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One World, Many Knowledges

Tar Halvorsen, Peter Vale

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One World, Many Knowledges: Regional experiences and cross-regional links in higher education.

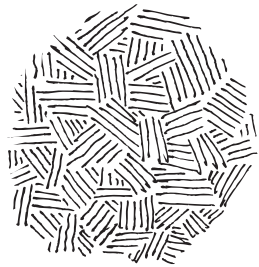
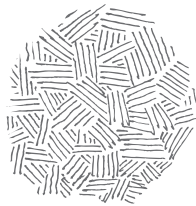
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PART II: DILEMMAS OF CHANGE



Chapter 3

Changes in higher education policy and the Nordic model

Risto Rinne

FOLLOWING THE MASSIVE EXPANSION in primary and secondary education worldwide, the higher education sector has followed suit. In 25 years the number of tertiary education students in the world almost tripled (from around 52 million students in 1981 to some 140 million students in 2006) (Rinne and Järvinen 2010). The meaning of higher education – its social and cultural place, role and functions, as well as the economic costs and outcomes – has changed radically, in what I see as a new era of global higher learning. The whole concept of higher education has been redefined.

Historically, different regions developed different models of higher education. In Europe, for instance, the Anglo-Saxon market-oriented model, the continental state-centred Napoleonic or Humboldtian model, and the Nordic egalitarian models emerged. By the late twentieth century and on into the present, mainstream higher education policy seems to mostly follow the market-oriented model, placing much emphasis on economic success, effectiveness, competition and new public management, and less on the public governance of universities. This new paradigm has been dubbed the ‘enterprise university’ or the ‘academic capitalism’.

In this chapter, I examine the historical roots of higher education and consider how these have changed. I then look at the core characteristics of the new university and, taking the case of Finland as an example, I ask how the old Nordic university model, which was quite the opposite of the market-oriented model, has reacted to the challenges and pressures posed by the new paradigm.

Historical roots

If we try to trace the basic notion of the university as institution we may come to various conclusions. Torsten Husèn (1993) sums these up, noting that traditional universities, at least from a Western perspective, were established on the basis of the following four core presumptions:

- Universities make a more-or-less sharp distinction between theory and practice.
- Universities put a premium on autonomy and aloofness, even to the extent of complete irrelevance.
- Universities have been elitist institutions, both socially and intellectually.
- Universities have tried to be ‘ivory towers’, seeing their main purpose as ‘seeking truth’.

Most of these core presumptions have been questioned ever since and the concept of the university is now different in almost every aspect. The number of universities have expanded enormously and have become one of the most central social, economic and cultural institutions in societies everywhere. They have differentiated and segregated along many trajectories, assuming ever more duties and functions along the way.

In the 1930s, Abraham Flexner (1930) stated that development had brought more and more new departments and schools to universities. According to him, a gamut of educational schools, vocational schools, teacher-training institutions, research centres, supplementary education and business operations was developing inside the walls of traditional science universities. As a result of academic drift (Clark 1983), more and more new professions emerged within university education. This line of development may be tellingly called a change from the traditional university to the multiversity of a new era.

It is almost forty years since Martin Trow (1974) launched the concept of mass higher education – a concept that has long been a reality in many parts of the world. The diversification of higher education, and the constant generation of new sectors within higher education explain a great deal of the growth. These include, for example, private and business based higher-education institutions as well as open and virtual distance-learning universities. The higher-education system has become an increasingly significant social focus point because larger numbers of children have participated in it, and its costs have multiplied. As Phillip Altbach (1999: 110) notes, ‘Higher education has moved from the periphery of society to its centre’.

Until the mid-twentieth century, studying at a university was a privilege reserved for members of the upper class. After the Second World War, and the transition made by some nations from industrial to service and welfare societies, higher education became increasingly accessible. Universities had to answer the demand for a highly trained work force in an ever-growing range of occupations. When two out of three members of an age cohort are reserved a place in the higher-education system, staying outside of that system becomes a 'sign of failing or character that needs to be specially explained, justified or excused', at least in middle-class circles (Trow 1974: 63).

According to Halsey (2006: 857–858), behind this (at least the European-wide) educational movement, three drivers and at least three obstacles can be detected. He sees the drivers as primarily social and economic. The first and most obvious, was the resuscitation of the Western European economy and the need for labour-force efficiency. This was quite strongly initiated and pushed by pressure from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The second driver was the strong confidence and trust in the capacity of universities to improve technical and technological efficiency. It is true that the academy has 'produced the atomic bomb, penicillin and the map of human genome'. The third and perhaps the most powerful driver, according to Halsey, was the push within the nation states to enlarge access to tertiary education. At first, this initiative aimed to redress some of the inequality of the pre-war period; later, it took the form of widening access to women, ethnic minorities, the lower classes and mature students.

