

A Stakeholder Theory Perspective of University Education in New Zealand



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Purpose of Research



To investigate how well tertiary education policy in New Zealand is articulated, implemented and executed, from a university's academic staff perspective.

Background



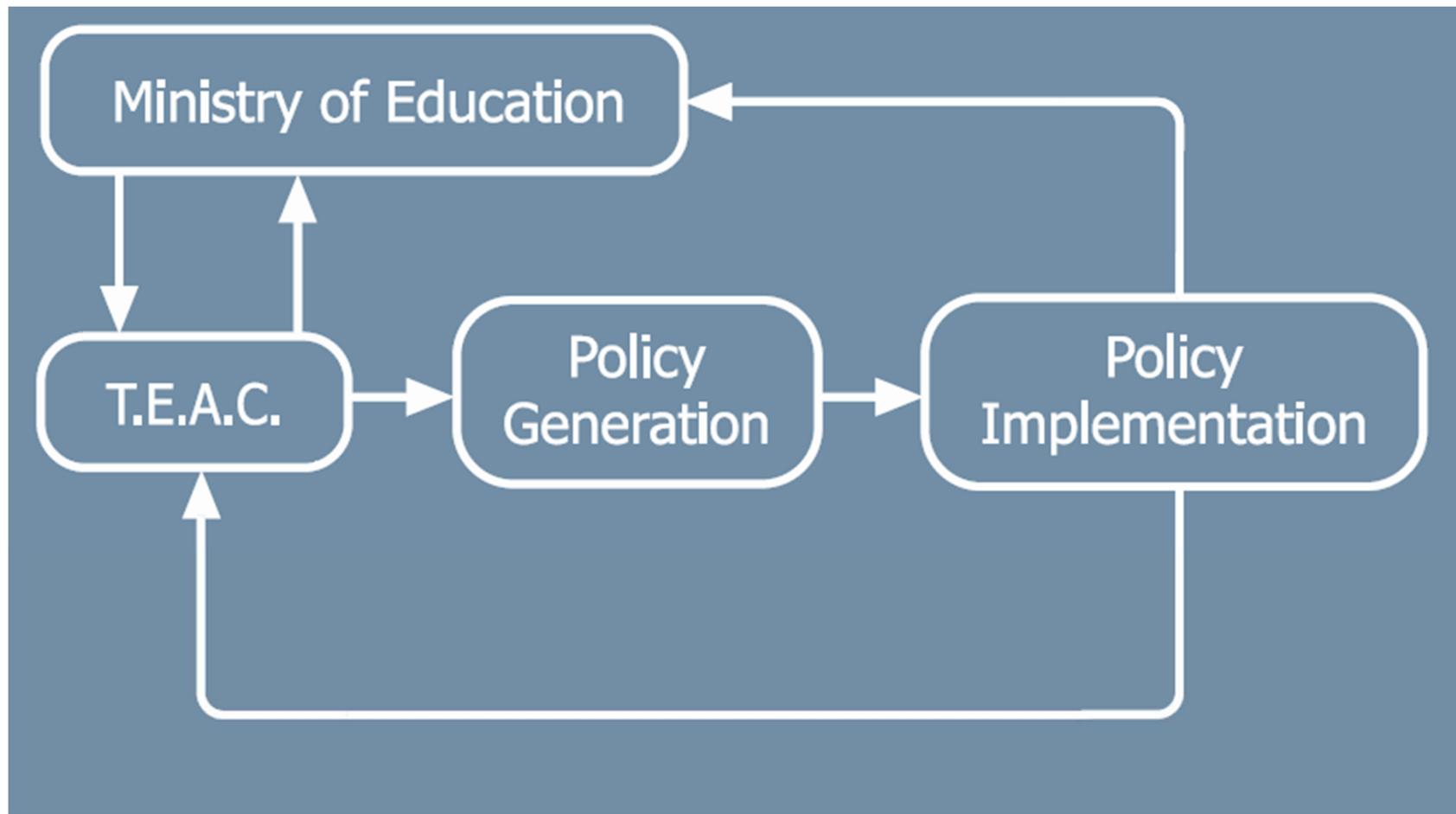
- Link tertiary education with New Zealand's economy, including its economic, social and cultural goals;
- Facilitate national strategic goals; such as innovation, economic and social development and fulfilling the Treaty of Waitangi obligations;
- Government intervention, give clear strategic leadership;
- Include stakeholders in the policy-making process.

