

THEORY AND METHOD IN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

THEORY AND METHOD IN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

Series Editors: Jeroen Huisman and Malcolm Tight

Recent Volumes:

- Volume 1: Theory and Method in Higher Education Research – Edited by Jeroen Huisman and Malcolm Tight; 2015
- Volume 2: Theory and Method in Higher Education Research – Edited by Jeroen Huisman and Malcolm Tight; 2016
- Volume 3: Theory and Method in Higher Education Research – Edited by Jeroen Huisman and Malcolm Tight; 2017
- Volume 4: Theory and Method in Higher Education Research – Edited by Jeroen Huisman and Malcolm Tight; 2018

THEORY AND METHOD IN HIGHER EDUCATION
RESEARCH VOLUME 5

THEORY AND METHOD IN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

EDITED BY

JEROEN HUISMAN

Ghent University, Belgium

MALCOLM TIGHT

Lancaster University, UK



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2019

Copyright © 2019 Emerald Publishing Limited

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83867-842-5 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83867-841-8 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83867-843-2 (EPub)

ISSN: 2056-3752 (Series)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------------|
| <i>List of Contributors</i> | <i>vii</i> |
| <i>Editorial Introduction</i> | <i>ix</i> |
| Analysing Policy Positions of Stakeholder Organizations in Higher Education: What, How and Why? | |
| <i>Martina Vukasovic</i> | <i>1</i> |
| Understanding Disability Frameworks in Higher Education Research | |
| <i>Kirsten Brown, Edlyn Peña, Ellen Broido, Lissa Stapleton and Nancy Evans</i> | <i>19</i> |
| Diffraction the Curriculum: Putting “New” Material Feminism to Work to Reconfigure Knowledge-making Practices in Undergraduate Higher Education | |
| <i>Carol A. Taylor</i> | <i>37</i> |
| The Looseness of Loose Coupling: The Use and Misuse of “Loose Coupling” in Higher Education Research | |
| <i>Mari Elken and Martina Vukasovic</i> | <i>53</i> |
| Higher Education Leadership and Management as “Practical Reasonableness”: A Phronetic Approach to Higher Education Research | |
| <i>Greg Walker</i> | <i>73</i> |
| Toward a Critical Whiteness Methodology: Challenging Whiteness through Qualitative Research | |
| <i>Chris Corces-Zimmerman and Tonia Floramaria Guida</i> | <i>91</i> |
| Mixed Methods for Research into Higher Education: Solving the Problem of Institutionalized Introspection? | |
| <i>Markus Seyfried and Florian Reith</i> | <i>111</i> |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Addressing Self-selection and Endogeneity in Higher Education Research | |
| <i>Xiqian Liu and Victor Borden</i> | 129 |
| An Exploration of Rhythms in the Contemporary Academy: Time, Space and Affect | |
| <i>Fadia Dakka and Rob Smith</i> | 153 |
| Pluralism as a Vehicle for Theory-building in Educational Technology Research | |
| <i>Sonja Strydom and Magda Fourie-Malherbe</i> | 173 |
| Internet-mediated Research: A Methodological Discussion Based on a Study with Non-traditional Adult Students | |
| <i>Leanete Thomas Dotta, Amélia Lopes and Carlinda Leite</i> | 193 |
| Ethnographies of Higher Education and Modes of Existence: Using Latour's Philosophical Anthropology to Construct Faithful Accounts of Higher Education Practice | |
| <i>Jonathan Tummons</i> | 207 |
| <i>Index</i> | 225 |

