An Exploratory Research on the Stakeholders of a University

Emerson Wagner Mainardes

NECE, Department of Business and Economics, University of Beira Interior (UBI)

Lot. Ribeira de Flandres, lt. 16, R/C DTO, Covilhã, Portugal, 6200-802

Email: emerson.wm@sapo.pt

Helena Alves (Corresponding author)

NECE, Department of Business and Economics, University of Beira Interior (UBI)

Estrada do Sineiro, S/N, Covilhã, Portugal, 6200-209

Email: halves@ubi.pt

Mário Raposo

NECE, Department of Business and Economics, University of Beira Interior (UBI)

Estrada do Sineiro, S/N, Covilhã, Portugal, 6200-209

Email: mraposo@ubi.pt

Abstract

Higher education institutions are undergoing a process of transformation. Their functions of teaching and research are being reassessed, with particular emphasis on the contribution they make to the welfare of their economic and social environment, be it the region, the country or the European Union (Jongbloed, Enders and Salerno, 2007). To this end, higher education institutions need to engage in profitable relationships with various stakeholders and incorporating their respective visions and purposes into their own management practices. Hence, higher education institutions need to identify these stakeholders and their needs before defining priorities and relational strategies for each entity. This way, the aim of this article is to identify main stakeholders in a higher education institution while confirms or disconfirms the need to include lower hierarchy levels for the correct identification.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Higher Education Institutions, University Management, Theory of Stakeholders, University and Stakeholder relationships.

1. Introduction

Strategically important to nations, higher education has undergone major expansion in recent decades. Within this context, the education market experienced various changes with the advent of competition between higher education institutions (HEI) whether in national or international terms (Tam, 2007).

This competition brought consequences for all stakeholders connected to higher education. Students gained greater breadth of choice when undertaking their professional training. The HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) themselves experienced this greater competition and driving their internationalisation and the setting up of not only virtual universities but also corporative entities with their roots in major private organisations (Mintzberg & Rose, 2003).

With such changes in their surrounding environment, HEIs began to need more professional management structures and more entrepreneurial types of organisation. A highly competitive market demands universities to develop skills and competences not previously required, specifically in terms of resource and student management, the development of their brands in society, the preparation of students for the job market, performance evaluation, among others (Michael,

2004). The HEI mission was expanded to stretch beyond teaching and research to include services to the community requiring partnerships be established with their surrounding communities and stakeholders (Jongbloed et al., 2007).

In this way, to survive in a competitively hostile market, HEI management turned towards the identification of the needs of their respective publics and the subsequent definition of strategies based on the needs in the meanwhile identified (Laredo, 2007). Given that such society oriented organisational modes had not been the norm, difficulties were encountered by HEI managers in developing these strategies guided by the demands of contemporary society. This scenario raises various questions: which are the HEI publics or communities? What do these expect of an HEI? What are their respective levels of importance? What are their true needs? How do contemporary HEIs interact with their various publics?

While answering such questions is neither simple nor easy given their dependence on the respective individual HEI and its surrounding environment, this study seeks to identify majors stakeholders in higher education institutions while verify if such identification can be made with only the top hierarchy levels (as usual) or whether it should also include lower hierarchy levels.

The researchers of Stakeholders Theory say that the process of identification of an organization' stakeholders, should be developed with top managers, as defended by Freeman (1984), Polonsky (1995), Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) e Bryson (2004), among others. However, could the identification of university stakeholders be done, with just the top mangers? Indeed, the university, as already demonstrated, is a very different kind of organization compared to traditional organizations, and lots of issues don't apply to universities (Baldridge, 1971).

Is this the case of Stakeholders Theory? The initial reason to develop this research was to identify the different perceptions between the several hierarchical levels inside the university. Using an exploratory study, the objective was to identify the university stakeholders empirically, as well as, outline the need to involve all the hierarchical levels. In the literature review, we don't find empirical studies about the identification of university stakeholders. The stakeholder's initial frame, found in this research can be used in future confirmatory researches.

2. Stakeholder theory and higher education institutions

According to Freeman (1984), a stakeholder may be any individual or group of individuals either impacted upon by the company or able to impact on the achievement of its objectives. This is the concept underpinning Stakeholder Theory. This theory considers that the final results of any activity should take into consideration the returns of the results for all stakeholders involved and not only the results of owners or shareholders.

Within the context of public and non-profit organisations, the 1998 Eden and Ackerman study (Bryson, 2004) identifies stakeholders as individuals or groups that have the power to directly impact on the future of the organisation.

