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Taina Saarinen

Quality on the Move

Discursive Construction of Higher Education Policy from the Perspective of Quality

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Editors
Minna-Riitta Luukka
Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä
Irene Ylönen, Marja-Leena Tynkkynen
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ABSTRACT

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The study analysed higher education policy from the point of view of *quality* as a discursively constructed higher education policy phenomenon. Theoretically, the aim was to investigate (higher education) policy as a discursive process. Methodologically, the study applied discourse analytical methods in the study of higher education policy texts. The practical purpose of the study was to learn more about current European higher education policies from the point of view of *quality* and *quality policy* in higher education.

The data consisted of higher education policy documentation from Finland, the European union, the OECD and the Bologna process. The analysis concentrated on the occurrences of *quality.* A Critical Discourse Analytical frame was applied. In a series of five articles, *quality* as a concept is examined by drawing on different textual approaches.

Quality is mostly taken for granted and it is presented as a self-evident good in present European higher education policies. This might suggest an argumentative tactic to persuade the reader that *quality* and the activities connected to it are shared, common understanding.

Some metaphors refer, for instance, to *quality* as some kind of force-of-nature, others to its fragile nature and the consequent need for regulation and control. As an evasive concept, *quality* receives meanings by the operationalisations attached to it. Also, different actors are presented in different ways in the context of *quality.*

Historically, the word *quality* is practically not used in policy texts until the turn of the 1980s. This might imply that the quality of higher education was either held self-evident, or it was considered to be a marginal concern of the academic community. The dominant values seem to be those of the economy, competition, and regulation. The voice of the academic community is more subdued, and consequently, its values less clearly presented.

(Critical) discourse analysis is helpful in raising issues, and making visible policy processes, their development and the values and power relations behind them. In the future, this approach could benefit from complementing it with analyses of situations where policy makers, administrators and the academics engage with these discourses.

Keywords**:** discourse analysis, higher education policy, quality assurance, Bologna Process, OECD, European Union

Author´s address

Taina Saarinen
Pohjolankatu 1 as 3
FIN-20100 Turku
FINLAND
taina.saarinen@pp3.inet.fi

Supervisors

Professor Minna-Riitta Luukka
Centre for Applied Language Studies
University of Jyväskylä

Professor Jussi Välimaa
Institute for Educational Research
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Reviewers

Professor Marjut Johansson
Department of French Studies
University of Turku, Finland

Professor Gary Rhoades
Center for the Study of Higher Education
University of Arizona, Tucson, USA

Opponent

Professor Gary Rhoades
Center for the Study of Higher Education
University of Arizona, Tucson, USA

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I Saarinen, T. 2005. 'Quality' in the Bologna process: from 'competitive edge' to quality assurance techniques. European Journal of Education 40 (2), 189-204.

II Saarinen, T. 2005. From sickness to cure and further. Construction of 'quality' in Finnish Higher Education policy from the 1960's to the era of the Bologna process. Quality in Higher Education 11(1), 3-15.

III Saarinen, T. Persuasive presuppositions in OECD and EU higher education policy documents. Discourse Studies 10(3) (Forthcoming in 2008).

IV Saarinen, T. Whose Quality? Social actors in the interface of transnational and national higher education policy. Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education 29 (3) (Forthcoming in 2008).

V Saarinen, T. & Ala-Vähälä, T. 2007. Accreditation, the Bologna Process and national reactions: Accreditation as concept and action. Higher Education in Europe 32 (4), in press.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This process begun with my gradually developed desire to conduct higher education research by using text analytical methods. This desire was a result of my previous study and work history. I graduated with a Master's degree in English philology, but already during my studies I got involved – as a hobby, as it turns out – with higher education research (Ala-Vähälä & al. 1987; Ala-Vähälä & al. 1989). We had a lively and inquisitive group of language students and student union activists, gathering at the Student Union of the University of Turku around questions of study paths of language students and the higher education policy changes having an effect on those paths. After graduation, it seemed only natural that I found myself doing higher education research, but this time for a salary at the Research Unit for the Sociology of Education at the University of Turku The topic of higher education policy, especially of the newly introduced aspect of assessment in higher education, was more of a coincidence. For several years, I did follow up research on the first institutional and study programme assessments of the early 1990s (Saarinen 1995a; Saarinen 1995b).

When the opportunity came to start writing my long overdue PhD thesis at the Institute for Educational Research at the University of Jyväskylä on the larger theme of evaluation in higher education policy, I did not think twice. At that moment, my previous motivations to take up a text analytical approach to higher education policy studies surfaced. Since the 1990s, I had been troubled by the fact that I had done higher education policy research, using policy documentation as primary sources, but – as was customary in the field – not using any particular text analytical tools to analyse them. I knew that I had been studying a concept ('quality') which meant different things for different people (Harvey & Green 1993), but the methods I had been using did not contribute to the understanding of that concept in a way I felt necessary.

Coming to work at the Higher Education Studies Research Team of the Institute for Educational Research (University of Jyväskylä) strengthened my self-identification as a higher education researcher. Simultaneously, being a PhD student at the Centre for Applied Language Studies (SOLKI) at the

University of Jyväskylä, made me more aware of my original interest in linguistics as a social discipline. I positioned myself somehow between two disciplines or fields of study, namely (applied) linguistics and social sciences (or higher education policy studies). This notion, and especially the difficulties in clearly identifying myself in either field, surfaced in situations where I found myself introducing myself to linguists as a higher education policy researcher, and in turn to higher education researchers as a linguist.

I started to work on this study in April 2002 with a rhetorical viewpoint, as witnessed by the original title (Saarinen 2002). Gradually, the original methodological concern grew into a theoretical one. What if 'language', or 'text', or 'discourse' was not just a medium to convey meanings about actual policy problems? What if 'language', or 'text', or 'discourse' actually supported, construed, and strengthened those policies? Consequently, 'discourse' begun to mean language as a social practice, and not just the physical artefact which constitute 'texts' (see for instance Kress 1985). (For a more thorough definition of the various terms, see chapter 2.1.1.) I realised that what I was doing had a focus of its own: that of looking into higher education policy as discursive, from a moderate social constructionist view. (See Heiskala 2000.)

Around the same time I stopped looking at myself as somebody doing 'interdisciplinary' research; in fact, I begun to find the notion of interdisciplinarity absurd and unproductive. On the other hand, doing my research between two disciplines (of applied linguistics and higher education studies) has made me adopt a practical stand to the issue of interdisciplinarity (see chapter 2.2.1 for a discussion of interdisciplinary research). During the course of this work, however, my situation between two disciplines leads me to risks of writing things that may seem mundane to the readership in one field, and – hopefully - necessary background to the other.

The purpose of this work is

- theoretically, to investigate (higher education) policy as a discursive process
- methodologically, to apply discourse analytical methods in the study of (higher education) policy texts
- practically, to learn more about higher education policy formation from the point of view of 'quality' and 'quality policy' in higher education.

This report presents the results of this five-year process. The study has been published in the original articles, listed above and referred to in this report by their Roman numerals. Chapter 2 maps the place of this research, both theoretically and methodologically in the fields of higher education policy research and discourse studies, and presents the research frame, the research questions, and data. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the higher education policy situation this study draws its material from. Chapter 4 looks back on the articles from the point of view of the choices made in them, as well as the results, in a

way which was not possible in the articles themselves. Chapter 5 offers an evaluation of the study. Chapter 6 draws together some future possibilities in discursively oriented higher education policy research.

2 WHY STUDY HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES FROM A DISCURSIVE VIEWPOINT?

This chapter looks into the theoretical and methodological motivations of this study. I begin with a discussion of the discursive approach in policy studies. I then continue by positioning this work in the field of higher education policy studies. Following that, I present some methodological possibilities for doing higher education policy research from a discourse analytical perspective, and the methodological choices of this work. The chapter ends with a presentation of the research questions and the data used in this study.

2.1 Theoretical considerations: discourse and / as policy

Chapter 2.1.1 first puts 'text' and 'discourse', both concepts which are frequently used both in linguistics and in policy studies, into the context of this study. Chapter 2.1.2 then further discusses some central concepts related to texts as social. Chapter 2.1.3 maps the particular discussion of 'discursive construction of policy' from the point of view of this work.

2.1.1 Definitions of text and discourse

Linguistic research can be roughly divided into functional and formal traditions. (Luukka, 2000, 144-151). The functional tradition has its focus in the use of language, and the formal tradition in its structure. The *textual* approach sees discourse as an independent linguistic product or entity. The *cognitive* view approaches discourse as a mental process. These two approaches can mainly be seen as belonging to the formalistic tradition, which looks at language as an abstract structural system. The functionalist tradition, in turn, includes two main approaches to discourse study. The *interactional* approach looks at discourse in real interactional situations. The *constructionist* view takes an even

wider look into the environment, as discourse is seen not only in individual interactional situations, but also in the wider societal context where it is used. The division into functionalist and formalistic approach is not exclusive: form is part of context, and study of linguistic forms is an essential part of the study of discourse (Fairclough 1995, 188).

Table 1 presents the formal and functional traditions and places different discourse analytical theories in these traditions. The table is a generalised representation and the different fields overlap. The present study can be located in the functionalist / constructionist corner of the table.

Both 'text' and 'discourse' are used in various meanings, both within linguistics and more broadly within (other) social sciences. Here, I am concentrating on views that deal with language in use, although even then, the scope is wide.

Within the linguistic traditions, Virtanen (1990) has made a general point, based on an extensive review of earlier literature, about 'text' traditionally being seen as a static concept and referring to a product, while discourse has been seen as a dynamic notion, referring to the process of both text production and comprehension. It seems, however, that these terms have come closer, as the scope of 'text' has expanded to cover also the processual notions. (Virtanen 1990).

de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981; see also Titscher et al 2000) note seven criteria for 'texts': *cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality*. These criteria mean that texts have to be understandable, they have been produced for a purpose, and they are produced and used in a social situation. Simultaneously, these criteria also imply that text may not mean the same thing to all readers, but take their meaning from the writer, the reactions of the reader, and the social context. In fact, 'text' can be seen as a holistic (instead of a dualist) concept. Hodge & Kress (1988) define 'text' and 'discourse' in an interconnected manner: for them, discourse refers to "*the social process in which texts are embedded, while text is the concrete material object produced in discourse*."

'Discourse' is at its simplest referred to as 'text in context' (Titscher et al 2000). Since the meanings of 'text' are varied, and also 'context' is problematic (see chapter 2.1.12 for a discussion), the above definition is circular.

In linguistics, 'discourse' has referred to a particular instance of spoken or written interaction or communication (Brown & Yule 1983). With the so-called linguistic turn in social sciences (see page 26) in the 1980s and the rise of critical linguistics in the 1970s (see for instance Fowler et al. 1979), 'discourse' started to take other meanings.

As was the case with 'text', the range of 'discourse' reaches from situated occasions of written or spoken language use (see for instance Brown & Yule 1983) to the wide societal understandings of discourse as a form of knowledge, or as practices that constantly form the objects of which they speak. In other words, 'discourse' does not refer to individual expressions but to meaning systems, which have historical, social and institutional implications. (Foucault

2002, 131.) Discourses in this sense are historically developed 'archives' of particular institutional practices**.** Discourses have also been defined as 'interpretative repertoires' (Potter & Wetherell 1987; see Jokinen & Juhila 2002), which refer to different clusters of definitions and concepts, which in turn construct versions of social practices and structures.

As Fairclough (2003) has pointed out, 'discourse' can be used either as a count noun or as an abstract noun. The abstract 'discourse' refers to the particular property of discourse participating in social life, both as being formed by it and construing it. The count noun 'discourse' refers to different discourses, or "ways of representing" (Fairclough 2003, 26), defined by for instance ideologies or social situations, and often showing different views on an issue. Fairclough (2003) distinguishes between discourse analysis entailing a linguistic analysis of texts, as opposed to discourse analysis in the Foucaultian tradition.

Blommaert (2005, 2) defines discourse as a "general mode of semiosis", in other words as meaningful symbolic behaviour, thus stepping further away from a purely linguistic definition and coming close to Scollon's (1998; 2001) idea of discourse as mediated action. Chouliriaki & Fairclough (1999) have defined discourse as "semiotic elements of social practice".

Approaching language as a meaning-making system (Halliday 1997; Blommaert 2005) directs attention towards functional definitions of 'text' and 'discourse'. Defining language as a meaning potential (Halliday 1978) leads into the metafunctions of ideational, textual, and interpersonal. The *ideational* metafunction refers to the potential of language to construe human experience. We view the world, and simultaneously interpret, explain, and construe it by language.[1] The *interpersonal* refers to language in human relationships. We situate ourselves and are situated in particular social roles in this interaction, and consequently take part in the creation and delimitation of social groups and practices. The *textual* metafunction of language refers to the capacity of language to create discursive orders of reality, and consequently is the one function that makes the other two possible. (Halliday 1994; 1997.)