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>Xiqian Liu</i> | Indiana University, USA |
| <i>Victor Borden</i> | Indiana University, USA |
| <i>Kirsten Brown</i> | Edgewood College, USA |
| <i>Edlyn Peña</i> | California Lutheran University, USA |
| <i>Ellen Broido</i> | Bowling Green State University, USA |
| <i>Lissa Stapleton</i> | California State University-Northridge, USA |
| <i>Nancy Evans</i> | Iowa State University, USA |
| <i>Fadia Dakka</i> | Birmingham City University, UK |
| <i>Rob Smith</i> | Birmingham City University, UK |
| <i>Leanete Thomas Dotta</i> | University of Porto, Portugal |
| <i>Amélia Lopes</i> | University of Porto, Portugal |
| <i>Carlinda Leite</i> | University of Porto, Portugal |
| <i>Mari Elken</i> | NIFU, Norway |
| <i>Martina Vukasovic</i> | University of Bergen, Norway and Ghent University, Belgium |
| <i>Markus Seyfried</i> | University of Potsdam, Germany |
| <i>Florian Reith</i> | Helmut-Schmidt-University, Germany |
| <i>Sonja Strydom</i> | Stellenbosch University, South Africa |
| <i>Magda Fourie-Malherbe</i> | Stellenbosch University, South Africa |
| <i>Carol A. Taylor</i> | University of Bath, UK |
| <i>Jonathan Tummons</i> | Durham University, UK |
| <i>Greg Walker</i> | The Open University, UK |
| <i>Chris Corces-Zimmerman</i> | University of Arizona, USA |
| <i>Tonia Floramaria Guida</i> | University of California, Los Angeles, USA |

This page intentionally left blank

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

This is the 2019 volume in the annual series *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*, which we launched in 2013 in the belief that there was a need to provide a forum specifically for higher education researchers to discuss issues of theory and method. So far, we have published around 90 chapters.

This volume is fairly balanced in terms of the focus on theory and/or method, but with a slightly greater focus on theoretical issues. There is, however, a strong focus on qualitative research, with only one chapter (Liu and Borden) dealing with quantitative research, and another (Seyfried and Reith) with mixed methods research.

Amongst the chapters focusing primarily on theory, Brown et al. examine disability frameworks, Elken and Vukasovic consider loose coupling, Strydom and Fourie-Malherbe discuss pluralism in research, Taylor applies new material feminism, Tummons focuses on ethnography, Vukasovic examines governance stakeholders, and Walker applies phronesis to leadership research.

In terms of method and methodology, contributions consider selection bias (Liu and Borden), researching rhythms in the academy (Dakka and Smith), internet-mediated research (Dotta, Lopes and Leite), mixed methods (Seyfried and Reith), and critical whiteness approaches (Corces-Zimmerman and Guida).

The international nature of interest in theory and method is clear with authors being based in Belgium, Germany, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, the UK, and the US.

Anyone interested in contributing a chapter to a future volume is invited to get in touch with either, but preferably both, of the editors.

Jeroen Huisman
Malcolm Tight
Series Editors

This page intentionally left blank

ANALYSING POLICY POSITIONS OF STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: WHAT, HOW AND WHY?

Martina Vukasovic

ABSTRACT

Stakeholders and their organizations are increasingly involved in governance of higher education, not only within institutions or at system level, but also in various supra-national and intergovernmental processes. For these, as well as pragmatic reasons (ease of access and relatively simple methods for analysis), this chapter advocates for a more systematic approach to studying stakeholder organizations, their participation in and impact on governance of higher education. Specifically, the chapter: (1) provides a three-fold nested conceptualization of policy positions of stakeholder organizations, comprising issues, preferences concerning these issues, and the normative basis utilized to legitimize said preferences; (2) presents advantages and disadvantages of different methodological approaches to analyzing policy positions of stakeholder organizations, including qualitative and quantitative content analysis, employing either human coding or computer-assisted coding of policy documents; and (3) highlights different insights one can gain from analyzing policy positions of stakeholder organizations. It combines (thus far limited) insights from higher education studies with the more generic literature on interest groups, and uses examples from European level stakeholder organizations to illustrate its points.

Keywords: Stakeholders; stakeholder organization; policy position; policy issue; policy preference; normative basis

INTRODUCTION

Stakeholders and their organizations are increasingly taking part in governance of higher education, not only within institutions or at system level, but also in various supra-national and intergovernmental processes (Amaral & Magalhães, 2002; Elken & Vukasovic, 2014; Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000; Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008; Ness, Tandberg, & McLendon, 2015; Vukasovic, 2018). While the focus on higher education stakeholders can be linked to growing marketization of higher education, that the state includes organizations of stakeholders in steering of higher education marks a corporate-pluralist shift in governance arrangements (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000; Olsen, 2007).