For Halsey (2006), the anchors or obstacles preventing change can be listed as follows:

- Existing institutions tended to cling to their autonomy and remain attached to Humboldtian and Newmanesque conceptions.
- The upper classes tried to defend the class divisions and status associated with a university education, wishing to pass on their advantages to their own children via the universities.
- The state showed reluctance to spend money on higher education; this was linked to the claims of warfare over welfare, the unwillingness of electorates to vote for higher taxes, and the liberal economic doctrines of minimal government.
- There was resistance from the anti-market, guild, or public-service orientation of staff within schools, colleges and faculties; although the voices of teachers' and researchers' organisations were powerful, in the end they were impotent to stem the reorganisation of education.

Becoming market-driven enterprise institutions

One of the more striking features of the postmodern global world is 'the educational gospel', the amazing continuity of belief in the strong connection between economic development and the growing role of education. In this way of thinking, especially in the developed countries, the idea is that we have entered a new 'knowledge economy' and a kind of 'age of human capital'. This policy mantra forecasts a world in which most people are highly skilled, highly paid employees. The repetition of this mantra has changed little since the 1960s, when human-capital theory was first glorified within education and economic policy (Brown et al. 2007; Rinne 2010).

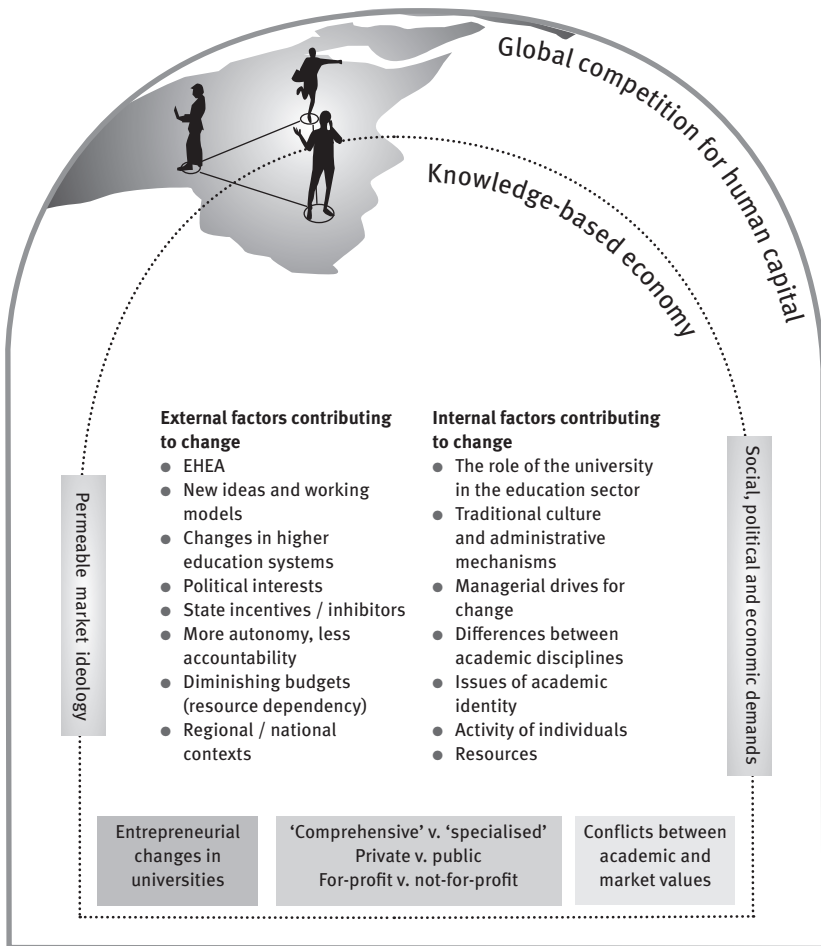
Supranational organisations, such as the OECD, have developed various ways of measuring the academic quality and performance of nations, ranking their educational systems and their universities in order of human capital. The competition for human knowhow and capital between nation states has become ever more intense. As, for example, Britain's prime minister has suggested: 'if we are to succeed in a world where off shoring can be an opportunity...our mission [is] to make the British people the best educated, most skilled, best trained country in the world' (Brown et al. 2007: 193).

