

# **KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY DISCOURSE IN INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION. CASE STUDY IN GOVERNMENTALITY**

*Terhi Nokkala\**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The process of globalisation and the emergence of knowledge society have been influential to the efforts undertaken by the most European countries and universities to introduce internationalisation policies and strategies over the last decade and a half. Internationalisation in this context is seen as «a systemic, sustained effort at making higher education more responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economy and labour markets» (KÄLVEMARK & VAN DER WENDE, 1997: 19). The current discussion around internationalisation of higher education covers the older notions of student and staff mobility, internationalisation of curricula, new emerging forms in international governance and policy making such as the Bologna process aimed at creating the European Higher Education Area by 2010 but also the growth of the global markets for higher education. (HUISMAN & VAN DER WENDE, 2004, TEICHLER, 2004, LARSEN *et al.*, 2004).

Through the discourse of internationalisation of higher education in Finland and the Netherlands, this paper focuses in the ways in which the dominant contextual knowledge society discourse is articulated in the talk on internationalisation. Consisting of an analysis of altogether 12 elite

---

\* University of Tampere, Finland.

The translation of the Finnish quotes into English has been made by the author. The style of quotes has been retained, but minimum linguistic alterations, such as erasing of repetitions of individual words have been made.

interviews of six university rectors, representing a wide range of different types of universities and six representatives of the respective ministries of education, national rectors' councils and national internationalisation agencies, the aim of this paper is to account for the deeper understandings and taken-for-grantednesses in what is understood by the elite of higher education policy as being international or internationalising in higher education and the ways of articulating the discourse of knowledge society in this context. Such a focus leaves aside the multitude of internationalisation practises as well as unavoidably does certain injustice to the complexity and richness of the different aspects of internationalisation discourse. Based on the interviews and the international and national level policy documents, the general narrative of knowledge economy and internationalisation of higher education is constructed and the specific elements of this narrative and its articulation in the contexts of internationalisation of higher education are analysed. The aim of this analysis is to understand the particular way in which the knowledge society discourse and its elements are articulated by those higher education actors who are central in formulating the policies and practises of higher education both on the national and international scale, in order to understand what kind of rationality is produced by the knowledge society discourse and to allow for a discussion on the direction of higher education in Europe.

## **I. NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN CONTEXTS**

The higher education systems in both countries, Finland and the Netherlands have faced similar type, large scale changes since the mid 1990's. The Dutch higher education system is a binary system of 13 research universities and 50 hogescholen, that is, professional higher education institutions or polytechnics. The 1993 Higher education and research act redefined the relationship between the state and the universities, replacing detailed ex ante control with increased institutional autonomy and ex post control. The government was, however, left with the task to provide the over all policy as well as with means to intervene in order to prevent unacceptable developments. The modernisation of university governance structures in 1997 strengthened the managerial positions vis-à-vis the collegial ones. The funding of higher education institutions consists of three

flows of funding, firstly, the block grant and the other core funds from the ministry of education, secondly research council funding and thirdly funding from contract teaching and research. Tuition fees make up a small percentage of funding. Since 2000, the majority of public funding has been allocated based on a performance-based allocation model consisting of teaching and research component with various indicators. The recent developments in the sector include the introduction of the bachelor-master structure and accreditation procedures (BOEZEROOY, 2003). The latest internationalisation policy from 2002 lays down three strategic goals: «1) to expand the opportunities for learners to acquire an international outlook, 2) to raise the profile of Dutch higher educational establishment on the international market for education and 3) to learn from and cooperate with other countries at central level» (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SCIENCE, 2002).

The Finnish higher education system is also a binary system of 20 universities and 29 ammattikorkeakoulu, polytechnics, both regulated by their respective legislation. The new university act in 1998 increased the university autonomy by delegating various governance issues for the universities themselves to decide. However, the ministry of education retains the authority to distribute educational responsibilities between universities. Funding of universities is based on state funding allocated by the ministry of education, and external research funding from other governmental as well as non-governmental sources. Between 1998 and 2003 the principles of state funding were gradually changed from an incremental input based mechanism to an output based formula funding. The state funding currently includes lump-sum core funding and funding of national tasks and various policy programmes, and is allocated based on performance target negotiations between the ministry and the universities. Education is free of tuition for both national/EU and non-EU students (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 2004). The recent developments in Finland include the introduction of a two-tier degree structure and accompanying changes in the funding structures, as well as changes in the university law to allow the universities to grant degree in other languages besides Finnish or Swedish.

The latest internationalisation policy of 2001 sets as a target for 2010 for Finland to be:

«a well-known and influential part of the European education and research area, and a successful player in the global contest for skills. The higher education community will be international and the demands of internationalization will be taken into account in the content of education. Finland will have a community of 10,000 - 15,000 foreign degree students (around 4 per cent of all higher education students) and the annual volume of student exchanges will be around 28,000. At least 15 per cent of graduate school students will be foreigners. The numbers of students with immigrant backgrounds will have increased considerably. The numbers of foreign teachers, experts and researchers working at Finnish institutions of higher education will be double what they were in 2001. Finnish businesses will already be benefiting from the labour input of foreigners who have studied in Finland.» (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 2001)

The development of the European Union has been equally strong as the changes on national level. According to the EU legislation, education policy is a matter of national rather than EU level policymaking, and the EU activities have previously concentrated around student mobility programmes such as Erasmus and Tempus. However, the perceived increasing competition between knowledge economies has rendered education increasingly important also on the EU agenda during the past decade, especially since the introduction in 2000 of the so called Lisbon Agenda, aiming at making EU the most competitive knowledge economy by 2010 and the emphasis on education and life-long learning in reaching this objective. The prominent role currently enjoyed by the European Commission as a partner in the Bologna Process and the so called open method of coordination increasing the cooperation of the EU member states in education has contributed to the increasing importance of EU as a higher education policy actor (See e.g. EUROPEAN COMISIÓN, 2003).