According to Jongbloed et al. (2007), the legitimacy of higher education to society is increasingly evaluated by the level and quality of the HEI commitment to its community of stakeholders and inherently of greater depth than any simple maintenance of contacts. It rather means that the organisation seeks out and adopts means of involving the stakeholders so as to best perceive how the latter value the services provided and just how these can be improved.

According to Benneworth and Arbo (2006), one plausible consequence is that these demands will generate a new approach to governance and social responsibility, highly professional management and a rethinking of the university business model.

The stakeholder theory might prove highly useful to HEIs in efforts to explain the attention rendered to the various communities found in the surrounding HEI environment in addition to the relational interaction between an HEI and its communities (Jongbloed et al., 2007). However, the HEIs have not yet proven able to either correctly identify the stakeholders involved with the institution or to concretely establish the needs of each entity and the level of importance to attribute to the respective relationship. There is still much to be done before ensuring HEIs meet stakeholder needs and, within this scope Stakeholder Theory has much to contribute towards completing this task (Dobni & Luffman, 2003).

3. Stakeholders connected to HEIs

Identifying the stakeholders involved in HEIs is a fundamental step towards not only establishing competitive advantages for teaching institutions but also towards identifying their needs and setting up the means to meet them. Meeting the needs of these individuals or groups is an important competitive factor for higher education institutions (Dobni & Luffman, 2003).

However, even this identification of the various HEI target publics is no easy task given that the processes of providing educational services are diverse and involving differing participants whether acting directly or indirectly. Various studies

have attempted to set out a framework for the different groups that may influence or benefit from higher education without making any distinction between clients or publics of the institution. Table 1 presents some of their findings.

<Table 1 about here>

Table one demonstrates that the approach adopted by the studies detailed in this table focused only on the identification of actors taking into consideration the teaching service rendered. However, given that a higher education institution extends beyond teaching, other stakeholders may be identified.

Correspondingly, Burrows (1999) identified the groups set out in Table 2 as possible stakeholders.

<Table 2 about here>

As can be seen from table two, teaching institution stakeholders are both diverse and difficult to quantify. In turn, each may wield greater or lesser influence over the institution and represent varying degrees of importance to the institution. Correspondingly, the HEI management holds responsibility for clearly defining just who the stakeholders actually are, their needs and their respective importance (Lam & Pang, 2003).

So as to attempt to identify and explain the importance of each one of the stakeholders and the relationship to be built up with each entity, Mitchell et al. (1997) set out a theory entitled Stakeholder Salience. In accordance with this theory, stakeholders vary in terms of power, legitimacy and urgency. Thus, they gain power to the extent they access coercive, utilitarian or normative means, are able to impose their will on the relationship, gain legitimacy where their actions are desired and appropriate within the framework of the prevailing socially constructed norms, values and beliefs, and urgency to the extent their needs require immediate action.

Therefore, based on these attributes of power, legitimacy and degree of urgency, seven classes of stakeholders (figure 1) may be identified and pooled into three main groups:

- Latent stakeholders. This stakeholder type holds only one of the three attributes (power or legitimacy or urgency). In this case, given restrictions on time or resources, the HEI management may not act on the relationship or even go so far as to ignore its existence. Where the attribute represents power, there is the tendency to remain inactive as while holding the power to impose its will, the entity does not hold the legitimacy for such actions or has no urgent demand. Where the attribute is legitimacy, the relationship remains discretionary. Here, while holding legitimacy, there is not the power to influence the HEI and often even no sense of urgency. In turn, where the prevailing relational characteristic is urgency, stakeholders tend to the demanding. However, these demands are left unmet as there lacks both the power and the legitimacy necessary to influence the HEI;

- Expectant stakeholders. This group of stakeholders is defined as in possession of two of the three attributes. Where the prevailing relationship features power and legitimacy, they are termed dominant stakeholders. This group of stakeholders is that which begins to become important to the HEI. To satisfy the group, the organisation needs to begin producing annual reports, for example. In turn, where the predominant attributes are legitimacy and urgency, then these stakeholders are left in a dependent position as they depend on either other stakeholders or even on the actual institutional management to be able to achieve their demands. When the attributes are power and urgency, then the stakeholders pose a threat as, despite lacking legitimacy, these stakeholders will attempt to resort to coercive means so as to meet their needs;

- Definitive stakeholders. Such stakeholders simultaneously bring together legitimacy, power and urgency. Whenever such stakeholders have an urgent need, the institution not only should but also must take this into consideration as they hold both the legitimacy and power to ensure the organisation rapidly responds to their needs.

