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## The best science, the best science in Finnish – and English – or the best Finnish scientists?

*La meilleure science, la meilleure science en finnois - et en anglais - ou les meilleurs scientifiques finlandais ?*

David Hoffman, Thomas Babila Sama, Ahmad El-Massri, Mika Raunio and Marjaana Korhonen

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# The best science, the best science in Finnish – and English – or the best Finnish scientists?

David Hoffman, Thomas Babila Sama, Ahmad El-Massri  
Mika Raunio & Marjaana Korhonen<sup>1</sup>

## Résumé

*Cet article traite d'une « vérité inconfortable » (un mythe), à propos de la mise en place d'une politique ainsi que des pratiques équitables en matière de gestion du personnel, dans le système éducatif supérieur d'un pays admiré pour l'égalité sociale qui le caractérise. L'étude présente une enquête participative des auteurs, qui se fonde sur leurs expériences collectives et leurs perceptions de l'intérieur d'un système qui est en train de changer rapidement. Les auteurs révèlent un certain nombre d'affirmations et de mécanismes qui ont mené à un abandon du débat sur l'égalité dans les discussions portant sur politiques éducatives. L'ironie de cette situation est que le « miracle finlandais » se fonde sur des valeurs nordiques pour lesquelles l'égalité est centrale. Pour finir, les conséquences de ces dynamiques sont expliquées à partir des efforts constants d'internationalisation du supérieur dans ce contexte et de phénomènes produits par l'immigration qui sont d'une toute autre nature.*

## 1. Is This really (only) Internationalization?

The Finnish education system is admired, from the *outside-looking-in*, around the world. However, the view from *inside-looking-around* quickly reveals several 'uncomfortable truths'. One of the most important deficits is outwardly similar to a feature shared by many higher education systems. Specifically, conceptual imprecision concerning students, faculty, staff, management and stakeholders linked to policy and practice of traditional internationalization (Trondal, Gornitzka & Gulbrandsen, 2003), and a very different set of students, faculty, staff, management and stakeholders spotlighted by international migration and ethnic relations dynamics (Pöyhönen, Hirsiaho, Hoffman, Rynkänen, Sahradyan & Tarnanen, 2011). The fact that the most widely cited international literature on these two distinct bodies of literature is carried out by two groups of scholars, whom seldom refer to each other, has important implications for the relationship between education and society in several countries (Hoffman & Välimaa, 2008). However, in countries like Finland, with virtually no meaningful experience of recent large-scale migration, the consequences of *not understanding* the distinction between traditional short and medium-term internationalization and more complex, long term demographically-driven massification (Trow, 1974) issues linked to equity, aging and migration may result in the unintended reproduction of social stratification quite common outside Finland, but never before experienced inside Finland (Forsander, 2004; Hoffman, 2007; Välimaa & Hoffman, 2007).

In terms of myths, the misrecognition of these distinct, yet related, social dynamics draws attention to the myth that egalitarian social policy has been – and remains – both an important and central goal of education policy in Finland, in general and Finnish higher education, in particular (Kivinen & Kaipainen, 2012; Välimaa, 2001; Välijärvi, 2006). Unfortunately, as the economic competitiveness imperatives of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2011) have been uncritically adopted by the Finnish Ministry of Education (Kallo, 2009), the social agenda – including what was once a vibrant discussion of equity has stagnated or even reversed in Finnish education (Kivistö & Tirronen, 2012; Nikunen, 2012). As pointed out by Slaughter and Cantwell (HE), higher education policy in both North America and Europe, oriented towards

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competitiveness imperatives increasingly ignore the public good aspect of the university, as an institution. Because scholars are basically complicit in this market-facing behavior (Marginson, 2006) we increasingly do not notice the casualties of our growing focus on competitiveness at the expense to social justice.

So while visitors to Finland, especially those in search of the illusive reasons underlying our high PISA scores, will be told that equity and high quality teacher training are the reasons for what appears to be a unique education success story (Partanen, 2011) and that this in turn, explains why Finland has been repeatedly selected by Newsweek Magazine as 'The World's Best Place to Live', (Sachs, 2004), the myth of equity is being challenged. The myth can better be explained by looking at growing groups, who do *not* fall within the scope of equity discussions. Specifically, groups linked to international migration dynamics, or those under the umbrella of Finland and the EU's social agenda, in contrast to groups linked to the internationalization of higher education, specifically part of Finland's economic competitiveness agenda. While it is important to emphasize that some individuals – analytically speaking – occupy a place in both policy discussions, our attention here is drawn to groups we have identified in our empirical research in Finnish society, but largely absent from the ranks of university personnel in locations and levels not difficult to isolate (Hoffman, 2007; Raunio & al., 2010).