In this study, 'document' refers to the material artefacts (such as letters on paper or bytes in a document file), the policy texts. The analysis focuses on the discursive practices constructed in and by the documents (see chapter 2.3 for methodological considerations). 'Text' (often as 'policy text') refers to these documents as meaningful passages with meaning-making potential (Halliday 1978). 'Discourse' refers to dialectical relationship of language as constructed by society and as construing it (Wodak 2001a; Fairclough 1992).

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[1] It is difficult to talk about language in this context without reducing it to a mere tool or instrument of something else. Language is not an instrument of human interaction – language IS human interaction.

TABLE 1 Discourse studies in the formal and functional traditions of linguistics (see Luukka 2000)

	Formalist view - language as a system	**Functional view -** language as social interaction
Nature of language	Language = mental, individual Language independent of context	Language = social, mutual Language and context inseparable
Task of linguistics	Description of internal structures Explanation of linguistic forms Theory-driven	Description of linguistic choice Explanation of usage and meaning Data-driven
Focus	Forms Structures Universals	Meanigns Usage Variation
Relationship of form and function	Form to meaning / function Language an autonomous system Description of meaning	Function / meaning to form Structure subordinate to meaning / function Creation of meaning
Bordering disciplines	Psychology	Sociology, anthropology
Types of discourse study	Textual Discourse = an independent text extract Research focus = structure of discourse Meaning = within text Context = within text, the text itself	
	Cognitive Discourse = mental procuct of knowledge processing Research focus = The cognitive structures behind discourses Meaning = within reader / writer Context = ”The World”; the extralinguistic reality as a cognitive, not social view	
		Interactional Discourse = interaction, meaning negotiation Research focus = real (individual) interaction situations Meaning = negotiable Context = situational
		Constructionist Disourse = social practice Research focus = meaning construction in society (social context) Meaning = dialogically constructed in the community Context = Social practices in dialogical relationship with discouses

The term 'discourse analysis' is used when the construction of different policies from the documents is referred to. Since this study is written with the dual purpose of introducing linguistic methodologies for higher education studies and taking a discursive look into higher education policies, the use of these terms may fluctuate between articles, depending on the intended audience. For instance, because of the particularly strong Foucaultian connotations of 'discourse' in social sciences, the term 'text analysis' is used in articles I and II when the linguistic features of analysis are stressed.

Discourse studies within social sciences have been strongly influenced by the Foucaultian view on discourse as a system of organising truth and knowledge, and consequently on how power is exercised by some and not others (Martín & Gabilondo 2006; Ball 1993). Discourse, in this view, is a field of competition for world views, rather than on the linguistic forms of discourse analysis (for an extensive discussion of Foucault's discourse analysis in relation with a textually oriented discourse analysis, see Fairclough 1992, 37-61). For Blommaert (2005), discourse makes the sense in our environment by transforming it into a socially and culturally meaningful one.

What makes this meaning-making function of language possibly is the dual nature of language of simultaneously being "ours" and "others'". Bakhtin discusses the dialogical nature of language as that of an *others'* word, "filled with echoes of the other's utterance" (1999, 129) and as an individual expression. This notion of the others' words in ours, or interdependency of discourses, in turn, brings us to the concept of intertextuality (see chapter 2.1.2).

Discourse analysis of policy texts can thus be useful in tracing policy changes and describing them, but also in explaining and understanding some of the developments that lead up to the implementation of the policies and the (political) views which are embedded in the debates, and in understanding how policies are produced (discourse as social practice). Discourses not only describe the world, they also create and recreate it. Policy actors foreground problems, simultaneously narrowing the space for alternative views. By doing so, they also perpetuate some political views of social reality (Muntigl, 2002), and ultimately exercise power. Consequently, the concept of power is present in this study implicitly, as the representations of competing values and ideologies.

2.1.2 On texts as social

Chapter 2.1.1 described how the basic concepts of text and discourse are understood in this work. This chapter further develops how text and discourse are understood as social. Texts have different functions in different social situations and they may be transferred to other situations. Texts contain references to other texts and they express dialogicality. The production and interpretation of texts is based on social conventions, and in understanding these conventions, the concept of *genre* is useful. (Solin 2004.)

Genre has been used at least in the study of rhetoric, literature, folklore, movies and media, and linguistics[2], and is consequently used in very different ways and with different meanings (Swales 1990). Swales defines genre "as a class of communicative events", which share a set of communicative purposes. In Bhatia's (2004, 23) similar definition, genre refers to

> "…language use in a conventionalized communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals of a disciplinary or social institution, which give rise to stable structural forms by imposing constraints on the use of lexico-grammatical as well as discoursal constraints."

In order to be identified in belonging to the same genre, the texts would need to share particular commonalities in their content, form and function (van Leeuwen 2005b). Genre can, shortly, be defined as the linguistic manifestation of a particular social action (Mauranen 2006), as they not only imply particular text types, but also the processes of producing, distributing and maintaining the social processes in and behind those texts (see Fairclough 1992, 124-127).

In higher education policy studies we come across at least the genres of legislative texts, government policy plans, directives, progress reports, policy reviews and press bulletins, just to name few. While genres are stable and even normative, and thus enable communication, as well as the preservation social conventions, they may also fluctuate and overlap (Bakhtin 1999). Different kinds of texts constantly draw from and are transformed into other texts, even across genres (Fairclough 1992). Any text (in the widest meaning of the word) is a result of contacts with and responses to other texts; and through these contacts, the social practices are produced and reproduced. These links between texts, either as allusions or specific references (Chilton & Schäffner 2002), represent *intertextuality* or *interdiscursivity*, which in turn is an essential concept when the functions and uses of texts and discourses in society are discussed.

Fairclough distinguishes between manifest intertextuality and constitutive intertextuality (or interdiscursivity) (1992, 85, 117-140). Manifest intertextuality refers to a situation where other texts are drawn into texts, for instance directly as direct quotations, or indirectly as presupposition (see Article III). What other texts are being drawn into the text under analysis, and how? How are discourses represented (directly or indirectly)? Are they contextualized in the text? Are they somehow demarcated? Some of these elements of intertextuality are presented by the writer as 'given', and this given may have its roots in other texts (see also the discussion on presupposition in 2.3.2).

Constitutive intertextuality, or interdiscursivity, a Fairclough prefers, means that texts are constituted of elements of different types of genres (Fairclough 1992). Blommaert (2005), like Fairclough (1992) distinguishes between intertextuality and interdiscursivity. For him, intertextuality means connections (both historical and synchronical) between texts, somewhat like

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[2] In linguistics, the origins of genre analysis can be traced back to J.R. Firth and Dell Hymes, whose work was in turn influenced by that of the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. (See Shore & Mäntynen 2006 for a discussion.)

Fairclough's notion of direct or indirect manifest intertextuality, whereas interdiscursivity refers to connections between discourses, as in Fairclough's constitutive intertextuality, or the mixing and blending of genres.

For Fairclough (1992), intertextuality is indistinguishably linked with his focus on the role of discourse in and as social change. He quotes Julia Kristeva's (1986) observation that intertextuality implies "the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history", which seems to have inherited from Bakhtin's (1999, 123) analogical definition of (speech) genres "as the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language".

Discourses and texts not only show traces of and clues to other discourses and texts, but they are constantly also transformed in what Fairclough (1992, 139) calls *intertextual chains*, Blommaert (2005) *text trajectories*, and Iedema & Wodak (1999), following Basil Bernstein, *recontextualisation.* For instance Finnish government policy plans may draw from working group memoranda, which in turn may have connections with policy studies and comparative country reviews. In these transformations or recontextualisations, the question is not only of texts and discourses moving around and finding new places. Rather, as the discourses enter new situations, they also produce new social processes and new discourses and, ultimately, structure our society.

For this study, this particular transforming or recontextualising property of intertextuality is especially interesting, as the textual chains from trans-national to national levels of higher education policy contain various points of transformation (see articles II, IV and V). Recontextualisation is conducted by means such as nominalisation and depersonalisation (see article IV) and it "involves shifts in meaning and materiality away from the previous instantiations" (Iedema & Wodak 1999, 13). This, in turn, normalizes and hides power (Iedema & Wodak 1999; Blommaert 2001), and makes it taken-for-granted or "blackboxed", a term coined by Callon & Latour (1981).

Another feature of discourse as an instrument of power is that access to the process of text production and reconstruction is limited. (Fairclough 1992; see also Ball 1993.) Language plays an integral part in constructing the world, and it is easy to understand how the production and legitimation of discourses may be seen as a field of power struggle and competition (Martín & Gabilondo 2006). Social power is based on access to particular social resources, and access to production of discourses is one of these resources (van Dijk 1993.) *Power* is thus a social construct rather than a personal one.

Blommaert suggests (2005, 4) that "a critical analysis of discourse in contemporary society is an analysis of *voice*" (original emphasis), and states that the analysis of voice is also an analysis of power effects and conditions of power**.** From a discursive point of view, seeking hegemony in this process is seeking a way to universalize a particular meaning, in the service of achieving and maintaining dominance of a particular ideology.

Chiapello and Fairclough (2002) define *ideology* in critical (Thompson 1990[3]) terms as "a system of ideas, values and beliefs oriented to explaining a given political order, legitimizing existing hierarchies and power relations and preserving group identities". Value systems and associated assumptions can be regarded as belonging to particular discourses, which are ideological (Fairclough 2003, 58). Values are something that "may be invoked or appealed to in order to produce particular effects" (Bacchi 2000, 52). Policy actors may offer competing interpretations of particular policy concepts (such as, in the case of this study, 'quality'), in order to support and defend their view of reality. (Bacchi 2000.)

2.1.3 On discursive construction of policy

Using policy documents as data and text analysis as method easily leads into assuming that there is something 'in' the texts that 'describes the world', and, conversely, that the 'texts' would exist outside the 'world'. This, in turn, implies that there is also something called 'the world', and that the problem of interpreting what the texts say about the world is a methodological one. As described in chapter I, this is more or less how I entered this field. For me, however, this problem gradually turned into a theoretical one. Turning towards discussions on 'policy as discourse' (Bacchi 2000; 2004) helped me realize that the documents were not just' text, but something else. They created and supported action; they construct a view of the world; they voiced problems and promoted solutions to these problems.

The use of language has political implications. Any definition of a word make claims about how it should be used, rather than describe how it is used (Bacchi 2000). In other words, the significance of language is what it is thought to be used for, not what it is thought to mean. This observation turns the focus on social constructionism (Fairclough 2003; Heiskala 2000; Bacchi 2000; Burr 2003).

The reason I personally found this difficult in the beginning was my view (somewhat based on mental laziness) that social constructivists had a somewhat narrow view of the world. This is connected to the problem I have with the idea of 'discourse as reality' (as if nothing existed above and beyond discourse), in its extreme form. This kind of a generalisation only works to distance the researcher from the (social) environment in which the text has been produced. Sometimes it even seems that some kind of a "fear of language" - for want of a better term - can be detected. Texts are loaded with meanings and powers, and consequently they may be "overanalysed", as some kinds of grim intentions and hidden meanings are searched in policy planning documents. The researcher in a way gives him/herself the possibility to ignore the physical environment, since discourses are, self-evidently, "reality". Rajanti (1992) has

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[3] In addition to this critical view on ideology, which sees ideology as a mediator of power relations, Thompson (1990) also has a neutral, or descriptive definition of ideology (as a system of beliefs and world views, shared by a group of people) as well as a negative view on ideology (i. as a distorting reality and consciousness).

commented this kind of approach ironically by saying that the researcher "does not need to worry about the extent to which the deductions are true, or respond to the reality of the object of study, because texts with their existence prove the reality of their own existence".

I wanted to dissociate myself from the extreme view that everything is interpretation and that everything in our world is socially constructed. Problems such as hunger and poverty do exist in the world; they are not mere social constructs of those issues. Instead of an extreme, idealistic view of social constructivism, I turned towards "moderate social constructivism". I hold with the moderate constructionist view that the restrictions of our physical world set some limits to the possible interpretations we can make about the social construction of the categories of our world (Fairclough 2003; Heiskala 2000).

It is impossible to overlook some physical structures that frame, for instance, the operational environment of higher education systems and organisations, while at the same time accepting that discourses are one form of social practice. Language as such does not create these physical environments, but rather frames our views on how the environment is perceived. The world is structured and outlined by language, and consequently competing views of the world are produced by language.

Policy is also, in other words, language. Policies are discussed in parliamentary groups, argued in legislative bodies, and written in policy plans and laws. Ball (1993) makes a distinction between 'policy as text', or policies as fluctuating and constantly changing representations of policy formulations, and 'policy as discourse', or policies exercising power through a production of 'truth' and 'knowledge'. Policies are implemented by enhancing written laws and by commenting and explaining those laws verbally. Policy analysis and planning are, shortly said, "practical processes of argumentation" (Fischer & Forester 1993, 1). On the other hand, policy "changes the possibilities we have for thinking 'otherwise'" (Ball 1993, 15); in other words, policy as discourse limits and constructs the possibilities of who has power.

Palonen's (1996; see also Treuthardt, 2004) distinction between *policy* (choice between different views or programmes), *polity* (structures, or established norms and practices), *politicking* (putting emphasis on the power battle over different policies) and *politicization* (opening new issues to be "politicked" with) illustrate the different aspects of policy making in the field of rhetoric.