Due to the lack of official EU competence in education, alternative cooperation schemes have emerged in Europe, the most important of them being the intergovernmental Bologna Process currently including 45 signatories and aiming at creating the European Higher Education Area by 2010, by facilitating transparency and transferability of higher education degrees throughout Europe. Bologna is also a prime example of the shifts in the governance of higher education in Europe, and has been successful in creating a new higher education discourse embraced by the higher education actors (KWIEK, 2003).

The national and international level developments around higher education all share significant similarities, namely the emphasis on increasing the competitiveness of national and regional economies and the increasing convergence of national higher education policies around the new public management measure in governance of higher education. Underlined by the principle of language being one of the key mechanisms of constituting social reality and social relations, this paper argues that the discourses around knowledge society and the increasing global competition are significant in creating shared understandings and rationalities among higher education actors across national borders. The paper aims at combining the work of discourse theorists and governmentality theorists in order to understand the way in which discourses work as ways of creating regimes of truth or coherent rationalities, which function as mechanisms of government (ROSE, 1999). The notion of governmentality (FOUCAULT, 1991), a process of initiating and embracing particular rationalities and internalising particular forms of subjectivity leading universities to govern themselves within and in relation to the overall rationality provided by a dominant discourse and related non-discursive - administrative, political and economic - mechanisms of government (ROSE, 1999), offers us a possibility to understand the emergence of university identities in the knowledge society. In this paper the discourse of knowledge society is looked at as an example of such a rationality creating a logical coherent understanding within which the universities evaluate their own activities as actors in the knowledge society.

## **II. KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY AS THE PREVALENT RATIONALITY**

The changes of the past two and a half decades in many western countries as well the changes brought about by globalisation have rendered the old concepts of political power inadequate to understand the constellations of present day societies and the shift in the role of the state vis-à-vis market and civil society. New concepts are needed to understand and analyse the new forms of power beyond the top down imposition of the rule of the state (ROSE, 1999).

To understand the changing social power relations, Rose (1999) suggests focusing on the rationalities of government, instead of the arrangements and institutions of governance. «Government» is here used in a broad Foucaultian notion as conduct of conducts, governing the self and others (LEMKE, 2002). This governing does not, however, take place in the form of imposition but through emergence of rationalities or «regimes of truth» (ROSE, 1999: 19) or «hegemonic discourses» (FAIRCLOUGH, 2003a: 218) which legitimise certain activities and delegitimise others, constituting and constraining the activities of actors as subjects of government. This implies that at a specific time and place, at a specific context, a specific rationality emerges, bringing together various discourses, practices, laws and institutions underpinned by a coherent system of thought, making them seem a systematic whole. «Political rationalities are discursive fields characterised by a shared vocabulary within which disputes can be organised, by ethical principles that can communicate with one another, by mutually intelligible explanatory logics, by commonly accepted facts by significant agreement on key political problems» (ROSE, 1999: 24-28). The rationalities are acted out in the discourse of both those governing and governed, institutionalised in texts, policy programmes and laws, but also in the everyday parlance of those governed, such as local authorities, universities or individual people.

In the context of globalisation and economic competition, such a coherent rationality is provided by the notion of knowledge economy or knowledge society, which has become the preferred way of the states to refer to themselves. It is used to illustrate the shift from an economy based on the low skills industrial production to knowledge intensive production and services as the backbone of the economy, or the shift from a fordist to a post-fordist society, marked by denationalisation and transnationalisation of state regulation, transnational flow of capital and ensuing global competition (FRAZER, 2003, WEBSTER, 2002, CASTELLS, 2000, BROWN & LAUDER, 1996). It emphasises the shift to knowledge intensive high skills labour force, international circulation of brains, emphasis on life long learning, transferable skills and competences and knowledge management as a key individual and organisational capacity.

The robustness and coherence of the knowledge economy or knowledge society discourse, as well as the extent to which the European societies have actually moved to a true knowledge economy may be debated. It is also

clear that the concepts of knowledge, information and learning, and especially those of the knowledge economy and knowledge society are often used interchangeably in documents and interviews. Despite the certain lack of analytical clarity, the discourse of knowledge economy or knowledge society<sup>1</sup> has become a way to characterize the new relationships between the state, society and economy and many of the national and supranational policies and practices are introduced in its name.

The discourse of the knowledge society has rendered higher education increasingly important for the international competitiveness of the nation states through their central tasks of generation, application and dissemination of knowledge and training high skilled labour force. Processes previously thought to be outside the boundaries of a market, such as the notions of knowledge and learning are increasingly falling under the category of commodities to be sold and purchased in the global market place (BARNETT, 1996, 1997).

The ideal subject of a knowledge society is a self-governing, entrepreneurial subject, be they individuals (PETERS, 2001) or organisations (CLARK, 1998). In the knowledge economy universities are key producers of knowledge and knowledgeable labour force, geared towards reaching the common good: competitiveness of the nation and society in the globalised world. It is clear from the discourse of internationalisation that universities have internalised this subjectivity. The universities assume new identities and the tasks set out for them in a policy plan as a result not of imposition or implementation, but in a complex process of translation, an alignment of «the objectives of authorities wishing to govern and the personal projects of those organisations, groups and individuals who are the subjects of government» (ROSE, 1999: 48). The projects of «efficiency» of nation-states, national economies, organisations or individuals are an example of a value translated to the practices of various organisations and individuals, and the internationality and competitiveness can be seen as similar translations penetrating the universities and forming

---

<sup>1</sup> Due to the fact that the concepts are mostly used interchangeably and in the interest of readability, I will further use the notion of knowledge society discourse covering also the aspects of knowledge economy. For a critical commentary on the blurring of the concepts, see Peters 2001.

a coherent rationality for their functions (ROSE, 1999: 48-51). Universities are keen to identify themselves as international top universities or as research universities, or as universities giving master level education rather than bachelor level education, as opposed to being parochial or «loosing out» in the competition, being international rather than «just» national. In the internationalisation discourse the individual subjects of knowledge society are internationally oriented students possessing skills needed in an international labour market.

