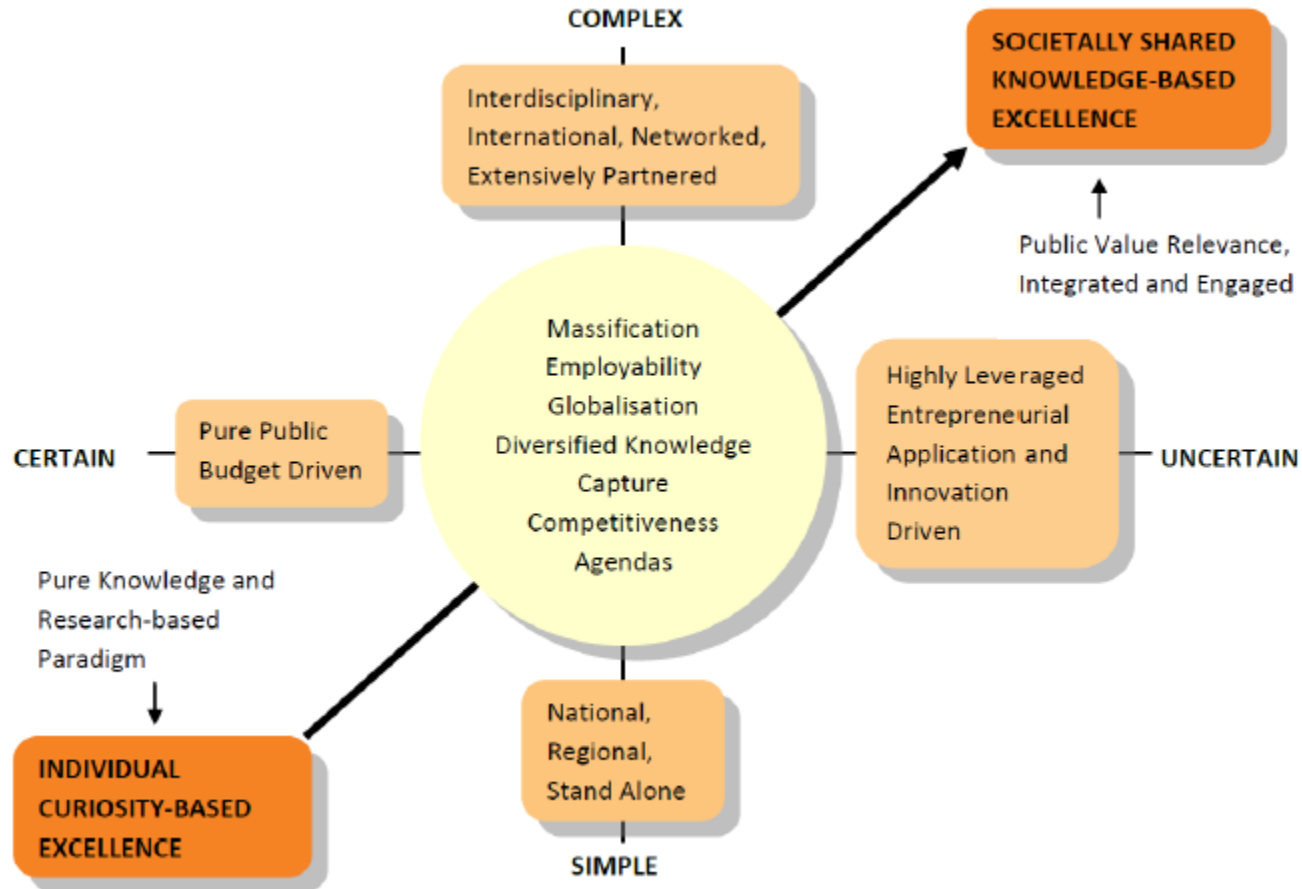# The changing role of universities

1. Defining the problem / setting the agenda

- Proving that a problem is a legitimate public concern or that it should be a higher priority issue than it currently is, e.g.:

- related to market failure;
- related to social equity or vulnerable groups;
- related to discrimination against certain groups;
- related to the public or national interest.

1. Defining the problem / setting the agenda

- Campaigning, problematizing and raising awareness

- Re-framing an existing problem

- Good timing

- Growing out of issue rhetoric

- Quantifying whenever possible

1. Defining the problem / setting the agenda

- Diagnosing conditions that cause the problem

- Making sure that the solution is not defined into the "problem"

- Negotiating the problem definition within teams and with partners and stakeholders

2. Assembling evidence and constructing policy alternatives (policy options)

- **Assembling evidence**

- **Constructing alternatives**

Examples of policy options in HE:

- *Taxes*

    Tax deduction;
    Tax credits and tax incentives.

- *Regulation*

Areas of regulation
    Academic standards and quality;
    Access and participation;
    Provision of information;
    Protection of students (as consumers);
    Financial stability;
    Good governance.

Regulation policies

Adding new standards or removing old ones;
Tightening or loosening existing standards;
Improving the scientific or expert basis for writing standards;
Improving enforcement;
Increasing or training enforcement personnel;
Changing reporting and auditing procedures;
Tightening or loosening appeal procedures;
Adding or improving complaint mechanism;
Deregulating – e.g. lowering the barriers to entry for new providers;
Changing the range of providers covered by the regulation;
Devising different content of the regulations applicable to different provides.