#### ■ **Why do we do not 'see' this**

The most concrete reason, in Finland, that the above distinction is still ignored or undetected is that organizational capacity in Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) remains generally undeveloped with respect to complex mobility patterns involving foreign-born university personnel, as well as personnel with a migrant background (Hoffman, 2009; Raunio, Korhonen & Hoffman, 2010; Finnish Ministry of Education, 2008). The first specialized organizational efforts have begun, however, they are aimed at obvious practicalities associated with 'traditional internationalization' (Trondal & al., 2003), specifically short-term, temporary mobility *between* higher education institutions (HEIs); not the host of issues associated with the more complex demographic challenges changing *within* Finnish society in general and Finnish HEIs in particular (Pöyhönen & al., 2011). Alongside these efforts, current statistics that purport to measure or gauge academic mobility – do not get traction on, nor target complex demographic patterns associated with ageing and migration dynamics (Hoffman, 2007). The two most important aspects of this void are firstly, the lack of a predictable, transparent career system for many types of university personnel. Secondly, the relationship between ascriptive or immutable characteristics and career trajectory remains a matter of speculation or personal opinion regarding all explanatory ascriptive variables except gender and age (Hoffman, 2007, 2009). Ascriptive or immutable characteristics are characteristics of a person or group that cannot be changed by individual effort, for example, gender, age, kinship, skin color, national origin, sexual orientation, physical disability and ethnicity (Beck, 1992). The most important relationships systematically ignored in policy, research and university organizational practice include the effects ascriptive characteristics; particularly national / regional origin, mother tongue and visible physical characteristics associated with ethnicity, have on the career trajectory of university personnel (Hoffman, 2007).

The most interesting aspect of problematizing this topic is the contrast between university units in which there is very little, or no, work to be done on these issues; versus units in which there is virtually no awareness regarding problems associated with the way foreign-born personnel are recruited, selected, promoted and retained. In other words, empirically-speaking, while we cannot meaningfully talk about higher education institutions, *per se*, as having good track records on merit-based and equity-based personnel practices, it is very easy to locate units, institutes and distinct groups at the sub-institutional level in Finnish higher education which do. It is as easy to locate other organizational sub-units which would wilt under a conceptually-driven and comprehensive examination of the relationship between merit and equity, regarding personnel policy (Raunio & al., 2010).

In several Finnish universities, the first steps of tenure track positions have been initiated and university boards have proclaimed they are committed – in principal – to implementing the four-stage research career system. However, because widespread *application* of these ideas remains to be seen in many universities, many more interesting questions can be asked about the extent to which HEI management grasps who works for them; and – more importantly – *who does not*. It is quite easy to locate HEI management in Finland who are not aware that there are groups present in Finnish society, but absent from student and faculty ranks (Hoffman, 2007, 2009a, 2011; Raunio & al., 2010).

This article aims at illuminating this literature and practice gap through critical action research (Kemmis, 2006), using methods that focus on voices and issues often missing in policy discussions affecting mobility involving foreign-born personnel in Finnish HEIs.

### ■ **Why this is important**

The significance of engaging this lack of capacity is that it represents an area in which Finland's most serious competitors – inside and outside Europe – have already established excellence (Kahn & Pavlich, 2001; Laudel, 2005; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Because Finnish universities are 'coming from behind' regarding the consistent capacity to recruit, select, promote and retain foreign-born university personnel and personnel with a migrant background, studies of this type are needed to explore, illuminate and contrast tensions between:

- locally-held assumptions about traditional internationalization, the most important forms of mobility connected to university personnel, the nature of academic productivity and competitiveness, and
- emerging phenomena outside the direct experience of many personnel working in Finnish HEIs. Specifically, acculturation and integration by foreign-born university personnel in Finnish society and specific organizational settings (Hoffman, 2007; Hoffman & al., 2009a).

More importantly, the analytical distinction we draw is important because of the retirement of the baby-boom generation, which will soon leave Finland with one of the oldest working-age populations in the EU, alongside projected labor force vacancies which migration cannot account for (Koivukangas, 2003; Salmenhaara, 2009). Despite projected labor force needs, several mobility issues connected with the *recruitment, selection, promotion and retention* of foreign-born university personnel – as well as personnel with a recent migrant background – remain unattended (Hoffman, 2009a, Raunio & al., 2010).

The principal analytical coordinates of possible organizational interventions have been identified in earlier research (Hoffman, 2007; Raunio & al., 2010). In addition, the most problematic challenges of Foreign-born university personnel in Finnish HEIs have also been identified (Hoffman, 2007; Hoffman & Välimaa, 2008; Raunio & Forsander, 2009; Söderqvist, 2005). However, despite recent research findings, there have been very few original efforts based on the potential strengths inherent in Finnish HEIs, as well as challenges linked to complex mobility patterns.

The identification of new challenges does not mean established challenges 'disappear' or become less important. Rather, this topic reflects a complexity HEIs – worldwide – are confronted with in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, as societies and their education systems change (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). The type of practice needed to effectively engage and the mobility of foreign-born university personnel, in a strategic sense – at the level of HEIs – involves extremely specialized knowledge. There are clear ways forward in the knowledge void identified above and there is no reason to re-invent too many conceptual wheels, as several well-known approaches are in use – outside Finland. However, applying these approaches – systematically – inside Finnish HEIs, is an entirely new topic informed by remarkably few perspectives – and even less innovation.