On the other hand, policy is not just language. Text and talk are only a part of the world, and policies include actions which are not executed verbally. Funding is allocated to universities as a result of political decision-making. Ideologies and power plays have their non-verbal outcomes. It would be simplistic to reduce the whole world into mere discourse, but it would be equally one-eyed to exclude the textual aspect from the study of policies. Language is not neutral, and the researchers of policies should not assume it is. While the role of language in the study of policy processes should not be overdone, it should not be ignored either. (See Majone 1989, 1-2.)

Consequently, when policies are studied, too much weight should not be laid on texts alone. The text may create a reality, but that reality needs to be reflected against the reality of political action such as funding decisions, legislation, and operationalisations of policies. In fact, it is also possible to see acts of policy communicating meanings.[4]

In a recent study on the policy processes of international organisations (see Henry & al 2001, 128 for a discussion on the OECD and Muntigl & al, 2000 for the European Union) it is stated that one of the ways in which the organisations uses their influence is through "discursive interventions" or "discursive processes", creating conceptual models or classifying and categorising phenomena. Social actors such as the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) can, in other words, be said to name problems which they then attempt at solving. This view comes close to the "policy as discourse" approach of policy studies, according to which policy problems do not exist objectively in the community to be solved, but rather the problems are given shape in the same policy proposals that are offered as responses to the problems (Bacchi 2000, 48). In this viewpoint, the one who gets to name the problem, also has the power to solve it.

How, then, can one discuss "discourse" without reducing it dualistically into the text vs. reality or "mere text / mere rhetoric" debates on one hand, and without banalizing it into "discourse is all there is" on the other? This question led me towards views of the dialogical and heteroglossic nature of language (Scollon 1998; Lähteenmäki 2002). In this view, language is a social phenomenon, and it has to be approached from the point of view of its interactive nature.

Bakhtin talks about the dialogical overtones of utterances when describing the property of language to reflect on others (Bakhtin 1999; Lähteenmäki 2002). 'Heteroglossia', in turn, refers to the various (ideological) languages we use, which in turn construe different worlds, and represent different ideological positions in this world. (Scollon 1998; Lähteenmäki 2002.) A community could, in other words, be defined as a group of people who share the same language and who may – intentionally or unintentionally – attempt at universalizing their own language and the meanings conveyed by it.

Lähteenmäki (2002) defines language as a group of ideological languages which represent a particular view of the world, and from which the speaker will have to choose one to represent his/her own voice. From this follows that it is impossible to accept the dualistic distinction between policy words and policy action, as done for instance by Theisens (2004). Policy words are not mere rhetoric, they *are* policy, or at least "policies are textual interventions into practice" (Ball 1993, 12). Consequently, this means that study of policy discourse is not only an epistemological (and methodological) question of language as describing a policy. It is an ontological (and also a theoretical)

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4 Policy deeds (as opposed to words) as elements of persuasion would be another interesting topic, but outside the scope of this work. Consider, for instance, the use of performance rewards as elements of persuasive communication from the funder to the educational organization (cf. Saarinen & Laiho, 1997).

question of language both construing policy and being affected by it. For practical purposes, however, some dichotomies are necessary; hence also in this work the need sometimes to talk about policy words and policy action as two sides of the same thing.

2.2 Position of the present study in the field of higher education research

Chapter 2.2 presents the major methodological "gap" in present state-of-the-art of higher education policy studies, by first shortly presenting in chapter 2.2.1 higher education as a field of study, and then in chapter 2.2.2 the existing situation of linguistics in higher education policy studies.

2.2.1 Higher education as a field of study

Higher education research is by nature interdisciplinary, and seems to be continuously diversifying (Teichler 2000; Clark 1984). In Teichler's (2005) view, this interdisciplinary nature is characterized by

- the theme-based nature of the research;
- it's strategic nature as combining the needs of basic and applied research; and
- the unstable institutional status of researchers and research organisations.

For higher education researchers, this implies various roles, depending on their theoretical and methodological approaches, fields of expertise, and their position towards application and development. (Teichler 1996; Teichler 2000.) Higher education researchers with an interest in higher education theoretically and methodologically[5] may be characterized as

- *discipline-based, occasional:* strong basis in own disciplinary background theoretically and methodologically, with an occasional interest in higher education as a phenomenon.
- *discipline-based, continuous*: strong basis in own disciplinary background theoretically and methodologically, with a continuous interest in higher education as a phenomenon.
- *theme-based academic higher education researcher;* somewhat connected to own theoretical and methodological background, but more connected to the thematic and practical questions of higher education research.

[5] The remaining roles mentioned by Teichler (2000) are those of applied higher education researcher, consultant, and reflective practitioner; who, in Teichler's view do not share an interest in theoretical and methodological development of the field.

Another way of looking at higher education research as interdisciplinary is to take views of centralist, pluralist and integrationist models of interdisciplinarity as the starting point (van Leeuwen 2005a). By the centralist view, van Leeuwen refers to a view where particular, disciplinarily defined theories and methodologies are in focus. The pluralist view starts with research issues and problems, as does the integrationist view, which goes further than the pluralist view in that "no single discipline can satisfactorily" address any given problem on its own. I realised that my original inability – as I had felt it - to identify myself either as a linguist or a social scientist had its roots in an apologetic "I'm not a centralist" viewpoint. Higher education studies do, however, fall under the pluralist, or the integrationist view.

The articles in *Perspectives in Higher Education*, edited by Burton Clark (1984), deal with eight disciplines or perspectives which have a bearing to higher education research. *The Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (1992), edited by Burton Clark and Guy Neave and published eight years after Clark's work, presents as many as 19 different disciplines and approaches to higher education. In his Introduction to the Encyclopedia's section on disciplinary perspectives on higher education, Tony Becher refers to different disciplinary views on higher education by using different metaphors presented by the writers in the Encyclopedia: spotlights on a stage, spectacles with distinctive lenses, or nets for catching fish (Becher 1992, 1763-1765).

Applications of (text and discourse) linguistics in higher education research are easily understandable in the study of differences in disciplinary discourse (see for instance Parry 1998), or in comparisons of scientific argumentation (see, for instance, Mauranen 1993). In one of the articles in the Encyclopedia, Bazerman (1992) looks at higher education from the point of view of the language of disciplines and the ways in which academic disciplines form their own worlds. This is, as such, a viable and interesting field of study, and could be taken further in the cultural approach to higher education research. This view is theoretically interesting in offering possibilities for the study of, say, differences in disciplinary or institutional cultures or identities (see for instance Ridley 2004; Richardson 2004).

In higher education policy research, in turn, at least viewpoints of policy studies (Maurice Kogan, Ivar Bleiklie), sociology (Burton Clark, Pierre Bourdieu), and educational sciences (Tony Becher, Noel Entwistle) can be found. For instance the roots of an extensive comparative study (Kogan & al. 2000) can be found in organisational sociology and politology.

Henkel (1998) calls for knowledge from different knowledge traditions in order to identify the potential range of issues in higher education evaluation. Rhoades (2001) sees the prevailing perspectives in higher education policy studies in organizational sociology and policy science, and finds new possibilities for instance in William Tierney's postmodern and Nelli Stromquist's feminist outlooks on higher education in a special number of Higher Education (vol. 44, 1) on *Perspectives on comparative higher education*. Tight (2003) goes as far to suggest that using less popular methodologies and

approaches (such as conceptual analysis, phenomenography, critical and feminist approaches among others) would offer the most rewards and challenges.

2.2.2 Position of linguistics in higher education research

The "Foucaultian" view of discourse had been introduced in social sciences since the 1970's (see, for instance, Powers 2007) and has more or less dominated the field to the point that the mere mention of discourse implies a certain theoretical approach. In recent decades, however, linguistic and textual methods have found their way into social science research. This has been referred to as "the linguistic turn" in social science (see Summa 1989; Fairclough 1992). Fashionable terminology - discourse, genre, communication, context, representation, rhetoric etc. - is abundant, as are the meanings given to these terms (Hiidenmaa 2000, 163).

In higher education policy studies, this linguistic turn has not been so obvious. Higher education policy studies are frequently conducted by using policy documents as data. This does not, however, make the study text analytical. As Tight (2003, 188) points out, surprisingly little document analysis is done in higher education research, even if a lot of the data is textual. He is, in fact, rather vague about what he refers to as documentary analysis, but it appears that any method utilising documents would fit into this category. Tight (2003, 188) suggests that one (paradoxical) reason for this may be that using documents – "reading them" – is to such extent endemic to research that it is easily assumed that no particular guidance or methodology is needed[6].

When practical applications of linguistics in higher education research are considered, it may be more helpful to start out with Teichler's identification of four spheres of knowledge than with a disciplinary approach. Teichler's "spheres of knowledge in higher education" (Teichler 1996, 441) are:

- quantitative–structural aspects;
- knowledge and subject related aspects;
- person-related as well as teaching and research related aspects; and
- aspects of organisation and governance.

These spheres are distinguished more by the research theme than by the disciplinary basis they represent. In fact, a particular theme or sphere can be approached from different directions, or disciplines. Similarly, as Teichler points out, any demanding or ambitious research project would have to consider and address more than one sphere at a time. (Teichler 1996, 441-442.)

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6 Quentin Skinner has said (while discussing the historians' problems in understanding and interpreting ideas presented in literature) that "it is hard to see how any amount of reading the text 'over and over again' as we are exhorted to do, could possibly serve as the means to gain this understanding" (Skinner 1969, 32; see also Palonen's discussions on Skinner for instance in Palonen 1996). While Skinner is not, in this passage, referring to methodological problems of text interpretation as such, he draws our attention to the apparent self-evident nature of texts as data that Tight (2003) also discusses.

Methodologically, it is clear that higher education policy research could be conducted from a variety of theoretical and hermeneutic traditions, while using text analytical methods in answering the questions posed from the different viewpoints.

Linguistic analyses of policy texts have been rare in higher education policy studies so far. A look into articles published in three higher education journals confirms that while the concept of 'discourse' has been used in various meanings, specifically linguistic applications of discursive approaches in higher education policy studies remain rare. The analysis was conducted by first searching the journals for the words "discourse" and "policy". They were then read in order to see whether the writer defined his or her view of "discourse" in any way (either explicitly, by giving a definition, or implicitly, for instance by referring to a particular theorist or tradition), or whether the term was used in a general "way of talking about something" (van Dijk 1997), without any reference to a particular tradition.

The journals in question, while being international, do have a strong European basis. *Higher Education* is published by Springer Netherlands; *Studies in Higher Education* is published for the United Kingdom based (though international) Society for Research into Higher Education; and the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* is published by Routledge / Taylor & Francis in the United Kingdom, while having a strong position also in Australia. Concentrating on more specifically American journals (such as the *Review of Higher Education*, published by the Johns Hopkins University Press, or the *Journal of Higher Education*, published by the Ohio University Press) might have produced a somewhat different result.

In *Studies in Higher Education*, there were altogether 53 articles somehow dealing with policy issues between 1990-2005, three of which mentioned discourse (Peters 1992; Barnett 1994; Greener & Perriton 2005). In these, the concept of discourse was, however, not particularly problematised, and used mainly in the informal and general (van Dijk 1997) meaning of "way of talking about something".

In *Higher Education* in 1993-2005, there were 166 articles mentioning 'policy', and of these, 10 dealt with policy issues and discourse. Of these ten, five articles utilised and/or problematised the concept of discourse somehow (most notably Vidovich 2002; Chan 2005). A Foucaultian or critical view was taken in some of these articles (for instance Chan 2005; Robertson & Bond 2005). In three articles, the concept of discourse was utilised to describe and enable the juxtaposition of two, opposing policy arguments or views. (Välimaa & Westerheijden 1995; Robertson & Bond 2005).

In the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 1998-2005, there were 151 policy-related articles – understandably many, considering the focus of the journal. Of these articles, two took a discourse approach, but without any particular problematisation of the concept as such. Clegg (2005) discusses the dominant vs. competing discourses of management, and de Freitas & Oliver (2005) understand discourse as a "way of talking about something".

Looking from the point of view of discourse studies, the situation is analogical. While policies have been analyzed frequently with the methods of critical discourse analysis, for instance in *Discourse & Society* (SAGE), during the years 2000-2003 no articles appeared with a focus on educational policy, let alone higher education policy. The same applies to the *Journal of Language and Politics (*John Benjamins). In the journal *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education* (Routledge), education policy articles appear more frequently. The concept of 'discourse' is, however, used in various meanings. In an interesting example, Vidovich (2001) looks at Australian higher education policy by tracking the various 'chameleon-like qualities' presented in policy documents.

