic priorities than of across-border trends. Those trends have been most prominently characterized in the literature as neo-liberalism, academic capitalism, and marketization (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, 2001; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Maringe & Foskett, 2010; Pusser et al., 2012). Some writings on the topic rely heavily on limited country- or region-specific lenses and research methods, but as Marginson and Rhoades (2002), Shahjahan (2012), and Shahjahan and Kezar (2013) have argued, there is much for higher-education researchers to gain from going beyond their “national container” and avoiding “methodological nationalism.” Indeed, the trends are sufficiently ubiquitous to merit characterization as evidence of an emerging “world society” (Bromley & Meyer, 2015).

From that last perspective, shifts in higher education can be driven by the spread across governmental borders of “hard” (legalistic) and “soft” (administrative and professional) pressures to act in certain putatively rational ways. Accompanying these pressures is the imposition of across-border accountability standards, enforced by both coercive and normative means (Bromley & Meyer, 2015). Intermediary organizations can play an authoritative role in influencing adoption approaches, especially via their prestige (ontological) authority, moral authority, or capacity-based authority (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). Pressures toward certain processes and standards are energized and applied by growing cadres of professionals trained and socialized to enforce growing consensus among polities around rationalized culture. A number of works in higher education policy adoption have endorsed the power of such influences extending beyond mere geographic contiguity (e.g., see Ness, 2010; Sponsler, 2010; Tandberg, 2013; Ness et al., 2015).

Settings vary, however, in their level of openness to, or insulation from, these pressures. Meyer and his colleagues (see especially Pope & Meyer, 2016) have highlighted six dimensions of diffusion processes shaping these variations. Adopting these dimensions for tertiary policies and systems is straightforward. To the extent universities and their faculties are *structurally embedded* in a large number of

¹Although the world-society literature focuses primarily on diffusion across nation-states, our focus here employs similar perspectives to incorporate diffusion across provinces and states within nation-states.

cross-border scholarly and professional organizations, their leaders are more likely to adopt policies employed by peers in other polities. To the extent tertiary policies, values, and practices do not match those of cross-border initiatives, local policy-makers will *decouple* rationalization initiatives from their original forms, to help ensure allegiance and compliance “on the ground.” To fit with local understandings and knowledge bases (e.g., senses of national or state history), tertiary policymakers will also *domesticate* or “glocalize” cross-border policy reforms originating outside their borders. Relatedly, to the extent externally imported policies appear discordant with local cultural framings, tertiary policymakers will pursue *contingent diffusion*, embracing only those policy aspects sufficiently comfortable in context. Further, to the extent tertiary policy pressures are in sync with pressures in other policy arenas, policymakers may embrace *multiple diffusion* by adopting a cluster of interrelated policy choices spreading across borders. For example, in embracing the global environmental movement, institutions may reform their curricula in concert with reforming their business practices in environment-sensitive directions. Indeed, universities may adopt somewhat opposing policies within a particular domain like higher education, owing to cross-pressures across domains (Levine et al., 2013). Finally, *multi-level diffusion* processes can take place. These processes seem particularly relevant for the university-centered analyses presented in the preceding three chapters. As Pope and Meyer note (p. 296), “... [M]odels may diffuse at various levels of the social system. Individuals, organizations, nation states, regional groups, or intergovernmental organizations can be receptor sites for diffusion...” In this sense, “nesting and hierarchy” are factors in policy diffusion.

Certainly, the three chapters we review here can be productively examined through a variety of historical institutionalist lenses, including path dependence, power, displacement, layering, drift, and conversion (see, for example, Pierson, 2004; Fioretos et al., 2016; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Thelen, 1999).

Employing a lens derived from that of Meyer and his colleagues, we examine in this essay (1) the extent to which the three preceding chapters show consistent spread of rationalist policies across governmental borders, (2) the role of intermediary factors in policy diffusion, and (3) the ways “filters” at borders shape whether and how fully individual polities embrace policies already adopted elsewhere. We assay the apparent differences across settings and provide some concluding comments on critical implications.

The Three Chapters

The Gándara and Woolley chapter (Gándara and Woolley, [this volume](#)). This chapter [henceforth GW] provides not only an intriguing empirical analysis of adoption in higher education but also a valuable review of prior work on policy diffusion across the U.S. states. While praising the value of the numerous earlier quantitative analyses of policy adoption, mostly using event-history analysis, GW make their

greatest contribution in stressing several limitations of that body of work. First, prior analyses have too often focused on replications of theorized influences on adoptions, at the expense of the frequent failures of some familiar propositions. Why haven't we seen more consistent results in across-state diffusion analyses? What are the key factors leading to non-adoption? Second, GW argue that analysts have too often assumed that regional diffusion across similar, (usually contiguous) states is the most predominant form of diffusion, ignoring national-level networks, national policy pressures, and the ascendant influences of certain states as recognized leaders in policy development, often spurred on by intermediary organizations. Third, GW emphasize the fraught nature of the concept of policy adoption, for both researchers and the larger policymaking arena. How, exactly, do adoption processes unfold in polities? At what stage in these processes are diffusion processes most influential? What aspects of these processes are diffusing (rationales, targets, metrics)? Fourth, because quantitative analyses at the level of states' formal legislative and administrative actions cannot tell us enough regarding the "What," "How," and "Why," of adoptions, GW make the case for more use of other techniques, including case-study analysis, interviewing, document analysis, and the like. Helpfully, GW cite various recent works addressing the limitations of the dominant earlier paradigm in U.S. diffusion analyses.

The second part of the GW chapter presents an empirical analysis of two states that touches on the concerns raised in the first part of the chapter. Qualitative and focused on non-adoption, this analysis of proposals to adopt performance-based funding [PBF] in those states concludes that, while external pressures were present tilting the two states toward adoption, a variety of internal characteristics and considerations overrode external influences in both states. Most notably, the states' "flagship" institutions led efforts to resist national trends toward convergence in adopting performance funding.

Viewed from the Pope and Meyer (2016) perspective, the most striking conclusions to be drawn here connect to embedding and domestication. Although some aspects of the PBF movement are supported structurally across the U.S. (e.g., by the influential Lumina Foundation in its grants and networking efforts), tertiary education in the U.S. is largely a state responsibility. There is no federal or professional sanctioning attached to non-adoption, limiting the penalties for resisting adoption at the state level.

It is important to bear in mind that flagship institutions are primary policy players and cultural lodestars in both states, and PBF adoption would have worked against their interests in maintaining funding and influence. In effect, adopting PBF as policy designers framed it would tend to disfavor those universities and disrupt the states' local order. For these dominant institutional actors, efforts to domesticate the national PBF policy movement represented hegemonic threats. Further, negotiations for revising aspects of PBF policy models did not succeed, ultimately dooming prospects for specialized adoption (e.g., adopting PBF only for non-flagship public higher-education sectors, as had been done in at least one other state).

In the end, the two states resisted the convergence occurring in other U.S. states' tertiary systems. This finding calls attention to Hall and Taylor's observation (1996, p. 941) that institutionalized arrangements can distribute power unevenly across

social groups. In such settings, it makes sense to “assume a world in which institutions give some groups or interests disproportionate access to the decision-making process... some groups lose while others win.” In highlighting the role of key actors in non-adoption, GW make a significant contribution to the literature.

The Rexe, Clarke, and Lavigne chapter (Rexe et al., [this volume](#)). In this chapter [henceforth RCL], the authors provide an exemplary review of literature on policy innovation and diffusion, then present an intriguing overview of policy shifts in Canadian provinces over a 25-year period. They note policy convergence across provinces in freezing or limiting tuition increases and in such arenas as institutional foundings, mission shifts, and reliance on intermediary actors (e.g., for quality-assurance processes). The authors also highlight the partisan roots of some policy debates in the provinces, with adoption of new accountability regimes and new programs frequently the targets of right-wing policymakers.²

In all, the range of substantive policy shifts assayed across the provinces and across the time period is impressive, and this ambition pays off in a number of valuable observations. Of particular interest here are the distinctions the authors draw between innovations based in across-border emulation, competition, and lesson-drawing, and innovations based in within-polity variables (e.g., postsecondary governing arrangements, socioeconomic conditions, political). For across-border influences, the directionality can be horizontal, as polities learn from, compete with, and emulate same-level polities (e.g., provinces) or vertical, as polities are coerced, demanded, or encouraged to adopt policies from authorities at lower or higher levels (e.g., the federal government).

There are places where definitions are blurred in the chapter. For example, the authors say that “convergence... suggests that common structural arrangements and conditions give rise to similar policy adoptions,” but also say that “a primary factor in policy convergence is emulation, a result of lesson drawing from others experiences and therefore a result of policy learning.” Such wording blurs the meaning of convergence as to within vs. across-polity origins. That said, of course, it is impossible to make a definitive judgment on such questions because adoptions’ roots lie at multiple levels.

This hearkens us back to Gándara and Woolsey’s point that naming and measuring pose significant challenges for analysts of policy innovation and convergence. That point arises again as the authors take us through the varied policy innovations taking place over the period in the provinces. Their ambitions are descriptive and exploratory, and they succeed fully on that front. Their concluding thoughts emphasize the critical need for further considering timing, exogenous factors such as local and national economic and political contexts, the role of federal and intermediary actors and, importantly, the “dosage” of various policy initiatives.

That latter point, raised earlier by Kelchen et al. (2019), seems crucial. For example, is a province or state’s adoption of a performance-funding initiative covering less than 10% of an institution’s budget comparable to one covering 80 or 100%?