### **III. THE ARTICULATION OF KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY IN INTERNATIONALISATION DISCOURSE**

In the European context, the discourse of knowledge society is articulated by linking the elements of competitive knowledge economy with the discourse of social cohesion and increased quality of life, which is evident in a brief analysis of the main European policy documents, such as the Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council Meeting (2000) and the Communiqués of the Berlin Ministerial Meeting (2003), as well as the Dutch and Finnish higher education policy plans (2004 and 2003 respectively) and internationalisation of higher education policies (2002 and 2001 respectively). The documents invariably referred to the emergence of competitive knowledge economy or knowledge society. The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council meeting have achieved a prominent status achieved a position of a primary document to be referred to: it was mentioned directly in the opening paragraphs of two out of the other five documents, and indirectly in other two, by setting the objectives of the policies in the context of the year 2010, the timeline set for achieving the Lisbon targets, but also for the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area. The Lisbon process also featured more prominently later on in the documents. Thereby the Lisbon process and its target of Europe by 2010 «*to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*» frame the talk of the higher education actors. It creates a taken for granted social reality and provides a rationality for the activities of the governments and universities alike (ROSE, 1999).



The dominant narrative emerging from the policy documents and interviews may be called «competitive knowledge society in the age of globalisation» and features the following story line:

«We are living in a global world where countries are competing for the knowledge workers and the labour markets have become global. Therefore graduates need international skills for the labour market, and to teach these skills and educate internationally oriented people, we need to internationalise higher education and our universities. There is a global market for higher education on which countries and higher education institutions compete for best students and staff, as well as strive to generate much needed revenue. Therefore we need to be attractive for international students and staff, otherwise we stand to lose in the competition and run the risk of losing our relevance.»

This narrative is illustrated in its purest form by the following two extracts:

«I think that without internationalisation the knowledge based society cannot be further developed. What do we need for the knowledge based society, knowledge and especially the application of knowledge to create creative products and processes? We need smart people, good minds, and for this we would like to recruit from the largest possible talent pool, the global talent pool. So therefore the best minds are to be found anywhere in the world, try to bring them in, try have the best teachers and researchers in your university, again the best minds, that's all very expensive and therefore it's a costly operation. But only by doing that, again because it's it's all about competition also here, it's competition between the European knowledge society and the American knowledge society and the Japanese knowledge society, it's competition within Europe between various systems or nation states there, it's competition between companies, multinationals, it's all about minds. People, who can create knowledge, create added value and eventually create economic growth and prosperity. So yes, it can only be done if internationalisation is very high on the agenda» (DUA3<sup>2</sup>).

«Internationalisation, I would see that it now is this, kind of a new challenge of universities so that universities could respond to the new challenges of education and research. I suppose on the other hand in

---

<sup>2</sup> For explanation of abbreviations, see appendix.

education, through this internationalisation a person should acquire skills and abilities to function in the global world. In my opinion it does start from this general globalisation, this need to change education, contents of education and people's abilities so that then they can get such a job in this internationalising world, directly in these international companies or then companies cooperating internationally. And in research I think it has always been a question of race of science for new things and in that sense the researchers must of course be well aware of what is being done elsewhere. So that one can compare ones own standard, progress with international standards and international development and direct the research efforts so that we are in the forefront of science». (FSA2)

The following analysis aims to show how the specific elements, here termed sub-discourses, of the narrative are often articulated in two or more different ways. These different articulations are sometimes conflicting and represent a counteracting interpretation of the hegemonic narrative, but more often they are parallel, complementary articulations of the same sub-discourse.

*a) We are living in a global world ...*

The sub-discourse on the rationalisation behind internationalisation of higher education is essentially related to the discourse of globalisation, be that the notion of global economy and interconnectedness of national economies or the notion of a global village where the development of information and communication technologies and development of fast means of transportation facilitate communication of people from around the world, and on the other hand common concerns such as the inequality of development or environmental hazards unite people around the world. The existence of globalisation and knowledge economy, as well as the contributions of higher education in the knowledge society are taken for granted, including the need to engage with the surrounding society to a greater degree in the era of increasing interconnectedness of national economies and higher education systems. As already witnessed in the aforementioned policy documents, the internationalisation discourse of both the university and state actors, is articulating together the economic and social rationalisations of internationalisation, producing an image of higher

education in general and internationalisation specifically as activities contributing both to the economic development of individuals, countries and regions, and to the international peace, friendship and understanding between individuals and nations.

I think that in this country certainly many of us feel that in order to have more economic development and value, better social and cultural life, we need further development in the knowledge economy and therefore we need to be stronger higher education and research system (DUA3).

*b) where countries are competing for the knowledge workers...*

High skilled labour, knowledge workers, are a scarce resource over which there is an increasing competition, especially amongst the countries striving to be knowledge economies and at the same time facing declining birth rates. This sub-discourse focuses on attracting knowledge workers into the country, either as graduates or already as students. Amongst the interviews, however, another narrative can also be detected, namely that of educating foreign students not primarily to stay and get a job in the country, but also for the purpose of gaining revenue. This will be discussed later on. Although competition and cooperation often are contrasted (see e.g. van der Wende 2001) as strategies of internationalisation, this sub-discourse articulates also cooperation much in the framework of competition, cooperation in a way of university networks and consortia or the European cooperation aiming to create the European Higher Education Area, are viewed as a way of increasing the overall competitiveness of a group of universities or countries.

Then the last thing is obvious, we need to bring many more skilled researchers, graduate students from outside the EU to the Netherlands, simply, that's in national interest, and transcends a little bit the institutional interest and student interest but the nation as a whole in the context of for instance the Lisbon targets it needs to attract knowledge workers on a structural base for the next ten years or so on a much wider scale than we see at present. And there is a kind of rethinking of terminology also that I think is quite relevant. Personally I would, I come to think more and more of graduate students also in terms on young knowledge workers where knowledge worker is more important fact than that they are student (DSA2).

*c) and the labour markets have become global*

The notion of global labour markets creates two related rationalities. The individualistic notion includes the opening up of a wider range of job opportunities for an individual, and emphasises the importance of providing students with skills to find their place at the global labour market, which will be further discussed under the next heading. The macroeconomic notion on the other hand emphasises the process of global companies recruiting from a wider scale of potential employees and the importance therefore of providing the companies the kind of high skilled labour they are looking for. This is important also for preventing the multinational companies from relocating and outsourcing their high skill jobs into other countries.