- *Subsidies and grants*

> Changing the level or type;
> Changing the formula by which subsidies are allocated;
> Modifying eligibility rules and other conditions for receipt;
> Loosening or tightening enforcement.

- *Service provision*

> Introducing new services or expanding existing ones;
> Better customizing existing services for a particular target group;
> Linking two or more service delivery systems;
> Improving access to services – e.g. by going online, simplifying forms, improving payment options.

- *Budgetary changes*

- *Information provision*
	- introducing more transparency;
	- introducing government rating or certification;
	- standardizing the format of the provided information;
	- simplifying information;
	- subsidizing production of information;
	- subsidizing the dissemination of information.

- *Financing and contracting*

- *Bureaucratic and institutional reforms*

2. Assembling evidence and constructing policy alternatives (policy options)

- **Narrowing down and simplifying alternatives**

- **Consulting the alternatives with stakeholders and critics**

- **Selecting the criteria that will be used to evaluate the projected outcomes of the policy alternatives**

Examples of criteria for HE policies

Evaluative criteria:
- effectiveness;
- efficiency, based on cost/benefit analysis;
- equality, equity, fairness, justice, freedom, etc.;
- process values such as participation and access.
Practical criteria:
- legality;
- feasibility/implementability;
- political acceptability, possibility to build coalitions or to launch a campaign to gather support;
- robustness and flexibility/improvability.

2. Assembling evidence and constructing policy alternatives (policy options)

- **Deciding on trade-offs across criteria:**
  - criteria representing values that we wish to maximize;
  - criteria representing values that should be minimally satisfied (constraints);
  - criteria representing values of lesser priority for which it holds that "more would be better".

- **Projecting the outcomes**

Useful approaches in the process of projecting outcomes:

- *Break-even analysis;*
- *Sensitivity analysis;*
- *Developing scenarios;*
- *Foreseeing undesirable side effects;*
- *Considering emergent features in the system;*
- *Assessing the possibility and the costs of failure.*

2. Assembling evidence and constructing policy alternatives (policy options)

- **Confronting the trade-offs across projected outcomes**

- **Narrowing down, focusing and deepening on the most promising alternatives**

- **Choosing the solution (the preferred policy option)**

3. Policy proposal/ Policy design

- **Developing a policy instrument mix**

- **Developing a delivery organization mix**

- **Developing an implementation strategy and plan**

- **Developing a comprehensive evaluation procedure**

4. Telling the story and disseminating policy ideas

	Type of policy paper	
	Policy study	Policy analysis/recommendation/proposal
Audience targeted	Targets the policy community	Targets decision makers
Focus and purpose	General information and recommendations on policy issues in a certain issue area	Designs and proposes specific policies to be implemented
Methodology	Can include much primary research	Includes little primary research
Ideas and language used	Can be technical and specific to the issue area (but nevertheless should not use professional jargon)	Must be very simple and clear
Format	Report-like	Report-like or memo format
Length	No more than 25 000 words	No more than 5 000 words

4. Telling the story and disseminating policy ideas

People will march for a phrase;
they will not march for a paragraph and, even less, for a page

4. Telling the story and disseminating policy ideas

Basic tips on writing effective policy papers:
- Unless the report is very short, it should begin with an executive summary;
- Usually, it is good to include a clear statement of the purpose of the policy paper somewhere in the beginning;
- Each alternative that has been evaluated should have its own section, and the projected outcomes (including evidence) should be easily discernible in the text;
- Detailed discussion of the criteria that were used can usually be skipped if it is necessary to save space;
- There should be a separate section focused on the policy recommendations;
- Subheading is important in order to make the piece more readable;
- Graphics can make some points easier to comprehend (unless the audience is not comfortable with graphics);

4. Telling the story and disseminating policy ideas

Basic tips on writing effective policy papers:
- Detailed technical information and calculations should appear in appendices, not in the text. Technical information in the text should be limited to that which is necessary to convince the reader that the analysis is credible;
- Tables should deal with at most one or two problems and should be comprehensible even if taken out of the surrounding text. The title of the table should state the main point (conclusion) that the table leads to;
- Notes are more effective if they are in the form of footnotes than in the form of endnotes;
- References and sources should be listed, unless the format of the presentation does not allow it;
- Even if no press release is published, it is useful to write it in order to be forced to condense the main message;
- In a memo, the fist sentence should catch the reader's attention.

Essential readings

Bardach, E. 2005. *A practical guide for policy analysis: The eightfold path to more effective problem solving* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Behn, B. 2012. Craft of Memo Writing. *http://www.hks.harvard.edu/thebehnreport/All%20Issues/Behn,%20Craft%20of%20Memo%20Writing%202013.pdf*

Brinkerhoff, D. W., and Crosby, B. L. 2002. *Managing policy reform: Concepts and tools for decision-makers in developing and transitioning countries.* Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, Inc.

Rizvi, F., and Lingard, B. 2010. *Globalizing education policy*. New York, NY: Routledge.