## 2. Our approach

In this article, we address this literature gap by firstly introducing an interpretive framework that was developed in a mixed-methods study of the relationship between *complex mobility patterns of university personnel* and the *competitiveness of basic units* in Finnish universities (Hoffman & al., 2009b; Raunio & al., 2010).

Secondly the emerging interpretive framework is used to problematize our own position or perspective by focusing on a synthesis of related issues in which the authors have direct experience, extensive empirically-based knowledge or both.

Thirdly, we reflect on the implications of the issues and perspectives raised in this article – as a group. In critical, participative inquiry of this type, individuals sharing circumstances define the most salient features of their experience and their perceptions (Kemmis, 2006; Reason, 1998; Richardson, 1998). Although the differences between us are striking, especially in terms of ascriptive characteristics, our similarities, in terms of organizational position, forms a solid point of departure for critical reflection on career mobility patterns in Finnish higher education. This is especially true when reflecting on career stages and patterns (Baldwin & Blackburn, 1981; Välimaa, 2001), generational lens (Aittola, 2001), the relevance of our specialties in terms of disciplinary cultures, our focus on the research and service missions of the university and the spectrum of our experiences concerning forms of mobility that will become increasingly important in 21<sup>st</sup> century Finnish education. Using what appears to be – to many – in the Finnish context an unconventional approach is crucial to illuminate the differences between personnel dynamics shared by all university personnel in Finland, and those known only to personnel with a migrant background.

Currently, many higher education actors are seeking to understand, interpret and explain the way in which globalization now manifests *within* a quickly changing Finnish society. We argue that the reason so many policies, programs and attempts to deal with ‘internationalization’, ‘integration’, ‘diversity’ and ‘multiculturalism’ – among others – are so utterly unconvincing, from our perspective – is because change within Finnish society is better handled by extending equity-based discussions (Malin, 2005) which are much more familiar – and non-stratifying – to new or potentially new members of y(our) society. Posing our introduction question: ‘Is this really (only) internationalization?’ underlines our perception that changes within Finnish society – and her universities – are a part of a transformation that can only be addressed using an evolving discussion within *Finnish society* – that includes all groups who have come before, who are here now and those who may come in the future. We aim at a more nuanced understanding of where *internationalization between countries* leaves off and *transformation within societies* begins.

An international audience, however, will find nothing new, substantively, conceptually, methodologically or empirically speaking in this article. However, the *setting* might be surprising. That this type of social stratification is emerging on the pedestal upon which many have placed Finnish Education should be alarming to many who have hoped for ‘holdouts’ amongst the reproduction of inequities that cuts across the globe, fueled by neoliberal academic capitalism (Currie & Newson, 1998; Marginson, 2006).

### ■ **Position**

In terms of the organization, we can be easily situated using seminal work in international comparative higher education, for example disciplinary cultures, career stage and mission (Baldwin & Blackburn, 1981; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Välimaa, 2001). In terms of biography, though, literature that focuses on a *full range* of ascriptive characteristics bearing on academic career patterns involving university personnel are unfamiliar to many in Finnish higher education. In this sense, the question we are interested in is: What types of relationships exist between a scholar’s biography and their trajectory within Finnish education in general and faculty/staff ranks in particular? What implications does this have for society?

■ **Similarities: Familiar territory from familiar perspectives**

All university personnel enter a highly structured set of positions and relationships that exists *prior to their entrance* (Archer, 1995; Bourdieu, 1988). The position of the authors is fairly similar in that four out of five of us are located in the *temporary field of positions* (Välilmaa, 2001), we are all closer to the beginning of our career than the end of it and occupied with key transitions. Specifically: A master’s level student securing their first degree-related job (El-Massri), Master’s-level to Ph.D. completion (Babila Sama & Korhonen), Licentiate to Ph.D. completion (Raunio) and junior to senior-level university research career trajectory (Hoffman). While these similarities might seem to make us appear too similar, the range of the fields of studies we specialize in (international comparative higher education, international migration and ethnic relations, intercultural communication, education, social and public policy, regional innovation studies) is fairly broad. This is important, as our argument is aimed at *application* of our research findings and experience beyond the scope of any single project we have been involved in.

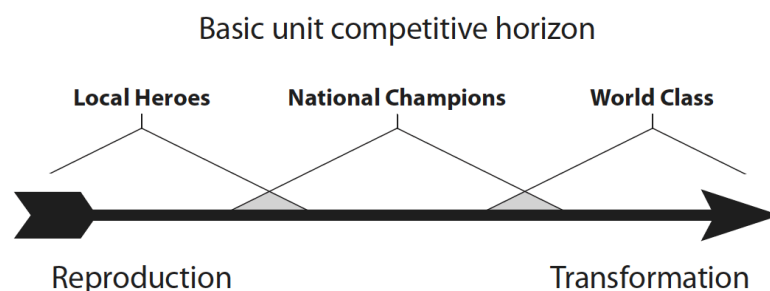
■ **Differences : Do Ascriptive Characteristics Matter ?**

While similar in an organizational sense, the authors bring very different biographies to this article. The authors, four men and one women, come from four different countries on – and between – four continents. The group, unlike many approaching migration-related topics in Finland, is made up of native-born *and* foreign-born university personnel; Citizens by birth, naturalized citizens and permanent residents with no intention of seeking citizenship. Three of the group members have visible physical ascriptive characteristics that immediately distinguish them from the general population in ways that have very particular consequences in Finnish society. In addition, three of the authors were raised in cultures quite distinct from Finnish culture.