The ascendancy of neo-liberal theory in policy-making has emphasised particular ways of looking at the higher education system as an engine for economic growth, producing prime human capital for private rather than public good, and as a new service sector within the economy. These ideas also lie behind the concept of the 'New Europe' as a 'Europe of Knowledge' and the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (Robertson 2009). Thus, throughout the post-industrialised societies, the trend towards more market-oriented 'enterprise universities' is growing stronger. Supranational organisations, such as the OECD, the World Bank and the European Union (EU) are applying tremendous pressure to promote this kind of unifying university politics and growing competition.

In the name of internationalisation, accountability and assessment, universities have been given new social responsibilities and, in the tumult of change, their traditional tasks and values have been questioned. A new paradigm is taking the stage, with universities being depicted as 'entrepreneurial' or 'managerial' and analysed using concepts such as 'academic capitalism' or the 'MacDonaldisation of higher education' (the 'McUniversity'). These terms have been coined to refer to the changing nature of the tasks carried out by universities: the production of knowledge for those outside the university; the competition for funding; the emphasis on risk-taking and innovation;

and the ever-increasing demand for (cost) effectiveness, profit-seeking and immediate benefit to be evident in all activities (see, for example, Clark 1998; Kivinen et al. 1993; Rinne 2010; Rinne and Koivula 2005; Ritzer 2002; Slaughter and Leslie 1997). Figure 3.1 illustrates the pressures typically exerted on the ‘enterprise university’.

FIGURE 3.1 The entrepreneurial university in context



Source: See Rinne and Koivula (2005).

Universities today are expected to do more and obtain better results with fewer and fewer resources. They have to try to maintain their cultural and academic heritage, but, simultaneously, hastily and flexibly respond to every new demand. They have to retain some common features, while constantly responding to thousands of new voices, because everyone may be a stakeholder. As Burton Clark says, the modern research university has become 'overextended, underfocused, overstressed and underfunded' (Clark 1998: xiii-xiv).

The changes that have occurred between the late 1980s and the time of writing in 2012 may be traced by listing the factors presented first by Guy Neave (1985) and Frans van Vught (1990):

- Cuts in public funding.
- Pressures for efficiency, that is, more throughput using fewer funds.
- Pressures for reducing student fees.
- Conditional contracting, that is, funding tied to objectives and results.
- The introduction of evaluation systems.
- Managerialism, involving the introduction of strategic management within universities, with an emphasis on the values of enterprise culture.
- Massification, that is, competition between universities for students.
- Despite increased autonomy, restricted freedom of universities because of accountability and market competition.
- The need for more professional management and governance structures.
- Increased expectations and pressures to deliver innovation and provide services.
- The need for harmonisation among degree structures.

Since the mid-1980s, universities around the world have been under exogenous pressures to change. Social uncertainty has created growing controversies about the changing nature of the university. Nowadays the *raison d'être* of universities tends to mostly be defended by pragmatic and utilitarian arguments, such as to improve the competitive power of a nation in world markets or to produce an effective work force for the labour market. Universities are involved in a new level of instrumentalising knowledge and have developed a new relationship with the state as a principal stakeholder (see Dale 2007; Husèn 1993; Nedeva 2007).

Massification and structural change in Finnish higher education

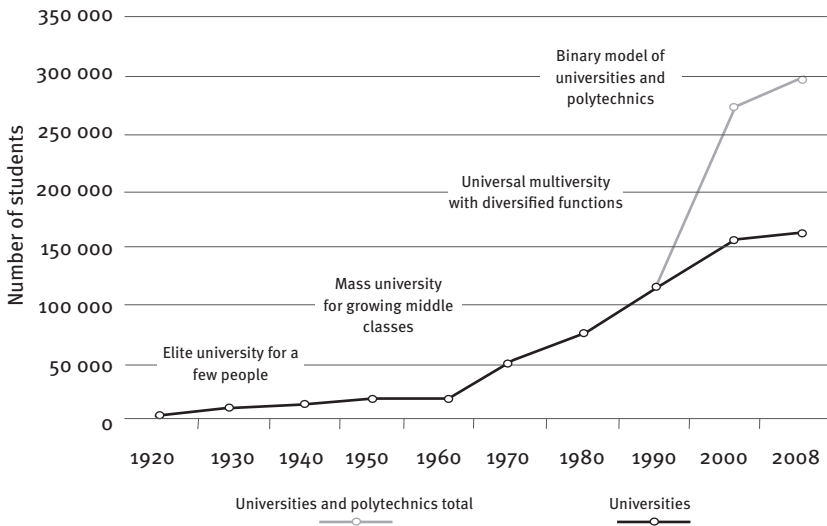
Arild Tjeldvoll, in his introduction to the book *Education and Scandinavian Welfare State in 2000: Equality, Policy, and Reform* (1998), claims that all five Scandinavian countries share the characteristics of a similar kind of welfare-state model. At the core of this model is a striving for social justice and the ideal of creating a democratic society; goals that have been historically progressed by means of social and educational policies. Central to Scandinavian welfare states is an egalitarian education policy and, in the field of higher education, the Nordic higher-education (university) model.