²This parallels similar developments in recent years in the U.S. (e.g., see Taylor, 2022).

Can and should such different commitments be simultaneously analyzed as “PBF adoption” in across-polity studies? Or is the polity with less than a 10% commitment far more akin to an polity with no commitment, in conceptual as well as practical terms?

Viewed from the Pope and Meyer (2016) perspective, the RCL chapter is particularly valuable for its sensitivity to the distinctions among policies and the parallel distinctions in their origins. In their concluding comments, RCL ask “What factors or contexts give rise to provincial or regional tendencies, including policy leadership?” This pattern fits the complexity of multi-level diffusion, which distinguishes the origins of specific policy shifts by their connections to other policy stances supported by other organizations or other levels of government.

The chapter’s observation also connects to a conclusion drawn in some early work on policy innovation in higher education. Hearn and Griswold (1994) speculated that, as opposed to purely educational policies, financially re-allocative policies may have roots largely outside of a state’s higher-education governance and policy contexts, suggesting that “One might even speculate that such innovations fall within the domain of populist politics, rather than that of rationalist, professionally driven policy-making (p. 183).”

As RCL note, however, they did not seek to comprehensively address internal province-level factors for adopting popular policies nor did they completely identify horizontal and vertical policy diffusion models or mechanisms. Further analysis could illuminate why and how the convergences noted in the chapter took place.

Additional analysis could also inform analysts regarding connections between the Canadian policy innovations and similar innovations in neighboring and other nations. Striking on that front are the movements in Canada toward (1) mission shifts and degree expansion, parallel to the movement in the U.S. of 2-year colleges toward offering 4-year degrees, and (2) shifts to constrain tuitions, parallel to the movement toward “free community college” in the U.S.

The Dobbins, Martens, Neimann, & Vögtle chapter (Dobbins et al., [this volume](#)). This chapter [henceforth DMNV] provides a comprehensive, informative assay of five quality-assurance system dimensions in Germany, France, and Italy: involvement of various actors, institutions, types of quality assurance (internal, external, or peer-reviewed), areas covered, and types of assessment (ex-ante vs. ex-post). Like the GW chapter, the authors argue convincingly for analyzing non-adoptions.

DMNV indicate that quality-assurance processes emerged in higher education systems of Germany, France, and Italy before the Bologna Process started in 1999, but pay particular attention to convergence and divergence from the Bologna framework. While DMNV see the emergence of new quality-assurance practices as part of “lesson drawing” for solving the prevalent higher education problems, Bromley and Meyer (2015) suggest that a value-assessment concept has emerged in every domain with the spread of globalized rational culture. This assessment is done through traditional accounting principles and techniques and through new counting and assessment methods, such as return-on-investment, cost-benefit analysis, financial accounting statements, university rankings, various types of ratings, social rate of return, and impact assessment in teaching and research.

However, the quality-assurance processes were institutionalized and to some extent harmonized across the three countries with the soft laws or law-like rules which Bologna Process has introduced in the form of European Standards and Guidelines-2015 [ESG-2015] (2015) and various Ministerial Communiqué. Although ESG-2015 does not set any quality standard, it does define quality as “fitness for purpose,” (ESG-2015, p. 7). Also, ESG has given ten standards for establishing internal quality-assurance mechanism and seven standards for establishing external quality-assurance mechanisms. As result, common trends amongst quality assurance of Germany, France, and Italy can be seen. For instance, all of these countries have internal and external quality-assurance processes for new program, teaching, and research. Furthermore, the new rationalized culture has empowered various individuals, which supports the participation of students, employers, and other societal actors in quality-assurance processes. Multiple types of quality assessments (ex-ante vs. ex-post) in teaching and research are a manifestation of counting mechanisms based on scientific principles.

Nevertheless, ESG-2015 is very broad, and thus susceptible to various interpretations and implementations. Of the three chapters, DMNV stands out for its close attention to filtering at the national level of continent-wide influences and also for its attention to implementation issues. Regarding the latter point, the management theorists Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) have argued that scholars and managers alike pay far too much attention to decision making and far too little attention to the ways that decisions are implemented. In implementation, the effects of decisions are muted or amplified in ways invisible through a simple focus on the direction and details of a policy decision itself.

Research on performance funding in the U.S. states has been challenged by the fact that some state legislatures and agencies formally adopted or publicized such a policy but never implemented it, or funded it at levels far below specified originally, or delayed implementation for significant periods. Minnesota is a frequently noted example of non-implementation of an approved policy, while Georgia is a frequently cited example of planned implementation that was eventually abandoned. This decision/implementation gap is a significant issue for research, including but also extending beyond the dosage variation noted in earlier chapters. It gets to the heart of what, exactly, is a policy, and what exactly are we studying when we characterize states as adopters in our analyses.

The DMNV chapter concludes that, while some aspects of quality assurance are similar and diffused rather smoothly across national settings, differences remain owing to country-level distinctions and also to variations in implementation approaches. The chapter’s perspectives merge nicely with the perspective of Pope and Meyer (2016) on multiple ways. First, the three nations were each influenced by the Bologna Process, which the authors note “can be defined as an institutionalized structure for the exchange of information among participating countries that is linked to all of the mechanisms of transnational communication,” namely lesson drawing, problem solving, policy emulation, and policy promoting. Further, the Bologna Process in concert with the European Commission have represented top-down influences encouraging compliance at the national level. Clearly, in both the

lateral and vertical dimensions, these features highlight the structural-embedding concept of Pope and Meyer.

Similarly, DMNV focus on policy filtering in their attention to historical institutionalism, suggesting path dependence as a factor supporting the emergence of “national idiosyncrasies and deviant developments amid processes of diffusion.” Path dependencies seem especially clear in Germany and France. Germany’s Humboldtian academic self-governance tradition and federalist system have tended to ensure that academics have a significant role in the quality-assurance system (driven mainly by the *Länder*). In contrast, France followed its centralist state traditions and developed a highly top-driven quality-assurance system.

We see elements of contingent diffusion in DMNV’s attention to policy diffusion. In Germany, for instance, a significant role of academics in the quality-assurance process is a continuation of Humboldtian academic self-governance tradition. Although *Länder* or the state-level bureaucracy do actively pursue institutional quality assurance, they do so to a lesser extent than the French or Italian national bureaucracies, and they have resisted the national government’s pressures to weaken the traditional German federalist structure. For example, the roles and competence of the federal-level Accreditation Council, established in 1999, have been transferred to the Foundation Accreditation Council, to multiple accreditation agencies, or to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). Further indicators of this resistance lie in the continuing primacy of institutions’ internal quality-assurance processes, heavy reliance on peer-review, and developed ex-ante and ex-post assessment approaches. In sum, accountability still remains largely in the hands of academic professionals.

In France, on the other hand, top-down and bureaucratically controlled quality-assurance processes reflect the nation’s history of state-centered higher-education governance. But the particulars of these processes as well as recent marketization trends in French higher education can increasingly be seen as domestic responses to the prevailing poor performance of French universities in comparative global rankings in 2003 (Dobbins, 2012). Thus, quality-assurance efforts heavily rely on external reviewers and the quality of research is assessed in output or ex-post terms (Dobbins & Knill, 2017, p. 74). In effect, domestic conditions have pressured French higher education to adopt ESG-2015’s definition of higher-education quality as “fitness for purpose,” with those purposes defined by ESG-2015 and the Council of Europe as “preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparing students for active citizenship, and creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation” (Camilleri et al., 2014, p. 7).

Finally, Italy lies in between Germany and France in terms of its quality-assurance model. Historically, Italian universities have exhibited strong academic oligarchy (Clark, 1983). Although the new state-level quality-assurance agency [ANVUR] is relatively independent from this historically embedded academic oligarchy, the Bologna Process’s quality-assurance efforts in Italy have been slowed by these legacies and shaped contingently by them. As of June 2021, ANVUR had not been registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) because of its failure to comply with all ESG-2015 standards

(Vinter-Jørgensen et al., 2020). Academic peer review remains a cornerstone of Italian quality assurance and international experts participate in that process, but bibliometric criteria are becoming increasingly important (Dobbins & Knill, 2017; Nosengo, 2013). Italian higher education has moved towards marketization (Dobbins & Knill, 2017), but the influence of ESG-2015 and related cross-border pressures has been mediated by domestication and contingent diffusion.

Additional analysis could help position the Italian change process along the conceptual lines of displacement, layering, drift, or conversion. While Germany and France can both be characterized as examples of incremental change within a rather stable tertiary institutional arena (Paivandi, 2017), albeit in different forms, Italy presents a significant yet incremental centralizing shift away from a system traditional controlled by academics.

In the end, the DMNV chapter highlights the enduring power of loose coupling and institutional autonomy in higher education. A regulatory approach setting strict quality targets from “outside” often will encounter faculty and institutional resistance and hostility, producing “window dressing” rather than compliance (Barnabè & Riccaboni, 2007; Gonzales, 2015; Dougherty & Natow, 2015). At the same time, the chapter illustrates the tensions as a nation’s acceptance of a meta-regulatory approach can contribute to “long-term erosion of traditional forms of authority” in that nation, and movement toward broader conceptions of power in the global rationalizing culture (Bromley & Meyer, 2015, pp. 72–73). In their responses and adaptations, Germany, France, and Italy each “work the margins” between extra-national and national priorities, traditions, and values.

