Higher Education Policy in the Age of Knowledge Society

Credits: 2

Course Co-ordinator: Liviu Matei

Assessment: 30% seminar participation; 30% seminar presentation; 40% one 2000-word final paper

Teaching: Lectures and Seminars

Course Aims

The talk about the knowledge society is omnipresent in different areas of public policy, and there are scores of particular policy projects inspired by this talk. The United Nations and several of its agencies, the World Bank, the European Union, social activists and politicians speaking on behalf of the “Arab world”, many national governments around the world, international professional associations and many others propose and attempt to implement “knowledge society projects”.

A comparative analysis indicates that when “knowledge society projects” are envisaged the primary drive is most often essentially, if not exclusively, economic and/or political, with no particular or primary interest in higher education. However, major knowledge society projects almost always end up by proposing very specific higher education policies and also by putting forward normative models regarding the role of higher education institutions.

Higher education policy is public policy, and it is a matter of concern for the society as a whole. Higher education policy is not primarily and exclusively the making of individuals and groups directly involved in the work of higher education institutions (students, professors, university administrators); it has a significant impact -- economic, political, cultural -- on the life of society beyond the walls of universities.

This course provides a conceptual framework to analyse specifically how the discourse on the knowledge society translates into higher education policies. Furthermore, it explores the rationale for various policy actors to walk deeply into the territory of higher education, even when they have no direct interest or mandate in this area (e.g. ministries of finance, economy, or commerce; international and intergovernmental organisations of various types from those promoting international security to those promoting regional economic integration, or sustainable development; professional associations in fields ranging from industrial lobbying to human rights, etc.); who exactly makes and who implements higher education policies “for the knowledge society”; what are the connections of higher education policies “for the knowledge society” with other policy areas.

The course will use a comparative approach and will combine theoretical and empirical material, including in particular a selection of case studies. The readings will come primarily from sociology (including sociology of education) and political science, with elements of history, international relations, economics, and management.

Course objectives

This is a graduate seminar designed to introduce students to the

- To develop an understanding regarding the nature of the political and policy discourses on the “knowledge society” or “knowledge society and economy”
To develop an understanding about the relationships between this “talk”, or discourse, and public policy, in particular higher education policy (or policies), including how they are formulated, implemented, and evaluated.

To develop an understanding of different approaches to developing and implementing higher education policies at global, regional, national, and institutional level, as a particular type of public policy in the context of the knowledge society talk.

To understand the emergence, impact and limitations of major knowledge society projects and corresponding higher education policies at global, regional, and local level.

To understand how higher education institutions position themselves in this context, how they respond to and how they are influenced by the talk about the knowledge society.

To provide an understanding of the of the place of higher education and higher education policy in the European Union (“European construction”) and in Europe in general.

To develop an understanding of concepts and techniques useful for research in this specific policy context.

Curriculum

1. **The knowledge society narrative and the global picture of knowledge society projects**
   - Conceptual clarifications: knowledge society, the knowledge society narrative, knowledge society projects.
   - From Castells to Drucker: theoretical approaches to the study of the knowledge society and knowledge society projects.
   - The place of policy in the talk about the knowledge society. Knowledge society and governance. The utopia of the knowledge society as ultimate liberation and the angst of being left out forever.
   - A taxonomy of knowledge society projects
   - The knowledge society discourse and the global economic crisis

2. **Knowledge society discourse and higher education policies**
   - From the knowledge society talk to higher education policies. A model of how knowledge society projects translate into higher education policies at global, regional, national, or institutional level.
   - Actors and processes. The economic drive. The impact of ideology and politics. Any place for culture?
   - The emergence of “universities for a modern Renaissance” model. Policy projects and blueprints regarding the role of universities (e.g. African reconstruction, Arab Renaissance, the “European dream”).

3. **Higher education policies “for the knowledge society” at work: the global level**
   - Higher education policies of major international organizations promoting knowledge society projects with a global scope: the UN and its agencies (UNDP, UNESCO), the World Bank, OECD, the International Association of Universities. Global knowledge society projects and the place of higher education policy (Millennium Project, World Summit for the Information Society).

4. **Higher education policies “for the knowledge society” at work: the regional level (I)**
   - Great policy narratives, great errors. The knowledge society, the rediscovery of universities in Africa and the project of an African Renaissance
   - Arab Human Development Reports as a blueprint for bridging the “knowledge gap” in the Arab world and for an Arab Renaissance

5. **Higher education policies “for the knowledge society” at work: the regional level (II)**
   - The project of the Europe of the knowledge society. Lisbon agenda/Europe 2020 strategy as the EU’s overarching strategy to cope with the challenges of globalization and with immediate economic challenges. The European Research Area. The European Area of life Long Learning. Higher education policy at EU level and the principle of subsidiarity. Making higher education policy through EU funding mechanisms. Changing the rules of authorization, the open method of
coordination in higher education. The impact of the Lisbon strategy on higher education policies outside the EU.
- The project of the European Higher Education Area. **The Bologna process** in the context of the knowledge society discourse. The particular nature of the Bologna impact on higher education policies.
- Bologna and Lisbon compared from a higher education policy perspective.
- What is “Europe” when it comes to higher education policy?
- The place of higher education and higher education policy in the European construction. Higher education policy in the EU between the logic of economic and political integration.
- Higher education policy as an instrument of political construction: comparative analyses (U.S. and Europe, the historical role of universities in the consolidation of national states vs. European construction)
- The Europe of the knowledge society and the rediscovery of universities in Europe.

6. **Higher education policies “for the knowledge society” at work: the national level**
- The “education Gospel” in the U.S.
- When universities propose a national model: Scotland
- Translating global and regional models into national policies: the UK
- Between aspirations of regional integration and national indecision: the Balkans
- The shaping of national higher education policies in the context of the knowledge society talk: who sets the agenda, how policies are shaped and implemented, the impact of non-national players and processes
- Lessons from a comparative analysis of national experiences

7. **Higher education policies “for the knowledge society” at work: the institutional level**
- How individual higher education institutions participate in the discourse about the knowledge society.
- The dialogue with the State, external “stakeholders” and peers.
- Development of internal institutional policies in connection with the knowledge society talk. The impact on curriculum, research and outreach.
- The entrepreneurial or academic enterprising university
- Universities as actors in knowledge regions

**Recommended readings:**

- Wilson, J.D. (2002). The nonsense of “knowledge management”. *Information Research, Vol. 8, No. 1, October*

**EU and EU-related Documents**

- *Communication from the Commission –The role of universities in the Europe of Knowledge /*COM/2003/0058final*/*
- *Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in education and training*. Commission staff working paper. Brussels 2005

- *EUA Response to the Communication from the Commission “The Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge”, May 2003*

- *The Bologna Declaration*, 19 June 1999

- *Sorbonne Joint Declaration*, 25 May 1998

- *Communiqués of the Conferences of Ministers responsible for higher education*: Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005)

**Council of Europe documents**

- Resolution 1393 (2004). *Parliaments and the knowledge society*

- *Message from the Council of Europe to the meeting of ministers of the European Higher Education Area*, May 2005

**World Bank documents**


**UN, UN agencies documents**


- *Universities and their role in World Peace*. Major presentations from IAUP/UN Commission Meetings /Workshops 1995-2001

**OECD documents**