Until the late 1980's, the main characteristics of the Nordic university model have been listed as follows (see Rinne 2010):

- Relatively small, with restricted markets.
- Strict centralisation and control of resources.
- Formal institutional uniformity, with, ostensibly, almost no recognised hierarchy.
- Restricted competition with respect, not to markets, students, or business, but to state resources.
- Low institutional initiative, as conditions of strict centralisation inhibited the taking of initiative, challenges to the bureaucratic rule in the universities and the development of an entrepreneurial culture.
- The right to free higher education.
- A strong belief in fostering social equality by removing obstacles that prevented equality of opportunity in higher education.
- Higher-education policy as a vital part of the wider regional and social policies.

But after the 1980s, and especially the 1990s, the Nordic university model also changed dramatically. As in other Western nations, the expansion of university education began in the Nordic countries, including Finland after the Second World War, and especially as the baby-boom generation emerged from secondary schooling in the 1960s and 1970s. Figure 3.2 illustrates the transformations of Finnish universities as an example of the changes in the Nordic countries more generally. In less than a hundred years, our institutions transformed from elite universities via mass universities to universal multiversities, and from cultural universities via research universities to enterprise university.

FIGURE 3.2 Changes in the form and status of higher-education institutions in Finland, 1920 to 2008



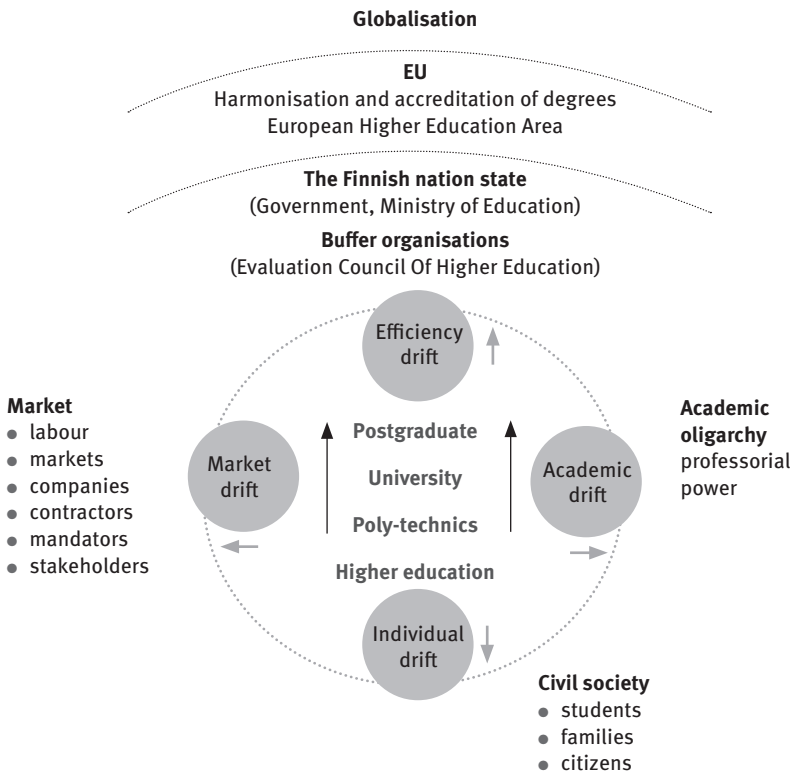
Sources: Antikainen et al. (2006); Clark (1983); Flexner (1930); KOTA (2009); Rinne (1999; 2002; 2004); Ritzer (1993; 1999); Slaughter and Leslie (1997); Tilastokeskus (2009); Williams (1978); Wittrock (1985).