Evidence of Policy Diffusion and Filtering in the Three Chapters

Across the countries, states, and provinces covered in the three chapters, patterns of diffusion (and diffusion-resistance) suggest some conclusions. Governmental leaders in each setting evinced understanding of policy pressures and decisions in other parallel governmental settings and in government settings above or below. Similarly, the preferences of external intermediary NGOs were clear in each case. Pressures toward convergence were felt and in many cases acted upon. In particular, the supranational formal and informal influences of the Bologna Process and other European organizations and networks played notable roles in shaping national policies covered in the DMNV study. Absent similar formalized pressures, the states and provinces studied in the GW and RCL analyses also acknowledged and deliberated pressures emanating outside their borders.

At the same time, context-specific filters were observed in each setting. Assaying parallel developments in other U.S. states, decision makers in the two states in the GW analysis eventually found insufficient reason to fuel convergence toward adopting performance funding like many of their peers (for similar findings, see Rubin &

Hearn, 2018). Similarly, Canadian provinces examined in the RCL study only inconsistently adopted policies proliferating in other provinces. And, in the analysis of France and Germany, path dependencies among certain arrangements, preferences, values, and norms circumscribed wholesale adoption of externally favored policies in each nation. In the end, the work of Morphew et al. (2018) is upheld: national, provincial, and professional consensus regarding public and private priorities and levels of authority play critical roles driving institutional and system change. In Northern Europe, the strategic emphasis on pursuing research excellence is embraced across national polities, while in the North American states and provinces, there is less emphasis on agreed-upon national and regional priorities and more effort to preserve deeply institutionalized sub-national authority.

Conclusion

A number of implications emerge from the three prior studies. First, as GW argue explicitly and the other chapter authors suggest somewhat less directly, the power of quantitative methods to discern policy-diffusion influences is limited. Often, the qualitative evidence presented here allows us to see in more depth the workings of polities' decisions regarding adoption. Too often, quantitative analyses rely on overly broad operationalizations of policies and of local and supralocal influences. Without "dosage" information on a funding policy, for example, it makes little sense to compare adoptions across borders. Without precise indicators of the extent to which certain understandings and organizational arrangements are historically embedded over decades or even centuries, measuring influences on adoption across otherwise seemingly similar settings is compromised.

Second, as each of the chapters emphasizes, non-adoption and partial or selective adoption merit more attention. Numerous tertiary-education studies note that what is encouraged or imposed formally at the macro level can very often take on a somewhat different shape in distinctive contexts. To the extent outside influences are disruptive, universities can cope by seeking to buffer their internal operations from tight external scrutiny and accountability. Often, they will conform performatively at the macro level while resisting at the micro level. Numerous analyses of national and provincial/state policy adoptions highlight this pattern.

Notably, analysis of performance funding in the U.S. by Dougherty and colleagues (Dougherty & Natow, 2015; Dougherty et al., 2016) has highlighted the ways a nationally favored "logic model" of performance funding morphed upon encountering local state conditions, morphed again as state initiatives were imposed on individual institutions, and then morphed yet again as actors within institutions (such as faculty in academic departments) encounter and respond to new expectations for accountability and behavior change. Strained through so many levels, it was little surprise that substantial decoupling occurred along the way, to use Pope and Meyer's (2016) term.

Third, and relatedly, each of the chapters illustrates the limitations of focusing solely on the adoption/non-adoption decision. As Gándara et al. (2017) have noted, analysts have too often focused on the “why” and the “whether” and not enough on the “how.” As noted earlier, analysts like Jeffrey Pfeffer and colleagues (e.g., Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006) have stressed the significance of the implementation stage. By framing diffusion mainly at the point of a vote or fiat, the literature may constrain its power to inform and guide. At the opposite end of the timeline, long before a legislature or state bureau makes an adoption decision, intermediary organizations and policy “champions” are often hard at work spreading the case for or against adoption. Those actors can not only facilitate policy learning but limit it. And, even prior to the case for a particular policy emerges, the meta-argument for it exerts influence. For example, the Dobbins et al. chapter highlights the fact that prior to the Bologna Process, local fiscal and political pressures and the new public management movement were laying the groundwork in European nations for particular reforms to take root.

Finally, the research in this arena would benefit from greater definitional consensus and consistency. The field’s attention to policy convergence, emulation, diffusion, lesson-learning, and transfer, in particular, seem intuitively understandable on first glance but the distinctions break down upon closer contact. While the chapters here each confront these distinctions smartly, there are some differences that make across-chapter conceptual framing difficult. The problem is even more acute in the broader literature. A question dealt with by the authors in this volume and others involves the roots of convergence: to what extent is growing similarity in policy choices across polities a product of the importation of ideas (diffusion), as opposed to growing similarities in social and economic conditions internally? That is, what is endogenous and what is exogenous in diffusion?

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Part VI
Comparison and Conclusion

Chapter 22

Same Same, but Different? Comparing the Politics of Higher Education Policy in Western Europe, Canada, and the U.S.



Martin Maltais, Jens Jungblut , Erik C. Ness, and Deanna Rexe

Abstract This concluding chapter summarizes the main findings of this volume on the politics of higher education policy. After presenting key results from each of the three contexts, we discuss the status-quo of the respective research communities including considerations of salient research themes and conceptual approaches in the study of higher education policy. To provide an overarching discussion of our findings, we map the insights gained in the previous chapters across the three contexts and the five main themes. Through this we also provide an answer to the conceptual question whether higher education policy dynamics are characterised by convergence or path-dependent divergence. We further highlight what researchers working in one of the three contexts can learn by looking at the other environments and conclude the chapter with an outlook on potential future challenges for higher education policymaking.

Introduction

Universities around the world are often argued to be rather similar: they fulfil the same main tasks, namely teaching and research, they share a common organizational heritage, they become increasingly formally organized, and they are internationally connected in one way or the other (Frank & Meyer, 2020; Krücken & Meier, 2006; Ramirez & Meyer, 2013; Schofer & Meyer, 2005). This opens the question, in how far policies and state regulations directed towards higher education as well

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as the political processes surrounding them are also showing more similarities or whether we observe persisting national and regional differences. This interest was the starting point for this volume and our structured comparison of the politics of higher education policy in Western Europe, Canada and the U.S. By pursuing this interest, we hope that our empirical work offers two types of benefits: (a) to gain insights into policy processes in this policy area, including its unique features, and (b) to identify areas of convergence or distinctiveness in policy innovation, in order to draw conclusions on the development of the policy area as well as processes of policymaking in general. Regarding the latter, the results of this volume can be expected to be relevant not only for policies regulating higher education and research, but also for adjacent policy fields such as education policy in general or welfare state policies, and policy areas that are also characterised by strong and knowledge-intensive professions such as health.

Higher education is argued to have become more politically salient in recent decades. This is due to several processes: increasing levels of participation, increasing public and private spending, the relevance of higher education as a transversal problem solver for other policy areas, and the shift towards knowledge economies (Chou et al., 2017; Christensen et al., 2014; Gornitzka & Maassen, 2014; Maassen & Stensaker, 2011). This increased salience is suggested to have led politics to treat higher education policy less special (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2011). This refers to the idea that instead of being governed based on a balance between the state, the market and the academic profession (Clark, 1983), higher education is increasingly an object of political dynamics similar to other policy sectors. In the past, higher education policies were mainly an issue discussed between bureaucrats, representatives from the higher education sector, and few politicians who specialised on the issue. One could say that politicians in all three contexts, albeit at different points in time, have realised that higher education has become socially too important to be treated as a niche issue and so it is increasingly included in “ordinary” politics (Olsen, 2007). This also means that politics, but also the public, have increasing (and often contested) expectations towards higher education which go together with new ways of assuring that the sector performs as expected especially in the context of increased levels of public investments (Busemeyer, Garritzmann, & Neimanns, 2020; Maassen & Stensaker, 2011).

At the same time, the politics of higher education policy are influenced by general socio-political or politico-administrative trends that can be observed in several countries around the world including phenomena such as increased political polarization, the rise of populism and nationalism, or growing scepticism towards science (Berg et al., 2023; McCoy et al., 2018; Pierson & Schickler, 2020; Rutjens et al., 2022). With universities, researchers and their results becoming more important for solving different grand challenges, such as climate change, they also become more involved in the related political debates, which in turn can have collateral effects on higher education policy. These arguments highlight, that it is unlikely that we will see a move back to the more sector-specific policymaking regarding higher education, but rather that the increased salience of higher education policy represents a more lasting feature of the sector.

While these global trends have been observed in many different contexts, higher education policy also remains influenced by national as well as regional dynamics (Christensen et al., 2014; Dobbins & Knill, 2014; Slaughter & Taylor, 2016). Differences in politics, policy legacies, policymaking structures, political cultures, and higher education systems create a certain form of resilience to changes and resulting path-dependencies (Thelen, 1999). As reforms are usually benchmarked against existing arrangements, whether a change is seen as appropriate differs between contexts, opening the possibility for lasting differences even under conditions of converging policy trends.

These tensions between global trends and national path dependencies are also reflected in the conceptual foundation of this volume. We took our starting point in a neo-institutional understanding of political processes in the sense that both the role of actors and structures are acknowledged when considering factors that influence policymaking (Hall & Taylor, 1996). To get a better understanding of the tensions between the global and regional or national aspects of the politics of higher education policy, this volume presents a structured comparison of the three contexts using the comparative elements within the chapters (i.e. comparing entities within a setting) and between the chapters (i.e. comparing across contexts) for each of the five sub-themes in higher education policy: governance, funding, interest groups, framing, and diffusion. In addition, we will present a structured comparison of the politics of higher education policy in each of the three contexts in this chapter. To capture the balance between convergence and divergence, we build on sociological and historical institutionalism to investigate the tension between the relevance of the wider social environment and historical processes.