Although stakeholder organizations have become, in addition to the state, the usual suspects of higher education governance, this has not been mirrored to the same extent in higher education research. The state and its policies remain the main focus of analysis, while studies putting stakeholder organizations front and center are comparatively rare. Thus far, these studies have focused on student organizations and political activism of students (Altbach, 1989; Klemenčič, 2012; Klemenčič, Primožič, & Bergan, 2015; Luescher-Mamashela, 2010, 2013), and, to a lesser extent, on academic associations, universities and their alliances (Ness et al., 2015; Nokkala & Bacevic, 2014; Tandberg, 2010; Yagci, 2014. See also the special issues of *European Journal of Higher Education* (2012, vol 2, issue 1), *Studies in Higher Education* (2014, vol 39, issue 3), and *European Educational Research Journal* (2018, vol 17, issue 3)).

This chapter adds to this emerging literature by focusing in particular on the policy positions of stakeholder organizations. The conceptual point of departure is that the policies of stakeholder organizations are their key organizational outputs, constituting the basis for influencing policymakers and for organizational maintenance. At the same time, from a pragmatic point of view, policy positions of stakeholder organizations are lower hanging fruit; relatively easy to access and collect, and suitable for various approaches to analysis, leading to better understanding of higher education governance.

Relying on thus far available insights from higher education research and complementing those with conceptual and methodological advancements in comparative politics/interest groups literature, this chapter focuses on:

- the “what” – the conceptualization of policy positions of stakeholder organizations;
- the “how” – the data collection and analysis approaches suitable for the proposed conceptualization; and
- the “why” – the ways in which analyzing policy positions of stakeholder organizations in the way promoted in this chapter can support a better understanding of governance of higher education as such.

STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

Stakeholders “are actors – organizations, agencies, clubs, groups or individuals [...] with an interest (‘stake’) in the organization’s performance”

(Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010, p. 569). From this point of view, stakeholders of higher education organizations and, by extension, higher education systems include, in most generic terms, all tax payers supporting publicly funded higher education, as well as students, academic and administrative staff, employers, local community, etc.

An interest in an organization's (or system's) performance may also come with an interest in participating in governance of said organization (or system). The question of who should be involved in governance is, on the one hand, a political one, the answer to which is likely to reflect the tensions between various purposes of higher education (Castells, 2001; Marginson, 2011; Trow, 1975), as well as inherent differences in positions of various groups, which claim a stake in higher education. On the other hand, it is possible to add an analytical dimension that concerns stakeholder salience (Jongbloed et al., 2008), namely the extent to which specific individuals or groups are perceived to possess key stakeholder attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency of demands (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). While this does not ensure a neutral answer – the focus is still on how individuals or groups are perceived – it does allow to conceptually distinguish between (1) latent, (2) expectant, and (3) definitive stakeholders, depending on whether the individual/group is perceived to possess only one, two or all three attributes.

This also means that individuals and groups can boost their own salience by strategically altering one or more of these characteristics. One of the most common ways of doing this is mobilization into organizations specifically tasked to cater for stakeholder interests, or more generally an interest group – a formal organization whose main aim is to influence public policy (Beyers, Eising, & Maloney, 2008). Organizations have more resources than individuals or non-organized groups, and these resources – financial and symbolic – can be used to boost power and legitimacy of the (now organized) stakeholders, as well as provide a more effective setting for pooling of demands (Truman, 1951; Williamson, 1989). Overall, the relationship between stakeholder organizations and public policymakers can be conceptualized as a demand-supply one: decision-makers, in need of information, expertise and political support for their decisions, engage with a limited number of stakeholder organizations which they perceive as legitimate, rather than with an unorganized mass of individuals or groups (Blau, 1964; Bouwen, 2002). Stakeholder organizations aim to supply such policy goods, through direct consultations, participation in decision-making structure or, if necessary, public pressure, in order to cater for the interest of their members.