<Figure 1 about here>

Correspondingly, and in accordance with the Stakeholder Salience theory classification of Mitchell et al. (1997), the importance of each entity is of a reduced level for latent stakeholders, average for expectant stakeholders and high for definitive stakeholders. It should be emphasised that within this framework, no stakeholder holds a static position and the level of importance evolves over the course of time.

The contribution made by the Mitchell et al. (1997) proposal towards a theory for stakeholders has been recognised across the literature. However, its impact has primarily been in modelling the categories of stakeholders rather than in their actual individual identification. Analysis of stakeholders enables public managers to better understand just who their various stakeholders are and what satisfies them. Ideally, this assists in defining just what means of satisfying these stakeholders will create public value and better the common good (Bryson, 2004). To this end, Bryson (2004) put

forward a systematisation of techniques existing for identifying stakeholders based on the work of various authors. Table 3 provides a summary of these.

<Table 3 about here>

Analysis of table 3 makes it clear that the techniques for the identification of stakeholders are varied and with diverse purposes so as to ensure that each may be deployed in differing situations. Some only assist in identifying relevant actors and their respective needs, nevertheless, others help in delineating current and future strategic dependence not only regarding the prevailing stakeholder needs but also on the existing levels of support or opposition. It should also be highlighted that some techniques provide visual representation and as such significantly facilitate the identification process.

However, one failing shared by the majority of these studies derives from how stakeholder identification normally only ever applies these techniques to the highest hierarchical levels (for example: Polonsky, 1995; Buysse & Verbeke, 2003; Lim, Ahn & Lee, 2005; Beach 2008, 2009; Semerciöz, Dönmez & Dursun, 2008). Indeed, while this might make sense within a corporate context, within that of higher education, the specific characteristics of the respective institution must be taken into consideration (Baldridge, 1971, Licata & Frankwick, 1996).

In practice, higher education institutions are characterised by the high level of autonomy enjoyed by their faculties, departments and even teaching and research staff in pursuing individual and institutional objectives. Correspondingly, while the strategy of one higher education institution may be established at a senior level, it is frequently implemented with significant autonomous scope attributed to the respective actors. Hence, it is commonly the lower hierarchical levels that engage in the relationships and contacts important to the institution and hence these hierarchical levels may play a fundamental role in correctly identifying institutional stakeholders (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1980; Licata & Frankwick, 1996).

4. Research methodology and techniques

In order to achieve the objectives set, the fieldwork was carried out empirically based upon the work undertaken by the Bryson (2004) study that set out methodologies for researching the stakeholders of any particular organisation. One dimension to this research involved ascertaining whether it would be necessary only to interview a senior institutional representative of a particular higher education institution (HEI) for the identification of its stakeholders or whether it would be recommendable to consult other managerial levels such as the middle management. To this end, qualitative-exploratory type research took place.

This exploratory research was also necessary because of the lack of scope of existing research on HEI stakeholders. Exploratory research requires a qualitative approach to phenomena (Denscombe, 2003; Hair Jr., Babin, Money & Samouel, 2003).

As the unit of analysis, a typical Portuguese state university (PSU) was selected. The entity chosen makes up the group of thirteen PSUs, which are all endowed with similar management systems in accordance with the legislative framework in effect nationally. That is, results obtained at any one PSU would tend to represent those at other PSUs in Portugal. The study targeted one of the five faculties making up this PSU, the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences. This faculty was selected given that it contained the largest number of students enrolled at the PSU chosen for study. Therefore, as a sample, the following were invited to take part in interviews:

- As representatives of senior faculty management: the faculty president, the four faculty departmental presidents and the president of the only faculty research   unit,

- As representatives of middle faculty management: the directors of the faculty's seven undergraduate degrees. The choice of undergraduate degrees (and not second and/or third cycle study programs) is explained by these degrees being attended by the greatest number of faculty students.

This is a convenience sample type (Denscombe, 2003). The six senior management representatives and the seven middle management representatives were invited to take part in the research project. Of the total, four senior management and five middle management representative agreed to participate.

For the purpose of data collection, a semi-structured script was drafted appropriate to extended interviews (Hair Jr. et al., 2003). Four subjects underpinned the questioning of the respective HEI stakeholders: their understanding of HEI services (the university mission), their understanding as to the stakeholder concept, the identification, from the interviewee perspective, of all HEI stakeholders, and ranking the stakeholders identified by order of importance.