Critical higher education research is only now beginning to become more visible (see for instance Henry & al. 2001; Vidovich 2001; Nóvoa & Lawn 2002b). The concept of discourse has been used by Välimaa & Westerheijden (1995) in discussing the existence and interplay of research discourse and policy-making discourse in higher education policy. Henry et al. (2001) have discussed the discursive practices of the OECD policy making. Nóvoa et al. (2002b) have looked into the discursive construction of Europe in the EU setting. In Finland, Herranen (2003) has studied the Finnish polytechnics as a discursive space. Söderqvist (2002), in turn, has analysed internationalisation of higher education by conceptual, content and discourse analytical methods. Stensaker (2000) defines discourse as "focused dialogue" between two actors, in his case the public and the HE institutions. Policy can also be seen as a discursive power play, or a struggle for meanings and the right to define them. (Henry ym. 2001, 128; Vidovich & Porter 1999).

2.3 Discursive analysis of policy

Chapter 2.3 looks at the methodological possibilities offered by linguistics to higher education policy studies, first in general in chapter 2.3.1, and then as the particular choices made in this work are presented in chapter 2.3.2.

2.3.1 Methodological possibilities

A lot of social studies research deals explicitly with texts as primary sources, which makes the use of textual analysis all the more relevant. Seidel (1985, 43) names content analysis as the predominant tool for analysing policy texts in sociology, social psychology and political science (see also Titscher et al. 2000), but otherwise, no particular linguistic tools were used to aid the analysis of sometimes huge masses of texts. It seems that the traditional textual method in social sciences appears to have been "close reading", or reading the text "as many times as necessary to grasp the meaning of the text". It could be said that this kind of textual analysis exhausts the analyser as well as the text.

Discourse analysts like Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough begun in the 1980's to ask themselves (and other discourse analysts) quite bluntly about the uses of discourse analysis in social sciences (see for instance van Dijk 1985b, 1-2; Fairclough 1995, 208-213). What is the relevance of discourse analysis to social study? Especially van Dijk criticised text analysts and linguists of sometimes ignoring the social setting and concentrating on a more descriptive and technical approach. He demanded that linguists move "from structural description to functional analysis" (van Dijk 1985a, 4-5).

Social scientists have, in turn, been criticised by discourse analysts of neglecting to use text analytical tools in the study of texts (for instance Blommaert 2005). In spite of "the linguistic turn" in social science (see Summa 1989; Fairclough 1992, 210), the use of textual methods has been scarce in higher education studies, and other, less linguistic tools, have prevailed.

For instance Koski (1993, 26-27) has studied the symbolic order of Finnish universities by using the concept of discourse in the Foucaultian sense, where discourse not only describes the object and its characteristics, but also defines and creates it at the same time. The use of metaphor suits this kind of "symbolic" approach well, since Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) views on metaphor conform to the idea of "language not only describing, but also creating" (Koski 1993, 31). Summa (1989) has, in turn, used rhetoric in studying housing policies as an example of welfare policy planning in Finland. She has attempted to base her analysis partly on classical rhetoric, but especially on Perelman's "new rhetoric".

This study originally had a rhetorical starting point. I see rhetoric from an Aristotelian viewpoint; in other words, as an art of conscious (political or judicial) persuasion (Kennedy 1991). Of course, nowadays it is not unusual to see rhetoric referred to pejoratively, as "empty" words and political demagogue. Having been brought to this topic originally by views of the new rhetoric and the idea of persuasive policy (Saarinen 2002), I landed into problems with the rhetorical starting point. As described above, I committed myself to looking at the issue of policy change from the viewpoint of social constructivism: while the texts do describe the society, they also create and maintain a particular social system and order. In the end, I found myself not too interested in the views of cognitive or discursive psychology and issues brought with it, how ever interesting they may be (see Burr 2003; Potter & Wetherell 1987; and especially van Dijk 2002 on applying cognitive psychology to political discourse studies). Especially far from my mind was the idea of analysing the intentions of the writers and readers of the documents from a cognitive starting point. For me, the idea of looking at the texts as having a dialogical relationship (for instance Fairclough 2003) with the society turned out to be more fruitful.

What was left over from the original, rhetorical starting point (in addition to article III) was the assumption that policy planning documents – in this case, higher education policy documents – can be seen persuasively. Policy is persuasive by nature (see Becher & Kogan 1992). Consequently, when policies are studied, this basic nature should be taken into account. Persuasion is not

only defined by presenting facts about an existing political situation and presenting rational solutions to the problems (cf. Fredriksson 1992).

I am not interested in the documents' writers' (political) intentions, as fascinating that might be as an approach to the study of policy documents. For example Wilson's (1990) work on the pragmatic analysis (from the point of view of implicature or presupposition, for example) of political language is interesting as such, but takes on from the linguistic aspects or politically manipulative language:

> Most important, from the perspective of this book, is the general idea that speakers can employ implicative relations in order to direct a hearer's interpretation. I am not suggesting that this is a form of 'thought manipulation' in any Orwellian or deterministic sense however. It is more a conjuring trick, where we employ those forms which we predict will lead to the interpretation most conducive to our aims at a point in time. (Wilson 1990, 21.)

I adhere to Luukka (2000, 157) who states that discourse analysis which overlooks the structures and systems of language easily falls into no more than commentary on the texts. Even in a socially oriented text analysis, the structures and forms of language have to be taken into account. Fairclough criticises the social scientists who are

> "ready to accept the in principle that social life is built in and around language, but it is more difficult to persuade them on a practical level that text analysis needs to be done on their methods".

Equally dangerous, in Fairclough's mind, is to "reduce all of social life into discourse, and all of social science to discourse analysis". (Fairclough 1995, 185.)

Thus, having abandoned rhetorical analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA) seemed to provide the starting point I had been looking for. CDA has taken a task of trying to fill the gaps between textual analyses and social processes, as described above, and sees language as "social practice". It is particularly interesting from the point of view of studying institutional, political, gender and media discourses (Wodak 2001a, 1-2). 'Critical' can be traced back to the influence of the "Frankfurt School" and Jürgen Habermas (Wodak 2001a, 2). In present-day discourse analysis, however, the implications of 'critical' are mainly about 'making things visible' – and I adhere to this view - although the social and political, or emancipatory aspects of effecting change in the society are also a central element of critical language studies (van Dijk 1997, 22-23; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999, 35; Pietikäinen 2000).

CDA has a background in critical linguistics (see for instance Kress & Hodge 1979), but has also been influenced by classical rhetoric, text linguistics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and pragmatics (Blommaert 2005; for an extensive and also personal look into the origins of CDA, see Wodak 2001a). The CDA programme (Blommaert 2005) is characterized by its heterogeneity of theoretical and methodological approaches, problem based, and is perhaps best

described in van Dijk's (1993, 131) words as "at most a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis".

CDA is naturally located in the tradition of functional (social) constructionism, where

- discourse is seen as a form of social practice
- the focus of study is the (social) construction of meanings in the community
- meanings are seen to be created dialogically in the community.

The aim of critical discourse analysis is on one hand to bring together, through linguistic analysis, detailed information on the discursive side of social events, and on the other, to connect the linguistic phenomena into their wider societal contexts (Pietikäinen 2000, 193). Fairclough in fact coined the term "textually oriented discourse analysis" or TODA in his 1992 work *Language and Social Change*, but seems not to have used it since.

CDA includes a wide variety of approaches, but most often Norman Fairclough's (1989; 1992; 2003) views on the relationship between language use and wider societal structures, Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach (2001b), and Teun van Dijk's work on discourse and cognition (2002) come up. Theo van Leeuwen and Günther Kress have been involved in the development of theories of socio-semiotics and multimodal concepts of semiosis, also influential in CDA work. (van Leeuwen 2005b; Hodge & Kress 1988.)

The views of CDA, and in particular Fairclough's work on discourse and social change (1992) helped me to move on with the study of discourse as social practice, away from the original rhetorical interest. It seemed to fit my needs, both methodologically and as a general view into doing research (Fairclough 1992; Titscher et al. 2000), although, as described further in this chapter, I also ended up having some reservations about whether it were better for entry into than exit from this study.

CDA has theoretical, methodological, historical and political implications (Fairclough 1992; Muntigl 2000; Meyer, 2001).

The theoretical implication relates to the fact that texts constitute one important form of social action (both on macro and micro level). Since language widely (mis-)perceived as transparent, this function of texts in constructing, reproducing or transforming social structures is routinely overlooked.

From a methodological point of view, texts provide a major source of evidence for grounding claims about social structures, relations and processes.

The historical implication is that texts can be seen as sensitive barometers of social processes, movement and diversity. Thus, textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change, as texts provide evidence of ongoing processes

The political implication of CDA relates specifically to social science with critical objectives. Social control and social domination are exercised (and

negotiated and resisted) through texts; notably in the media but elsewhere as well.

Since discourses simplify (Fairclough 2005, 55-56) economic and political relations, it depends on four factors whether a particular discourse 'wins' or 'loses' in the policy situation:

- *structural selectivities*; structures are more open to some strategies than others;
- *scope and reach of the discourse*; some discourses such as 'globalisation'; 'knowledge based economy' or 'quality' are nodal discourses which articulate many other discourses
- t*he differentiated capacities and power of the social agents* whose strategy it is to get their message across; access to (or control over) mass media and other channels and networks for diffusion;
- *resonance* of discourses, their capacity to mobilize people, not only in the institutions but also in the lifeworld.

Some critical discourse analysis has been done on policy processes (see Muntigl et al. 2000; Augoustinos et al. 2002; Pardo 2002). The uses of CDA are, however, quite rare in higher education policy studies. It seems that when 'discourse' appears in educational studies, it is used more in the abstract Foucaultian than the linguistic meaning. Granted, the Foucaultian view of discourse as an archive of social meanings and a set of power struggles (see for instance Foucault 2002) has more in common with the Critical Discourse Analysis view of language as a form of social practice (Fairclough 1989; 1992) than for instance with the views of discursive psychology (see Burr 2003), where the focus is on individual constructs of mental and social events.

There are some problems with CDA, which for me surfaced during the problem, and lead towards some ideas for further research, presented in chapter 6 of this work.

As stated above, CDA cannot be considered a homogeneous social research method. Rather, it is a collection of different viewpoints, characterized by pragmatism, problem orientation and a linguistic orientation. This is also the source for criticism towards CDA: followed carelessly, this may also lead towards coincidental (or, in extreme cases, politically motivated) research settings and data selections, and consequently turn the analysis into a political programme and ideological interpretation. (Titscher & al. 2000, 163). Critical discourse analysts (see Fairclough, 1992), in turn, aim at rejecting this criticism by stating that in order to be able to answer complex social questions, the research setting will have to be open. Also, recognizing and stating one's own position as a researcher is a basic necessity in CDA research. These questions are regularly brought up within the circle of Critical discourse analysts themselves. (For an example, see the discussion in Discourse & Society, vol. 1999).

Blommaert (2005) presents three major criticisms on CDA. First, he rejects what he calls the *linguistic bias* in CDA. By this, he refers to CDA's dependence on systemic-functional grammar (Halliday 1994), and to CDA's dependence on available discourse, which restricts the analysis to textually organised data. For me, the latter problem surfaced towards the end of this process, as I begun to play with the concept of "discursive operationalisation" of policy action (see chapter 6). Scollon (2001), presents a somewhat related criticism of many language and discourse theories which claim to focus on 'social action', but in the end becoming focussed with text, backgrounding other aspects of social action as 'context' (see chapter 2.3.2 for a more detailed discussion of *context)*. This, in his understanding, can lead to a distorted understanding of the relationship between discourse and social action. While I realize that the scope of this work allows only for the analysis of the textual aspects of discourse and 'context', I try to keep in mind that the textual representation of social action is not all there is.

Second, Blommaert finds CDA's closure to particular kinds of societies (i.e. post-industrial, First World highly integrated) problematic, taking into account CDA scholars' interest in phenomena such as globalisation (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).

Third, Blommaert criticizes CDA for its closure to a particular time-frame, and finds that what CDA scholars call a 'historical' development, is in fact a quite fast development of two or three decades. This criticism hits my work in that the longest time-frames fro my study span from the 1960's (see chapter 2.4. on data), even if the phenomenon of 'quality' or related issues such as 'accountability', and the related ideological higher education policy problematics, have a longer history (Welch 1998).

With this criticism in mind, I realized that it was easier for me to commit to the methodological eclecticism of CDA and the ontological assumption about the social construction of reality than its 'critical' background assumptions. The appeal is in its combination of taking a linguistic analysis of texts, continuing with an interpretation of the discursive practices, and coming up with a social explanation. Discourses, defined as social practices, mediate between the individual social events (or 'texts') and abstract social structure (Fairclough 2006).

There are naturally several other possibilities outside Critical Discourse Analysis within the field of linguistics (see chapter 2.3.1). The scope of this work does not allow for a presentation of, for instance, ethnographic views (Gumperz & Hymes 1986) on higher education policy discourse, or semantic or cognitive analyses on metaphors (see Lakoff & Johnson 1980) connected with 'quality', without any particular focus on the social implications of a quality policy. Using methodologies of, for instance, conversation analysis (see Hammersley 2003 for a discussion on ethnomethodological conversation analysis in relation to discourse analysis) would have been equally interesting in the realm of higher education policy. Different forms of rhetorical analysis would also offer interesting insights into texts. This study uses the rhetorical

concept of persuasion (see article III) in the sense used by the so-called New Rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Perelman 1996), but for instance van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1987; 2004; van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 2003) views of pragma-dialectical argumentation would have offered interesting possibilities for reconstructing arguments in policy texts. For introductions into other textual methods and their applications in social sciences, as well as for further reading, see Titscher et al. (2000), Wodak & Meyer (2001) and Fairclough (2003).