**3. The Best Sciences, the Best Science in Finnish – and English – or the Best Finnish Scientists?**

We turn now to three distinct worldviews that emerged during a multiple case study (Hoffman, 2009a; Hoffman & al., 2011). During the cross-case analysis of this study, *significant differences* were observed in three types of basic units that illuminate the division of labor within Finnish universities. These worldviews – shaped in part by the competitive horizon – is associated with perceptions and patterns of personnel mobility that vary a great deal within different types of basic units (Hoffman & al., 2008a). In addition to differences, *important commonalities*, as well as *key issues and ideas completely missing* from organizational practice were identified. As we have written extensively about the common – and missing – features found in the series of studies leading to this analysis (See Hoffman & al., 2008 and Raunio & al., 2010), we focus here on the distinct types of basic units found in Finnish universities.

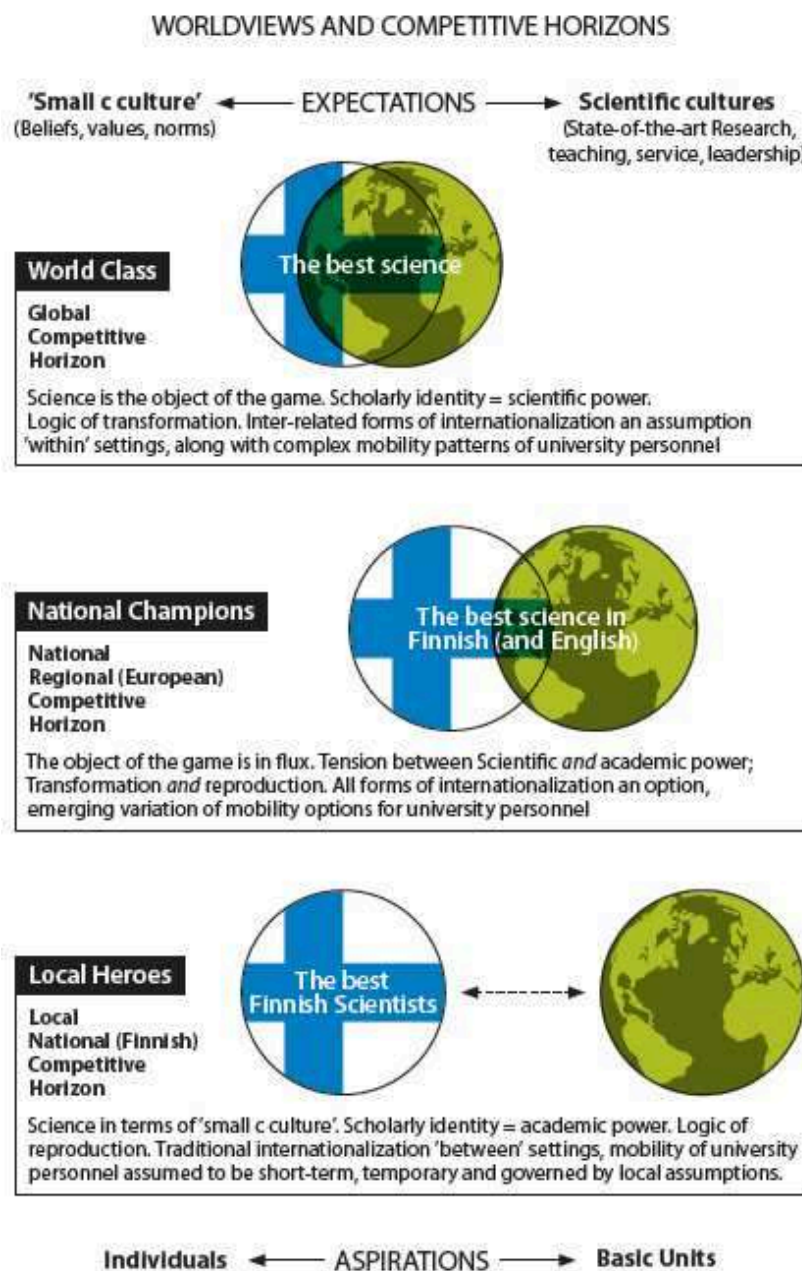
Figure 1 - Basic Unit Competitive Horizon