Taken together these comparative elements enabled us to make sense of the different developments regarding the politics of higher education policy in Western Europe, the U.S. and Canada. The work presented in this volume offers a unique comparison of the politics of higher education policy which includes the most prominent higher education systems in the world, whose universities dominate international rankings and are often used as reference points also for policymaking in other regions of the world. Thus, we hope that our findings not only provide a bridge between these three regions and their so far somewhat siloed scholarly communities, but also offer relevant insights for those studying the politics of higher education policy in other contexts. Moreover, the different chapters in this volume can help us to understand the relation of different conceptual approaches used in the three scholarly communities. To this end, we will also use this concluding chapter to highlight areas in which the three scholarly communities can learn from one another both conceptually and regarding empirical comparisons.

This introduction is followed by three sections each presenting a structured comparison of policymaking dynamics in one of the regions. Afterwards, we will discuss conclusions arising from the comparison of the three contexts as well as theoretical implications of our work. We will conclude the chapter by discussing the potential effects of emerging challenges on the politics of higher education policy.

The Politics of Higher Education Policy in Western Europe

As indicated already in the introduction, Western Europe is maybe the most diverse context covered in this book due to its mixture of a multi-country and supranational environment. Similarly, also European higher education is characterized by diverging and long-grown historical traditions (Huisman et al., 2009) that still influence policymaking today. At the same time, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) created a context in which European higher education policy contains more unified strategies and is rather forward looking also because of the self-perception of European higher education as lagging behind especially the U.S. (see the chapter by B. Stensaker, [this volume](#)). Thus, the EHEA offers a framework in which higher education reforms can become a common project that unites the continent (Huisman et al., 2009). However, what this means for policymaking in a specific country or university still differs (Huisman & van Vught, 2009).

Policy Systems

Regarding the actors, contexts, and structures of policymaking, the chapters have shown that Western European higher education politics are still mainly affected by public actors. Contrary to North America, higher education in Western Europe is dominated by public higher education institutions. Moreover, Europe has a long history of provision of higher education through the state, which in itself makes private higher education less prominent compared to, for example, the U.S. This goes hand-in-hand with increased interest from political parties, bureaucrats and public regulatory agencies in higher education, as public institutions generally face more scrutiny and regulation (Jungblut & Vukasovic, 2018). Increased public spending and increased enrollment in higher education since the 1970s led to more political salience of the policy area (Chou et al., 2017), which further increased interest by public actors in the performance of the sector. In addition, recent studies on public opinion towards education policies in Europe show that public preferences regarding the provision of higher education differ both between countries and among people with differing political affiliations indicating that there is increased potential for political conflicts (Busemeyer et al., 2020). At the same time, the move towards New Public Management-inspired governance approaches and steering at a distance led to a development towards more corporatist approaches in higher education governance (Vukasovic, 2017, 2018). As a part of this development, the interest group landscape became more diverse in the last decades as other actors than the state and what Clark (1983) called the academic oligarchy are seen to have a legitimate interest in regulating higher education (Chou et al., 2017). The EHEA with its focus on the inclusion of organizations such as student unions or representatives of employer organizations helped to legitimize the involvement of these groups on the national level (Vukasovic, 2018). However, the impact of this varies as countries with more corporatist political cultures, generally speaking, do better in actively

including interest groups in national-level policy making (Schmitter, 2015). At the same time, intermediary organizations emerged on the national and to some extent the European level, which can act as buffers between universities on the one and public regulators on the other hand. This development coincided with agencification and the transfer of ministerial tasks to newly created public agencies (Friedrich, 2019, 2020).

The diversification of actors involved in higher education policy discussions also gave room for the rise of entirely new actors. Contrary to the U.S. context, private foundations do only play a limited role in Western Europe due to the dominant role of the state in many aspects of higher education policymaking. However, internationalization and differentiation led to the creation of an increasing amount of university alliances and networks (Vukasovic & Stensaker, 2018). These organizations are active in lobbying for the interest of their members and operate next to more inclusive stakeholder organizations.

The area in which European higher education politics saw maybe most development is the emergence of trans- and supranational actors as well as policy networks. Due to increasing Europeanization there is substantial policy-making activity on the European level and European actors are increasingly relevant for higher education policy (Chou & Gornitzka, 2014). At the same time, this activity does not provide strict regulations for national governments due to a lack of legal competences. Instead, these actors use steering through funding and other soft forms of influence to promote their policy ideas (Elken & Vukasovic, 2014). The multi-level dynamics in European higher education are maybe one of the most significant changes in the last 25 years that made policymaking and politics more complex. However, this did not lead to strict convergence of policies but rather added another layer on top of existing politics with specific actors, forums, interests, and policymaking dynamics. These can also be used strategically by national actors, e.g. through up- or downloading of national level policies to collect additional legitimacy (Ravinet, 2008). Europeanisation created new issue networks in which national policy actors come together on specific topics in regular forums to discuss new trends and topics related to their area of expertise. Similarly, one can observe an increasing number of university alliances and joint study programs as well as large collaborative research networks that are funded by the EU. This leads to the growth of network structures across the region that are somewhat independent of national boundaries. These facilitate the flow of information, policy ideas as well as tools or solutions. Overall, this supports policy diffusion even without regulative competence as policy ideas can travel easily between countries through the existence of these supra-national networks.

Policy Dynamics

Policy debates in Europe are diverse and the salience of specific issues within higher education policy varies between countries. However, there are some topics that by-and-large received increased attention in Western Europe in the last decades. First

and foremost, Europeanisation and its associated reforms have been at the center of political attention especially in the first decade of the 2000s (Vukasovic et al., 2017). After all, Europeanisation of higher education started already in the late 1980s with the EU's Erasmus program that had the aim to increase student mobility in Europe (Kehm et al., 2009). Therefore, mobility represents the core policy issue around which much of European collaboration has been build. Furthermore, both questions regarding access and affordability as well as questions of public governance of higher education, have remained high on the agenda (Bleiklie et al., 2017; Jungblut, 2016). With varying policy dynamics across different countries, issues regarding student support systems, tuition fees and widening access to higher education have constantly been debated (Garritzmann, 2016). At the same time, higher education in Western Europe is mainly funded through public funds, which makes the debate about the appropriate level of funding for higher education and demands for funding increases by higher education institutions another constant theme.

With regard to the public governance, studies have found that debates about the best way to steer the sector prevail along political conflict lines (Jungblut, 2016). However, a general trend towards more institutional autonomy, more output-oriented steering and more experimenting with different forms of internal governance arrangements can be observed (Bleiklie et al., 2017; Huisman & van Vught, 2009). All these changes must be seen though in the context of the generally dominant role of the state in governing higher education especially when comparing Europe to the U.S.. Some of the proposals for changes in governance have been framed in the context of a need to free the universities from state control to enable them to catch up with their U.S. counterparts. However, in how far the link between the form of public governance and performance in research, innovation or international rankings can really be substantiated with empirical research is still unclear.

The salience of higher education policy in Western Europe also increased as higher education is seen as a transversal problem solver that is expected to address grand societal challenges such as climate change and deliver policy solutions to other policy areas (Chou et al., 2017). This goes hand in hand with a rhetoric describing higher education as an important building block of the knowledge economy (Chou & Gornitzka, 2014). This not only created links between higher education policy and debates in other policy areas, but also made the set of political actors that are involved in policy debates more diverse. All of this cumulated in the latest EU strategy for universities that describes them as *lighthouses of the European way of life*, and explicitly highlights their role in addressing societal challenges as well as paving Europe's post-pandemic recovery (European Commission, 2022). At the same time, discussions about the relevance, or lack thereof, of core values in European higher education intensified in the last years, questioning in how far European integration in higher education has come at the cost of upholding norms such as academic freedom (Jungblut et al., 2020a).

The dynamics of policy change also show national differences. While Europeanisation provides common reform ideas, what this means in national debates varies and research has shown that especially Western European countries seem to assign less importance to Europeanisation over time (Jungblut et al., 2020a;

Vukasovic et al., 2017). This indicates that following an initial decade of Europe-driven reforms in the early 2000s national policymaking dynamics are becoming more important again. However, Europeanisation remains a constant narrative in policy debates. As highlighted in the chapter by Stensaker ([this volume](#)), the key narrative of European higher education policy is a forward-looking one. In Western Europe the initial assessment that the continent's higher education sector lags behind its North American, and to a certain extent Asian, competitors provides a frame which is inherently reform-oriented. At the same time, it must balance the acknowledgement of the long history and distinct national traditions that are enshrined in European higher education systems. This balancing act between embracing the imaginary of century old universities that serve vital functions for their national societies and international organizations that compete with other universities around the globe for innovations, talent and prestige is not only relevant for policymaking but also for universities themselves.

A common observation in the higher education research literature in Western Europe has been that even during the high-times of Europeanisation one could observe continuing national differences (Amaral et al., 2009; Bleiklie et al., 2017). This mixture of dynamics of convergence and divergence can be explained using arguments from institutional theory. On the one hand, historical institutionalists would highlight that feedback effects of existing higher education systems will influence the room to maneuver for national policy reforms (Thelen, 1999). As, for example, Garritzmann (2016) shows for funding policies, implementing a reform that represents a radical change from the status quo is often politically costly making it less likely that governments will implement radical changes. Thus, national policy legacies are an important factor that helps to explain continued differences among European higher education systems even after more than two decades of intense Europeanisation. Similarly, Christensen et al. (2014) argue that ideas about higher education reforms that seem to be part of global reform debates, such as an increased focus on output-oriented steering, might provide national policy debates with converging labels and frames. However, the implementation of policy changes is influenced by what they call "national filters". These filters help actors to select policy ideas which are more in line with what is perceived as an appropriate policy, leading to nationally diverging responses to similar policy problems or narratives.

Western Europe, contrary to Canada and the U.S., is a set of very diverse autonomous countries each with their own policy legacy that underwent a process of Europeanisation in the last two decades. This diversity is still visible in many of the studies on higher education policy, even if the European countries are at times more similar to one another than they are to the U.S. or Canada. The differences in political or party systems, are greater, political culture, welfare state regimes etc. more varied, and all of this has an influence on the politics of higher education policy. Thus, the question whether Western European higher education systems can be described as converging or diverging depends on the analyzed time frame, the area within the policy field one looks at, and the units of analysis one compares. Western European higher education policy has become more alike since the start of the Bologna Process in 1999, but it is still far away from being a coherent area. Instead,

the drop in salience of Europeanisation in the last years and the shift to Europeanisation through inter-university collaborations, visible for example in the European Universities Initiative, could lead to more convergence between universities while national policymaking remains somewhat divergent. This might further complicate the already complex multi-actor, multi-level, and multi-issue characteristics of higher education policy in Europe (Chou et al., 2017).

State of Scholarship

Western Europe has an active research community studying higher education policy. However, this community is spread between those who can be described as higher education researchers, focusing nearly exclusively on this object of study, and those who work in different disciplines, such as political science, economics, or sociology, and for whom higher education is one study object among many. These two sub-groups interact at times, but due to their differing starting points in approaching the topic they can use slightly different conceptual lenses. In general, the field has made use of a diverse set of conceptual approaches from classical ideas from political science, such as party politics, over foundational sociological approaches, such as neo-institutionalism, to more recent concepts like multi-level governance. There is not one concept that is used most frequently, and one can argue that the diversity of conceptual approaches is a strength of the research community. Moreover, while the community has developed some original concepts, by-and-large those are rather limited in their conceptual reach and often more descriptive than predictive in their nature (Maassen, 2009). This has earlier been described as a problem, since studies on European higher education have often suffered from what has been called ‘double-isolatedness’, meaning studies have treated higher education as isolated from other policy sectors and rarely used analytical frameworks from general social sciences (Maassen, 2000, 2009). While links between disciplinary scholars and the higher education research community have gotten stronger as core disciplines have re-discovered higher education as a relevant object of study (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2011), this has not changed fundamentally.

There are many aspects in which the Western European higher education policy community could profit from closer exchanges with their North American counterparts. First, the multi-level dynamics in higher education policy in the U.S. and Canada, including exchanges between the federal and state/provincial level and exchanges among states or provinces, offer a good comparative framework that can help to better understand Europeanisation dynamics. Second, the differences in politics and polities between North America and Western Europe also hold the potential that cross-Atlantic comparisons provide us with a better understanding of higher education policymaking. For example, while Western Europe is strongly characterized by a corporatist interest group structure, the U.S. and to a certain degree Canada have a more pluralist environment. In this, very diverse types of

actors are involved in higher education policy debates, which can broaden the horizon regarding how we understand the interplay of interest groups in Europe. Similarly, funding dynamics in higher education are inherently different given the, on average, larger amount of private spending in the U.S. and Anglophone Canada. These cases offer important contexts against which one can test results and assumptions developed in Western Europe, where the level of private spending is more limited. Finally, given that many European higher education reforms have been framed as a way to catch up with leading U.S. institutions, increased collaboration between scholars from Western Europe and North America can help to assess in how far these institutions can really serve as best-practice examples, and in how far there are tradeoffs that are linked to mimicking their development.

The Politics of Higher Education Policy in Canada

The politics of higher education policy in Canada is conditioned by national and provincial institutionalized cabinet governments (Dunn, 2002; Savoie, 1999), a highly decentralized federal structure (Elkins & Simeon, 1980; Smiley, 1987), distinct cultural and language differences between provinces, and provincial autonomy over higher education (Jones, 1997), a professional and politically neutral public service (Kernaghan, 2002), and the publicly funded character of higher education across the country (Fisher et al., 2006; Jones, 1996). Policy scholars have characterized Canada's national policy style as punctuated gradualism, in which the influence of executive federalism and other pressures shape gradual and periodic policy innovation and gradual reform over time, as a result of required close intergovernmental negotiation and cooperation (Howlett & Migone, 2018). This national policy style extends from the historical practices that forged the original confederation, which involved elite accommodation and negotiated settlement (Howlett & Migone, 2018).

Policy System

Further to constitutional arrangements and policymaking style, there are a number of additional features of Canada's higher education policy system worth noting that help to shape Canada's higher education policy research environment. These include limitations to policy knowledge production, institutional arrangements for policy coordination, and policy actors. Policy-oriented research in higher education is generated across a wide variety of venues, including government, academic researchers, interest groups, networks, and private consultants. There are a limited number of higher education research centres in Canada, and within the multi-level and multi-departmental arrangements of government, there is relatively limited policy analytic capacity in higher education. Provincial governments have followed a pattern of creating and dissolving traditional intermediary organizations, largely

replacing them with direct departmental decision-making or creating specific-purpose intermediary bodies, such as in the case of degree quality assurance or student mobility (Jones, 1996; Shanahan & Jones, 2007; Smith, 2014). A few moderately institutionalized and voluntary coordinating bodies contribute horizontal self-coordination, intergovernmental cooperation, and information exchange (Jungblut & Rexe, 2017). Temporary policy venues are relatively common catalysts for policy processes and take various forms, including ad hoc commissions or inquiries, special purpose advisory bodies, and *les Assises*, which often provide opportunities for public and stakeholder engagement. It has been observed that growth of expertise has expanded the range of actors associated with policy activities and communities, which could challenge governmental and intergovernmental monopolies (Howlett & Migone, 2018).

Canadian policy actors are active in both provincial and federal venues and are predominantly linked to publicly funded institutions. Interest groups representing faculty, students, and institutional networks interact with government in a variety of ways, shaped in part by differing regional politico-administrative arrangements and regional culture. The Canadian context has features of both pluralist and corporatist interest group systems; in recent decades, organized interests show increased fragmentation and differentiation, and exhibit competitive behaviours, in an environment with relatively few organized interests, and a demonstrated willingness and ability to cooperate on particular policy matters. Overall, faculty and students generally articulate their interests through nested, multi-level associated organizations, although there are distinctive features of the Quebec student movement, relative to the rest of Canada (Drago, 2021). Institutional interests and advocacy networks are increasingly differentiated and specialized. At the national level, institutional membership organizations and networks have grown in number, with increasingly specialized identities, different membership alliances, and shifting policy priorities, operating within an increasingly competitive political environment. Similarly, restructuring of student organizations reflect shifting values and priorities in student politics, and competition between organizations for membership and influence. Less studied but present are philanthropic bodies, including those associated with universities (Thomarat, 2019) and influential foundations that have transnational interests in Canadian higher education (see e.g. Johnson et al., 2020).

One notable change in the environment is the emergence of new policy actors. There are increasingly influential entities in Canada who function at the interface of government, business, and higher education, who use their funding mechanisms to steer institutional behaviour. These formal academy-industry-government interfaces have increased in number and in influence, operating as quasi-intermediary bodies (Metcalf, 2010) and undertake policy-oriented advocacy and coordination. These new actors, their internal policymaking processes, and relationship to public policy processes are notable gaps in understanding in this field of inquiry and provide an opportunity for further research.

Policy Attention

Overall, a dominant theme in historical and contemporary higher education policy debate centres on the proper role of the federal government, from the financing of post-war expansion to research funding models to questions of proper jurisdictional authorities and inter-governmental relations. Specific policy attention and activity has changed over time, and varies widely from advocates of high federal involvement, including many student and faculty organizations, and advocates of low federal involvement, such as the province of Quebec. Overall, Canadian scholars tend to agree that the most significant policy effects are those shaped by the federal government; federalism can account for similar provincial responses on higher education policy areas. However, while provincial policy adoptions appear to suggest isomorphism, there are few empirical studies that confirm or describe mechanisms of horizontal policy transfer. Unlike the United States, there has been limited sub-national comparative work in this area, and even fewer exploring the role of political parties, partisanship, elected or administrative sector leadership in shaping policy adoption. The research undertaken to date affords a limited understanding of the role of path-dependencies or policy legacies in higher education politics and policy-making in Canada.

In the post-war era, dominant higher education policy debates in Canada have continuously focused on a few key areas. One primary theme is accessibility and affordability, centring on growth, system-building, and financing mechanisms. These debates are shaped by cycles of expansion in participation rates, institutional and system capacity building, and related increases to tuition fees, surfacing questions on the balance of cost-sharing between students and government, student debt, and need-based financial aid. Additional policy attention centres on economic benefits of higher education and how to address economic or social inequality through accessibility, including questions on socio-economic influences on participation and the role of education in economic growth. A key shift is evident with increasing questions on privatization and the role of marketization in higher education, which became well established in the 1990s, addressing the potential role of private universities and colleges, private sources of funding in higher education, research funding, and the regulation/deregulation of tuition fees. Finally, questions on various higher education reforms, such as increased reliance on market mechanisms, government and quasi-governmental steering, the effects of international and interprovincial trade agreements on higher education, and new forms of university governance and management.

More recently, there has been increased attention to the relationship between higher education, the labour market, and the economy, posing questions on public investment in research and innovation (Veletanlić & Sá, 2020) as well government steering of university science and university-industry partnerships (Veletanlić & Sá, 2019), employability and “skills gaps” (Viccko et al., 2019), and questions of quality assurance (Liu, 2020). Internationalization emerged as a policy priority, manifesting at the federal, provincial, and institutional levels, with complex interactions across policy spaces, presenting unique challenges to coordination (Tamtik et al.,

2020) and raising questions about how global convergence in higher education is structured and organized (Klassen & Sá, 2020). Finally, shifting equity, diversity, and inclusion discourses and policy adoptions at the institutional level, addressing critical questions of systemic racism and the larger project of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada, have attracted recent scholarly attention (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Tamtik & Guenter, 2019).

State of Scholarship

Canada has a small research community studying higher education policy, comprised of both scholars and highly productive and influential practitioners. There are less than a handful of university-based higher education or educational leadership research centres, associated exclusively with university faculties of education, and one provincially funded higher education research entity, located in Canada's most populous province, Ontario. Canadian higher education studies, as a field, is most closely affiliated with education scholars and practitioners and less so as an object of study within traditional social sciences, although Canadian scholars employ diverse conceptual approaches and disseminate research across variety of discipline-based venues.

Constitutional, legislative, and institutional factors shaping policy choices and outcomes is firmly established as a dominant framing and explanatory narrative in both French and English empirical policy scholarship. However, there has been limited formal attention to causal complexity. Critical scholarship has focussed on questions of power, examining policy actor behaviour and assessing policy implications or outcomes with a social justice lens. Regardless of scholarly approach, higher education policy studies lag behind other Canadian policy research (which also tends to focus on federal policy subjects), in both topical attention and conceptualization, and its limitations share similar characteristics with those observed in other regions in this volume (Maassen, 2009).

There are a number of opportunities for Canadian policy communities to benefit from greater interaction with international scholarship. Drawing from approaches to studying political processes in the United States and Western Europe, the established Canadian state-centered theoretical lens could be extended to further and more precisely understand dynamics of policy innovation and reform, and the political behaviour of policy actors and interest articulation. Canada's diverse regional policymaking contexts and cultures offer an opportunity to contribute interesting cases to comparative projects. One priority area could be to gain greater insights from both the United States and Western Europe into the dynamics of policymaking, with increased marketization and fundamental shifts in funding across most Canadian provinces and given a potential widening gap in political priorities related to higher education finance. Further, European scholars have developed promising approaches to examining the political dynamics in key policy areas that are largely unexamined in the Canadian context but are important areas of policy innovation,

such as quality assurance and student mobility. Finally, larger questions of the political expressions of global competition and improved conceptualization of Canadian government regulation and policy design in higher education could be advanced through international scholarly exchange.

Last, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided the unwelcome opportunity for observing the politics of higher education policy, across all areas covered in this volume: government and intergovernmental relations, university governance and decision making, access and affordability, as well as policy entrepreneurship. Reflections on this work is emerging in Canadian higher education policy studies (Buckner et al., 2022; El Masri & Sabzalieva, 2020) and policy sciences (Migone, 2020). It will be an interesting comparative international opportunity to assess if the fundamental dynamics of multi-actor, multi-level governance in higher education have changed in response to this policymaking environment, or whether and to what extent political behaviours in this arena conformed to established patterns.

The Politics of Higher Education Policy in the U.S.

The politics of higher education policy in the United States is shaped primarily by the federalist government structure and the more pluralist nature of many stakeholders seeking influence. Although the tenth amendment of the U.S. Constitution reserves power over education to the states, the federal government exerts tremendous influence over the higher education sector through funding and agenda-setting. Similar to the Canadian and Western Europe contexts, the U.S. region has wide variation in higher education at the sub-national level. U.S. states govern higher education with different levels of centralization (McGuinness, 2016), fund higher education using different approaches (Hearn, 2015), award financial aid based on different criteria of need and merit (Ma & Pender, 2021), and attend to equity differently (Jones & Berger, 2019). Indeed, within the federalist system states are often seen as laboratories to experiment with different approaches to government and policy that often lead to different outcomes.

Policy System

The higher education policy system in the United States leans more pluralistic than the policy systems in Canada and Western Europe. Public and non-public actors shape the policy activity at both federal- and state-levels. The federal higher education policy system primarily includes government agencies that distribute and manage resources for student financial aid and research. There are also several national member associations that represent different types of higher education institutions (e.g., research universities, private universities, and community colleges). At the state-level, the public actors with the most authority and influence are the state

higher education agencies that coordinate and govern public higher education institutions within each state. States take a range of approaches in the autonomy of colleges and universities and their accountability to the state. Most recently, there's been a rise of accountability efforts within state systems of higher education which has included the increasing influence of the state governor (Tandberg et al., 2018).

The United States also has a robust collection of non-public actors that influence higher education. This includes constituent organizations that represent students, faculty, academic disciplines, and key professional functions (e.g., financial aid, admissions, business officers). Arguably, however, the actors with the most sharply rising influence are policy organizations, or intermediaries. These intermediaries range from regional compacts that provide policy analysis and services to states in defined geographic regions to single-issue policy organizations related to college affordability, diversity equity and inclusion, and public accountability and efficiency. Intermediary organizations exert influence on higher education through mechanisms such as providing technical information, creating and expanding networks, and advancing specific policy solutions (Ness et al., 2018).

One of the main differences between the United States and the Canadian or Western European contexts is the scope of private funding for higher education. This includes not only tuition and fees that students pay to attend public and private institutions, but also significant funding from private entities including corporations and philanthropic foundations. In fact, many argue that foundations are playing major roles in identifying and advancing the policy priorities at the national and state levels (Haddad, 2021; Miller & Morphew, 2017). This rising influence of non-public actors most often supports the objectives and policy directions of federal and state governments. Yet, some critics contend that foundation funding has shifted the genesis of higher education policy priorities from public to market influences (Barnhardt, 2017).

Policy Dynamics

Given the wide variation in policy systems and actors, there are many areas of higher education policy attention in the U.S. At the risk of over-simplifying, however, these areas of attention tend to converge around three main strands. The first strand is the most stable and productive in examining the effects of higher education policies on various outcomes. The strand includes a robust literature examining the effects of higher education funding, governance, and policies on outcomes at the student-, campus-, state-, or federal-level. For example, over recent decades, scholars examined the effectiveness of performance-based funding models on student retention and graduation outcomes (Hillman et al., 2015), the effect of student financial aid to whether and where students attend college (Flores, 2010; Zhang & Ness, 2010), and how state transfer and articulation agreements influence degree attainment (Spencer, 2021). This approach draws heavily on economic models often grounded in human capital theory.

The second strand includes examinations of how various contexts of the policy-making setting influence the adoption of higher education policy decisions. This body of work has grown in the last several decades and has relied on theories of the public policy making process such as diffusion, advocacy coalition, policy entrepreneurs, and principal agent theory. These theories point to several contexts such as socioeconomic and demographic factors (e.g., race/ethnicity, income), political factors (e.g., party control, formal government power, interest group activity), and external factors (e.g., intermediary organization activity) that stand to influence whether state governments adopt certain policy initiatives (Hearn et al., 2017; McLendon, 2003). This work has been expanded to examine a wide range of policy decisions including student financial aid programs, performance-based funding models, and governance structures (Doyle, 2006; McLendon et al., 2007; Morgan et al., 2021). One particularly salient finding has been the influence of political party control on the adoption of different types of policies. Based on the increasingly partisan divide on the perceived value of higher education with Republicans showing far less support for higher education than Democrats (Parker, 2019), this line of inquiry stands to grow among researchers and higher education leaders.

The final strand of the notable policy dynamics relates to higher education affordability, access, and equity. This work has generated a significant amount of scholarly attention for several decades and has become even more pronounced in recent years. This line of inquiry focuses on the differences in funding and outcomes for students, faculty, and other stakeholders from communities underrepresented in higher education. In the United States this primarily includes individuals from lower income backgrounds as well as racially minoritized communities (namely African-American, Latinx, and Indigenous populations). This work has long examined access and opportunity to higher education for students from these underrepresented communities. In the last decade, there has been much more attention on college success or degree attainment and the extent to which attainment gaps exist for underrepresented populations (Jones & Berger, 2019). Much of this work is conceptually grounded in social and cultural capital and in critical perspectives, such as critical race theory. These theories highlight the power imbalance felt by communities of color in the United States. They also challenge the pluralist notion that many groups can influence policy decisions likely sharing Schattschneider's (1960) critique that "the flaw of pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent." This line of inquiry seems likely to strengthen in the future, especially as race-conscious higher education policies continue to be advanced and opposed in many U.S. states.

State of Scholarship

Compared to the Canadian and Western European contexts, the United States includes a robust landscape of researchers, academic programs, and policy organizations that examine higher education policy. The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), which serves as the disciplinary and professional

association for U.S. higher education researchers, has roughly 1500 members from more than 100 academic programs in U.S. colleges and universities. There are dozens of academic journals that publish peer reviewed research on a range of topics related to higher education. Even if the sub-field of scholarly emphasis on policy and politics represents a share of this overall activity, higher education is indeed a growing field of study in the U.S..

In addition to these academic entities, many higher education researchers from state agencies or other policy organizations contribute to the higher education scholarship in the U.S.. All 50 states have at least one state agency that coordinates or governs higher education institutions and nearly all of these agencies include research and policy analysis officials. The State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Association serves as a member organization for these agencies and provides substantial resources and leadership that inform state level decisions and advocate for state higher education agencies and represent the state agencies in national and federal deliberations. There are dozens of other higher education associations and organizations, in addition to SHEEO, that publish policy reports and convene actors to examine pressing policy issues.