2.3.2 Methodological choices made in this work

As described above, this work started with an interest in rhetoric, and particularly New Rhetoric, and then moved on to the views of Critical Discourse Analysis. Both have left their traces in this work, despite of the reservations I ended up having towards both approaches.

From the New Rhetoric, the concept of *persuasion* continued to be interesting (see article III). Policies are, in general persuasive (see Muntigl 2002), and in particular the transnational policies of the EU and the OECD can be said to be based on a "construction of a consensual best practice", as Dale (2006) says in the context of the EU. For me, however, *persuasion* is not about its effectiveness as such, but about the means in which persuasive discourse is structured and constructed.

Critical Discourse Analysis, in turn, provided the entry point into combining a linguistic analysis of texts with an analysis of discursive and social practices. On the other hand, with the kind of macro-level data I used (see chapter 2.4), other approaches became more easily applicable (see article III for an application of presuppositions in the study of policy texts and article IV for a view of social actors).

Fairclough (1992, 75-85) distinguishes between seven dimensions of analysis; the first four can be seen as elements of text analysis and the remaining three as elements of the analysis of discursive practice:

- vocabulary; or individual words
- grammar; or words forming sentences and clauses
- cohesion; or how the sentences are linked together
- text structure; or large scale organisational properties of texts
- force; or the speech acts (promises, threats, requests etc)
- coherence; or the "meaningfulness" of texts
- intertextuality; or the relationship of texts to other texts

These elements are then used as the analysis progresses from the analysis of discourse practices (intertextuality and interdiscursivity; or macro level) to text analysis (micro level) to analysis of social practice of which the discourse is a part (Fairclough 1992, 231). As Fairclough points out, this process goes from interpretative to descriptive and back to interpretative. (Fairclough 2003.)

Figure 1 presents the process of a CDA study, from description of the linguistic properties of the text, to the interpretation of productive discursive practices, to the social explanation of the relationship between the discursive and social practices. This frame is useful as a heuristic device, even if no distinctly CDA approach were taken, since it draws attention to not only the linguistic analysis, but its interconnectedness to discursive and social practices. The process is not linear, but the analyst has to move back and forth from one level to another during the research process.

From the point of view of the level of textual description, or the descriptive part of analysis, word meaning, word choice, and the use of metaphors (both lexical and grammatical, see Fairclough 2003) appear particularly interesting from the point of view of (higher education) policy analysis.

Metaphors can evoke some automatic, cognitive conceptualisations, which makes it difficult to recognise them, and resist the ideologies presented in them. In political texts, metaphors "constrain our lives", as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state in their classic *Metaphors we live by*. For Fairclough (1989), metaphors "imply different ways of dealing with things", suggesting, again, that language is not so much about description but action. For instance, are difficult policy concepts presented with metaphors of struggle or co-operation? In articles I and II, this conceptual property of metaphors is applied.

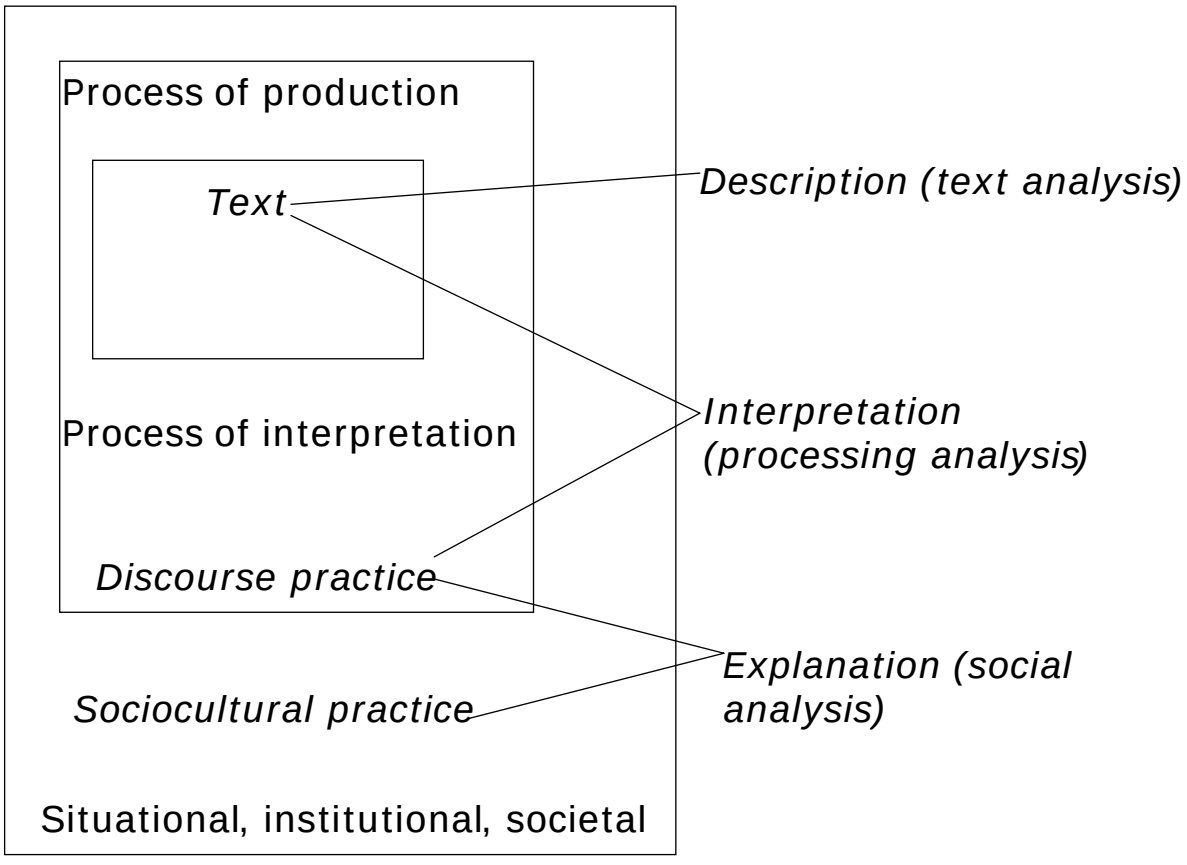

FIGURE 1 Critical discourse analysis as process (Fairclough 1992; 1995; Titscher & al. 2000)

Equally interesting is who appears as the *actor* in the texts. Actors can be looked at from an individualistic (the significance of individual key actors) or holistic (structures of the society sets limits to the role of the actor) viewpoint (Heiskala 2000). While some actors may be said to have more power in the re/construction process of discourses, the policy processes cannot be reduced "to the intentions and ambitions of a few key actors" (Ball 1990, 155; Bacchi 2000, 51).

I am particularly interested in the discursive representations of *social actors* (see Article IV). van Leeuwen's (1995; 1996) approach on social actors and social action allows for a wide range of actors to be taken into account, not just the grammatical ones. The social actors have roles, and the representation of these activities and roles, in turn, leads to a possibility of viewing the representations of different spheres of policy action in the documents.

van Leeuwen presents a wide taxonomy of social actors and action (1995; 1996). In this study, the analysis of social actors and their representation is particularly limited to the representation of inclusion vs. exclusion; passivisation or activisation; and personalisation or impersonalisation. From the social point of view, not mentioning some actor or group of actors can be ideologically at least as significant as mentioning another, if not more so. Is there an actor visible, or are the actions presented in passive voice? Often simply the analysis of exclusion or inclusion from a policy situation reveals something new. Are the desired actions in the policy documents represented in the active voice (does somebody or something cause things to happen), or are they represented as "just happening" (as a force of nature).

Policy is, in this study, a highly persuasive genre (Muntigl 2002), and consequently, policy planning and policy making are "practical processes of argumentation" (Fischer & Forester 1993, 1). As I said earlier, this work started with an interest in Perelman's New Rhetoric (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969). New Rhetoric relies primarily on rhetoric as persuasion (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969; see also Perelman, 1996).

However, I did not end up doing analysis on persuasion either from an Aristotelian point of view of the effectiveness of persuasion (see Kennedy 1991; Aristotle 1991) or from the the pragma-dialectic point of view resolving a difference of opinion (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004). Instead, I got interested in the persuasive features of implicit language. Rather than look at the premises of argumentation as a starting point for persuasion, I approached presupposition as persuasive (Sbisá 1999), which brings viewpoints of pragmatics into this work.

While Levinson (1983, 21) is tempted to define *pragmatics* as "the study of those aspects of meaning not covered in semantics", he ends up sketching some issues and concerns that he feels pragmatists should concern themselves with. These include questions of meaning and interpretation in social contexts, which leads to a quite diverse approaches to human interaction. For Leech (1983) pragmatics is simply defined as "how language is used in communication", and

Thomas (1995), rather similarly, defines pragmatics as "meaning in interaction".

Verschueren (1995), in turn, defines pragmatics as "the cognitive, social and cultural study of language and communication". This is also a wide definition, since it includes both language form and its use, which in turn links it to cognitive, social and cultural processes. (Verschueren 1995.) As such, pragmatics is naturally linked to sociolinguistic traditions.

In this study, especially the concept of implicitness (article III) is important (Bertucelli 1995). Östmans's (1986, 312-313) point about persuasion based by nature on implicit cues and markers rather than on explicit facts and arguments was one of the early entry points of this work, and Bertucelli (1995) actually finds Östman's treatment of implicitness as the defining characteristic of pragmatics.

In policy documents, a lot is necessarily *presupposed*. To presuppose something is to take it for granted (or at least act as if we do) that the interlocuters share some common ground (Stalnaker 2002). Presupposition is generally understood to mean the explicit and implicit background knowledge that the producer of the text offers the reader as the joint starting point for communication. Presuppositions may be triggered by various linguistic means (see Levinson 1983, 181-184). In article III, especially the use of existential, but also factive and temporal presuppositions was analysed (see Levinson 1981, 181-184).

However, it is not reasonable to assume that the interlocutors would always share the same common ground. *(*Sbisà 1999*)*. Wodak (2007) suggests, in fact, that when new information is given as presupposed, it may be used to trigger audience consent to what is expressed, even if that what is presupposed would be contested or controversial. Presuppositions help set the frame of interpretation for the texts (Bertucelli 2006), but they may simultaneously hide value assumptions and ideological standpoints. Presuppositions can be used to represent as self-evident assumptions about how our world should look like, and can thus be used as one way of shaping views of the reality (Sbisá 1999). Persuasion can, in this sense, be defined as the textual cues which have been placed to suggest the reader how the texts should be interpreted (Magalhães 1995).

By studying policy texts it is not possibly to see their actual success in persuading the reader. Using discourse analytical methods is, however, helpful in analysing how policy documents are constructed in a persuasive way. How are presuppositions cued? What is presented as old or new information and how? Are presuppositions polemical, sincere, or manipulative?

The use of presuppositions can serve a persuasive function, as they may narrow the space where competing voices can be negotiated (Muntigl 2002; see also Fairclough 1992 and 2003). And when presuppositions offer ideological or value-laden arguments as given background information, they have a persuasive function (see Sbisà 1999).

In article V, a more traditional semantic device of the *semantic triangle* was applied, where the relationship between symbols and thought is described (for an illustration, see figure 3 in chapter 4.1.5). The semantic triangle is usually first attributed to Ogden and Richards (1989, 10; see also Eskola & Suoranta 1998), as they discussed the relationships between "thoughts, words and things", or references, symbols and referents. The symbol ("word", in the case of article V "accreditation") symbolises the reference ("thought", or the idea of "accreditation"). The referent, in turn is an actual entity, something that exists (practises and conducts of "accreditation"). The connection between the symbol and the referent is implied. While the triangle has been criticised as simplistic (Eco 1989), in article V the triangle served to illustrate the very practical differences in the usages and meanings of *accreditation* in four European countries.

The analysis of social practice in the CDA process (figure 1) is more difficult to put into a checklist like the above described means for textual and discursive analysis. For this study, the central aspect would be to interpret and re-interpret the discursive practice produced in the policy texts and to link the analyses with the context of implemented higher education policies, by using existing research on higher education policy implementations. However, the concept of policy *context* turned out to be a difficult one, if I assume that policy is discursive. How could a 'situation' or a 'setting', as context is often defined, be predefined, if I assume that policy is discursively constructed? The term *context* is often used fuzzily, and it seems to indicate an arbitrary reduction of relevant connected policy issues into mere background noise. (See also Scollon 2001.)

Wodak (2001b) defines context by four criteria:

- the immediate, language or text-internal cotext and the local processes;
- the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;
- the language-external social/sociological level which is called the 'context of situation' and explained by middle-range theories
- the broader socio-political and historical contexts.

Wodak's definition widens the understanding of context, but leaves the basic problem untouched: context is background. van Dijk (1997) beats around the same bush by defining context as "the structure of all properties of the social situation that are relevant for the production or the reception of discourse". Moreover, van Dijk also stresses the dialogical relationship of discourse and context by saying that not only does context influence discourse, but vice versa.