What is characteristic for stakeholder organizations in specific and interest groups in general is the continuous tension between (1) the logic of influence – focusing externally on influencing the policy-makers; and (2) the logic of membership – focusing internally on the needs and preferences of members (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999). The tensions exists because, in order to achieve influence, interest groups rely on professionalization of staff, autonomy of leadership and frequent interaction with policymakers, which can detract them from or damage their interaction with the members (Lowery & Marchetti, 2012).

Interest groups in general and stakeholder organizations in particular are constantly concerned with survival due to: (1) external factors: competition with other groups, status in the policy arena and (2) internal factors: lack and/or instability of financial resources, membership fluctuation, frequent internal organizational change, heterogeneous identity (e.g., due to diverse membership), age and size (Gray & Lowery, 1997; Halpin & Thomas, 2012b).

Given that the basic rationale for stakeholder organization existence is to influence policy-making, how they choose to go about this is of key importance. Halpin (2014) suggests that, apart from focusing on measuring influence and explaining why some organizations are influential and others are not (what he terms “policy wins”), one should also focus on “policy work.” Policy work is key for stakeholder organization survival, since it provides a platform for lobbying (thus catering to the logic of influence), while ensuring that members are involved in policy development (thus catering to the logic of membership). While policy work comprises a variety of activities – for example, information provision, mobilization through protests, communication with and through media (Leech, 2011), “policy preparation, implementation and even member coordination” (Halpin, 2014, p. 179) – formal policy positions are of key importance. This is because they are the most visible indications of what the stakeholder organization stands for and as such serve a double purpose: they are external signals to the policy makers about what the stakeholder organization is likely to lobby for (or against), while at the same time acting as internal devices for maintaining cohesion of membership.

THE “WHAT”: CONCEPTUALIZING POLICY POSITIONS OF STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS

When it comes to analysis of policy activities of stakeholder organizations (or interest groups more generally), the comparative politics/interest groups literature provides a variety of inter-related concepts, the bulk of which concerns studying when, how and concerning which topics interest groups interact with public policymakers.

In that vein, Donas, Fraussen, and Beyers (2014) focus on *policy portfolios*, i.e. policy domains and policy issues within these domains that interest groups say, they prioritize in their work, while Halpin and colleagues (Halpin & Binderkrantz, 2011; Halpin & Thomas, 2012a) use records of public consultations to map in which domains and concerning which issues interest groups are engaged in. They further make a distinction between three different facets of *policy engagement*: (1) involvement – which concerns the group contacting the policy makers, (2) access – which concerns the policymakers contacting the interest group, and (3) prominence – which concerns a situation in which a group is considered as a taken-for-granted representative of a particular set of stakeholders (Halpin & Fraussen, 2017). Some studies also analyze how stakeholder organizations align their positions with ideas and proposals by policymakers or other stakeholder organizations (Bernhagen, Dür, & Marshall, 2015; Bunea, 2014).

Recently, the interest group literature has linked some of these ideas with a concept from policy analysis – *policy agenda* – highlighting three distinct layers: (1) policy interests, a broad policy space that is of general interest to an organization, (2) a narrower set of policy priorities that the organization dedicates resources to, on which it develops formal statements and around which it may form coalitions with other organizations, and (3) policy actions, the narrowest set of policy issues on which the group is actively lobbying (Halpin, 2015).

The conceptualization of *policy positions* in the focus of this chapter corresponds to Halpin's second layer – policy priorities. In that respect, one should remember that stakeholder organizations are primarily active during agenda-setting and policy formation stages of the policy process. Their policy positions (Halpin's policy priorities) serve as a platform for their policy actions, and constitute their key organizational outputs. Given that agenda-setting is a process of selection of policy issues to focus on from a wider set of policy considerations, stakeholder organizations themselves need to have defined a set of *policy issues* they themselves would like to see taken on board. For example, in relation to many different higher education considerations, some stakeholder organizations may want to see more policy development concerning access, while others may push for more focus on quality, funding, autonomy, etc.