The interviews took place between the 9th and 25th November 2009 with each interview lasting an average of sixty minutes. All interviews were duly recorded. After all nine interviews were completed, they were firstly transcribed

before then being subject to qualitative data analysis software processing.

With all the answers in digital format, data analysis involved the surveying of content with the objective of finding and classifying faculty stakeholders through their codification (Denscombe, 2003) through recourse to Atlas/ti software (Muhr, 1995). This type of analysis seeks out regularities and variations within the extent of repetitions of observations or affirmations in an attempt to quantify the qualitative data (Denscombe, 2003). In this particular instance, codes were initially established for the words most commonly cropping up in the interviews before then being used in transcription analysis. Subsequently, both the data and the codes were inserted into the software surveying interviewee discourses in terms of their regularities and similarities with the codification established. Thus, it proved possible to carry out comparative analysis of all the interviews and set out a ranking of the codes present in the data collected from the respondents (both the most and the least frequent).

5. Data analysis

The data collected was subject to two stages of analysis. First, there was analysis of the interviews carried out with the senior faculty management (presidents). Secondly, analysis looked at the data gathered from the middle management of this faculty (degree directors). Finally, the analytical results were compared.

5.1 Analysis of Interviews with Presidents

This section sets out the results obtained from the presidents: of the faculty, of departments and the research unit at this PSU. In total, four interviews were completed.

Thus, as regards the service provided by the faculty, teaching was most commonly referred to. One interviewee stated that "...the motive for the faculty's very existence is the training of individuals..." with the main focus of any teaching institution being students and their professional training. Furthermore, all respondents focused on scientific research given that, as one interviewee explained: "...it is necessary not only to disseminate knowledge but especially to produce it...". Hence, the faculty does not only exist for individual enhancement but also for the progress of scientific knowledge and to advance the state of the art in faculty areas of competence.

Another point shared by all respondents was the relationship between the university and its surrounding environment. According to another interviewee, "...a university should set itself the objective of developing the region where it is located as a university should maintain the appropriate relationships with its surroundings...". Another respondent highlighted the role of the university as a means of "...contributing towards social change, economically and socially developing the local community and the entire nation...". A third added there was "...a need to train human resources for society as well as transfer the knowledge obtained within the university itself...".

When the interview script raised the concept of stakeholder, it quickly became clear that all respondents were well acquainted with the concept first proposed by Freeman (1984), defining a stakeholder as an individual or a group of individuals that influence or are influenced by the organisation. On inquiring into their own definitions of stakeholders, all interviewees defined their terms very similarly to the Freeman (1984) definition: "...somebody with interest in the institution...", "...target publics with relations with the university...", "partners or entities that make up the organisation...", "...they are those parties with an interest in the university...", "...any actor interested in or even of interest to the university...". Correspondingly, it did not prove necessary to explain the meaning of the concept under analysis.

In accordance with the previously drafted script, the following step involved requesting the respondents to identify the university's stakeholders. The results are summarised in table 4:

<Table 4 about here>

For each stakeholder identified, an explanation was requested in conjunction with a consideration of its respective level of importance. From these justifications, it proved possible to establish a ranking of stakeholders from the most to the least important.

In general, the student was chosen as the most important of stakeholders given that according to one the responses obtained, "...without students, there is no university...", or furthermore, "...the student is the raison d'être of a university...". For other interviewees, "...the student is the main reason for the university's existence..." A third respondent highlighted how "...it is the student who ensures the university's survival..." The choice of student as the leading stakeholder is in line with expectations given how the presidents also lecture and their efforts in this capacity are focused on students, which implies greater weighting being attributed to this specific stakeholder. Another motive also justifying the choice of student as the main stakeholder is the fact that for one respondent, "...this university still does not focus sufficiently on scientific research rather demanding that the institution strive to attract and keep students, as they

represent the main source of university financing...".

The second most important stakeholder was the region where the university was located. For one respondent, "...it is the location of the university that holds the greatest influence over the institution...". Another stated that "...the university impacts upon and experiences the impact of the region surrounding the university...". In addition, a third answer defined that "...the local region strongly influences the university...". Meanwhile, the fourth interviewee affirmed that "...our university holds a direct influence over the region in which it is located...". Therefore, following students, the second most important stakeholder is the local community and the immediate environment surrounding the university. This factor may be explained by this university being located in an inland region of Portugal, more precisely in a medium-sized city (by Portuguese standards). Hence, one of the most important roles of the institution within the region is deemed to be that of regional development.