As far as the goals on internationalisation with respect to teaching is concerned we believe that the main driver for internationalisation is the fact that most of our graduates will be employed in an international environment. We have disciplines in economics and business which is about 45 percent about the total student population and another large faculty is that of social sciences, and third in size is the faculty of law and for almost all disciplines covered by these schools, maybe excluding to some extent psychology, you can expect that the students are prepared to work after finishing their degree in an international context, either related to a company which is located in the Netherlands which has this contacts in other countries or being employed in an international, multinational work they are more or less in a natural way exposed to an international environment (DUA1).

*d) Therefore graduates need international skills for the labour market ...*

The sub-discourse of international skills seems to be consisting of two different features. The first, dominant one treats international skills as something specific and separate, either specific practical skills or a general mindset of internationalisation. However, also a counter-discourse of the international skills being an outcome of the normal activities of the university can be found, this notion being based on the discourse of internationality of science and on the unity of the two functions, research and education.

That kind of production requires highly educated staff and a very big proportion of our population is in higher education, we have even established

this applied higher education track, namely polytechnics. So that we would have people who can work in that kind of industry. And then the next point, which involves us, is that we can't live just by selling those to each other but we have to be able to operate in the global markets. And then we have to have labour force which can operate on global markets and then we have to get already within education modules that include, bring these international communication skills. — the knowledge which is being taught and the skills which are being learned are not by content, they are not invented in Finland nor meant to be used only here but it is like an essential need in current world, so that one can live, none of us can live anymore without some kind of internationalisation, for instance in hobbies (FSA1).

*d) and to teach these skills and educate internationally oriented people...*

The sub-discourse of internationally oriented people also has two sides to it. The first one represents the perspective of the society and its ideal subjects, namely entrepreneurial, active citizens, within whom international mindset is also a desired quality. The counter-discourse starts from more of an individual's perspective and features international orientation rather as empowerment and is related to the notion of universities as educating citizens rather than simply as teaching skills to students. However, these discourses are fairly difficult to tell apart.

It means that our import and export pattern, our structure of our enterprises are international. Therefore international education is so important strictly for this country, because we have to serve the market, that is asking for people that are internationally oriented, that have been abroad (DUA2).

But of course I think this internationalisation also has intrinsic value and as a matter of fact the only value I think, [...] the only proven result is this positive change in a person, this empowerment (FSA1).

*e) we need to internationalise higher education and our universities...*

The talk of internationalising higher education in general and the universities especially seems to consist of four specific features, three of which are covered here. The first one is the notion of English as a language

of teaching in both of the non-English speaking countries. The second one is the idea that internationalisation requires rethinking of the curriculum, structures and strategies of the universities. The third element is the idea of internationalising the university by bringing in international, that is non-national or foreign, students and staff to create a more international environment for studies and research. However, as this is featured later on under the chapter on attracting foreign students and staff it will not be discussed further here. The final element is a counter-discourse of the eternally international science, untouched by the temporal process of internationalisation.

### *Language*

An interesting feature to be found in the discourse of the Finnish and Dutch higher education actors is the pervasiveness of the notion of the importance of English language as the language of teaching as a characteristic of internationalised university. The spread of English as a global language of communication, business and education can be seen as a «globalised locality» (SANTOS, 1999). Remarks regarding the increasing use of English as the language of teaching, or the importance of English for the internationalisation of the universities, were made by all the representatives of universities and national university organisations as well as the national ministries. In some cases this seems to be even undermining the position of the national languages Finnish and Swedish and Finland, and Dutch in the Netherlands.

«It's also the quite intensive finding the capacities for you staff members with respect to command of English in the classroom. Most people of course have some command in English but it is different story if you have to teach, not loose the quality content of teaching by changing from Dutch to English so it also requires quite intensive training of the staff members either by sending them to certain courses in language area, or by sending them on sabbaticals and to spend some time at other universities outside Netherlands. And finally that is more or less the, the last step in the process, at the certain moment, and [university] is at this moment in this stage, you have to consider whether you should switch to English as language not only of instruction but also as the language of communication within the

university, so this will of course require quite large investment with respect to supporting staff both with respect to people who are exposed to the students directly and those people who are in the supporting staff in the faculties and the central administration» (DUA1).

However, this dominant sub-discourse of English being a prerequisite and attribute of an international university does not go completely uncontested, and also counter-discourse can be found, although even in this extract the speaker is reflecting partly the dominant, partly the counter-discourse.

«We have this idea that if we just more into English language, we are international. And that is not true. It is like in business world when two companies merge, and this has been talked of in Finland, then what is the language of the new merged company. And the official language can be English, but is it really the internal language of the company? And this I think this is important because international university is not one which just teaches or researches in English. And to this I would pay a lot of attention myself, this is maybe the biggest challenge for us. Because we see that for instance now in Finland when a lot of universities move to, or start these foreign language master's programmes and we here for instance have five English language Master's programmes and of course in some way it does internationalise, it is one dimension of internationalisation, but it does not, and research has to be international and there of course language is decisive but internationalisation is much deeper than in what language is being spoken» (FUA3).

In terms of the research function of the universities, less explicit references to the language of research were made. However, the notion of internationality of science and research repeated by all interviewees, with references to the importance of international publishing of results, imply that the language question would be at least as significant and less of a novelty now being taken-for-granted, than is the case for education.

«Well, If I try to start and start maybe from that in a long perspective the universities have maybe been one of the most internationalized institutional in the Finnish society, well of course foreign policy and the organizations dealing with those, but if we don't {take those into account] and the international cooperation is natural and that has of course started from research which is largely international and publishing has already for a

long time, it depends a little bit on the discipline, what is the emphasis, but let's say natural sciences, medicine, technology those have been already for centuries been meant for international audiences, read by them and [internationally published works] read in Finland» (FUA4).