Over the same time period, great structural changes have occurred in the higher-education sector. Finland has moved from the unitary university model to the new binary model of higher education, whereby universities are no longer the only higher-education institutions. There are now two tiers in Finnish higher education, although these are officially kept apart. Applying Clark's classic 'triangle of co-ordination' model to the two-tier system, Finland's universities have been moving strongly towards the 'market' and 'market drift' corners, and the old 'academic oligarchy' has had to give up its historical position and power. At the same time, the new polytechnics (Fachhochschule) are evidence of a strong 'academic drift' on the part of lower educational institutions in the educational and labour market. Under pressure from the global market and supranational organisations, Finland has adopted the new paradigms of effectiveness, competition and assessment. Finnish universities no longer breathe the same air that they traditionally did in the old days.

By further elaborating Clark's 'triangle of co-ordination' and his ideas of 'academic drift', we arrive at the quadrilateral image shown in Figure 3.3.

In addition to the state, market and academic oligarchy we can add the fourth element, namely civil society with its mass of potential students and their families. Supranational organisations and globalisation are included to indicate their growing power over nation states. And, in addition to academic drift, three more drifts have been added. The first is market drift, which is strongly linked to the market orientation of the universities and polytechnics, and to their contest in the labour market. The second is efficiency drift, which is evident in the rapidly growing assessment and evaluation machinery that looms above the higher education sector. The third is individual drift, which denotes the massification of higher education and pressures towards diversification from students and their families.

FIGURE 3.3 Finland's binary system of higher education (from the 1980s onwards) showing external pressures and internal drifts



Source: Derived from Clark (1983) and Neave (1988).

From academy to neo-liberal university

According to various more or less speculative and spectacular rankings and assessments, Finland has been celebrated as, for example: the Nordic welfare state, an alternative model for the information society (Castells and Himanen 2002); as economically one of the most competitive and innovative societies in the world (World Economic Forum 2005); and as an example of an excellent education system, combining both quality and equality (OECD 2001; 2004; 2007; 2010). In spite of this global commotion, Finnish universities have, in many respects, remained relatively traditional in their doctrines when compared to most other countries. While countries in the vanguard of university reform (such as the UK, the US, the Netherlands, and Australia) have faced issues such as the (new) wave of managerialism, the quality revolution, and the launch of the institutional evaluation industry since the early 1980s, the Finnish university only really confronted these changes nearly two decades later.

In fact, it took a considerable amount of time before the Nordic university system was grafted onto the wider education system and began to be affected by social, economic, welfare and educational policy. It lived a long life as almost the typical ivory tower, dominated by an 'academic oligarchy', the elite professoriate. Thus, in Finland, for example, it was not until the 1960s that the growing welfare state, through the rising Ministry of Education, started more powerfully to legislate, regulate and plan the functions of a massifying higher-education system. Since then, and during the later period of the 'state regime of the development doctrine', it was literally forbidden for the surrounding market and economic life to make any efforts to influence the decisions of the autonomous (but state-driven) universities. Even private donations, for example, were virtually forbidden as irrelevant interference with the principles of academic freedom and autonomy.

Up until the 1990s, Finnish welfare policy clearly followed the Nordic social-democratic model, strongly stressing universal and comprehensive social security, strong state control, significant income transfers, full employment and a high level of equality. Educational policy has been considered one of the most important elements spearheading the removal of all types of social inequality (Rinne 2004).

The country's higher-education policy strongly supported the removal of all hindrances and inequalities preventing citizens from moving up the educational ladder. This was intended to strengthen the equality of educational opportunity in higher education and ensure that socio-economic and cultural background, gender, religious or ethnic backgrounds played no

role in preventing students from gaining access to higher education. Thus, the higher education system was rapidly expanded and regionally broadened to cover the whole country.

Prior to this, university expansion in Finland occurred after the Second World War, and was carried out by relying heavily on the ability and the will of the academic elite to steer the rather autonomous and independent university sector. The aim of that phase of expansion was mainly to guarantee the freedom of teaching and research in universities and to provide an elite education mostly related to the needs of the country's civil service, and it lasted in Finland until the 1960s.

The decades from the 1960s until the late 1980s can be termed the period of 'the social-democratic Nordic state development doctrine' and it formed a kind of watershed between the old, more Humboldtian 'traditional academic doctrine' and the rising, more liberal 'managing by results and competition doctrine', which, in turn, has been evolving into the 'neo-liberal new public management doctrine', since the early 2000s.