Finally, in terms of interviewee discourse, the following decreasing stakeholder level of importance was identified: students, local community and its authorities, teaching staff, researchers and other employees, state entities, national government and state financing agencies, companies/organisations (profit making or otherwise) and institutions that may be future student employers, professional bodies (orders), former students, European professional organisations, non-academic society in general, and other universities.

5.2 Analysis of Degree Director Interviews

The second stage of analysis incorporated the interviews with the degree directors, who may be termed the HEI middle management. This stage included a total of five director interviews.

In relation to the service provided by the faculty, there was also a certain consensus as to the teaching service. However, questions did emerge as to the mission of the university as well as the faculty itself. For one interviewee, "...the university does not have a clearly defined mission and for this reason frequently fails in the provision of the services set for the university...", and continuing, "....it is necessary to focus on the employability of students and that can only be obtained by good degrees and good internal service provision standards...". Another respondent highlighted the accelerated rate of growth of universities in Portugal and the consequent lower level of emphasis on pedagogic questions that weakens the service provided by the HEI and hinders in attracting students. Furthermore, this same respondent also maintained that for the university to be effective in the services rendered, "...there is the need to separate the teaching from the research staff as the two functions together mutually hold each other back...". Despite this, the director discourse may be broadly summarised by the comment of one respondent: "...the university should produce knowledge of worth to society as well as seeking to disseminate knowledge, that is, the teaching and research aiming at bringing about improvements to society...".

Considering this quotation, scientific research was also generally categorised as one of the university's outputs. However, the service most present in interviews with degree directors was that provided to the community. According to one answer, "...the university should not only undertake research but should also be equipped with technology transfer mechanisms...". Another comment from this same interview was that "...this university should cause an impact on the region as the characteristics of this region demand it...". Additionally, a second interviewee highlighted that "...the main mission of a university is to provide services to the community. A university should have the role of intervening and improving society in general...". A third respondent affirmed that "...teaching staff need to be separate from the management. Not all teaching staff hold the competences and skills to be university managers as such roles required specific abilities...".

Having identified respondent perspectives on the services provided by the university, the next step was to understand the meanings attributed by degree directors to the concept of stakeholder. The first respondent stated it was "...all parties interested in something...", with the second defining the term as being "...the influencers and the influenced involved in an organisation...". The third respondent highlighted it as being "...the people and organisations interacting with a university...". The fourth put it as "...any actor interested in the university...". The fifth respondent declared a lack of any awareness as to the term. In this case, the Freeman (1984) definition was presented and explained to the participant.

With all questionnaire respondents understanding fully the stakeholder concept, they were then asked to nominate the university's stakeholders. The results are collated and summarised in table 5.

<Table 5 about here>

Table 5 immediately reveals that there is a greater diversity of stakeholders than previously found. Following the same analytical approach as in the first interviews, respondents were then asked to justify and qualify the role of each stakeholder identified.

Furthermore, there were differing opinions even as to the most important stakeholder. While one respondent named the top university management (the rectory team) as the leading stakeholder another respondent attributed the same level of importance to the national and local government (in terms of the legislative framework), the European Union (in terms of demands) and the regulatory agencies (degree accreditation). Meanwhile, the third respondent put the universities teaching staff in first place while the other two interviewees opted for the student as the main university stakeholder.

These differences reveal the divergent visions of degree directors and reflect their role as the link between senior management (presidents and the rectory) and the teaching staff. Hence, when considered against the results obtained from the presidents, there is a clear distinction in discourse indicating a communications issue between the two hierarchical levels, a factor previously identified in research into university management structures (Baldridge, 1971).

Despite these differences, leading the way as the main stakeholders given the level of importance attributed by respondents were: the students (and potential students), national government (especially on legislation related questions) and state entities, the teaching staff, employees and researchers, companies and nongovernmental organisations, business and professional associations, competitor universities, education system sources of financing, former students, student families, the media and the local and regional community. This represents a summary of the data collected from degree course directors at the faculty under analysis.

5.3 Comparative Analysis

In order to obtain the main research objective, this stage features comparative analysis between the results obtained. This comparison is set out in table 6 and discussed below.

