SOPP 5298 – HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Fall 2020

Syllabus

Course instructors: Kata Orosz and Norbert Sabic

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course provides an introduction to fundamental issues and topics in the contemporary higher education sector, with a special focus on the design and implementation of higher education policies.

Higher education is seen as a particularly contested area of public policy, which has important connections with, and impact on, other fields or policy areas. Higher education policies can foster social integration and economic development, but also reproduce inequalities; help the creation of shared identities, but also contribute to societal divisions; and have as much to do with the production of knowledge as with broader political agendas, tensions and conflicts.

Using an interdisciplinary perspective, the course offers a systematic overview of the key actors, structures and dynamics in the field of higher education. Policy areas covered in the course include policies related to higher education provision and governance, higher education access policies, funding policies, and policies related to accreditation, quality assurance, and performance measurement.

The course combines theories of the policy process with relevant case studies, in order to bring both the theoretical and practical world of higher education policy closer to students. The course aims to equip students with knowledge and analytical skills that can help them better understand the issues and challenges of present-day higher education systems and how government policies seek to address those.

The course is intended to provide a platform on which further, more specialized, studies in the domain of higher education policy can be built. It also prepares students to pursue a professional career in the governmental or non-governmental sector dealing with educational matters.

Learning outcomes
After the successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Recognize the main actors and policy challenges in contemporary higher education settings;
- Understand and critically assess how specific higher education policies are designed and implemented; and
- Participate in work aiming at developing alternative solutions to specific problems or situations facing higher education.

Assessment

Students will be assessed based on their performance on the following:

- Asynchronous learning activities   (30%)
- Video presentation of a higher education policy (team-based)   (30%)
- Final paper (logic model & implementation history of a higher education policy)   (40%)

Asynchronous learning activities: Students must familiarize themselves with the assigned content of each of the ten topic-focused modules (i.e., Modules 2 through 11). Student must also complete asynchronous writing, discussion, peer-feedback, or self-assessment activities associated with each of these ten modules. Asynchronous activities for each module must be completed within a week of posting.

Video presentation: Students, working in teams, must prepare and video-record an approximately 20-minute presentation on a higher education policy, program, or intervention of their choice. In the presentation, students must introduce the policy in terms of the actors involved in conceiving it, its characteristics and design, and the process of how it was implemented. Students must not only describe, but also critically assess the design and implementation of the policy that their presentation is focused on.

Modules 4 and 10 are dedicated to the discussion of policy design and policy implementation theory. The content and activities in these two modules are specifically designed to help students prepare the video presentations. The deadline for submitting a topic proposal for the video presentations is November 30. The deadline for uploading video presentations is **December 16, 2020**.

Final paper: Students must submit a three-page (max. 1,500 words) critical assessment of a higher education policy, program, or intervention of their choice. The final paper must combine a revised version of the logic model (i.e., the writing assignment associated with Module 4) with a discussion and critical assessment of the implementation of the same policy, program, or intervention. The deadline for submitting the final paper is **January 3, 2020**.

Student consultations

Throughout the semester, course instructors are available for individual and team-based consultation by appointment. Individual students or student teams should request appointments for consultation by emailing the instructors at OroszK@ceu.edu or SabicN@ceu.edu at least 24 hours in advance of the requested meeting.

Responsibilities of the instructors
- Create a safe and inspiring learning environment for students;
- Communicate course-related expectations to students clearly and in a timely manner;
- Use consistent and clearly stated evaluation criteria to grade student assignments;
- Submit assignment grades within two weeks of the assignment deadline;
- Provide reasonably detailed, written feedback to students on their assignments;
- Respond to student emails within 24 hours, with the exception of weekends and holidays;
- Be available for consultation;
- Be responsive to student feedback.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module 1: Introduction to the course
Date & time: Week 1 (i.e., week starting on September 28)
Location: Online

In this introductory module, students will receive guidance on how to navigate the course's content and the various assignments associated with the learning modules. Module 1 also serves as an introduction to the range of topics that will be covered in the course. As the number of students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees increases steadily and the idea of a knowledge society gains popularity among developed countries, the field of higher education policy is becoming a central concern for governments. With the help on an asynchronous writing activity, students will explore the core policy functions of higher education and how it can be instrumental in furthering other policy goals, such as economic development, innovation, or social equity.

Required readings:

Shils, E. (1989). The modern university and liberal democracy. *Minerva,* 27(4), 425-460.

Smolentseva, A. (2017). Where Soviet and neoliberal discourses meet: The transformation of the purposes of higher education in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. *Higher Education*, 74(6), 1091-1108.

Module 2: Access and equity policies
Date & time: Week 2 (i.e., week starting on October 5)
Location: Online

Content covered in Module 2 introduces theoretical and practical concepts related to the issue of higher education access. Students will inventory policies that have been designed and implemented in various contexts to promote access to higher education. The first activity will focus on "merit-based" policies for admission, i.e., state and institutional policies that regulate admission to higher education based on various forms of academic achievement. The second activity will focus on equity of access through structured reflection on affirmative action policies and quota-based admissions policies, and the political and policy challenges associated with implementing such policies.