Research Questions

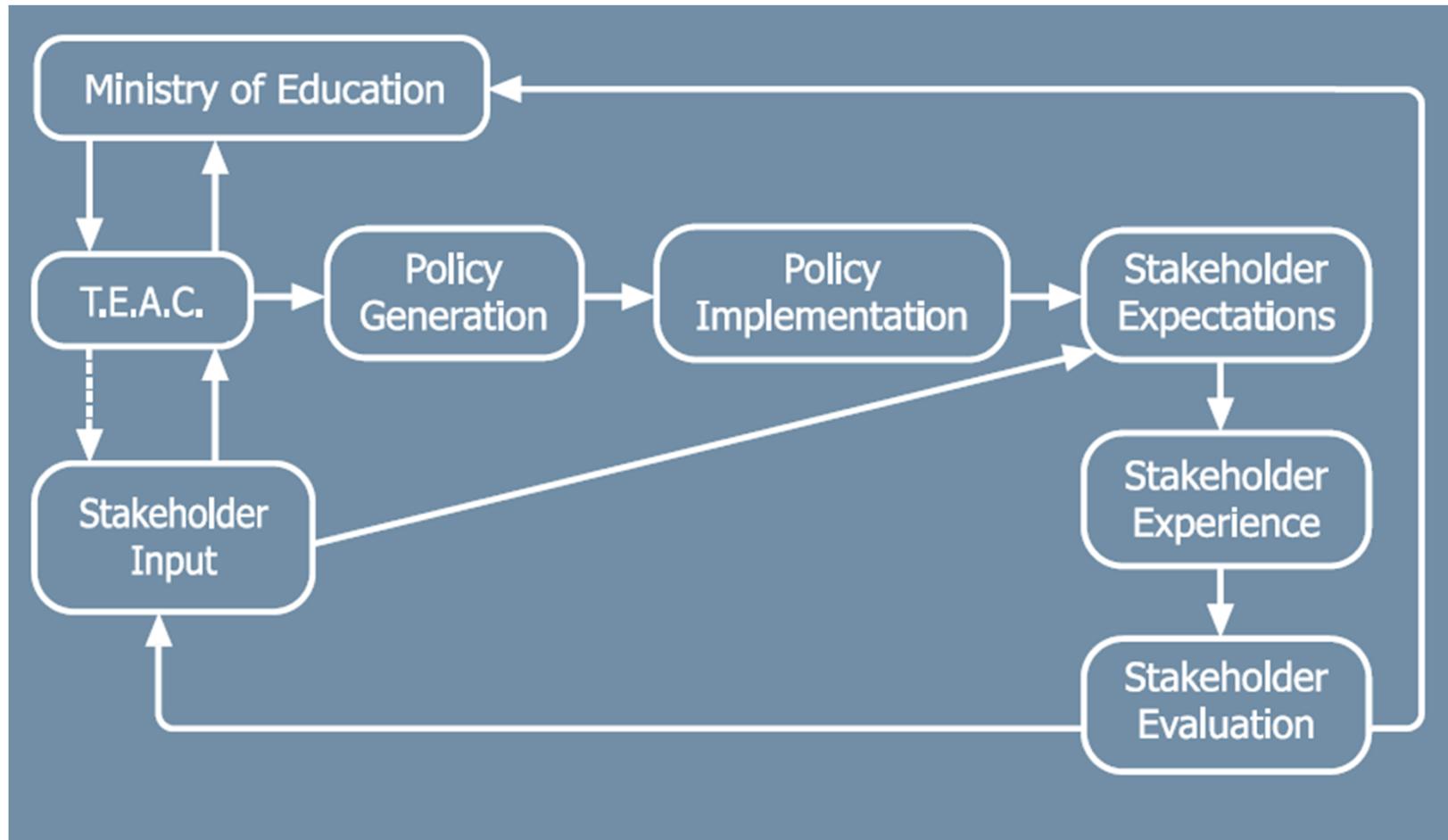


1. What were the intentions of TEAC's policies? And, have they been achieved as planned?
2. How have the policies affected a university's academic staff?
3. How do the current evaluation mechanisms determine the impact of the policies?

The framework for the policy development process



The framework for the stakeholder-based policy process



Method



- Single Case Study Approach
- Sample 60 Academic Staff
- Criteria
- Structured Interview Schedule
- Open-ended and rating scaled questions
- NVivo

Key Findings



1. Quantitative findings indicate general agreement with TEAC's policy intentions, whereas qualitative responses reveal underlying concerns;
2. Respondents perceive the language of policy to be vague and unclear and therefore potentially lacking in meaning;
3. Lack of mutuality in policy intentions;
4. Respondents feel disengaged from the stakeholder-based policy development process.

Key Finding 1

Quantitative findings indicate general agreement with TEAC's policy intentions, whereas qualitative responses reveal underlying concerns

For example: Contribute to the country's economy

Respondents (n=57) agreed that it was a function of the university to contribute to the economy.

Intellectual concerns tend to be regarded as an indulgence, if they are regarded at all and are respected only in so far as they make an economic contribution.

Key Finding 2



Respondents perceive the language of policy to be vague and unclear and therefore potentially lacking in meaning

Examples include:

- *Deliberately ambiguous;*
- *Meaningless and obfuscatory;*
- *This is typical bureaucrat language, it's not real language, it's the language of politics;*
- *All this political correctness, it's b**s**t. It doesn't actually mean anything.*

Key Finding 3



Lack of mutuality in policy intentions

For example:

Only in so far as the local community should be assured that we are producing top quality graduates and that the university system remains a critic and conscience of society.

Key Finding 4



Intervention, steering and clear strategic leadership perceived by respondents as interference.

For example:

I like to think that universities have a certain autonomy to be independent thinkers, and at the moment that's not really possible because the government determines most of what we do;

From a management perspective we do everything they [the government] require of us and there is an unbelievable amount of bureaucracy layer upon layer upon layer.

Research Contributions



Theoretical

- Framework

Practical

- Assists policy makers – provides stakeholder insight
- Adds to debate – provides evidence that illustrates that vague and unclear policy intentions lead to unsuccessful policy execution

Limitations



1. Generalisability - Sample not representative
2. Access to Ministry of Education documents
3. Interpretation Bias
4. Resources

Future Directions



1. Extend research to directly involve Ministry of Education alongside the sector's key stakeholders;
2. Interview academic staff from the eight universities in New Zealand;
3. Extend research internationally by engaging in comparative studies with other publically owned and managed universities.

Thank you