<Table 6 about here>

In analysing table 6, one immediate finding is that there is an inversion in the role of the university. While the group of presidents rank teaching first and followed by research and then relations with society, the group of directors ranked relations with the university's external environment above that of teaching. This difference in the vision may cause certain problems when implementing the policies handed down by senior management to HEI members of staff, in this case teachers, researchers and employees. Considering the prevailing business reality, it is highly important that the discourses of senior and middle management coincide, something that was not identified in this case.

A second finding, within the objective of this study, was to identify the different stakeholders across the different levels of university management. Comparing the stakeholders identified by presidents and by degree directors, it may be understood that some of the stakeholders selected by directors do not appear in president discourses (and vice versa). Correspondingly, it is possible that in later research targeting university stakeholders, recommended best practice involves their identification across various hierarchical levels and not only at the senior HEI level. This question was structural to this study and contradicted the methods used in the studies of Polonsky (1995), Buysse and Verbeke (2003), Lim et al. (2005), Beach (2008, 2009) and Semerciöz et al. (2008).

Finally, further evidence of the communication problems between presidents and directors may be observed when classifying the previously identified stakeholders by level of importance. While the focus of attention at the president level extends, in addition to students, to the local surroundings and the university team of staff, the directors expressed far greater concern over questions relating to the teaching regulatory framework with no overall consensus among directors that the student was the leading stakeholder. These important distinctions once again demonstrate divergence in the respective discourses at president and director levels and an issue that might impact on overall university performance.

6. Conclusions

This research project primarily sought to verify whether HEI stakeholders could be identified, as is the normal practice, through recourse only to the top layer of management. Correspondingly, it was found that different hierarchical levels identified practically the same stakeholders even though both their importance and relevance varied across actors at different hierarchical levels.

The small sample of people involved in this exploratory study, doesn't allow assuming the results as definitive. Only a confirmatory research, involving a more representative sample can establish the definitive stakeholders of universities. However the research developed in this paper shows relevance as it point to a group of initial stakeholders obtained directly from the university members, something not usual in the literature.   The relevance of the study also shows that, the traditional methods of stakeholders' identification, as supported by stakeholder's theory, are not applied to the reality of the universities.

This means that, studying just the top manager, can not represent the current reality of the university. Also it can hinder a

stakeholder-based management, because the organization could focus his attention in the wrong stakeholders. This aspect is clearly evidenced in this research and is a recommendation for future researches about stakeholders in universities. We assume that this is the main contribution of this exploratory research.

Relative to the results obtained, in terms of senior management, the attention was focused on the student stakeholder and the teaching service on the one hand because student numbers determine a significant proportion of institutional financing and on the other hand because universities research is only now gaining in prominence. However, any further development in the scope of research undertaken would seem to be hindered by a lack in financing.

At the middle management level, the student as stakeholder also emerged as the most important even while priority in terms of the university's mission is attributed to links with the community. This seems to be a more restrictive vision among degree directors who look to society as some kind of "entity" whose needs should be satisfied through the rendering of teaching and training. This society thus effectively stipulates educational needs and then absorbs the outputs of this same training process.

Furthermore, the middle management vision is naturally more limited in scope whether on the mission of the university or on the importance to be attributed to each of the stakeholders as many degree directors attribute maximum priority to senior management and all the regulatory entities influencing the degrees being taught.

Hence, these conclusions do point to certain difficulties in institutional strategic implementation given that, as mentioned above, degree directors intermediate the relationship between senior management, professors and students. Correspondingly, where the former do not attribute the same priorities to the different stakeholders, there may be expected to be a lack of both alignment and synergies resulting from implementation of the policies handed down by senior management.

It would thus seem fundamental that any study about the identification and prioritisation of HEI stakeholders extends to incorporate the different institutional levels involved. Additionally, the implementation of measures and relationships seeking to reach out to different stakeholders need explaining across the various hierarchical levels and their respective stakeholder levels of importance.

7. Limitations and future lines of research

The qualitative and exploratory nature of this research project inherently represents one of the main research limitations. Despite the technique adopted enabling a better understanding of the nature of the problem under study, the interviews carried out focused only on one faculty of a state university that may limit the applicability of the conclusions reached. However, it should be highlighted that this exploratory study had the objective of verifying whether studies of educational sector stakeholders need only incorporate the most senior hierarchical level. This approach was rejected by the findings. Correspondingly, it would be important for other similar studies to include other hierarchical levels as, given that differences and nuances in interpretation were found across two hierarchical levels, probably still greater differences may be expected when a greater range of hierarchical levels are taken into consideration.