Required readings:

McCowan, T. (2016). Three dimensions of equity of access to higher education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 46*(4), 645-665.

Antwi-Boasiako, K. B. (2017). The affirmative action policy: A tale of two nations and the implementation conundrum. *Journal of Comparative Politics, 10*(2), 70-87.

Recommended reading:

Drummond, T. W., & Gabrscek, S. (2012). Understanding higher education admissions reforms in the Eurasian context. *European Education, 44*(1), 7-26.

Module 3: Student funding policies
Date & time: Week 3 (i.e., week starting on October 12)
Location: Online

In Module 3, students will focus on higher education systems that charge tuition to some or all university students. They will examine the interaction between tuition fees and higher education access and will familiarize themselves with policies related to the provision of financial aid to students. Activities in this module will require students to synthesize information about various forms of financial aid (scholarships and grants, loans, student discounts and other benefits), and compare and contrast the advantages and drawbacks of designing and implementing different types of financial aid programs (e.g., merit-based vs. need-based financial aid programs).

Required readings:

Scott-Clayton, J. (2015). The role of financial aid in promoting college access and success: Research evidence and proposals for reform. *Journal of Student Financial Aid, 45*(3), 7-22.

Czarnecki, K., Korpi, T., & Nelson, K. (2020). Student support and tuition fee systems in comparative perspective. *Studies in Higher Education,* [Online first](), 1-15.

Recommended reading:

Johnston, A., & Barr, N. (2013). Student loan reform, interest subsidies and costly technicalities: Lessons from the UK experience. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 35*(2), 167-178.

Module 4: Understanding why policy design matters
Date & time: Week 4 (i.e., week starting on October 19)
Location: Online

In Module 4, students will consider the process of policy design in more general terms and to reflect on why policy design matters. Readings in this module will assist students in learning about the components commonly used is policy scholarship to characterize policy design: the target group of a policy; the goals it is intended to achieve or the problems it is intended to solve; the tools that are intended to change behavior in the target group; the rules for inclusion and exclusion; and rationales that legitimate the policy. Students will also reflect, with the help of structured activities, on the social construction of target groups for policy design and will examine the target groups of higher education policies through this analytical lens. The writing and peer-feedback activities in this module will help students identify components of a logic model – a heuristic that can be used to describe policy design – and allow them to apply this heuristic to higher education policies and interventions.

Required readings:

Besharov, D. J. & Call, D. M. (2017). Using logic models to strengthen performance measurement. In: Besharov, D. J., Baehler, K. J., & Klerman, J. A., *Improving public services: International experiences in using evaluation tools to measure program performance* (pp. 303-324). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ingram, H., Schneider, A. L., & Deleon, P. (2007). Social construction and policy design. In P. A. Sabatier (Ed.), *Theories of the policy process* (pp. 93-126). Cambridge, MA: Westview Press.

Recommended reading:

Copeland, K. D., & Mamiseishvili, K. (2017). The Arkansas lottery scholarship act: An examination of the policy design process. *Educational Policy, 31*(1), 108-136.

Module 5: Higher education and the state
Date & time: Week 5 (i.e., week starting on October 26)
Location: Online

In recent years many countries have experimented with changing the governance model of their higher education system, often by loosening control over these institutions, setting clear performance targets, and giving more authority to underrepresented groups in the governance of higher education (e.g., students, industry representatives). Drawing upon European developments, as well as trends in other parts of the world, in Module 5 we will look at various governance models in higher education and also encourage a discussion on institutional autonomy, accountability, and control.

Required readings:

Sultana, R. G. (2012). Higher education governance: A critical mapping of key themes and issues. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 2(4), 345-369.

Donina, D., Meoli, M. & Paleari, S. (2015). Higher education reform in Italy: Tightening regulation instead of steering at a distance. *Higher Education Policy, 28*(2), 215-234.

Module 6: Higher education and the market
Date & time: Week 6 (i.e., week starting on November 2)
Location: Online

New Public Management has been one of the core principles driving governance change around the word. It follows the policy conviction that introducing market mechanisms into the sector of higher education will result in more responsive and efficient higher education provision. In Module 6, students will explore in more detail the role of the market and how it can bridge the gap between university-industry relations.

Required readings:

Schulze-Cleven, T. & Olson, J.R. (2017). Worlds of higher education transformed: Toward varieties of academic capitalism. *Higher Education*, 73(6), 813-831.

Amaral, A., Tavares, O. & Santos, C. (2013). Higher education reform in Portugal: A historical and comparative perspective of the new legal framework for public universities. *Higher Education Policy, 26*(1), 5-24.

Module 7: Accountability and performance measurement
Date & time: Week 7 (i.e., week starting on November 9)
Location: Online

Accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms are used to ensure a minimum level of quality, which is why these instruments are often limited in promoting quality improvements in higher education. Consequently, several governments started to experiment with setting performance targets or using rankings and classifications as a way to improve their higher education system. In Module 7, we will take a critical look at these emerging policy tools.