Bourdieu 1988; Brennan 2002, Hoffman, Välilmaa & Huusko 2008

The heuristic device of the competitive horizon draws attention to the most critical resources and processes that different basic units and scholars orientate to, over time (Hoffman & al., 2008a; Välimaa & Hoffman, 2007). An empirical look at these orientations and processes reveals a specific relationship to the state-of-the-art in any discipline, field of study or specialty. The distinctiveness of the competitive horizon is further illuminated with respect to the emphasis on mission combination and the leadership and administration of the three university missions. Conceptually, the competitive horizon illuminates a basic tension between basic units and university personnel who *transform* the state-of-the-art and those who *reproduce* it. The interesting feature of the university – as a social institution – is that both processes are vital, simultaneous, ongoing and in high demand within complex HEIs (Bourdieu, 1988; Brennan, 2002; Hoffman & al., 2011). Below, we briefly describe the three distinct types of basic units, which underpin our argument.

Figure 2 - Basic Unit Wordviews and Competitive Horizons





■ ***The Best Science (World Class Basic Units)***

World class basic units in Finnish universities focused on the *transformation of their discipline, field of study or specialty*, for example, heavily-funded research groups in leading Centers of Excellence. These units are orientated to *scientific power*, a field-specific form of capital identified by Bourdieu (1988). Academics concerned with scientific power are concerned with *the advancement of state-of-the-art knowledge in their discipline*. Relative position in World Class units is governed by the publication of high impact, international refereed, scientific texts, a consistent ability to secure funding from a wide variety of sources and innovative presentations concerning disciplinary developments which can be characterized as breakthroughs (Bourdieu, 1988; Fairweather, 2002). Human resources are recruited to these units – from anywhere they can be located – because of their potential with regard to pushing beyond the state-of-the-art in their discipline. The most salient identity of these highly productive scholars is often that of the scholar – above all else.

■ ***The Best Finnish Scientists (Local Heroes)***

At the opposite end of the spectrum, university personnel who *draw on the state-of-the-art, but take no direct part in the transformation of their discipline or field of study*, for example, university instructors in a regionally orientated campuses in programs that emphasize teaching and who orientate to *academic power*. Academics who act with respect to academic power are focused primarily on the social dynamics that will reproduce *the next generation of academics* in a given faculty, institute, department or basic unit. Relative position in units populated by Local Heroes is governed by the control of a subordinate's time, departmental politics and the control of administrative practice (Bourdieu, 1988). In these teaching-orientated basic units there is a need for the 'pastoral care' (Delamont & Atkinson, 2004) needed to guide large numbers of students through their stay in university, seeing them through their graduation – while making sure the curriculum corresponds to needs identified as important by university stakeholders. National student and stakeholder demand is the primary rationale for these units, which often have a *translational role*, contextualizing local or national events, using state-of-the-art conceptual, methodological and empirical approaches – identified by those at higher competitive horizons. Local Heroes compete, but mainly amongst themselves or with scholars from similar units within Finland. Competition centers on a limited number of positions and predictable supply of students seeking well-defined knowledge to be used in tightly regulated Nordic job markets.

■ ***The Best Science in Finnish – And English (National Champions)***

In between these two extremes, National Champions pursue original research results – while also regularly producing students, although one may be more emphasized than the other. While some unit personnel spend the majority of time on 'pastoral care' of students, there are solid research outcomes alongside instructional programs in high national and sometimes regional demand. In an increasingly competitive higher education environment, research and scholarship is more emphasized than in units populated by Local Heroes. The research profile may rest on areas with long traditions in Finnish higher education, like language-related disciplines, the arts, and the interdisciplinary hard-sciences related to forest products or newer areas of research, like business, information and communication technology and biotechnology, well outside the traditional or instrumental historical scope of interest in Finnish higher education.

National Champions recognize the need to address 'both worlds' available to the scholar – reproduction and transformation. The key difference between National Champions and Local Heroes units is the external funding required to pursue new or novel knowledge and the types of research and publications linked to these. Because the scope of the unit's interest extends beyond mere translation of state-of-the-art findings for local or national consumption, the nature of the unit may attract students or personnel from outside the national scope. The stakes of competition in these units correspond to a wider spectrum of resources and these units are more likely to have topic-based degree programs taught in different languages, particularly English, in

order to compete for students on a wider scale. The likelihood of finding foreign-born university personnel in these units is better than in units populated by Local Heroes, but not as usual in World Class units.

#### 4. Issues and perspectives

In our original Finnish-language study, each author detailed a single set of issues prominent in their experience, research, or both. In this section, a synthesis of these accounts is presented. Our original, individual, accounts addressed the following question: *Keeping in mind the relationship between education and social change in the Finnish context – and based on your experience and perceptions in Finnish society in general and higher education in particular, which issue – or set of related issues – is brought to mind by the heuristic frameworks presented above?*

##### ■ ***Towards an explanation of the lack of organizational capacity in Finnish HEIs regarding foreign-born personnel***

As researchers, we routinely encounter four interlinked obstacles when studying and experiencing the most important forms of mobility concerning university personnel. This especially applies to foreign-born personnel and potential university personnel with a migrant background interested in pursuing a career amongst National Champions and Local Heroes.