Blommaert (2001) acknowledges the fact that the intersection of discourse and social structure (as the primary focus of CDA) presents interesting and relevant research problems, but simultaneously criticises CDA, much like Scollon (2001) does, for treating *context* as "backgrounding and narrative". Blommaert does not really have a new definition for *context,* but he offers

alternative ways of merging discourse and social structure. Some of these (like the notion of "home narratives" of asylum seekers or "data histories" of gathered ethnographic data) may be more useful for ethnographers, but the concept of *text trajectories* has already been dealt with earlier in this work in chapter 2.1.2 By tracking the recontextualisations, or text trajectories, ultimately points towards questions of who has the power to transform the discourses, which in turn leads us to social structure, or 'context'. For Blommaert, *context* is a question of "normalized" power and hegemony. (Blommaert 2001.)

However, for the practical purposes of this study, context is defined as any factor which has an influence on how a (policy) event is constructed. The relevance of this definition would then have to be tested with something like the triangulation process in the discourse-historical approach (Wodak 2001b).

The choices of particular methodological approaches taken in each article are presented and discussed further in chapter 4.

2.4 Research questions and data

This study analyses 'quality' as a higher education policy phenomenon. While this work is set in the larger frame of discursive formation of higher education policy, the analysis is limited into the appearance of 'quality' in those policies. The different meanings and uses of 'quality' need to be conceptualized, in order to be able in the future to look further into national and international higher education policies with quality implications. Also, I am hoping to be able to look into higher education policies through the 'quality window' – what do 'quality policies' tell us about higher education policy in general? As Dunne (2003), I hope to make explicit some quality policy issues which the policy reader (either policy makers or researchers) have noticed but cannot quite pin down. 'Quality' is, in other words, an entry point (see Fairclough 2006) into the study of higher education policies. This work takes a macro level approach into the quality policy.

As stated earlier, higher education policies have not been studied extensively as discursive policies. The purpose of this study is, thus, to fill this gap in higher education policy studies. The motivations for the study are,

- theoretically, to investigate (higher education) policy as a discursive process
- methodologically, to apply discourse analytical methods in the study of (higher education) policy texts
- practically, to learning more about higher education policy formation by using 'quality' and 'quality policy' as and entry point into the study of higher education.

The main research question is: What kind of higher education policy is produced and supported in the name of 'quality'?

This main question can be operationalised into analytical subquestions:

- How is the concept 'quality' contextualised in higher education policy documents? What kinds of metaphors are used to give it meaning?
- How is the concept 'quality' operationalised in higher education policy documents? What actions are linked to it? What kinds of actors are active?
- What kinds of textual means are used to argue for the need of a 'quality policy' in the policy documents? What is presupposed? What kinds of values does the 'quality policy' promote?
- What kind of 'quality' is predominant at different times / places?

Chapter 4 and table 2 present an overview on how the questions are addressed in individual articles.

The data consists of higher education policy documents from the case countries and from the organizations studied: development plans, budget plans, policy declarations, policy implementation reports etc:

- Finnish HE policy documents (Council of State decisions, Development plans, Ministry of Education memoranda, Finnish Higher education Evaluation Council action plans) since the 1960s.
- OECD higher education policy publications since the 1960s
- European Union higher education policy documents since the 1970s
- Bologna process documentation (declarations, communiqués, background reports, follow-up reports and Finnish national reports)

The data is extensive, covering more than 4000 printed pages (see table 2). Most current documents are available on the Internet, which also means that they could be collected electronically. To make possible the kind of qualitative analysis conducted in the articles, analysis is limited to the occurrences of the word 'quality', and on the occurrences of that word in the introductions of the documents or on their sections dealing with quality. As discussed in more detail in chapter 3.4, 'quality' has be come a catchword on which different views on and needs for higher education policy can be reflected. It is also a high-stakes concept in the sense that it is loaded with "everyday expectations" – who would not want high quality instead of mediocre or low? As Sultana (2002) says, 'quality' has "travelled in sociologically interesting ways between one context and another".

Introductions were chosen as I assumed that in them, the documents' premises about the meanings, uses and purposes of 'quality' would be visible. Van Dijk & Kintsch (1983) have suggested that titles express the main ideas of a discourse, or at least fragments of them. I assume that the same applies to

introductions, where the writer generally states his or her position or argument, or states a strategy or method for analysing the presented problem presented.

At this point, I limited the study on textual data only; i.e., written policy documents from the Ministry level and from the transnational organisations. The macro-level analysis means that no university, department or individual academic voice is heard in this study. At this point I wanted to reconstruct the national and transnational policy interface. As I will tell in chapter 6, there are limitations to this approach. Data selections for individual articles are described and argumented in more detail in chapter 4 and in the articles themselves.

3 HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY: RECENT CHANGES AND THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY

This chapter takes a look into the changes of the last three decades in higher education policies in general, and in the introduction of 'quality' as a higher education phenomenon in particular. First, however, a short look is taken into how "change" can be conceptualised in higher education policy.

3.1 Policy change or discursive policy? [7]

Change is somehow self-evidently assumed as either source for policy action or its consequence. Consequently, change is often in the focus of higher education policy research, since policy aims at change. Advocates of policy change (often politicians) have been interested in follow up of processes of change, which has had meant that higher education reforms have often been looked at as implementation processes (Cerych & Sabatier 1986; Kyvik 2005). On the other hand, change has also been analysed by applying various social theories and viewpoint (Saarinen & Välimaa 2006; see for instance Clark 1983; Becher & Kogan 1992; Kogan & al. 2000; Vabo 2002).

Policy change can be looked at from several perspectives. One possibility is to see change on one dimension as external or internal, and on another dimension as evolution or conflict. (Burke 1992; Saarinen & Välimaa 2006.) Figure 2 depicts different views on change, as found in current higher education policy research. The figure consists of four fields defined by external vs. internal characteristics of change on one hand, and the tendency towards conflict vs. balance on the other. External change can be characterised as borrowing, imitation, or diffusion. Often used metaphors for internal change are *growth* or *decay*. Change as evolution, in turn, refers to a gradual

7 This discussion is based on an article on different theoretical views on *change* that I wrote together with Jussi Välimaa (Saarinen & Välimaa 2006).

development. Conflict refers to an abrupt change or discontinuation. (Burke 1992.)

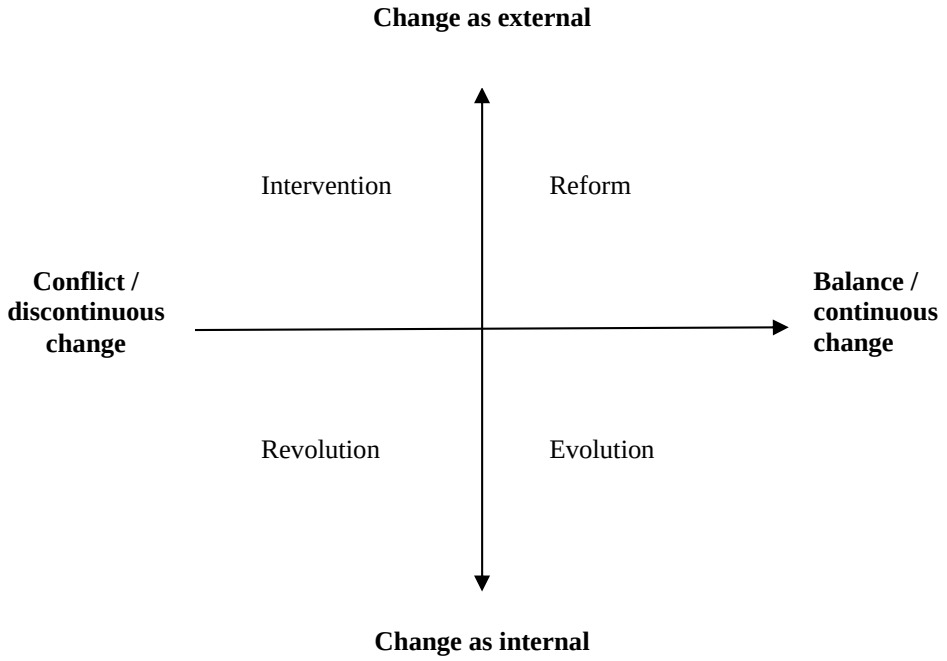

FIGURE 2 Theories and dynamics of change and different types of higher education policy change. (Saarinen & Välimaa 2006)

These views on change can be found also in higher education policy research. Amaral & Magalhães (2004) refer to the Bologna process with an external metaphor of 'epidemic'. Catchwords and ideas spread across countries, but information about the effects and experiences in the national situations is less easily transferred. Teichler (2004) has referred to supra-national organisations like the OECD as spreaders of viruses (see also Halpin & Troyna 1995 ; Ball 1998.)

However, as I said in chapter 2, discourses have a dual function: they construe social action and are themselves construed by it. Consequently, policy texts may describe and construe change, but they are also themselves construed by policies. Critical and conflict theoretical higher education research is only emerging as we speak (see for instance Henry & al 2001; Vidovich 2001; Nóvoa & Lawn 2002b). Thus, policy change can also be seen as a discursive power play, or a struggle for meanings and the right to define them (Vidovich & Porter 1999; Henry et al. 2001, 128). Policy change as discursive inevitably includes frictions between competing views and understandings about the policy (Ball, 1994), which in turn means that to think of 'policy' as an entity that either changes or not is irrelevant. Consequently, analysing policy change is not only a question of analysing causes and consequences of policy change, but the discursive processes that create the views on those policies. This does not

change the fact that the need for causing 'change', rather than need for preserving the status quo, is inherent to policy-making. That, however, can be traced back to the persuasive nature of policy (Muntigl 2002; Becher & Kogan 1992): *change* is discursively constructed as an essential aspect of policy making.

3.2 On recent higher education policy developments

In most Western countries, the steady post-war growth of higher education stagnated and even turned into a decline after the economic hardships of the 1970's. As public funding turned towards a decline in most European countries (Finland being one of the notable exceptions), concern about the quality of higher education began to increase. Governments recognized that improving public steering and management is an integral part of the structural adjustments needed for better economic performance in a changing environment. Consequently, universities and other institutions of higher education became increasingly accountable for the responsible and efficient use of their resources. Assessment and evaluation were usually initiated as an effort to control the universities and encourage them to improve their functions. [Bleiklie & Kogan 2000; Neave 1994; van Vught & Westerheijden 1994; Brennan & Shah 2000)

These changes can be traced back to different origins. The changes in higher education steering, implementation of quality assessment and assurance, and continuing stress on market forces are considered examples of international imitation by Kogan and Bauer (2000). Massification of higher education, on the other hand, is an example of a general, "natural" development, which cannot be pinned down to any particular actor or nation. (Kogan & Bauer 2000, 48-51.)

Change may also be pushed by national and local factors. The governments, on one hand, may advance changes, which have been influenced by international examples. The same demands may, on the other hand, have different kinds of realisations and implementations in different situations. For Kogan & al, this is not just a question of national idiosyncrasies and their impacts on higher education policies. Their analysis of higher education as a field of social actors also leads to the observation that higher education reforms are nationally only partly coordinated. (Kogan & al. 2000, 213-214.) On the other hand, not all simultaneous policy changes result from international influences.

Since the state has in European countries usually been responsible for most of the funding, it has been the state that has demanded evaluation as well. In more market-driven systems, on the other hand, the role of the 'consumers' of higher education (students and graduates, employers etc.) has been more significant than elsewhere. (Clark 1983; Staropoli 1991.) As a result of different needs, the approaches to assessment and follow-up have varied from

demonstrating efficiency to assuring and improving the quality of teaching (or recently increasingly learning) and research.

Various national evaluation and follow-up systems were set up in the 1990s to monitor higher education systems. Some countries gradually introduced systems to reward universities for desired behaviour, or to allocate basic funding. These measures varied from such 'low-profile' and broad yardsticks as number of new students, to considerably narrower, and also more controversial ones, like perceived quality of teaching or research.

3.3 International organisations and policies vs. national policies

Since most of this study looks into policy documents of international organisations or developments, it is necessary to look briefly into the policy-making functions and practices of international organisations.

Archer (1994, 9-11) has distinguished between three kinds of policy functions of international organisations:

- *policy instruments*, to be used to identify problems or to inform national debates, simultaneously enabling formal, diplomatic interaction between member states;
- *policy arenas,* providing a meeting place to discuss common interest, allowing for policy confrontations;
- *policy actors,* which take their place as entities in their own right, distinguishable from their member states.

Archer's definitions allow for an analysis of international organisations' policies as discursive. As policy instruments, the organisations promote international conceptualisations of problems and debates. As policy arenas, they provide a place to discuss and argue (to provide discourse and argumentation) the problems. And as policy actors, they engage in the persuasive actions by being the body that provides for the argumentation for a particular (political) viewpoint

Richardson (1996, 5) has studied European Union's policy making and suggests that it takes place in four stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy decision and policy implementation. The first three stages are distinctively discursive processes (see Muntigl 2000, 2), as ideologies and policies are constructed, reconstructed and 'co-constructed' (Wodak 2000) during the policy process. From the point of view of my work, especially the functions of agenda setting and policy formulation are interesting.