Once the policy process moves into policy formation, the focus shifts towards desirable situations concerning the selected set of policy issues, for example, increased access, improved quality, more funding, and wider autonomy. Thus, stakeholder organizations also need to define what their *policy preferences* concerning specific issues are. Finally, one should not forget that stakeholder organizations specifically (and interest groups in general) are political organizations guided by a set of values and beliefs; i.e. they have a *normative basis* that will also be reflected in various ways in their policy positions. For example, those that highlight access as an important issue and would prefer to see expanded access to higher education are those that consider equity as an important value.

In effect, this chapter proposes a nested three-fold conceptualization of formal policy positions of stakeholder organizations, comprising: (1) *policy issues*, (2) *policy preferences* concerning these issues, and (3) the *normative basis* underpinning these policy preferences.

The proposed conceptualization is nested in order to reflect the relationship between the stakeholder organizations and its environment, that is, the policy arena it operates in. Moving from policy issues to normative basis, the influence of the environment decreases. When it comes to policy issues, stakeholder organizations do not decide entirely freely which issues to focus on. While internal considerations matter, choice of policy issues is affected by the policy domain itself, issues that are put forward by the state or other stakeholder organizations, and political opportunity structures (Halpin, Fraussen, & Nownes, 2017). That said, an organization may focus on specific issues because it wants to engage in positive lobbying and push for a policy change in light of its policy preferences, but also because it wants to prevent certain policy changes, in case they go against its policy preferences (negative lobbying). Thus, while the choice of policy issues can be driven to a significant extent by external considerations, for

defining policy preferences concerning these issues, one can expect internal considerations to play a more prominent role. Finally, given that normative basis effectively comprises “values shared by the members of an organization [...] beliefs about organizational purposes and how they should be achieved” (Ashworth, Boyne, & Delbridge, 2009, pp. 172–173), it is closest to the organizational core and primarily affected by internal dynamics.

THE “HOW”: SOURCES OF DATA AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Thus far, the comparative politics/interest groups literature has been focusing on policy positions of stakeholder organizations primarily in relation to their lobbying strategies, success and influence. This includes using policy positions to analyze: (1) how stakeholder organizations specifically (or interest groups more generally) frame certain policy issues (Borang et al., 2014; Eising, Rasch, & Rozbicka, 2015; Klüver, 2009; Klüver & Mahoney, 2015; Klüver, Mahoney, & Oppen, 2015), (2) how they articulate their preferences in relation to other actors and align them when forming advocacy coalitions (Baumgartner & Leech, 2001; Bunea, 2014, 2015; Halpin, 2011), and (3) how successful these organizations are in influencing policy decisions and ensuring that their preferences are translated into specific policy decisions (Bunea, 2013; Klüver, 2009, 2012, 2013).

The bulk of these studies rely on analysis of formal policy positions of stakeholder organizations, be those self-standing documents or documents submitted as part of an official consultation process, for example, in response to a proposal by the European Commission. Many of the studies employ an automated quantitative approach to content analysis, using the so-called “bag of words” approach in which individual words are unit of analysis (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013; Laver, Benoit, & Garry, 2003; Slapin & Proksch, 2008). Such approaches are sometimes compared to manual coding of policy documents or to interviews with lobbyists and experts (see e.g., Borang et al., 2014). Here, one encounters differences. Klüver (2009) reports significant correlation between results obtained through different approaches, and explicitly argues that automated quantitative content analysis may be superior when it comes to reliability and usability when having to analyze rich data under significant resource constraints (for a more generalized comparison of these approaches, see Klemmensen, Hobolt, and Hansen (2007) or Laver et al. (2003)). Others show some differences with regard to what kind of results emerge, but nevertheless maintain that the approaches are “to some extent interchangeable” (Borang et al., 2014, p. 199). However, some authors stress that there is an incongruity between the methodological assumptions of automated quantitative content analysis and the inherent characteristics of the policy processes of interest. Bunea and Ibenskas (2015, 2016) object that automated quantitative content analysis:

- uses frequency of words as an indication of political or ideological standpoint which, in their view, is a gross simplification;
- reduces policy positions to a single dimension, while in reality policies are multi-dimensional;

- does not take into account how documents subjected to automated quantitative content analysis were developed, thus assuming that these documents are comparable, while in effect they may be not; and
- does not allow for comparability across linguistic contexts.