The most difficult obstacle is what Komisarof (2009, p. 411) terms a “misguided optimism about the degree of confluence between acculturation strategies.” Komisarof refers to assumptions based on a lack of direct experience of the complexities of the twin demands of long-term acculturation and organizational performance. By lack of experience, Komisarof underlines foreign-born individuals who have *spent too little time in the host environment to accurately gauge the challenges inherent in acculturation*. This is compounded by a lack of experience by host nationals – who, by definition – *cannot know the complexities that acculturation within ‘their’ own society entails*. Komisarof focuses on *psychological acculturation*, specifically, shifts in behaviors, attitudes, values and identities of individuals, in particular, following Berry (1997), in relation to outcome expectations and behavioral consequences towards ethnocultural outgroups. Specifically: *Who is expected to become an ingroup member within a specific organizational setting?* (Komisarof, 2009).

The most interesting finding in Komisarof’s study was that *problematic-based strategies* of acculturation worked better than *conflict-based strategies* and as well as *consensual strategies* regarding acculturation and work performance for both foreign-born and native population participants in his study, conducted in Japan. This study indicated that many consensual strategies – which Komisarof originally hypothesized would lead to better outcomes – are often based on the naivety described above.

Kamisarof’s study has important implications in Finland, particularly with regard to organizational contexts. This is firstly because both Finnish and Japanese societies share the distinctions of being rapidly ageing, culturally homogenous populations projecting severe labor force shortages and hobbled by a lack of capacity regarding the recruitment, selection, promotion and retention of foreign-born personnel in several types of organizations. In addition, essentialist views of ‘foreignness’ are not very difficult to find and are at the root of unconvincing attempts to formulate policy change, in meaningful terms, relevant to demographic realities in both societies (Clarke, 1999; Hoffman, 2007; Komisarof, 2009). Clinging to a static, untenable conflation of national, linguistic, political and cultural identity that applies to the inhabitants of geographic territory in both Finland and Japan has resulted in a lack of conceptual nuance regarding the way in which societal change is *actually occurring*, in empirical terms (Blommaert, 2009; Pöyhönen & al., 2011). Specifically, imprecise conceptualizations of distinct populations – and dynamic combinations of groups of foreign-born citizens, residents and expatriates that routinely elude

vocabulary – up to the present time. Finally, the tension between Finnish culture – as a source of identity – and scientific cultures – which are complementary in some cases, for example in many World Class basic units, but which can be at odds in units populated by National Champions and Local Heroes, fully illuminates the complexity in the organizational context. This is because – at the level of HEI and at system level – all three types of units exist in close proximity to one another, within the same organization, posing major challenges to leadership.

The second major obstacle we face has to do with the normally unquestioned assumption that university career trajectory is not partially explained by a full range of ascriptive characteristics. The *belief* we encounter is that an individual's career path is explained by the merit of one's scholarship, with an partial range of ascriptive characteristics used historically (gender and age), but which arbitrarily and systematically excludes the range that *actually exists in Finnish society*. This tenuous relationship between equity and merit appears (on the surface) tenable in some basic units. However, it is not difficult to locate basic units in which this assumption will *not* withstand conceptual and empirical scrutiny (Hoffman, 2007; Hoffman & al., 2008a; Raunio & al., 2010; Huso, 2000). It even easier to locate groups in Finnish society which have no members in senior faculty positions, *especially* in units we would characterize as National Champions or Local Heroes. What many scholars in these units often fail to notice – or ignore – is that the subject matter of their discipline includes explaining these very patterns, in any type of organization, *especially* education. In the studies we have conducted or participated in, we routinely encounter basic units with no senior personnel – or junior personnel on a viable, recognizable trajectory pointed at senior positions – who are members of large groups of migrants in Finnish society. Of particular concern are individuals from Somalia, ethnic Kurds and from the former Yugoslavia (Hoffman, 2007; Hoffman & Välimaa, 2008; Hoffman, 2009a; Raunio & al., 2010). This is not the same thing as saying there are no persons in these groups qualified to enter the ranks of university personnel. It is saying their presence in university career paths is tenuous, compared to many smaller groups that have found acculturation easier in Finland in general and Finnish education in particular. Because many basic units in Finland still draw the majority of their personnel via closed, internal recruitment processes (Raunio & al., 2010), it comes as no surprise that the abovementioned groups are having difficulties gaining entrance to universities vertically – via entrance examination and subsequent entrance via student ranks – or horizontally – via open labor-market competition between qualified applicants. Because of these structural dynamics, the challenges regarding emerging ethnic stratification are stark. This type of stratification – if no intervention is made – could become generational, if the study and education of a changing Finnish society continues to be uninformed by a full spectrum of its membership.