It would furthermore be important to continue this study by analysing other faculties, particularly those of engineering, arts and letters given the differences they may raise as regards the issues under study, which, given its purpose (the social and human sciences), may prove more open to management and society related questions.

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Table 1. Higher education institutional publics

Researchers	Higher education institutional publics
Weaver (1976)	- Government - Institutional management - Teaching staff - Consumers (students, their families, employers and society in general)
Smith and Cavusgil (1984)	- Suppliers of funding, products and services and regulatory agencies - Actors, such as the media and public relations professionals conveying the university message whether to students or to employers - Student parents
Licata and Frankwick (1996)	- Students - Former students - The business community - The general public - Teaching and administrative staff
Owlia and Aspinwall (1996)	- Students - Employers - Teaching staff - Government - Families
Rowley (1997)	- Students - Parents and family - Local community - Society - Government - Institutional management team - Local authorities - Current and future employers
Franz (1998)	- The student - The family - The employer - Society

Source: self-produced

Table 2. Higher education institutional publics according Burrows (1999)

Stakeholder category	Constitutive groups, communities, among others
Governmental entities	Government, boards of management, boards of directors, sponsors, support organisers.
Management	Rectors/presidents, vice-rectors/vice-presidents, directors.
Employees	Teaching staff, administrative and support personnel.
Clients	Students, parents, social financing entities, service partners, employers, employment agencies.
Suppliers	Secondary school institutions, former students, other universities and institutes, food providers, insurance companies, service suppliers, utilities.
Competition	Direct: public and private higher education establishments. Potential: distance higher education institutions, new alliances. Substitutes: company training programs.
Donors	Individual (including directors, friends, parents, former students, employees, industry, research boards, foundations).
Communities	Neighbouring, school systems, social services, chambers of commerce, special interest group.
Government regulators	Ministry of education, support entities, state financing agencies, research boards, research support bodies, fiscal authorities, social security, patent offices.
Non-governmental regulators	Foundations, accreditation bodies, professional associations, religious sponsors.
Financial intermediaries	Banks; fund managers, analysts.
Alliances and partnerships	Alliances and consortia, co-financiers of research and teaching services.

Source: adapted from Burrows (1999)

Table 3. Stakeholder identification techniques

Techniques	Brief description
Basic stakeholder analysis	Technique involving various sequential steps beginning with focus groups followed up by plenary sessions. 1- Draft a list of potential stakeholders, 2- Set out a separate page for each stakeholder, 3- Entitle each page with the name of a stakeholder and divide it into two columns, 4- Complete the first column with the criteria by which stakeholders may evaluate the institution, 5- Identify the vision that stakeholders may have of the institution (good, reasonable, bad), 6- Identify and register what may be done to swiftly satisfy each stakeholder, 7- Identify and register long term issues in conjunction with the various stakeholders, whether individually or in group.
Power versus interest chart	This analysis enables the identification and representation of each stakeholder or group of stakeholders on chart with the axes of power (low/high) and interest (low/high). It provides a visual representation of possible strategic alliances and the actions to be undertaken for each group.
Participation planning matrix	This provides the identification and classification of the differing stakeholders in terms of their participation in institutional actions. Hence, they would be subdivided into those merely informed, those involved in consultation processes, those actively involved, those who participate and those holding decision making powers.
Stakeholder inter-relationship diagrams	This features a graphical representation of the actions to be undertaken by the institution and their linkage with its respective stakeholders. It sets out the interrelationship existing between stakeholders divided by either action or theme.
Framework for stakeholder problems	Given each problem faced by the institution, stakeholders are classified in accordance with their power and favourable or negative positioning. Hence, this identifies those stakeholders who are weak supporters, strong supporters, weakly opposed and strongly opposed.
Stakeholder support/opposition charts	Similar to the previous except dealing with future proposals rather than problems.
Stakeholder influence diagrams	Depicting the stakeholders in accordance with the influences they exert over each other. This enables identification of the most influential and most central.
Generating ideas for strategic interventions	Involving the definition of problems and the design of solution as well as their political viability based on stakeholder interests.
Powers bases and relevant management diagrams	Based on the interest versus power charts and the stakeholder influence diagrams, this depicts the power bases and the direction of the respective stakeholder interests. Thus, this identifies the sources of stakeholder power in conjunction with the objectives and goals sought after.
Identifying the common good and structuring a convincing argument	Based on the previous and enabling an understanding of which interests or themes gather most support among the broadest range of stakeholders.
Ignoring individual interests to attain the common good	Based on power bases and directed interest charts, this ensures representation of the connections existing between individual interests of stakeholders and the common supra-interests.
Ethical analysis chart	This provides for the identification of which proposals should be rejected or adopted in accordance with the ethical position of each stakeholder.
Stakeholder support/opposition chart	Based on the scheme defining stakeholder problems and analysis of their favourable or negative positions, this item analyses specific proposals and not problems or definitions.
Stakeholder role	This technique forces members of the management to play out stakeholder roles so as to evaluate to what extent proposals generated meet stakeholder interests.
Policy priority versus stakeholder capacity chart	In function of the stakeholder interest in the actions and their implementation capacity, this defines the proposals that may be successfully put into practice.