Klüver (2015) responds to such objections by highlighting that:

- given one of the basic assumptions of automated quantitative content analysis that “ideology dominates the language that political actors use in their documents” (p. 457), using relative frequency of words as proxy of ideology is a sound choice;
- multidimensionality of policy is exaggerated since competition for influence between different organizations often focuses only on one issue;
- given that results of automated quantitative content analysis correlate highly with manual coding, the comparability across different documents is not problematic;
- linguistic comparability can be ensured since such analysis is often done in single-language context and, when it is not, one could translate all documents into one language; and
- automated content analysis remains superior when it comes to reliability.

Reflecting on this dispute, Binderkrantz (2016) calls for a middle ground, which recognizes the limitations of different methods, combines different approaches, and allows for a more nuanced analysis of what similarities of policy positions actually entail, specifically stressing the difference between discussing the same issues and having the same positions on said issues (p. 17).

The nested conceptualization presented in this chapter answers to this call and has a clear methodological implication. It directs the attention first to identifying which policy issues an organization focuses on, after which policy preferences concerning these issues need to be determined and their normative basis discerned. This means that, in relation to the debate between Bunea and Ibenskas (2015, 2016) and Klüver (2015), analysis of policy issues can be done in an automated manner while analysis of policy preferences and normative basis requires at least manual coding, and in some cases interviews may be necessary as well. This is because, in order to identify policy issues, it is sufficient to monitor presence and frequency of different words. For example, in case an organization focuses on access, it is likely to also refer to enrollment, admission procedures, entrance examinations, etc. The dictionary linking policy issues and words (or their word stems) can be developed through hand-coding a representative set of documents, but after that “bag of words” approaches are sufficient to map which issues are in focus, what are the relative frequencies (e.g., does an organization focus more on quality or on access), and whether these absolute and relative frequencies change over time.

However, when it comes to policy preferences, “bag of words” approaches may not be suitable. For example, mere reference to commodification of higher education may not imply that an organization is advocating treating higher

education as a commodity. On the contrary, it might imply just the opposite (as will be demonstrated in the following section). Moreover, normative basis is not always explicit. As Vukasovic (2017) demonstrated, policy positions often do not include explicit references to values and ideology; normative basis becomes explicit primarily when contentious policy preferences are formulated and serves to reinforce the strength of the argument by invoking more universal values. This implies that for fleshing out normative basis for preferences that are not contentious, interviews with leadership and/or membership of an organization in question may be necessary.

Similar to how normative basis may not be explicit, policy preferences can be formulated in a rather ambiguous and generic manner. For example, an organization may state “we advocate for fair access to higher education,” but it can also argue “we believe that governance of access to higher education should ensure that the socio-economic characteristics of the student population reflect the socio-economic characteristics of the general population.” In both instances, the organization is defining what it stands for – fair access to higher education – but in the latter case, it attaches a rather clear indicator of what fair access to higher education means for them. The extent to which preferences are ambiguous or not may be indicative of resources put in developing policy positions – more resources allow for consideration and evaluation of more specific preferences (Daugbjerg, Fraussen, & Halpin, 2018) – or of the extent to which there is agreement within the organization. Lack of agreement results in ambiguous preferences or even in the so-called “zones of indifference,” issues upon which no preferences are formulated (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008).

These aspects and others explored in the next section constitute the “why” of analyzing policy positions of stakeholder organizations, illustrated with examples from European level stakeholder organizations focusing on higher education and research, namely: the European University Association (EUA), the league of European Research Universities (LERU), the European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Students’ Union (ESU), the association of quality assurance agencies (European Association for Quality Assurance in higher education (ENQA)), the association of academic staff trade unions (Education International (EI)), its European branch (ETUCE), and Business Europe – the association of employers.

THE “WHY”: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ANALYZING POLICY POSITIONS OF STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS?

So, what can one learn from analyzing policy positions of stakeholder organizations?

First, focusing only on positions of a single stakeholder organization, one can discern: