



Higher Education Policy: The Evolution of a Journal

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This paper looks back at 20 years of *Higher Education Policy*. It pays attention to the emergence of the journal, analyses the nature of the 656 contributions over time, investigates who contributed to the journal and what the affiliations are of the contributors. Finally, it addresses the geography of the journal: which countries — over time — have been discussed in the contributions? The analysis shows the evolution of a journal focusing on information exchange with a majority of single-author contributions, many of them administrators and managers in higher education; to a more scholarly journal, with a diversity of contributors (academics, managers and administrators). In terms of content, important policy issues throughout the two decades (university autonomy, marketization, internationalization, quality assurance, governance, etc.) are clearly represented. The analysis of contributors shows the rich variety of countries and institutions that have brought the journal to what it currently is.

Higher Education Policy (2008) 21, 265–274. doi:10.1057/hep.2008.6

Keywords: higher education policy; journal; evolution; content analysis

Introduction

The celebration of the 60 years of the *International Association of Universities* (IAU) almost coincides with 20th birthday of its journal *Higher Education Policy*. Almost, for the year 2008 implies the maturity — at the age of 21 — of the journal. The human metaphor, however, seems misplaced for one might pursue the analogy too far and conclude that the IAU is reaching the age of retirement, which would not be appropriate given the vibrancy of the association and the relevance of its meetings and conferences and its existence in general. Likewise, *Higher Education Policy* being mature by now would imply that it has been non-mature in earlier years and that it more or less will reach its intellectual peak in the coming years (and after that a period of decline will follow). So let us use the more neutral term evolution and state that this contribution will look back at 20 years of *Higher Education Policy* and will illustrate the evolution of the journal. I will do so by giving first a qualitative



impression of the development; by looking at the themes addressed throughout the years; by analysing who and which institutions contributed to the journal and by analysing the geography of the journal: which countries and continents were in the picture in the past decades?

Methodology

To carry out the analyses, a spreadsheet was created. Every row of the spreadsheet contained subsequently the title of the contribution, the author(s), the issue in which the paper appeared and the affiliation(s) of the author (organization and country). I excluded anonymous contributions, as well as contributions that clearly contained excerpts from (policy) documents. Additionally, editorials by Guy Neave — in most issues of the journal — were excluded, for this would seriously skew the database. Also contributions that did not go beyond mere description of a policy or an institutional-level development were excluded. In all, about 100 contributions — the majority being editorials of the former editor of the journal — were left out of the analysis. The database contained 656 papers, starting with George Psacharopoulos' (1988) *The Financing of Education in Developing Countries* and closing with Ivar Bleiklie *et al.*'s (2007) *Sustaining Diversity: Differentiating Higher Education Systems in a Knowledge Society: Conclusion*.

For sure, methodological problems arose. It was sometimes difficult to deduce whether the same or different authors were responsible for different contributions. It was relatively easy to find out — looking at the topic addressed — that F. Dalichow from the ERASMUS Bureau in Brussels (appearing in the journal in 1991 and 1993) was the same F. Dalichow from the University of Derby (appearing in the journal 1995). There was also some confusion around names: not all the contributors were consistent in using first and/or middle names or initials and sometimes a name was spelled slightly differently (Al-Dosary and Aldosary turned out to be names of the same author). Also, affiliations of authors were sometimes ambiguous: what to do if an author includes two affiliations and what if an author is emeritus and formally not associated with an institution anymore? In the former case, I took the first affiliation mentioned, assuming the author would mention the most important affiliation first. In the latter case, if the information was available, I assigned the person's last affiliation to the emeritus. Regarding the countries represented, obviously there have been geographical changes (particularly in Africa and Central and Eastern Europe); I decided to use contemporary country names (Lithuania, Russia, Benin, etc.). Finally, institutions change



their names or merge, which complicated the analysis of the affiliations somewhat.

In all, most problems could be solved, but I may have missed the odd change of a name or misinterpreted an affiliation. Given that most of these problems arose for authors who only appeared once in the journal, it did not affect the overall analysis.

A Qualitative Impression

For understanding the journal's development it is important to note its roots. For years, the IAU had published its *Bulletin* — not to be confused with the *International Astronomical Union's Bulletin* — to share and exchange information with its members. At the meeting of the Administrative Board of the IAU in Harare 1987, it was decided to change the format of the *Bulletin* and to add a new dimension to channelling the free flow of ideas and information throughout the world of higher education. The journal 'would focus on policy issues and the role of higher education in society today, and also will carry reports on relevant research being carried out in various parts of the world' (Eberhard and Thorens, 1988, 6). In the first years, the journal — then in A4-format — consisted of a thematic gathering of contributions preferably from different perspectives and (world) regions, an open forum section with articles and comments on current higher education policy issues, and a review of books and other publications. The thematic approach was considered most appropriate to examine contemporary elements in postsecondary education. Or, in the words of the editor of the first two decades: 'In this way, the reader will be able to examine the specific issue or theme in the light of a number of country "case studies" which will show the way the issue has evolved or assumed different dimensions depending on the particular national context' (Neave, 1988, 7).

The general objective of the journal did not change over the years. In both its first and its 21st year of existence, *Higher Education Policy* has provided an international platform for the world community of higher education, for sharing information and experience, as well as ideas about the role of higher education in society today. This objective has been met (see also the analyses below), particularly when it comes to geographical spread of the contributors and the (national) policies addressed. Countries range from A (Argentina) to Z (Zimbabwe), from small (the Azores and Macau) to large (USA and China) and all the continents, apart from the Antarctic, were represented. Despite the consistency in its objective, a development is noteworthy from a focus on the exchange of information and experiences towards a more scholarly approach. Three indications may support this gradual development. First, many of the



contributions in the first years of existence were not or hardly referenced. Second, many of these — mostly single-authored — contributions were written by leaders or administrators of higher education institutions or by representatives of intermediary organizations (unions, university associations, supranational agencies, etc.). Third, admitting this is the least convincing indicator, contributions in the early years were much shorter than they are in later years. Having accounted for a change in page format, the papers of the first 2 years (1988 and 1989) were on average 9.5 pages long. Those appearing in 2006 and 2007 were almost twice as long: 18.2 pages.

Themes Addressed

One might argue that the journal's thematic approach would stand in the way of an analysis of topics addressed. That is, themes may be chosen rather randomly and may have been very dependent on the insights of powerful persons in or around the IAU Administrative Board, the Advisory Editorial Board or may have been steered by the preferences of the editor. However, most of these concerns do not apply, given the lengthy period of analysis: over the 80 issues, particularly fashionable preferences would easily be spotted and not emerge in the analysis of the huge amount of articles and, at the same time, 'real' issues would pop up over the years and emerge significantly in the analysis. Furthermore, it would strike me as odd that persons in or around the IAU have been so powerful and, more importantly, powerful over the years, that there would be a particular 'bias' in terms of the themes addressed. If there would be a (f)actor of influence, it may have been the editor. But certainly after a few years, the then editor was very dependent on (academic) contributors who would suggest themes and prepare contributions: at most it would be editorial supervision as opposed to editorial steering (see also Huisman, 2007).

Ideally, a content analysis would address themes, methodologies, level of analysis, authors' location and institutional base (see e.g. Tight, 2003). Time constraints have forced me to focus on the titles of the contributions. Based on the assumption that the titles of the contributions would reveal the nature and theme of those contributions a word count of the 656 contributions was carried out. The titles contained in total 6,564 words and 1,461 different words were used. A bit more than half of the different words (750) were unique, in the sense that they only occurred once in the total set of words. Similar words (e.g. administration, administrative and administrator[s]) were taken together in one category. Meaningless words — in the context of this analysis — like 'the', 'a', 'of' were left out of the summary tables. Also, country and higher education institutions' names were left out. The following table gives a list of the 25 most

Table 1 Top-25 of words appearing in titles of contributions

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Word(s)</i>	<i>1988–1992</i>	<i>1993–1997</i>	<i>1998–2002</i>	<i>2003–2007</i>	<i>Total</i>
1	Education(al)/educating/educated	100	67	85	64	316
2	Higher	63	44	71	50	228
3	Universities/university	62	50	50	50	212
4	Policies/policy(making)	16	15	18	15	74
5	Academic(s)	6	26	24	8	64
6	Developing/development(al)	17	17	18	12	64
7	Case(s)	12	13	15	8	48
8	Research	14	9	12	12	47
9	Study/studies	13	13	8	9	43
10	Institution(s)/institutional	15	1	10	15	41
11	New(ly)	10	6	11	13	40
12	Change(d)/changes/changing	7	3	8	16	34
13	International(izing)/internationalization	8	18	4	3	33
14	Market(s)/marketing/marketization	4	3	15	10	32
	System(s)/systemic	10	6	6	10	32
16	Role	10	9	6	2	27
17	Autonomy	6	11	2	7	26
	Management/managing/managerialism	6	8	7	6	26
	Perspective(s)	7	9	7	3	26
	Student(s)/student-centered	12	5	4	5	26
21	Governance/governing/government(al)/s	4	5	13	2	24
	Quality	3	9	8	4	24
23	Challenge(s)/challenging	7	5	4	5	21
24	Finance(s)/financial/financing	12	4	3	1	20
25	Cultural/culture(s)	7	3	5	4	19
	Reform(s)	4	2	10	3	19
	State(s)	9	4	2	4	19

salient (groups of) words overall and by 5-year periods (1988–1992, etc., see Table 1).

Not surprisingly, ‘education’, ‘higher’, ‘university’, ‘policy’, ‘system’, ‘institution’ and ‘academic’ are often used in the title. Together these words account for 14.7% of the total number of words. These words also occupied the top-3 positions in each 5-year period.

The second largest set of words in the top-25 refers to specific topics addressed in the broader context of higher education policy. In order of importance in the top-25: ‘internationalization’, ‘marketization’, ‘autonomy’, ‘management’, ‘students’, ‘governance’, ‘quality’, ‘finance’ and ‘culture’. In total, these topics accounted for 3.5% of all words in the titles. Noteworthy is, but not surprisingly, that over the years these topics were paid different levels of attention to. The top-three for 1988–1992 was: ‘buffer (organizations)’, ‘student’ and ‘finance’. In the next 5-year period the order



was: 'internationalization', 'autonomy' and 'mobility', clearly an indication of the increase of international cooperation, exchange and mobility — and scholarly interest in these topics — in the period 1993–1997. The period 1998–2002 saw 'marketization', 'governance' and 'quality' feature largely in the contributions, reflecting the prominence of the market in higher education policy and debates. In the most recent period it is again 'marketization', followed by 'knowledge' and 'autonomy'. Throughout the years, 'autonomy' (and the related topic of 'freedom', not in the overall top-25 but appearing in the top-25 for the 5-year periods) seemed to be evergreens: these topics were most consistently paid attention to over the two decades.

A third set of words would be appropriately termed 'technical', in the sense that they generally refer to methods and methodologies used: 'case', 'study', 'research' and 'perspective'. The word 'research' is ambiguous in the sense that the word not only indicates methods, but might also refer to one of the main functions of higher education. Overall, these words accounted for 2.5% of the total number of words.

A final set (also 2.5%) clearly indicates the interest of the contributors in the dynamics of higher education, given the use of words like 'new', 'development', 'change', 'challenge' and 'reform'. One caveat here is that the word 'development' also referred to developing countries.

Who Contributed?

The 656 contributions were written by 698 different authors. Some of these have contributed more than once: including authors who had multiple contributions, 873 author names appeared on the first page of their input to the journal. As has been mentioned above, in the early years many of the papers were single-authored, whereas in recent years contributions are more often combined efforts. Overall, 169 contributions were multi-author papers. Of the 698 authors, the overwhelming majority (575, 82.4%) only contributed once. To stress the diversity of the set of authors writing for the journal, the top-10 of most prolific contributors 'only' contributed to 8.5% of the total number of publications. Table 2 presents this top-10 of most productive contributors over the years (Table 2).

For those following the academic literature, this top-10 probably does not contain that many surprises, for these authors are well-known scholars and are among the founding fathers. Speaking of fathers, indeed no mothers in the top-10. The first female authors to appear are Åse Gornitzka, then at NIFU, Norway now at ARENA; Elaine El-Khawas, then at the American Council on Education and George Washington University, USA; and Barbara Burn, then at the University of Massachusetts, USA. They share the 19th position in the

Table 2 Most productive contributors to *Higher Education Policy*

Rank	Name	Institution	Country	1988–1992	1993–1997	1998–2002	2003–2007	Total
1	Ulrich Teichler	University of Kassel	Germany	1	4	1	3	9
2	Ivar Bleiklie	University of Bergen	Norway		1		5	6
	Philip Altbach	University of New York and Boston College	USA	3	1	2		6
4	Henry Wasser	City University of New York	USA	2	2	1		5
	Martin Trow	University of California	USA		2	2	1	5
	Guy Neave	IAU	France	3		2		5
	Lynn Meek	University of New England	Australia		1	4		5
	Grant Harman	University of New England	Australia	1		2	2	5
	Alberto Amaral	University of Porto	Portugal			3	2	5
	Adel Aldosary	King Fahd University	Saudi Arabia		1	3	1	5





ranking, with 21 male colleagues. It must be stressed, without doing injustice to the quality of his contributions, that Ivar Bleiklie earns his position in the top-10 largely because of his contributions to one special issue of the journal (2007), in which he co-authored three papers and contributed with one single-authored paper. Probably the least expected person — but this is certainly (again) not meant to be a disqualification of the person or his work — to appear in the top-10 is Adel Aldosary from the King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals, Saudi Arabia. His contributions can be summarized as reporting interesting institutional research from his institution, focusing on student choice and drop-out, curriculum evaluation and manpower planning.