U.S. higher education researchers have much to learn from Canadian and Western European scholars. For example, the research attention in Western Europe to policy networks across the broader EHEA region offers important insights on how autonomous countries with their own policy legacies find connections and opportunities for policy transfer. The U.S. states, often clustered by region, also have distinct policy legacies. With the increasing partisan influence on higher education, these divisions may sharpen. For these reasons, the studies of networks and policy harmonization in Western European higher education policy may be increasingly relevant in the U.S. context. From the Canadian higher education studies, U.S. researchers could learn from their attention to social and economic inequality. This line of inquiry is clearly ascendant in the U.S. and examinations of systemic racism and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada would clearly be relevant. Scholarly exchange on the sources of these inequalities, the structures that perpetuate them, and the policies to eviscerate them would provide U.S. researchers insights from Canada's distinct history and approach. Finally, there are several specific areas of policy attention in common for U.S., Canadian, and Western European scholars. The balance of institutional autonomy and public accountability, the share of public and private costs for higher education, and the influence of broader social, economic, and political factors—just to name a few—are central to our higher education research communities. By understanding how these tensions exist and operate in other policy settings, higher education researchers may see our own contexts, tension, and policies more clearly.

Comparing Political Dynamics in Higher Education Policy in North America and Western Europe

One of the aims of this volume is to use a comparative approach to investigate in how far there is rationalization and convergence (Bromley & Meyer, 2015; Ramirez & Meyer, 2013) of the politics of higher education policy in the three contexts or whether we observe path dependence and lasting divergence (Thelen, 1999). While the comparative chapters in each section of the book and the previous sections of this chapter provide comparisons within regions and regarding each of the five aspects of policymaking, in the following we will take more of a birds-eye view and compare policymaking in higher education policy in all three contexts across all five aspects. To this end, we will focus on the key policy issues, the role of the federal/supranational level of governance, and the five aspects of policymaking that provided the core structure for this volume. By comparing the three contexts we will also be able to identify in how far there is convergence and rationalization at play or whether regional filters and path dependence persist (Christensen et al., 2014; Thelen, 1999). Finally, we will also discuss the state of scholarship in the three higher education policy research communities. Table 22.1 provides an overview of the comparison between the three contexts.

Looking at the central policy issues, one can observe a high degree of diversity between the contexts. Already within Western Europe it is hard to identify a specific set of dominant policy issues and when comparing the three contexts this diversity is even more pronounced. The main commonality that one can see is that higher education's relevance for other policy areas has increased in all contexts. This is visible, for example, in the fact that issues such as the role of higher education for economic development or reducing social inequality are key themes across the contexts. However, while universities in all three contexts fulfil the same functions, which of their function is highlighted in policy discussions or perceived as needing reform differs. We know from studies of policy agendas (Baumgartner et al., 2006) that attention of policymakers is a rare good. Thus, issue attention is often driven by perceived lack of performance or opportunity for reform. These dynamics are usually strongly embedded in a specific political system giving room for increased importance of national peculiarities. The politicisation of higher education and the growing linkages to other policy areas (Chou et al., 2017) further increase the relevance of national or state/province policymaking as well as politico-administrative arrangements (Bleiklie & Michelsen, 2018) creating limitations for rationalization and convergence and fostering persistent differences.

The role of the supranational and federal level in the three contexts is overall rather limited. As outlined in the introduction to this volume, we are aware that the comparison between a supranational entity like the EU and a federal state does not happen on equal footing, but it is interesting to see that we can observe similar dynamics across contexts. Neither the EU nor the federal level in Canada or the U.S. have a strong role in higher education policy and all these entities operate under very strict legal limitations on their ability to be active in policymaking in this

Table 22.1 Comparison and summary of main findings

	Western Europe	United States	Canada	Do we see convergence or divergence between contexts?
Central policy issues	Europeanisation and student/staff mobility persist as relevant issues, but salience of issues is strongly driven by national differences	Affordability, access, success in higher education, especially difference by economic/social/demographic characteristics	Relationship between higher education, the labour market, immigration, and the economy; research and innovation; economic and social inequality	High degree of divergence between contexts; issue salience driven by local agendas and perceived performance of higher education
Supra-national/federal role	Limited supranational role, mainly standardising & steering with money, focus on institutional level because of partly decreasing national interest	Limited federal role, mainly financial aid/research federal funding; increasing state government control/influence of higher education	Limited federal role, but financial steering in focussed policy areas; influence contested by sub-national governments, but encouraged by institutional actors and networks	Limited role of the supranational/federal level in all contexts, path-dependence from the legal/constitutional order, common trend to use steering though the provision of funding to exert influence
Governance	Historically strong role of the state developed into more diverse governance arrangements with focus on interest representation and university autonomy	Rise in state-level accountability efforts; increasing influence of state governors and of party politics	Incremental reform tied directly or indirectly to government funding, with strong historical university autonomy	Differing historical starting points and diverging reform dynamics; relevance of university autonomy as common theme, but policymaking and reform dynamics strongly influenced by political context
Finance	Comparatively high level of public funding using diverse funding approaches (performance-based vs block grants), funding dynamics often the result of political processes interacting with policy legacies	Shrinking share of public funding (state appropriations) compared to tuition fees; rise in state-level performance-based funding models	Historically high public funding, with subnational variation; changing dynamics related to increased government steering and reliance on market mechanisms	Still high levels of public funding in Western Europe and Canada paired with a move to more performance-based allocation; in the U.S. stronger reliance on tuition fees but also use of performance-based allocation for shrinking public funds

<p>Policy framing</p>	<p>Diverse set of frames is being used reaching from welfare state, Europeanisation, economic growth to solving societal challenges</p>	<p>Dominance of neoliberal ideology embraced by policy actors has led to policy solutions that embed neoliberal governing rationality and market-based solutions</p>	<p>Shifting emphasis over time on themes of education rights, economic development and change, social and economic equality</p>	<p>Framing of higher education policy differs between contexts with Western Europe and Canada having a wider variety of frames being used;</p>
<p>Interest organizations</p>	<p>Mainly corporatist with multi-level dynamics, increasing diversity over time; growing importance of university networks & alliances</p>	<p>Both statist and corporatist traditions with growing influence of philanthropic foundations that support intermediary & advocacy organizations</p>	<p>Both statist and corporatist traditions, with significant sub-national differences; increasing diversity over time; new government-business-academia partnership bodies</p>	<p>Differing dynamics in the three contexts and different types of actors are gaining more importance; but converging development that interest group ecology is getting more diverse in all contexts as new actors enter the arena</p>
<p>Policy diffusion</p>	<p>Vertical dynamics through Europeanisation but increasingly also horizontal through organizational networks & university alliances</p>	<p>Significant horizontal diffusion, some vertical diffusion; increasing partisan divide in support for higher education sector as limiting factor</p>	<p>Evidence of a national system of emulation and sub-national isomorphism; limited understanding of dynamics of conditioning vertical diffusion and voluntary horizontal diffusion</p>	<p>Diffusion is present and relevant in all contexts, but concrete dynamics differ; diverging balance between vertical and horizontal diffusion linked to the role of the supranational/federal level</p>

area. These limitations are less the results of recent governance reforms but rather represent examples of path-dependence stemming from early constitutional arrangements that continue to limit their active involvement. Because of these limitations it is also not surprising that the main tool that supranational/federal level actors use to influence higher education policy is in all contexts the provision of funding for certain activities. This includes research, student support or international mobility. In addition, policy coordination or standardisation is used to some extent to support the harmonisation of higher education policies of the different countries, states, or provinces. In how far these activities of the supranational or federal level are seen as appropriate is to a differing degree an object of political debate in the three contexts. Thus, a commonality across contexts seems to be that steering through the provision of funding for activities that are perceived as desirable remains to be the most promising and least controversial way to exert influence on higher education.

Looking at the five aspects of policymaking that we focused on in this volume and the question of the level of convergence across the three regions one can observe some interesting dynamics (see Table 22.1). First, the results clearly show that there is persistent divergence as policymaking dynamics continue to be influenced by politico-administrative contexts and local policy agendas. Interestingly, it seems that in some areas Western Europe and the U.S. are at the end of a continuum of differences while Canada takes up a middle position between the two blending aspects of both contexts. At the same time, one can also identify similar change dynamics across the three contexts. All three policymaking environments are characterised by a greater number of actors with more diverse backgrounds being involved in and relevant for higher education policymaking. Moreover, higher education policy is becoming more politicised in all three contexts and increasingly linked to other policy areas creating a multi-level, multi-actor and multi-issue policymaking environment (Chou et al., 2017). Finally, higher education in all three contexts is exposed to a growing political demand that public funding is closely tied to demonstrating performance.

Taken together, our results are very much in line with the proposal by Christensen et al. (2014) who suggested that while there are global reform trends in higher education that these undergo processes of national or regional filtering before being adopted in a given context. This follows arguments from historical institutionalism (see e.g. Thelen, 1999) that highlight the relevance of policy legacies and path dependence of policymaking dynamics for the way in which globally circulating reform ideas are being adopted. The results from our volume clearly demonstrate the relevance of these arguments for higher education policy. So, while there are common reform themes across contexts, to understand what this will mean in a given context still demands investigating the interaction between a concrete politico-administrative system and a reform idea (Bleiklie & Michelsen, 2013, 2018). This demands more comparative studies on the politics of higher education policy not only between the three contexts addressed in this volume but also between other regions of the world.