We can therefore, quite justifiably, divide the history of the Finnish higher education sector into four periods, each with their corresponding doctrines, as shown in Table 3.1 (see also Rinne 2004; 2010).

A new and quite radical University Law was passed in Finland in 2009. Under this law, universities are no longer state institutions, but have a stronger financial and administrative status as 'independent legal persons' supplied with starting capital. This does not imply the total privatisation of universities, however. Instead, it is said that as 'legal persons' (rather than as 'state accounting offices', as they were designated before) the universities will be better equipped to respond to their own needs, as well as to the expectations of society and the market. The composition of university boards is changing radically though, with representatives of different kinds of stakeholders and market agents outside the university taking more powerful roles, and even occupying the position of chair.

Changes driven by economic, ideological and pragmatic motives have steadily modified the forms and mechanisms of university governance and policy making, even in Finland, the country that formerly upheld the Nordic university model. Thus, Finland's older and more traditional frameworks which accommodated 'collegial organisation', 'professional bureaucracy', 'organised anarchy' or 'loosely coupled organisations' have been replaced by alternative perspectives and paradigms such as 'the corporate university', 'the entrepreneurial model', 'the service model' or 'the McUniversity model'. Common to both the older and the newer models, however, is the

TABLE 3.1 The phases of and doctrines behind Finnish university development since 1960

Policy dimensions	'Traditional academic' (until the 1960s)	'State development' (late 1960s – late 1980s)	'Managing by results and competition' (late 1980s onwards)	'Neo-liberal new public management' (since 2009, New University Law)
The aims of teaching and research:	Freedom in teaching and research. Focus on the provision of education for the elite. Professional power.	Production of adequate supply of trained manpower. Allocation of training quotas by labour market needs. Science as a factor of production.	Response to demand from many sources. Focus on productivity. Orientation to EU and EHEA policy.	Elastic and flexible. Europeanisation of Finnish higher education. Full quality assessment and evaluation.
The nature of political influences and relations with the state:	University autonomy.	Subordination of education to social, regional and labour market policy. State dirigismé in education. University democracy in inner governance.	Flexible and innovative service of societal needs. University steered on basis of achieved results. Innovation policy. Evaluative state.	Non-state institutions. Process of restructuring the university field. Amalgamation of universities. Strong innovation policy and the 'third function'. New public management.
Economic role:	No expectations of immediate economic benefit but an awareness of long-term benefits	Higher education as a crucial factor in economic development.	The promotion of international competitiveness and industrial diversification. Market driven university.	Extensive external private funding. Diminished public funding. Economic stakeholders involved in governance.
Equality:	Training students for leading positions in society, especially in the civil service.	Full utilisation of potential talent requiring egalitarian educational access. Rapid expansion leading to levelling out of social and regional inequality.	Observance of gender and regional equality. Promotion of state-led competition. Equity.	Full free profit-seeking competition. Excellence above all. Top units. Equity as individual performance and competition.
University type:	Elite university.	State mass university.	State-driven mixed universal university.	Quasi-market-driven enterprise university.
Higher education model:	Nordic model with a relatively weak state.	Nordic model with a strong state.	Liberal quasi-market model.	Neo-liberal quasi-market model.

Sources: Derived from Kivinen et al. (1993) and Rinne (2004; 2010).

perception of universities as peculiarly bottom-heavy organisations with weak organisational governance (De Boer et al. 2007; Rinne and Koivula 2005; 2009). And that is also why, at least in Finland, a kind of battle is looming between an approach which values cultural heritage versus the new public management approach.

Concluding words

The Nordic countries, following the mainstream, are trying to increase competitiveness between universities by diminishing funding and establishing extensive assessment procedures aimed at guaranteeing and improving efficiency and quality. The expectations placed on universities are enormous. Forces in favour of common global (or at least European market-oriented) higher-education policies are strong even in Finland, which has become a member of the EU and part of the EHEA and which has tried to behave as a kind of 'model pupil' in Europe's educational class.

However, in the most recent stage of university development, the historical and cultural roots of the nation states and different university models are beginning to reassert some of their traditions and characteristics. The Nordic model still has some key features of its own, although many of its distinguishing characteristics have vanished. Some traditional educational principles of social democracy, such as the right to free higher education and the effort to keep all the country's regions under the university system, are still alive. This does not, however, mean that Finland is not moving towards the more uniform higher-education policies common to the market-driven approach.

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