International organisations have as an in-built function that they are expected to cause change. Papadopoulos (1994) describes the role of the OECD from the point of views of national educational policies as 'catalytic', which implies some (intended) change, caused by some intervention. Further, Papadopoulos (1994, 13) implies that an international organisation like the

OECD could somehow rise 'above the horizon' and detect policy problems before they become hot national issues.

This study focuses in the international policy influences of the European Union and the OECD. Organisations such as the World Trade Organization (education as a commodity; Shumar 1997) or the International Monetary Fund and the World Band (especially on the role of education in the developing countries) would have provided ample and interesting alternative material for a study in the international higher education policy making.

While the focus of this study is not on 'globalisation' (see Beerkens 2004 for an excellent discussion on 'globalisation' vs. 'internationalisation' and 'transnationalisation'), the points that Burbules & Torres (2000, 10) have made about the situation of nation state in a 'global' situation are relevant also here.

Policy change is influenced by international or 'global' factors. Regardless of the recent international or global policy pressures, however, nation states still seem to be very much at the heart of national policy making (Marginson & Rhoades 2002; Enders 2004). Marginson & Rhoades (2002) criticize current conceptualizations of comparative higher education for not having taken the 'global' as a problem for study, but rather as a "residual explanation for observed commonalities across countries". Global forces are identified rather than analyzed. Enders (2004) refers, in turn, to the concentration on policy effects (and the consequent neglect of the process of policy formation) as one of the "blind spots" of higher education policy studies.

Burbules & Torres state that the nation state has to try and balance between responding to transnational capital; to global political structures; to domestic pressures and demands; and to its own internal needs and self-interests. As a consequence of these, (also) educational policies are

> "formed in the matrix of these four pressures, centered on the nation-state conceived no longer as a sovereign agent, but rather as an arbiter attempting to balance a range of internal and external pressures and constraints."

For Wodak (2005), this kind of 'glocalisation' referred to by Burbules and Torres above means a situation where trans-national policies are being re-contextualized in different and possibly conflicting national situations.

3.3.1 The OECD

The OECD (*Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*) was founded in 1961 to replace the post-war OEEC (*Organisation for European Economic Co-operation*). The main task of the OECD is to foster the economic development of its member states, and it is committed to a market economy and to Western, pluralist political democracy (Henry et al. 2001).

As a booster of economic growth, education has gained more importance since the founding of the OECD. (Papadopoulos 1994.) Since the 1960s, OECD educational policy was largely fuelled by the expectation of economic growth (Papadopoulos 1994, 37-39). Simultaneously, the higher education sector (as

other educational sectors) began to grow significantly. The first signs of a quality discussion were seen in the 1960s, as the effects of massification were discussed in connection with quality, efficiency and effectiveness. (Papadopoulos 1994, 69.)

The economic recession of the 1970s was a turning point for OECD education policy. The funding and administration of higher education landed under control, as the state took a tighter grip of issues that had earlier belonged to the academic community. (Papadopoulos 1994, 152-153.) In the 1980s and 1990s, the tightened grip of the state became visible as an increased demand for accountability and quality. Quality work grew radically especially within the programme IMHE (*Institutional Management in Higher Education)*.

Papadopoulos (1994) has characterized OECD's role in education as "catalytic" and "integrative". According to him, before the 1970, the social (for instance educational equality) overrode the economic in educational decisions, whereas since the recession, the logic of the theory of human capital became the leading ideology in educational policy making. (Papadopoulos 1994).

The first country reviews, which were to become a trademark of sorts, had been conducted in the 1950s, but only in the 1960s they began to include national background and planning documents, which changed their nature. (Papadopoulos 1994; Kogan 1979). The OECD's practice of producing reports as reviews makes it an "international mediator of knowledge" (Henry & al. 2001, 57). Kogan (1979, 70-75) has criticised the OECD about its tendency to select particular themes for its thematic reviews and thus for using its 'discussant' role to decrease national motivations and encourage 'cheap comparisons'; on the other hand, the role of the OECD in national education policies is not monolithic (Niukko 2006).

OECD is one of the international policy actors that create new concepts and consequently name and define problems (thus also 'creating' them) (Henry et al., 2001). In solving these problems, those who have been involved in formulating them have an advantage over those who have not. (see Bacchi 2000.) In policy texts, some things are foregrounded and others are forgotten. The texts of 'quality policy' not only describe the spreading of the 'quality epidemic', but also create and recreate the international, national and local context in which the quality policies are implemented.

3.3.2 The European Union

European Union (higher) education policy can be looked at in three phases (Corbett 2005). During the first decades of the European Economic Community education had a marginal role. Recognition of vocational diplomas and co-operation in vocational education aimed mainly at easing the free movement of labour.

The second phase witnessed a growth in the political importance of education. In the 1970's, the ministers of education of member states began their regular, if unofficial, meetings (Leitner 1993, 204). In the 1980's the European Court of Justice gave a decision which stated that also higher education is by

nature vocational (Keeling 2006). Thus, higher education was in effect included in the Treaty of Rome some thirty years after. As a consequence of the integration trends in the late 1980s, the Community education policy gained more momentum (Corbett 2005). Student and personnel exchange programmes expanded strongly in the 1980s. The mobility policy had contacts both to the labour policy and the cultural policy of the Community. From the point of view of the labour policy, the goal was to produce a flexible work force which was able and prepared to move from member country to other in search for work. From the point of view of cultural policy, the mobility programmes strengthened the sense of a European identity and integration. The purpose was not harmonisation of educational systems, although "voluntary" convergence was carefully referred to. (Leitner 1993.)

In the third phase, education was included in the Maastricht Treaty. Articles 149 and 150 (earlier 126 - 127) included student mobility, educational co-operation and exchanges, foreign language studies and distant learning in the core of the Union. Different levels of the educational system were no longer kept out of the agreement. (Corbett 2005)

The quality policy of the European Union has slowly taken shape in pilot projects dealing with methodologies of quality assurance. The then Conference of European Rectors (CRE; now EUA, the Association of European Universities), piloted its own quality assurance procedure in 1993 - 94. Reasoning from the point of view of the responsibilities of higher education establishments, it preferred an institutional approach of quality assurance to assessments of study programmes (van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994). With the strong suspicion towards a European Higher education policy in the early 1990s, the pilots were not followed up very keenly (van der Wende & Westerheijden, 2001).

Although the aim of the European Union is not a harmonization of the educational systems of the Member States, the pressure towards harmonization increased steadily as the internationalization of higher education intensified over the end of the last decade. The turning point on the convergence vs. harmonization discussion finally took place outside the European Union, in the Bologna process.

3.3.3 The Bologna Process

The latest changes into the European higher education policy scene were brought by the Bologna process, the process aiming at creating a European Higher Education Area. The Bologna process is not a development of some international organisation's efforts at harmonising higher education policies, but rather an indication of harmonisation – or, as Huisman & van der Wende (2004) rightly point out, preferably "convergence" - which was unthinkable some 10-15 years ago. Huisman & van der Wende suggest that some of the fears for convergence were erased by the national governments' positive experiences and developments, but as pointed out in Articles IV and V of this study, it is

also possible that the national governments have construed a version of convergence that they can live with.

The controversiality of harmonisation of systems is depicted in the debate surrounding the 1991 Memorandum on higher education. (COM(91); O'Callaghan 1993). It seems that while the efforts of the European Union were seen to intervene on the national policies in an inappropriate way, the 'voluntary' developments of individual countries and their ministries of education was more acceptable. In the 2000s, the Bologna process has served to release harmonisation pressures of the European Union also in quality matters (for the role of the European Union in the Bologna Process, see Keeling 2006).

The Bologna process offers an interesting window on the so-called "European dimension" of quality policy on the one hand and the national responses to that policy on the other. The prime motive behind this quality work is to ease the recognition and comparison of higher education systems and degrees. Thus, the Bologna process presents an interesting turning point in the internationalisation of European higher education in general and in the 'quality policy' of European higher education in particular. The goals of the process are set in an international / supranational context, by discussions, background reports and political processes. The stress on 'quality' is one example of the ways in which the present-day European harmonization takes place.

Following a 1998 Council recommendation (98/561/EC) a network for quality assurance in higher education was proposed. This was the basis for the establishment of ENQA, the European Network of Quality Assessment Agencies, in 1999. ENQA, which changed its name into European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 2004 while preserving the old acronym, now has a central role in the Bologna process. The Commission continues to fund ENQA. Keeling (2006) has suggested that many of the Bologna Process initiatives are, in fact, 'mainstreaming' solutions first developed by the Commission, and this certainly seems true of the quality assurance developments of the Process. The Commission is the only non-state member of the Process, as well as a full member in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). The weight of the Commission seems to be far greater than the principle of subsidiarity would suggest.

3.4 *Quality* in European higher education policy

This study focuses on 'quality' as a higher education policy phenomenon. While this work is set in the larger frame of discursive formation of higher education policy, the analysis is limited into the appearance of 'quality' in those policies. Quality needs to be contextualized in higher education policy, and the different meanings and uses of 'quality' need to be conceptualized, in order to be able in the future to look further into national and international higher education

policies with quality implications. I look into higher education policies through the 'quality window' – what do 'quality policies' tell us about higher education policy in general?

Higher education policy has been conducted under the catchwords efficiency and quality since the mid 1980s, coinciding with a decline in public funding, in an increasing number of Western countries. Evaluation has become practically an everyday experience in all universities, although practices and principles behind it have varied considerably. Demands for increasing accountability and efficiency have been complemented with measures directed at self-evaluation and self-development.

Research on evaluation in higher education policy increased during the 1990s. The place of assessment in national higher education policies and the new steering systems was depicted by the concept of 'the Evaluative State' (Neave & van Vught, 1991). Quality policies and their implications for higher education policy and the institutional and disciplinary level have been studied extensively (Vroeijenstijn, 1995; Brennan & van Vught, 1993; Westerheijden, 1999; Van Damme, 2000; Rhoades & Sporn, 2002; Brennan & Shah, 2000; Kekäle, 2000).

Quality aspects of higher education policy have been studied for instance from the point of view of the assessment system as a part of higher education steering (Bauer & Kogan 1997; Harman 1998); from the point of view of the practices and effects of quality assessment on the institutional, disciplinary and study programme level (Frederiks & al 1994; Saarinen 1995a; Välimaa & al. 1998; Brennan & Shah 2000; Kekäle 2000); assessment of teaching quality and assessment of learning (particularly in the American context); the use of performance indicators (see for instance Ball & Wilkinson 1994) etc.

The number of articles in quality policy has remained quite steady in the *Higher Education* in recent years. For instance, during the years 2000-2003, there were 13 numbers of articles involving 'quality' in the topic line. In addition to this, numerous articles have dealt with higher education policy in general. While many of the policy articles use policy documents as primary data (see for instance Higher Education special issue on mergers in higher education, HE volume 44, issue 1), the textual aspects of policy documents and analysis have been in practice totally ignored in higher education policy research.

The interest in quality has its origins in several sources, which also leads to tensions within the practices of evaluation (Segerholm, 2003; Morley, 2003). The increase in the duration of (higher) education degrees has grown, followed by a concern whether the quality of degrees has also increased. Morley (2003, 1) has suggested that quality assurance is one way of ensuring that the higher education systems can process the increasing flows of students; in other words, quality assurance can be seen as a reaction to the chaos of global expansion of higher education. Massification of higher education has been quoted as a significant source (Scott 1995; Morley 2003), as the increase in numbers of

universities, staff and students has "forced"[8] higher education policy makers in the Western world to create methods of quality control and quality assurance. Diversification of educational systems has brought by a concern for quality comparisons and quality assurance. Cuts in public funding have also lead into a concern for the quality of education. Increasing international contacts are another source for quality-related arguments in higher education policy. (van Vught & Westerheijden 1993). International mobility and the consequent need to ease degree comparisons was, in fact, one of the major triggers of the Bologna process.

'Quality' has become, as Scollon (1998) says, *a cultural tool;* a buzz-word, attention-getter, nearly-blank-screen (Dunne 2003), on which different views of the reality can be projected and from which different social processes and practices can be (re-) constructed. On a closer look, however, the meaning of quality is ambiguous and loaded with stakeholder interests. (See for instance Harvey & Green 1993).

One is forced to ask, whether this is not just another 'rhetorical turn' (see Majone, 1993) in education policy vocabulary. Increasing the quality of education is undoubtedly a more tempting goal than increasing economic efficiency by decreasing funding. A high quality education is a goal that is easy to accept. The question is not, however, purely rhetoric. As discussed earlier, policy discourse also constructs policy practices and not just describes them. The seemingly easily acceptable goal of 'achieving high quality' is, in fact, highly politicised (see Harvey 2004), as the achievement of tht quality presupposes policy measures which are not quite as self-evidently acceptable.