Source: based on the Bryson (2004) description

Table 4. Summary of president responses on university stakeholders

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4
Students	Students	Students	Students
Teaching and other staff	Former students	Teaching staff	Professors
Society (local, national and global)	Professors and researchers	Employees	Employees
Local and regional government	Society (local, national and global environments)	Professional bodies and entities (Orders)	Researchers
National government	Local organisations	Regional and national government	Companies and nongovernmental organisations
Companies	Companies and organisations in general	City and region where HEI is located	Non academic society
Institutions providing students with employment	Government and sources of state financing	Professional European associations	State authorities
			Local and regional communities
			Other universities

Source: Own research results

Table 5. Summary of director answers on university stakeholders

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4	Interviewee 5
Top university management (rectory)	National and local government	Teachers	Students and their families	Students
National government	European Union	Members of staff	Former students	Teaching staff
Students	Regulatory agencies (accreditation)	National and local government	Teaching and other members of staff	Members of staff
Teaching staff	Students and potential students (teaching market)	Students	Companies	Media
Professionals in the field and professional associations	Local business community	Companies	Public or private nongovernmental organisations	Education system sources of financing
Competitor universities	Local community			Society in general
	Press			Companies and organisations
	Business associations			Local and national community
	Competitor universities			Business associations
	Financing agencies (public and private)			

Source: Own research results

Table 6. Comparative analysis of answers from presidents and directors

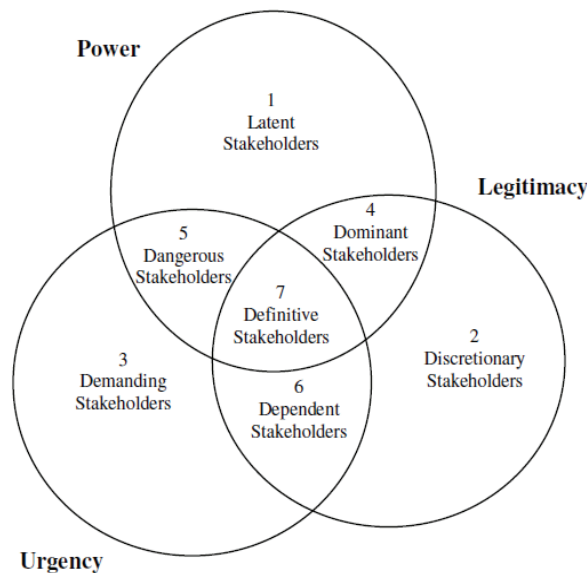| Questions	Presidents	Directors
University / Faculty Service (by order of importance)	1 – Teaching 2 – Research 3 – Relations with society	1 – Relations with society 2 – Teaching 3 – Research
Stakeholders identified	Students, former students, teaching staff, researchers, members of staff, society (local, national, global), government (local, regional, national), local companies and organisations in general, employment market, professional bodies (orders) and European professional associations, sources of state financing.	Top HEI management (the rectory), local and national government, the European Union, regulatory agencies (accreditation), students and potential students, former students, families of students, teaching staff, employees, businesses and business associations, professionals in the field and professional associations, competitor universities, local business community, local and regional communities, the media, sources of financing (public and private)
Core stakeholders	1 – Students 2 – University regional context, 3 – Teaching and research staff and other employees, 4 – National government and state financing agencies, 5 – Companies/organisations and institutions employing students, 6 – Professional bodies (Orders), 7 – Former students, 8 – European professional associations 9 – Other stakeholders.	1 – Students (and potential students), 2 – National government (especially on legislative issues), 3 – Teaching staff, 4 – Companies 5 – Business and professional associations, 6 – Competitor universities, 7 – Other stakeholders.

Source: Own research results

Figure 1. Stakeholder Typology: One, Two or Three attributes

Source: Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997: 874)