A third methodological difficulty is obscured by a fourth cultural assumption – about the nature of individualism. Hofstede (1997) asserts that members of individualistic cultures generally believe the life chances of an individual are mainly determined by individuals themselves; as opposed to collectivist cultures, where group dynamics are believed much more likely to influence life chances. The methodological difficulty associated with attributing too much emphasis on the individual efficacy is research practice on social interaction – or the potential of social interaction – that assumes a degree of agency that *may in fact not exist* for individuals in marginalized groups. The methodological hazard linked to overestimating agency and disregarding social structure, is upward or central conflation that is designed into studies, and manifests in data collection and analysis. This approach leaves the thorny empirical realities of stratification undisturbed by problems which are 'invisible' when viewed through a single cultural and methodological lens. Specifically, research questions that are never asked, data that is never collected or analyzed – nothing contentious to discuss (See Archer, 1995).

Our argument then, is firstly that substantive framing of issues bearing on foreign born university personnel starts out grounded in naïve optimism about acculturation in society and organizations, based on the inexperience of Finnish and non-Finnish personnel. Further, emerging stratification cannot be 'seen' because of linked – and erroneous – cultural and methodological assumptions.

Put another way, this means ungrounded 'discussions' of diversity, internationalization, integration, and multiculturalism obscure very alarming empirical trends in many organizations –

especially basic units populated by Local Heroes. This is mainly because *these ideas are engaged without the direct perspective of a growing population of diverse scholars, from many nations and cultures who routinely problematize their long-term acculturation within Finnish society and organizations*. This is particularly true in the field of Education, where senior foreign-born personnel – or personnel with recent migrant origin are conspicuous by their absence, compared to World Class and National Champions units in other fields. More importantly, *this is not the case with our most important competition* – if we raise our gaze above the local and national competitive horizon. Specifically, cutting edge education faculties, departments and research units – around the globe – directly competing with Finnish HEIs for the most talented students, personnel, research funding and the status that accrues to the HEIs who understand these dynamics.

The attractiveness of Finland's Education system – to the people we actually need to impress – concerns a World Class capacity we currently lack on any kind of meaningful scale in key fields. If acculturation and organizational performance are seriously considered in terms of education and social change, the exigent challenge in front of our education system – as a whole – is clear: *How to meet the aspirations of students whose demographics are changing far more rapidly than those in the faculties, departments and research institutes which have fallen short of either anticipating or adequately accounting for this change*. We will not be able to meaningfully engage this challenge until we are informed to a much greater extent by direct experience of university personnel who can problematize what acculturation entails in a rapidly changing Finnish society, including our most important organizations. For the field of education, in particular, this means fundamentally re-examining the way in which personnel are *recruited, selected, promoted and retained* in Finnish university basic units, *especially Education basic units that focus on classroom teacher training*. We focus on teacher education because of the stark *aspirations gap* (Bowden & Doughney, 2010) between youth with an immigrant background, who would like to find a place in Finnish higher education, but do not. This conceptual term is important as it spotlights a well-defined group of individuals, trying to access Finnish higher education, but who are not, when compared to their age cohort. More importantly than the concept itself, is the lack of convincing explanations that have been offered for this gap.

There are very important exceptions to our generalization about a lack of educators knowledgeable about this emerging structural challenge, but this handful of scholars are a drop in the bucket, compared to the need in Finnish classrooms, where the realities of migration dynamics are currently playing out.

The unexplored territory – beyond the argument we pose here – is our lack of organizational capacity, at the level of HEI, regarding the strategic consideration of organizational change with regard to the warrants of the argument advanced here. Specifically: *The best way to approach these dynamics at the level of HEI*. At some point the issues identified in this argument cease to be merely matters for study and become issues for university leadership to engage – or not.

## Conclusion

*Internationalization and societal reproduction versus migration and transformation:  
A 'both/and' challenge for the leadership of Finnish universities*

As this article goes to press, Finnish higher education institutions are currently undergoing radical reform, in order to conform to a prefabricated OECD 'modernization' agenda (Kallo, 2009). It is possible to argue that the strategic changes made in Finnish education represent 'innovations', however all important aspects of the reforms are already long-established practice in other regions of the world (Hoffman & Välimaa, 2008).

As Blommaert (2009) points out, government reaction to new situations highlights the tendency of society's most important institutions to react to 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges by attempting to 'raise zombie categories from the dead'. What Beck (1992) meant by zombie category, specifically, is

an idea, for example, like ‘modernization’, that was once quite meaningful in terms of *zeitdiagnose*. What Beck and Blommaert currently underline are the risks we run when framing today’s challenges in terms of the past, rather than reflecting on situated complexity, a task universities, ironically, are well suited for. As the framework presented in this analysis illustrates, however, getting traction on highly situated complexity is *not* the focus of all units in Finnish higher education, actually the opposite is the case. Very few types of basic units are ideally situated to explain the demographically-driven set of circumstances brought into focus by this article.

Linked to our ‘modernization’ agenda is one of the most treasured terms in current policy discussion, *innovation*. Innovation, in and of itself, could be a term fairly used in the ‘modernization of Finland’s higher education system’ – that already culminated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, having begun even earlier (Välilmaa, 2001). And innovation – as a policy term – is clearly shorthand for a crucial set of human activities, worthy of dedicated ministries in several countries, like Malaysia, Denmark and Spain. And where no ministries exist, supranational policy discussion and national innovation policies underline the idea that innovation is taken quite seriously around the world.