Geography

Of the 169 multiple-author contributions, 32 were written by authors from different institutions in the same country and 44 were crafted by authors from different countries (and thus also from different institutions). Of all the contributions, 580 (88.4%) were written single-handed or by a group of authors from one institution or organization, 4.9% were multi-institutional (but within one country) and 6.7% multi-country contributions.

In total, the database contained 851 names of affiliations hosting the authors. As has been stated above, there were in total 873 authors, but for some authors, the affiliation was not clear (a retired academic using his/her home address) or ambiguous. Despite these problems, the overall picture was clear. The overwhelming majority of contributions were written by representatives (either academics or managers) from universities, although a fair amount of buffer organizations, ministries, stakeholder organizations (unions) and supranational organizations (e.g. World Bank, UNESCO) could be found.

The top-10 of institutions that had the most contributions (see Table 3) includes mainly those universities that have relatively sizeable research centres on higher education (policy) in the Netherlands, US, Australia, Portugal, UK, Germany and Norway. But this picture needs some nuances, for behind the numbers of the universities of Twente, California and Porto and the institutes in the UK and Norway, we find numerous individuals, including researchers, administrators and managers, whereas the publications of the University of Kassel and the King Fahd University are mostly written by one person. The contributions of the University of New England are mostly written or co-authored by two prolific authors. Noteworthy is that all the contributions of the University of California and IAU are single-authored as are most of the publications of the Institute of Education, whereas all publications from the University of Nairobi in Kenya are co-authored. The latter university may be a surprise in the list, but from this university a variety of authors

Table 3 Most productive institutions contributing to *Higher Education Policy*

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Total number of contributors/contributions</i>
1	University of Twente	The Netherlands	33/22
2	University of California	USA	26/26
3	University of New England	Australia	16/13
4	University of Porto	Portugal	14/9
5	University of Nairobi	Kenya	12/6
6=	Institute of Education	UK	11/10
	IAU	France	11/11
8	University of Kassel	Germany	10/9
9=	NIFU/NIFU-STEP	Norway	9/7
	King Fahd University	Saudi Arabia	9/6

Table 4 Countries contributing to *Higher Education Policy*

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Total number of contributors</i>
1	United States	149
2	United Kingdom	71
3	Australia	52
4	The Netherlands	49
5	Canada	41
6	France	32
7	Portugal	29
8	Germany	28
9=	Norway	18
	Israel	18
	Hong Kong	18

contributed to various themes: information technology, cost-sharing and staffing requirements.

For the in total 873 author names, we retrieved 869 country names. Over the two decades, contributions came from 95 countries across the globe. The next table gives the top-10 of countries that delivered most of the papers to *Higher Education Policy*. The table (Table 4) reflects the Anglo-Saxon domination of the field of higher education research. At the same time, it reflects to some extent that certain countries are or were frontrunners when it comes to innovative policies. The UK, Australia and the Netherlands are cases in point, given that higher education in these countries experienced rather radical turnarounds in terms of policy approach (steering from a distance, the introduction of market mechanisms) and instruments in the early to mid-1980s.



Table 5 Continents contributing to *Higher Education Policy*

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Continent</i>	<i>Total number of contributors</i>
1	Europe	356
2	North America	190
3	Asia	139
4	Africa	71
5	Australasia	63
6	Latin America	47

For sure, the sheer size of a country to some extent has an impact on the number of contributions per country, although the positions of the Netherlands, Portugal, Norway, Israel and Hong Kong point in the opposite direction. If we present the data on the countries by continent, a clearer picture emerges regarding the rich geographical variety in the journal. It shows an emphasis on the Western world (in total 70% of authors), with Europe leading, followed by North America. But Table 5 — much better than Table 4 — shows that the developing world is represented as well.

Conclusions

This paper has shown both the qualitative and quantitative developments over two decades of the journal *Higher Education Policy*. The analysis shows the rich variety of contributions in terms of themes, higher education systems, and positions and background of authors. This diversity should be cherished and it is my intention to maintain this diversity, and to increase diversity in terms of currently underrepresented regions and to do something about the gender imbalance. But diversity is not a stand-alone objective (see Singh, this issue), quality in its broadest sense including scholarship and relevance are the basic requirements: papers submitted that not only describe but analyse and theorize particular policy developments either at supranational, regional, national or organizational levels are more likely to find their way to print.

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