As explained in the sections above, the scholarship on the politics of higher education policy in the three contexts rests on differing levels of institutionalisation.

While in the U.S. there is a sizable higher education research community, the Canadian community is much smaller and often embedded in disciplinary departments. In Western Europe there are some distinct higher education research centres, but many researchers are also here embedded in disciplinary departments. The difference in organizational structure of research communities also shows in the way how conceptual lenses are borrowed from different disciplines. As visible in Table 22.2, different conceptual approaches are prominent in the three contexts. At the same time, all have in common that there is only very limited development of own conceptual approaches. This echoes Maassen’s (2000) argument that higher education research is in need of constant exchanges with core disciplines to ensure that studies remain up to date regarding the latest conceptual development. This is even more relevant for studies of the politics of higher education policy as the object of study is not only higher education but rather the politics surrounding the sector. Thus, strong links to conceptual development in fields such as political science, public administration or policy studies are especially important. Moreover, the comparison in Table 22.2 shows that policymaking environment shapes the key issues that are being studied. Finally, both emerging and established topics in higher education research reflect differences in issue attention in policymaking. As studies of higher education policy often focus on aspects that are part of ongoing political debate or recent policy changes, there is a feedback loop between policy issues that are especially contentious or object of ongoing reforms and the type of research that is being done.

Besides those differences, the three contexts also show some commonalities. Policymaking in higher education in all three contexts is characterised by

Table 22.2 The state of scholarship on higher education policy in North America and Western Europe

	Western Europe	United States	Canada
Established focus	Europeanisation, HE governance/autonomy of universities, the social dimension of HE	Affordability/access, policy adoption, transfer across states	Policy histories, affordability & access to HE, the federal role in HE
Emerging interest	HE’s role in sustainability/ climate change, the role of values (e.g. academic freedom) in Europeanization	Focus on equality, diversity & inclusion (EDI), special importance of issues related to racial justice	Questions of social justice (EDI), internationalization, the role of policy actors, innovation policy
Established theoretical frames	Party politics, multi-level governance/Europeanisation, organizational research/ institutional theory, theories of the policy process, critical sociology	Human capital theory, rational choice, institutional theory, theories of the policy process	Critical sociology, legal/ institutional history, institutional theory, human capital theory, rational choice
Emerging theoretical frames	Interest group perspectives, meta-organizations	Critical perspectives, strategic action fields	Theories of the policy process

multi-issue, multi-level and multi-actor dynamics (Chou et al., 2017), and this is also reflected in the scholarship on higher education policy. For example, questions of actor constellations, interplay between levels of governance or diffusion of ideas are of interest in all three contexts. In addition, vertical policy diffusion between countries, states or provinces is a relevant topic of research in all contexts. This highlights the nature of all three contexts as rather complex interacting systems with elements that observe and learn from each other. One reason for this mutual learning is that higher education is becoming a more salient policy area in all three contexts which is accompanied by an increasing number of linkages to other policy areas. This makes higher education policy more politicised, which in turn sets incentives for higher education institutions and their networks to become more active players in political debates. The role of higher education for social equality clearly stands out as a central issue for researchers in all three scholarly communities. However, also here the specific focus of policy research is shaped by salient policy debates. While in North America questions of racial justice and the inclusion of the indigenous population are of increasing relevance, the focus in Europe is stronger rooted in classical sociological questions of class or socio-economic background with only limited attention to specific groups, e.g. access to higher education for refugees (Jungblut et al., 2020b).

Overall, the comparisons highlight that even if the research communities in the three contexts are to a certain extent siloed and links between them are still somewhat limited, there are many commonalities in the way how higher education policy is studied. This makes an expansion of comparative studies both easy and potentially fruitful. Studying the politics of higher education policy across diverse contexts not only helps to highlight similarities and differences but also allows scholars to better understand peculiarities of their own context and question taken-for-granted aspects of both their research and policymaking itself (Kosmützky & Nokkala, 2014).

The Politics of Higher Education Policy in a Changing World

Last, and this is one of the issues we realized while writing this book, there are new social realities and emerging themes that are influencing higher education politics around the world and that have the potential to be even more important in the future. We focused in this volume on five key aspects - governance, funding, framing, interest groups, and diffusion - when trying to understand how the politics of higher education policy are shaped in North America and Western Europe. However, our regional focus should by no means be understood in a way that these key aspects and the dynamics that have been described are only relevant for the three contexts we chose to study. To the contrary, we strongly believe that the five key aspects are all lenses that would be useful to understand and compare the dynamics of higher education politics in other regions of the world. First, they represent fundamental aspects of policymaking for higher education and thus are easily transferable to

other environments. Second, the multi-level, multi-issue, and multi-actor dynamics that we highlight have already been described as relevant characteristics also for higher education policy in other regions (Chou et al., 2017). Finally, universities in North America and Western Europe are often perceived as prestigious role-models which other countries aspire to emulate to a certain extent. Thus, policymaking dynamics from the three contexts can be expected to also inform policy debates in other environments.

Besides the relevance for other contexts, studying higher education policy in the three contexts highlighted the growing relevance of connections to other policy areas and the influence of more general (public sector) reform processes on higher education. For sure, one of the top priorities would be artificial intelligence (AI) and its influence on university development. Several countries are engaged in the development of AI, which promises an economic impact between 7.1 and 13.1 trillion U.S. dollars (Manyika et al., 2013) but also significant breakthroughs in education (Daniel, 2019). Already, research in pedagogy analyzes methods, practices and software using AI that aim to improve student success by focusing on various aspects of learning: targeted support for carrying out educational exercises, prediction of success to adapt teaching, the kind and nature of student feedback, etc. In fact, when one looks at how AI finds its way into universities, one can observe that projects are often driven by available government funds and are not explicitly linked to policies regarding AI in higher education. This lack of a regulatory framework makes this policy issue especially interesting for future studies as an increasing number of countries and universities will explore how they can use this technology in their provision of higher education especially following the recent increase in attention to AI-driven text generators.

The Covid-19 pandemic also had an immense effect on the delivery of education as well as research activities in universities around the world (Goedegebuure & Meek, 2021). For the better or the worse, Covid-19 was a very strong catalyst for distance education and remote work in universities. The pandemic has provided the unwelcome opportunity for observing the politics of higher education policy play out in real time and partly at record speed across all areas covered in this volume. It will be highly relevant and informative in the next years to embark on comparative international research to assess if the fundamental dynamics of multi-actor, multi-level governance in higher education changed in response to the pandemic, or whether and to what extent political dynamics conformed to established patterns. The fact that this reality lasted more than 2 years (while we are writing these lines) most likely will have significant influence for the future of higher education. But it is important to remember that decisions regarding delivery of courses, teaching practices or research organization were not driven by universities themselves, but by political actors in a context of a global health crisis.

Unfortunately, the role of crises seems to be an important and continuing game changer for the future of higher education and its politics. As universities are increasingly perceived as tools to solve societies' grand challenges, policy problems like global warming will be an important trend for research and educational provision. This will influence university organization, the delivery of courses, and government-funded research activities. Policy aims such as becoming

carbon-neutral, require not only technical innovations but also a better understanding of the public psychology behind a move towards a green future, or finding solutions for the political challenges linked to the implementation of green policies. This will be of central importance for higher education and its policies in the coming decade.

The issue of global warming also raises the question of immigration and integration, especially in the context of humanitarian crises and how universities respond to them and act as responsible organizations in an interconnected world. Universities as educational institutions that provide skills and knowledge, but also help people to become part of a society play a key role in the education sector's response to the integration of immigrants in general and refugees in particular (see e.g. Jungblut et al., 2020b; Unangst et al., 2020). World events like the influx of refugees in Western Europe in 2015 or the humanitarian consequences of the Russian attack on Ukraine in 2022 alternate the political environment for universities who often play a part in national responses to these challenges. Facing these kinds of situations, universities will have to react, and governments will expect from universities that they do their part in helping people integrate into society. At the same time, global conflicts and power struggles between countries or world regions also put internationalization of higher education on trial. With increasing global tensions collaboration across borders can become more challenging for academics and universities, and we need to better understand how internationalization evolves in different regions of the world given increasing competition between nations.

One aspect that is linked to the increase in tensions is the question of the role of foundational, democratic values in higher education. This debate is maybe the most visible with regard to the role of academic freedom and the question in how far cooperation in higher education is based on common values (Jungblut et al., 2020a). Similar debates also take place among students and staff in universities. With certain social values becoming more politicized and divisive, conflicts between, for example, the ideal of free speech and ideas of safe spaces for marginalized groups can create tensions. Some regions covered in this volume, have already considered new legislation to regulate academic freedom in the context of these value conflicts (Cloutier et al., 2021).

Overall, universities have always been answering to social needs and political expectations from their immediate environment. They are foundational institutions of the modern state and have fulfilled and keep fulfilling key functions for the state (Clark, 1983). The key difference today is that universities are embedded in a much more complex environment of globalised knowledge societies that rely on universities as central knowledge institutions to help them solve fundamental social challenges. Thus, by becoming more important for societies, universities are also getting increasingly connected to a wide range of policy fields, while being increasingly influenced by global events demanding from universities and policymakers to be much more responsive and adaptive to changing conditions. We do not know what the challenges of the coming decades will be for higher education, but by investigating the processes through which higher education is regulated and the policies that steer it, we will be able to have a better understanding of the interplay between

politics and higher education and how universities can contribute in a meaningful way to solving societies' grand challenges.

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