### *Change and rethinking*

Internationalisation is understood brought about a significant change in the universities, but this change is often described in terms of increased number and proportion of international staff and students and courses taught in English, or as internationalisation becoming part of the everyday life. Most often the change is conceptualised as progress, as is evident in the next reply to the question on the changes faced by universities in the past ten years due internationalisation.

«I can only speak for my own university, when we started 18 years ago, we had only agreements with three universities I think and now we have, I don't know with how many, and we have created the [university] network and we are not an exception, all universities did the same. That means that, what I mentioned in the beginning, we made progress in all these things. Just the traditional exchange and the curriculum, harmonisation, the credit point system, implementation of bachelor-master's» (DUA2).

«In my opinion it is an everyday thing to have foreign students and teachers, it has become quite common and of course also the administration which has been built to take care of these things and it is taken into account in result targets and so. But that in the everyday life it is quite natural that there are people from other countries and it is accepted and it has become commonplace, that has happened in the past ten years» (FSA1).

However, despite the changes already introduced, internationalisation is said to require complete rethinking of the content of curriculum, the organizations structures and institutional strategies. This rethinking often is presented as increasing the flexibility of the institutions in the global competition.

«I think broadly it forces the institutions to rethink their curricula probably and to restructure non-teaching aspects like housing, mobility



programmes, social environment where you put your foreign students in and those kind of things. I do think if you're seriously as an institution considering internationalisation as part of your core activities that it has large implications for these two aspects» (DUA4).

I think it is central that the university has a strategy, you have a mission, you have a vision and then this strategy so that you can reach the vision, you can implement this, and internationalisation is a natural part of it, it is not a singular case, it has to be seen in everything (FUA3).

### *International science*

As a contrast to the new elements of internationalisation, the rethinking of the curriculum, organization and institutional strategy, as well as introducing English as the language of teaching, internationality of research and science as eternally international, untouched by the temporal process of internationalisation. This sub-discourse of characteristic internationality of science and research tends to contrast research and education/teaching, and emphasise their differences both in terms of their essence and their relation to the university. Science and research, by being international by essence, are presented as requiring no internationalisation activities on part of the university, whereas education and teaching are seen as inherently national and therefore requiring specific activities in order to internationalise them. This is evident in the next quote which answers a question on what is being talked about when internationalisation is being talked about. However, also examples of the unity of research and education can be found.

«We are in a way talking about self-evident things when universities are concerned, but in a way anyway, it is so that when any university which is striving for this traditional university role, that is, research and teaching based on research, then it is of course, research is international and it is international in a way that from the perspective of university management, it finds its own channels without it needing to be guided or supported in any way. But what does require measures, and where we should be getting forward, is specifically internationalisation of teaching. Because that does not come about spontaneously, that requires measures» (FUA1).

f) *There is a global market for higher education on which countries and HEI's compete for students, staff and income ...*

The existence of global market and the ensuing competition is taken for granted throughout the interviews, but is variably presented either as atemporal or only having emerged in the recent years. The markets themselves are primarily articulated as markets for especially the extremely talented people, which include the notion that the education and the research will have to be excellent to attract the top people. On the other hand, markets and competition can be seen being primarily about generating revenue which does not lay an equivalent emphasis on the sub-discourse of quality. Positioning oneself on the market, either as a country, group of institutions or an individual institution is viewed important in both sub-discourses, including the notion of finding one's niche, be it in terms of focussing on certain disciplines where one considers oneself an expert, or in terms of targeting potential students in specific countries, on which one considers to oneself to have either close ties or other expertise. The competition over staff and students concerns both attracting international staff and students, and being able to retain the best minds in ones own country.

«The universities, especially in the universities in the Netherlands and I think also the same counts for Finland, they're all research universities and they all want to be excellent in their fields of exercise and they have a very strong ambition to be international and to have a good position in the international global competition and that competition is more and more strong every year you could say. With competition I mean competition in students, competition in researchers, universities worldwide competing for the scarce talents that are present in the whole world, that's what I mean basically with competition. Also competition for funding is very important» (DSA2).

«I am a firm proponent of these international university markets. We must exploit all honest lines of business in this country so that when industry flees from here then we must develop other lines of business instead, so that we can live here and we have work here and that we can keep our own form of society and maybe international students do not just exist so that they would come to Finland to work but Finland can simply participate as an actor in this education and start from the idea that Chinese can study in the west also to go back to China to work. And it is like in this world of

diminishing public economy, it is one of those few promising opportunities for the university to save itself, so that it can arrange both additional funding and foreign teachers by participating in these international markets» (FUA2).

### *Tuition fees*

This sub-discourse also involves a discussion on tuition fees, which exist in the Netherlands and are considerably higher for non-EU students than for national and EU students. Tuition fees do not currently exist in Finland but their introduction is discussed periodically. In the Finnish rector interviews there seems to be interestingly a certain frustration over the lack of tuition fees, which are viewed as necessary mechanism for importing the Finnish higher education and thereby also a tool for internationalisation of higher education.

«My personal point of view is that it is impossible for a higher education system or an institution for that matter, to keep on believing that, higher education is a public good and should be completely paid for by the tax payers' money. I think that it will simply not allow us to go on in this international competition on the international, global level in terms of creating further reputation for us» (DUA3).

«Then internationalisation of HE if we think how Finnish higher education has been exported then in that we are not necessarily very good, if we think, and here I come to this that I actually started from that if we see education as a line of business, we have education markets, then in Finland we don't have those mechanisms by which this product, education product can be exported» (FUA3).

### *g) Therefore we need to be attractive for international students and staff...*

The discussion on attracting international students and staff involves the general attractiveness and attracting-activities of both universities themselves and the national government. The role of universities in increasing the attractiveness has already partly been accounted for under the heading of internationalising universities, and is strongly related to the notion of high quality as the main factor. Also meaningful work, flexible arrangements, and practical tools such as a common brand for national higher education

institutions are mentioned. The role of government in facilitating the internationalisation is presented as stretching from removing practical obstacles such as unattractive migration and taxation policies, to influencing the general attitude towards foreign people are part of the perceived role.

«And I am not sure if it necessarily is related to this but this, it is very central to this that in order for us to have national education in Finland which fulfils international standards we have to have universities which can attract also foreign international top here, permanently, and this is the totally different, it includes taxation issues, immigration law, residence permits and so on, all this. So that it is often forgotten when talking about internationalisation that, only research and education is talked about, but one must remember that we are talking about recruiting students but even more important is recruiting teachers and researchers. Because if you can't create attractive working conditions here, research environment is talked about a lot, then you can't attract international top here either» (FUA3).

*h) ... otherwise we stand to lose in the competition...*

The discourse of competitive knowledge society presents «loosing in the competition» as the inevitable outcome of failing to comply with the aforementioned requirements. What this loosing means, is not necessarily very expressively presented. It may refer to remaining parochial or may refer to the loss of potential revenue.

«I think that we're already late, we should have been further now so I say this is definitely the moment, but the moment is already for quite a while there, so if we wait longer we may lose momentum and marginalise, other higher education institutions particularly from the Anglo-Saxon world, Australia and United Kingdom, America may be so strongly positioned that it's difficult to enter that market and the other reason is the introduction of bachelor-master absolutely, we have kind of a relative advantage to other countries because we have already implemented it and we should make use of this momentum as web» (DUA4).

### *Statistics and comparisons*

The construction of the position of the country and the «loosing out in the competition» is also partly based on the international statistics and

comparisons, which seem to be quite influential in determining the self-understanding of the universities as international institutions. This follows the ideas of Hacking (1991: 181) who has noted that «Statistics has helped determine the form of laws about society and the character of social facts. It has engendered concepts and classifications within the human sciences. Moreover the collection of statistics has created, at the least, a great bureaucratic machinery. It may think of itself as providing only information, but it is itself part of the technology of power in a modern state.» The international comparisons and statistics are used for the most part strategically, to emphasise the positive standing of ones own country and university. However, also the less favourable examples are regularly mentioned, and ones own country continuously reflected against the benchmark set by well-known American and British universities, as is evident in the next quote describing the position of the Dutch higher education in the international sphere.

«My opinion is that this position is quite good, for several reasons, I mean the Dutch universities are very, have excellent research standard, they are amongst the top of the ranks, of the ranking that mister Busquin<sup>3</sup> made earlier this year, so their research is quite good. I also think that Dutch students are, quite good prepared for university studies, especially when you compare it to some of the other countries in Southern Europe. So the conditions for higher education in the Netherlands are quite good. I think when it comes to education in the universities in the Netherlands, they still need to make a shift, to really internationalise, the education in the Netherlands should become much more, has to be intensified , has to be much more like the education that you can have in the United Kingdom or in a good university in the United States instead of the typical Dutch university» (DSA2).

«Finland is a small country, but now this education and research policy and then innovation policy and in general these comparisons of skills and different evaluations, it has become clear that the education, research and innovation policy in Finland is internationally successful. And this has awoken great interest and respect towards Finnish universities and also towards Finnish university policy» (FSA2).

---

<sup>3</sup> Former EU Commissioner for Research.

«The only thing that works well in here is student exchange, that works well compared internationally. But then for instance the number of foreign degree students is relatively speaking the smallest in the Nordic countries, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland are far ahead, Norway pretty much ahead. We think that we have some sort of international university system but it isn't really» (FUA2).

Although for the most part, the interviewees, both the university and the state actors seemed to be embracing the international statistics as taken-for-granted, they are sometimes also contested, if they are perceived to be measuring «wrong things» and giving the university in question an unfavourable image. However, the basic logic of statistics and comparisons are not questioned.

«Ministry is setting quantitative targets for student, primarily for student exchange and I think those indicators used in that are not particularly good. How many students go abroad and how many come here. Instead it should be viewed not just as student mobility but also teacher and researcher mobility and instead of counting just heads, how many people have travelled abroad and how many have come here, than what I think should be monitored is how many of our degrees actually include modules completed in some internat- foreign universities. That is a sign of really studying internationally and not just spending time abroad» (FUA1).

*i) ...and run the risk of losing our relevance*

The sub-discourse on the relevance of university is drawing from two separate sources. The first one, and in the context of the knowledge society discourse the dominant discourse, is articulating the relevance of the university as being subject to its international competitiveness. The counter-discourse is attributing the relevance of a university to the inherent internationality of science.

«For the Netherlands as a whole the university sector is very important, because of the fact that the Netherlands, perhaps even more than some of the Scandinavian countries, should focus on the importance of the knowledge economy. We in the Netherlands don't have that many other resources, other than the human capital [...] And the knowledge economy is very

important there because you see the old industries are generally fading away a little bit in Europe. So that makes it more special for the Netherlands. That is also why it has become one of the highest priorities of our new government. I'm sure you've heard about that, that our new government is making gigantic budget cuts, that I think are unprecedented not only in Dutch history but also in the history of the whole European community I think but the only economic sector they are making new investments in is the innovation sector, higher education and research» (DSA1).

«For the Dutch higher education community I mean that's quite obvious. Be international or die. Higher education institutions that are not internationally active lose their relevance and they know it» (DS2).

«Then this internationalisation, perceived in very many ways now, that one can participate in this scientific discussion in the world, to be able to participate in it on the highest scientific level and well the scientific community sets the agenda of science as a result of scientific discussion, what is aspired, what is strived for, where are the challenges, recognising these directs the activities and is quickly reflected in, or should be reflected in what is taught at higher education institutions and how. So that if the basis of this function is not international then one has already lost it. And it is very difficult to bridge that gap» (FUA4).

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

The knowledge society discourse can be seen as providing a coherent political rationality, embraced by higher education actors across different scales of policy making and governance. However, the vagueness of the knowledge society discourse makes it conveniently flexible and allows for a great variety of policy choices. Due to the traditional affiliation of the universities and producers and codifiers of knowledge, the discourse has been effortlessly embraced by universities, although in many cases the concept of knowledge itself has changed: knowledge in a knowledge society is essentially knowledge-in-action, knowledge in a performative role. The essence of knowing is transformed from knowing as contemplation to knowing as performance. These ideas of performativity, linked with economic regeneration, economic competitiveness and skills upgrading are very much assimilated by the universities and thereby able to transform the

old foundation of university (BARNETT, 2000: 40-49), thus forming an important part of the new governance of university.

Although this paper has especially focussed on the role of the knowledge society discourse as a mechanism of government, the governmentality theory embraces also other mechanisms (ROSE, 1999, GORDON, 1999). The extent, to which the discourse has gained ground in the universities, may have been facilitated by certain material, non-discursive conditions, such as the changes in the governance of higher education including the increased institutional autonomy and ex-post state supervision in the form of introduction of performance based funding mechanisms and quality assurance procedures. The discourse can therefore be seen as being materialised in practices of governing universities and embraced as particular subjectivities by universities and other higher education actors or «inculcated in particular styles of being» (FAIRCLOUGH 2001, 2003b), the process whereby the universities have become to «own» the new discourse and to act, talk, think and see themselves as actors of knowledge society. This constitutes a cycle of the functioning of the discourse as a mechanism of government and to strengthening of the rationality of the discourse itself. By means of creating particular subjectivities and legitimisations, the knowledge society discourse also contributes to changing the institution of university, namely the configuration of practises, norms and values, styles of being and related discourses, and its relation to the society at large. The rationality provided by the knowledge society discourse contributes on the one hand to creating universities as enterprising, autonomous, competing actors in the global labour and education market, and on the other hand continue to tightly connect them to the project of national competitiveness in the era of globalisation.

A question may rightfully be raised about the unity of discourse in this paper, showing remarkable similarity between the universities and national authorities, and between Finland and the Netherlands, both countries keen to be identified as competitive knowledge societies. One reason for this may be the inevitable weakness of such a short paper in its ability to only concentrate on one side of the story<sup>4</sup>. The focus in this paper has been in the ways in which the global discourses construct the universities and national higher

---

<sup>4</sup> The national translations are further analysed in Nokkala 2005.



education systems as subjects of the knowledge society, rather than on the local translations of the discourse constructed various institutional and national actors. Also the narrow elite base of interviews, or the tendency of the governmentality theory to aim for coherent rationalities binding together various practises, institutions and sub-discourses, may account for the peculiar unity of the discourse.

On the one hand, it seems that the competitive knowledge society discourse has really become a new meta-narrative for higher education policy, legitimising a multitude of converging policy choices in Europe and making them seem like a coherent, inevitable process. A wide array of research testifies to the changes faced by higher education institutions: massification of education, increasing demands for accountability, marketisation, changes in knowledge production and increasing performativity of knowledge and education all indicate that the configuration of values, norms, practises and discourses making up the social institution of university have changed considerably (See e.g. GIBBONS *et al.* 1994, SMITH & WEBSTER, 1997, SLAUGHTER & LESLIE, 1997, BARNETT, 1996, 1997). Additionally many of the current policy discourses are good at utilising old notions traditionally related to and internalised by universities, internationalisation and knowledge being good examples of this. However, in the current day context they carry very different meanings and represent a fundamental discontinuity and challenge to the universities rather than the uncomplicated continuity with the historic conception of university which they seem to represent (BARNETT, 1996: 45-55.) In this sense, the knowledge society discourse marks intensification and retranslation of old discourses such as the human capital discourse (BECKER, 1993, SCHULTZ, 1971) as a new type of configuration of discourses. In the context of the universities, the inherent and natural internationality of research and university institution, or the traditional strive for excellence in science are retranslated to fit the new parameters set by the knowledge society discourse.

**REFERENCES**

- BARNETT, R. (1996): *The Limits of Competence. Knowledge, Higher Education and Society. The Society for Research* (Buckingham, Higher Education & Open University Press).
- BARNETT, R. (1997): *Towards a higher education for a new century, Institute of Education* (London, University of London).
- BARNETT, R. (2000): *Realizing the University in an age of supercomplexity* (Buckingham, The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press).
- BECHER, T. (1989): *Academic tribes and Territories, Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines.*
- BECKER, G. (1993): *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- BOEZEROOY, P. (2003): *Higher education in the Netherlands, CHEPS Higher education monitor* (Enschede, Country report).
- BROWN, P. & LAUDER, H. (1996): *Education, Globalization and economic development, Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 11, 1.
- CASTELLS, M. (2000): *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture*, Second edition, Volume 1 (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers).
- CLARK, BURTON R. (1983): *The Higher education System. Academic Organization in Cross-national Perspective* (Berkeley, University of California Press).
- CLARK, BURTON R. (1998): *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of Transformation* (Oxford, Pergamon Press).
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2003): *Education & training 2010. The success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms* (Brussels).
- FAIRCLOUGH, N. (2003a): *Analysing discourse. Textual analysis for social research* (London, Routledge).
- FOUCAULT, M. (1991): *Governmentality*, reprinted in G. BURCHELL, C. GORDON and P. MILLER, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf).

- FRAZER, N. (2003): From discipline to flexibilisation? Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization, *Constellations*, Vol. 10, No2.
- GIBBONS, M.; LIMOGES, C.; NOWOTNY, H.; SCHWARTZMAN, S.; PETER, S. & TROW, M. (1994): *The New Production of Knowledge. The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies* (London, Sage).
- GORDON, C. (1991): Governmental rationality: an introduction, in BURCHELL, GORDON & MILLER, *The Foucault effect. Studies in Governmentality* (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf).
- HACKING I. (1991): How should we do the history of statistics, in BURCHELL, GORDON & MILLER, *The Foucault effect. Studies in Governmentality*.
- HUISMAN, J. & VAN DER WENDE, M. (eds.) (2004): *On cooperation and competition. National and European Policies for the Internationalisation of Higher Education. ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education* (Bonn, Lemmens).
- KÄLVEMARK, T. & VAN DER WENDE, M. (1997): National Policies for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe (National Agency for Higher Education. Högskolevärdet Studies 1997:8. Stockholm).
- KWIEK, M. (2003): The Institution of the University: The perspective of the Discourse on the European Higher education and Research Area, in J. DE GROOF (ed.), *Proceedings of the second European Cultural and Educational Forum* (European Association of Education Law and Policy, Bruges).
- LARSEN, K.; MORRIS, R. & MARTIN, J. P. (2002): Trade in Educational Services: Trends and Emerging Issues. Centre for Education and Innovation Working Paper May 2002. Revised version OECD.
- LEMKE, T. (2002): Foucault, Governmentality and Critique, *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 14, 3.
- Lisbon European Council. 23 and 24 March 2000 Presidency Conclusions.
- MERTON, R. (1973): The Normative Structure of Science, *The Sociology of Science* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (2001): *An International Strategy For Higher Education* (Helsinki).
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (2003): *Education And Research 2003-2008* (Development Plan, Helsinki).

- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (2004): *Management and Steering of Higher Education in Finland* (Helsinki).
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SCIENCE (2002): *Education for citizens of the world* (The Hague).
- MINISTERIE VAN ONDERWIJS, CULTUUR EN WETENSCHAP (2004): Hoger Onderwijs En Onderzoek Plan 2004. Den Hague.
- PETERS, M. (2001): National education policy constructions of the «knowledge economy»: towards a critique, *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, Vol. 2, 1.
- REALISING THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA: Communiqué Of The Conference Of Ministers. Responsible For Higher Education In Berlin On 19 September 2003.
- ROSE, N. (1999): *Powers of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge, University Press).
- SANTOS, BOAVENTURA DI SOUSA (1999): A Multicultural conception of human rights, in M. FEATHERSTONE & L. SCOTT (ed.), *Spaces of Culture* (London, City-Nation-World. Sage).
- SCHULTZ, T. W. (1971): *Investment in human capital: the role of education and of research* (New York, Free Press).
- SLAUGHTER, S. & LARRY, R. (1997): *Academic Capitalism. Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press).
- SMITH, A. & WEBSTER, F (1997): Changing Ideas of the University, in A. SMITH & F. WEBSTER (ed.), *The Postmodern University? Contested Visions of Higher Education in Society* (Buckingham, Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press).
- TEICHLER, U. (2004): The changing debate on internationalisation of higher education, *Higher Education*, Vol. 48, 1.
- VAN DER WENDE, M (2001): Internationalisation policies: about new trends and contrasting paradigms, *Higher education Policy*, Vol. 14.
- WEBSTER, F. (2002): *Theories of the information society. Second Edition* (London, Routledge).

## **ELECTRONIC REFERENCE**

- FAIRCLOUGH, N (2001): *The Dialectics of Discourse*. Textus XIV 2. 2001.  
([www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/norman/2001a/doc](http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/norman/2001a/doc) Downloaded 13.10.2003).
- FAIRCLOUGH, N. (2003b): *Semiotic aspects of social transformation and learning*, in ROGERS, R. (ed), *New directions in Critical Discourse Analysis: Semiotic Aspects of Social Transformation and Learning*. Erlbaum.  
([www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/norman/2003e/doc](http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/norman/2003e/doc) Downloaded 13.10.2003).
- NOKKALA, T. (2005): *Knowledge society/knowledge economy discourse in internationalisation of higher education*. Paper presented at Knowledge and Politics Conference, Bergen, Norway 18.-20.5.2005.  
(<http://ugle.svf.uib.no/svfweb1/filer/1297.pdf> Downloaded 12.7.2005).

## **APPENDIX**

### **ABBREVIATIONS OF THE INTERVIEWED**

- DSA: Dutch state actor, including the representatives of the ministry of education and the national internationalisation agency
- DUA: Dutch university actor, including the university rectors and the representative of the national university association
- FSA: Finnish state actor, including the representatives of the ministry of education and the national internationalisation agency
- FUA: Finnish university actor, including the university rectors and the representative of the national university rectors' council

The translation of the Finnish quotes into English has been made by the author. The style of quotes has been retained, but minimum linguistic alterations, such as erasing of repetitions of individual words have been made.

**RESUMEN**

---

Este trabajo analiza las maneras bajo las cuales la universidad y otros elementos a nivel nacional en Finlandia y los Países Bajos, articulan el dominante discurso de la sociedad del conocimiento en su comprensión de la internacionalización de la educación superior. Se argumenta que el discurso de la sociedad del conocimiento, produce una racionalidad política a través de la cual las universidades son regidas y se rigen a sí mismas. En el contexto de la internacionalización de la educación superior, este discurso se articula en términos de competitividad de las universidades y las habilidades universales del individuo, siendo ambas categorías los objetivos principales de la internacionalización y el mayor atributo de la internacionalidad. La racionalidad proporcionada por el discurso de la sociedad del conocimiento contribuye, por un lado, a la creación de universidades emprendedoras, autónomas, elementos competentes en el mercado global y educativo. Por otro lado, continúa agrupándolas fuertemente al proyecto de competitividad nacional en la era de la globalización.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Finlandia. Países Bajos. Análisis del discurso. Gubernamentalidad. Sociedad del conocimiento. Economía del Conocimiento. Competitividad. Habilidades universales. Mercado educativo.

**ABSTRACT**

---

This paper discusses the ways in which university and national level actors in Finland and the Netherlands articulate the dominant knowledge society discourse in their understandings of internationalisation of higher education. This paper argues that the knowledge society discourse produces a dominant political rationality through which universities are governed and govern themselves. In the context of internationalisation of higher education, this discourse is articulated in terms of the competitiveness of the universities and the international skills of the individuals as being the main aims of internationalisation and as main attributes of internationality. The rationality provided by the knowledge society discourse contributes on the one hand to creating universities as enterprising, autonomous, competing actors in the global labour and education market, and on the other hand continue to

tightly connected them to the project of national competitiveness in the era of globalisation.

**KEY WORDS:** Finland; Netherlands. Discourse Analysis. Governmentability. Globalisation. Internationalisation. Discourse analysis. Knowledge society. Knowledge Economy. Competitiveness. International Skills. Educational Market.