Required readings:

Hazelkorn, E. (2014). Reflections on a decade of global rankings: What we've learned and outstanding issues. *European Journal of Education*, 49, 12-28.

Ciolan L., Păunescu M., Fartuşnic C., Iucu R., & Hintea, C. (2015). *The role of impact evaluation in evidence-based HE policy making: The contribution of transparency tools*. In: Curaj A., Deca L., Egron-Polak E., & Salmi J. (Eds). Higher education reforms in Romania: Between the Bologna Process and national challenges (pp. 25-42). Dordrecht: Springer.

Module 8: Accreditation and quality assurance
Date & time: Week 8 (i.e., week starting on November 16)
Location: Online

Almost without an exception, countries across the world have instituted various accreditation and quality assurance measures in higher education. These practices seek to guarantee the quality of higher education by imposing strict rules and standards for the operation of higher education institutions. In Module 8, we will discuss in detail the differences between accreditation and internal and external quality assurance and explore the key standards that states seek to enforce in higher education.

Required readings:

Alzafari, K. & Ursin, J. (2019). Implementation of quality assurance standards in European higher education: Does context matter? *Quality in Higher Education*, 25(1), 58-75.

Salto, D. J. (2018). Attractive carrots, bland sticks: Organizational responses to regulatory policy in Argentine graduate education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(11), 2020-2032.

Module 9: Institutional funding policies
Date & time: Week 9 (i.e., week starting on November 23)
Location: Online

In Module 9, students will focus on theoretical and practical concepts related to the issue of higher education funding – this time turning to the issue of funding institutions rather than students. Through the assignments, students will inventory different approaches to higher education funding directed to institutions (block grants vs. targeted funding; formula-based vs. performance-based funding). The

activities designed for this module will require students to compare and contrast the characteristics of funding policies that were specifically designed to fund the teaching and/or research missions of universities.

Required readings:

Jongbloed, B., & Vossensteyn, H. (2016). University funding and student funding: International comparisons. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 32*(4), 576-595.

Jongbloed, B., & Lepori, B. (2015). The funding of research in higher education: Mixed models and mixed results. In J. Huisman, H. de Boer, D. D. Dill & M. Souto-Otero (Eds.), *The Palgrave international handbook of higher education policy and governance* (pp. 439-462). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Recommended reading:

Fussy, D. S. (2018). Policy directions for promoting university research in Tanzania. *Studies in Higher Education, 43*(9), 1573-1585.

Module 10: Understanding policy implementation in higher education
Date & time: Week 10 (i.e., week starting on November 30)
Location: Online

In Module 10, students will yet again take a momentary step back from the discussion of specific higher education policies to consider key theories and concepts commonly used in policy scholarship to analyze policy implementation. Reading and video-content for this module will cover game theory, principal-agent theory, and instrument choice theory, while reflection activities will guide students in understanding the limitations of these theories in conceptualizing the process of policy implementation. The assignment designed for this module will enable students to explore the utility of Howlett's multiple streams/critical juncture framework for critically assessing policy implementation in the field of higher education. The readings and assignment in this module are designed to help students prepare for the team-based video-presentation as well as for the final paper.

Required readings:

Howlett, M. (2019). Moving policy implementation theory forward: A multiple streams/critical juncture approach. *Public Policy and Administration, 34*(4), 405-430.

Khelifi, S., & Triki, M. (2020). Use of discretion on the front line of higher education policy reform: The case of quality assurance reforms in Tunisia. *Higher Education, 80*(3), 531-548.

Recommended reading:

Dougherty, K. J., & Natow, R. S. (2020). Performance-based funding for higher education: How well does neoliberal theory capture neoliberal practice? *Higher Education, 80*(3), 457-478.

Module 11: Policies related to online provision of higher education
Date & time: Week 11 (i.e., week starting on December 7)
Location: Online

In the last thematic module of the course, students will explore how higher education institutions and governments have adopted to the technological context of the 21st century as a response to the challenges posed by COVID-19. They will study emerging forms of higher education provision and reflect on the extent to which the "forced" transition to online education can be considered a success or a failure.

Required readings:

Johnson, N., Veletsianos, G., & Seaman, J. (2020). U.S. faculty and administrators' experiences and approaches in the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Online Learning, 24*(2), 6-21.

The great recession was bad for higher education. Coronavirus could be worse. Paul N. Friga. Published on March 24, 2020 in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Link: https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-great-recession-was-bad-for-higher-education-coronavirus-could-be-worse/

Module 12: Reflections on student video-presentations & lessons learned

In the final module of the course, student teams will deliver videos of their presentation of a higher education policy, program, or intervention of their choice, and provide feedback on the video-presentations of other teams. The module concludes with a self-assessment tool that allows students to review key concepts, themes and lessons learned in the course.

Date & time: Week 12 (i.e., week starting on December 14)
Location: Online