So, as the competitive horizons of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global higher education challenge the inner workings of a ‘modernizing’ Finnish higher education system (Hoffman & al., 2008a; Välilmaa & Hoffman, 2008) it becomes a fair question to ask: *Where are we not particularly innovative?* Considering, the attributes with which Finnish higher education has been described in the past, a focus on areas of ‘non-innovation’ is a more revealing exercise than a focus on the superstars who inhabit World Class basic units around the globe (Laudel, 2005; Shokat & al., 2007).

We are *not* innovative with respect to the way in which ‘outsiders’ become ‘insiders’ within the ranks of university personnel with reference to the general population of Finland and life-long academic trajectories. The perspectives and experiences we highlight – *from inside the system* – illuminate problems not only with the current substantive, conceptual, methodological, empirical and practical problems with our ‘non-approach’ to human resources in the university. But, more fundamentally, our perspective underlines a generational challenge, particularly regarding the way in which young students enter – or not – upper secondary school and the fragile transition to firstly, higher education, which remains the most important *de facto* route to the ranks of the HEI personnel in focus. The second stage – from Master’s-level student to the ranks of university personnel – for students of recent immigrant origin, as well as transitions beyond that, are completely ‘off the radar’ of our non-innovative personnel practices (Hoffman & al. 2009a).

The main reason for non-innovation in the area we’re focusing on is that the current changes in Finnish higher education involve a centralization of decision-making and power amongst those who have not detected the ‘virtual vanishing act’ of the central discussion of equity, on which Finnish – along with all Nordic social democracies – higher education rests (Hoffman, Välilmaa, Saarinen, Söderqvist, Raunio & Korhonen, 2011). Pay for performance, total cost management systems, management-by-results and changes to the legal status of universities – and university employees – sheds no light on the perspectives and issues raised in this chapter, no doubt on those areas where innovation is *not* taking place. At present time, the new system calls into question the collective agency of *any* group.

What remains unchanged, as we argue, in our introduction is recapped by the Finnish Ministry of Labor: *“For Finland the year 2010 will be an unprecedented turning point in terms of population, as the number of people of working age will begin to fall. The reason for this development is the ageing of the post-war baby boom generation... the demographic changes will mean that in the years 2010-2025 the population aged between 15 and 64 will decrease by 265,000... During the same period, the number of those in the prime of working life, between 20 and 49 years old, will fall by 80,000, or 5000 a year. The number of children born is still declining, as the age groups of childbearing age are smaller... the number of over 65 year olds in the population will increase from about 870,000 in 2006 by half a million to 1,370,000 in 2025.”* (Finnish Ministry of Labour, 2007)

The most interesting feature of this analysis is that coping with the increasing *dependency ratio*. The dependency ratio refers to the number of persons in the labor force – *dramatically shrinking* – needed to support the number of people outside the labor force – *dramatically growing*. While the Ministry of Labor’s analysis assumes migrants will stay in Finland – because of assumed ‘non-discrimination’ and ‘innovative personnel policy’ (detailed elsewhere in their analysis) – there is nothing in our experience or research that empirically justifies this naivety. And it is important to note this is a policy document designed to account for all occupational sectors, not just higher education.

The prerequisite of higher education’s potential contribution to society, as a whole, depends on the analytical clarity with which we perceive our situation: As a HEIs in society. There is no other institution to which the critical, analytical capacity of HEIs can be delegated. When significant events occur, the general public, media, policy makers and several types of institutional actors routinely come knocking on our doors for explanations and analysis qualitatively distinct from ‘common sense’, media reporting, commercial agendas or political framing. HEIs, on the other hand, have no one to ‘ask’.

No data from any study we have ever conducted, nor our experience within the system supports the assumptions in the Ministry of Labour’s analysis within many types of higher education settings that are – analytically speaking – quite easy to locate. How to engage this set of circumstances goes far beyond the scope of what is now practiced in internationalization units or by persons whose duties focus on what has been assumed to fall under the umbrella of traditional ‘internationalization’. This is because – as the numbers from the Ministry of Labour clearly indicate – this is a story of migration and societal transformation, not simple, traditional internationalization and reproduction. And until Finnish HEIs develop a capacity to not only *understand and explain* who works for them, doing what and under what conditions, *who does not* and *act* on this knowledge, the higher education system will be unable to fully contribute to the otherwise interesting policy targets talked about in Ministerial-level documents (Finnish Ministry of Labour, 2007; Finnish Ministry of Education, 2008), i.e. *society*, in a manner that is routine amongst HEIs located in our most potent competitors. Specifically, by drawing on and including *all groups present in Finnish society* to think about, problematize – and act on – the demographically challenging situation we now face. This will not be possible if equity fades to the status of myth inside the ‘brain’ of Finland’s knowledge-driven economy.

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