The increased interest in quality is related to what Power (1994; 2000) has in the British context of the 1980s called 'the audit society' and 'the audit explosion', and for which he gives three main reasons:

- the increased call for financial and value-for-money auditing, within the frame of the so-called New Public Management;
- closely related political demands for public accountability and transparency;
- the rise of quality assurance practices of a regulatory style.

Quality and its importance are values that seem to be accepted unanimously everywhere. Quality is a beautiful and valuable goal that everybody seems to agree on - whatever it may mean to the different stakeholders in higher education (cf. Harvey and Green, 1993). An ideal(istic) concept of an absolute quality that is identical to everybody only tempts the educational policy makers into believing that when the vocabulary is the same, also the subject matter common.

Equally, the principle of rewarding for quality is easily comprehensible and acceptable, and can thus be a powerful political concept (see Ewell 1993,

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8 The use of *force* and similar metaphors in this way (see article I) depicts the deterministic nature of quality assurance (see Morley 2003).

342). As quality has a multiple nature (Vidovich & Porter 1999; Vidovich 2001), new meanings can be attached to it, and it has gained a strong presence in higher education policies (at least in the Western) World in general.

It seems that concepts such as 'assessment' or 'quality' do, in fact, receive their meaning when they are applied as higher education measures (Vidovich & Porter, 1999; Saarinen & Huusko, 2004). And even if the existence of 'quality' can be on some level, intuitively, understood and accepted, it seems to escape closer definitions. Pirsig's (1976) classic declaration in the cult novel of quality researchers, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, has been quoted in this context often, and with good reason:

> "Quality... You know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. [...] Obviously some things are better than others... But what's the 'betterness'? ... So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding any place to get traction. What the hell is quality? What is it?"

Quality has dimensions outside good and bad. According to the OERD (2001), 'quality' can mean

- the degree of excellence of a thing
- general excellence
- of high quality
- a distinctive attribute or faculty; a characteristic trait
- the relative nature or kind or character of a thing.

At least in English language texts, these can be regarded as "the meaning potential" (Fairclough 1992) of the word 'quality'. The characteristics of different dictionaries are visible here. The OERD sets 'excellence' as the first meaning of quality, whereas others, be they English or other language, start out with the meaning of 'distinctive attribute or characteristic' (see KS 2006; Zingarelli 1994; Collins 1998; RH 1991; MW 1993; Hachette 1993; Moliner 1998).

4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter begins by presenting an overview of the empirical analysis published in the articles I-V (chapter 4.1) and continues by discussing the results in chapter 4.2.

4.1. Overview and critical discussion of the empirical analysis

The articles approach the question of discursive construction of 'quality' from different directions. The methodological possibilities were presented in chapter 2.3 and a very general overview of the data was given in chapter 2.4., together with the research questions.

Since the study is conducted in the fields of higher education research and applied linguistics – both by nature interdisciplinary fields – the articles have been published in varied journals. Articles I, II and V were published in journals mainly directed at a higher education research readership, whereas articles III and IV were aimed at a discourse oriented audience. This has, obviously, had an impact on structure and approach of the articles.

This chapter provides a short summary of each article, with discussions on the methodological choices, analyses, and data choices made in each individual article. Table 2 brings together the data and methodologies of each article.

TABLE 2 An overview of the data and methodological focus of each article (for article V, data from France and the Netherlands is excluded).

Article	Data	Amount of data	Methodological focus
I	• Bologna process declarations and communiqués 1998-2003 • Trends I-III reports 1999-2003 • National reports from Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden 2003 • follow-up reports of the Bologna process 2001-2003	• 4 documents, appr. 22 p. • 3 documents, appr. 290 p. • 3 documents, appr. 15 p. • 2 documents, appr. 160 p.	• definitions of quality • quantitative appearances of 'quality' (absolute & relative to all words)
II	• Finnish Council of State development plans 1979-2003 • Finnish Ministry of Education memoranda and reports 1983-2004 • Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council documents 2000-2001 • Finnish HE legislation 1995-1997 • Bologna process documentation 1999-2003	• 5 documents, appr. 180 p. • 6 documents, appr. 320 p. • 2 documents, appr. 400 p. • 2 documents, appr. 20 p. • 3 documents, appr. 19 p.	• operationalisation of quality: what action attached to it? • brief look into metaphors and word choices
III	• European Union documents 1991-2005 • OECD documents 1974-2004	• 15 documents, appr. 650 p. • 14 documents, appr. 1850 p.	• analysis of presuppositions as persuasive and ideological
IV	• Finnish Ministry of education documentation 2003-2006 • FINHEEC Audit Manual 2005 • Bologna process declarations and communiqués 1998-2005	• 6 documents, appr. 190 p. • 1 document, appr. 40 p. • 5 documents, appr. 28 p.	• analysis of social actors
V	• Ministry of education and other national documentation from Finland and Sweden 2001 - 2006 • Documentation from Finnish and Swedish quality assurance agencies • Bologna process declarations and communiqués 1998-2005	• 6 documents, appr. 120 p. • 3 documents, appr. 110 p. • 3 documents, appr. 28 p	• concept analysis (semantic triangle)

4.1.1. Article [I]: "So much quality makes no quality at all"

In article I, the potential meanings of 'quality' at the European and national level of the Bologna process were analysed. The linguistic analysis deals with the different meanings of 'quality' and the value assumptions attached to it. The discursive analysis focuses on the interdiscursive (Fairclough, 1992) features of the communiqués, the background reports and the national reports. In addition, the occurrence of the word 'quality' is calculated from the whole data in order to have an overview of the data that reaches over five years and almost 220 000 words.

The analysis concentrates on the introductions of the documents or of the quality assurance sections of the documents. These have been selected because they set the 'tone' of the document, without going into technical policy or implementation detail.

An analysis of Bologna process documentation during 1999-2004 lead to the following observations:

- the occurrences of 'quality' increase over the years significantly, both absolutely and proportionately in relation to the total number of words in the documents
- the meanings of quality seem to converge more and more over the years, from varied aspect of customer ideology and ideas of European openness to the technical implementation details of QA systems in the signatory countries
- the use of metaphors seems to decrease over the years, as the political consensus over the actions of the process seems to grow.

Originally, the Bologna process was not meant to be such a central topic of this study, but as the process developped, it became too tempting a subject to be left out. An early draft of the article was presented at the First Euredocs Conference in Paris, 2004, and was, as a result, published in the European Journal of Education. As a consequence of this, the original idea of doing a more thorough linguistic analysis on the documents was subdued, as the publication forum was educational policy oriented. In this article, the Bologna process in fact displaced the country cases of Sweden and the Netherlands, which appear as short examples in article I and in Article V. This article also led to a further analysis of "accreditation" in the Bologna process (Article V); and to a more thorough analysis of the national reactions (Article IV).

4.1.2. Article [II]: "Quality is as quality does" [9]

Article II looked into the discursive construction of 'quality' and 'assessment' in Finnish higher education policy from the 1960's onwards. Chronologically, the

[9] This article benefited greatly from co-operation with Mira Huusko on an earlier joint article (Saarinen & Huusko 2004).

article deals with a period from the beginnings of a national higher education policy in the 1960s to the pressures for change brought by the Bologna process in the beginning of the 2000s.

Methodologically, the article concentrated on the metaphors and actions connected with the words 'quality' and 'assessment'. Another methodological choice was to look at the actions connected discursively with the words 'quality' and 'assessment'.

The data consists of

- Council of State Development plans since the 1960's (although the first mentions of quality are in the 1979 plan);
- Ministry of Education memoranda since the 1980s
- Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council documentation from the 2000s
- Bologna process documents since 1999

The article shows the gradual development of 'quality' as a higher education policy argument, from quality being the problem (in 1980s) to becoming the solution (in the 1990s). In the 2000s, the break from the previous 'assessment as a tool for development' policy was brought to an end quite drastically by the Bologna process, suggesting a heavy transnational influence in national policy. One of the anonymous referees for article I commented on the fact that I had not taken into consideration that quality might just be another

> "fashion - policy mimicking without any real substance put into it. If that is the case, then "quality" is just an excuse for policy intervention, and it is not surprising that it has new meanings from one year (or period) to the other."

I could see his/her point of 'policy fashion' in the everyday meaning of the word, as fancy ideas that come and go in policies, spreading from country to another, somehow empty of nationally or otherwise motivated content, motivated just by "because everyone's doing it". As a discourse analyst, however, I cannot think of the meaning of a concept like quality either as filled with policy meaning, or empty and thus open to use for policy intervention. From my point of view, "quality is as quality does". Consequently, it was difficult in this article to see quality as a vessel for policy intervention, when I was in fact looking at quality itself producing policy action. Fortunately, I then had a chance to look into quality policy as fashion with two other colleagues, Leena Treuthardt and Mira Huusko, in another article (Treuthardt & al. 2006).

The article focuses on the university sector. The polytechnic sector was being implemented in the early 1990's. From a quality policy point of view, the differences of the university and polytechnic sector were big, which lead to some of the discussions in Article V. The article also left in me the need to look more into discursive operationalisations of policy actions (see chapter 6), although I could not pursue that interest in the present study.

4.1.3. Article [III]: "… but of course everybody wants quality!"

Article III looks into the persuasiveness of higher education policy documents. The analysis concentrates on the presuppositions in higher education policy documents of the OECD and the European Union, which led towards recognising the background assumptions about the need for a transnational European higher education policy. Article III is a follow-up for my original interest in (especially the new) rhetoric (cf. Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969).

The methodological tools were derived from pragmatics (Levinson 1983; Stalnaker 2002; Wodak 2007 on pragmatics and CDA). The analysis of presuppositions was discussed from the point of view of presupposition as persuasion, as discussed by Sbisá (1999). Presuppositions are cues which set the assumed common ground, and this common ground consequently sets the frame of interpretation (Bertucelli 2006). However, presuppositions also shape our views of the reality by presenting something as a matter of common sense. When this assumed common ground includes ideological arguments, it has a persuasive function (see Sbisà 1999).The analysis in article III does not evaluate the actual success of persuasion, but rather how policy documents are constructed in a persuasive way.

The original data was extensive. The European Union documents consisted of various discussion papers; notably Green and White Papers. Green papers are discussion papers published by the Commission on a specific policy area, and White papers are documents containing proposals for Community action in a specific area. The OECD data consisted of thematic and country reviews, surveys and conference publications (see table 2). Most documents were excluded from further analysis because there were no mentions of 'quality' in them. On the other hand, article I suggests that as the number of mentions of 'quality' increases, its meanings become more and more standardised. Consequently, the selection criteria were the number of mentions of quality, with the extremes left out of further analysis. Another way of cutting the extensive data was to limit the analysis to introductions, as done also in article I.

Based on the analysis, it seems that

- *quality* is existentially presupposed;
- the existence of *responsible consumer choice* is presupposed, and the economically laden presuppositions related to *quality* suggest that higher education is represented as a commodity;
- *competitiveness* is presented as ultimately an intrinsic property of the academic community.

The presuppositions which state the (assumed) common ground in the policy documents of the OECD and the EU seem to "persuade that", or represent as existing, rather than "persuade to", or convince the readers that it would be necessary to act. If these assumptions about the quality of higher education were asserted explicitly, the writer would have to be prepared to argument for

them as well. As presupposed, the background assumptions create a frame of general acceptability, where other views appear as interest-driven and one-sided. In this sense, presupposition is a more powerful tool for persuasion than an explicit assertion.

4.1.4. Article [IV]: "Whose quality is it, anyway?"

Article IV analyses social actors (van Leeuwen 1996; see also van Leeuwen 1995 for similar discussion on social action) in higher education policy. The first drafts of article III included data of the OECD and EU as well as the analysis of argumentation, but after some preliminary analysis, it became obvious that it was too much for one article, and the analysis of social actors and the Bologna process was saved for article IV. Consequently, the national cases of Sweden and the Netherlands were left out of this article, but appear as examples in articles II and V.

The focus of article IV is also on European quality policies, this time of the Bologna process. Van Leeuwen's approach was been chosen as a starting point as he takes actors as a social rather than a grammatical category. (See van Leeuwen 1995 and 1996). Article IV concentrates particularly on the representation of inclusion vs. exclusion. When social actors are included, are they represented as passive or active; personalized or impersonalized; named or classified as belonging to a larger group? In fact, omitting one actor or group of actors from the document can be ideologically quite as significant as mentioning another.

In policy making, policy actors at different horizontal and vertical levels – national and trans-national, academic and governmental - affect each other. I find the metaphor of the different policy making systems as "tectonic plates" (Bleiklie & Kogan 2000, 21) particularly appealing, as it describes the tensions between these actors.

The analysis presented in this paper is based on selections from central Bologna process documents and Finnish higher education policy documents, either responding to that process or presenting policy frames for the future. The transnational level data consists of the declarations and communiqués. The Finnish data consists of responses towards the Bologna process and central policy documents dealing with aspect of the process.

It seems that the representation of actors varies with the assumed audience. In the Bologna process declarations and communiqués, the active actors are *we* (inclusive, as in the Bologna Declaration of the Bergen Communiqué) or *the Ministers* (authoritative, exclusive, as in the Prague and Berlin Communiqués). Higher education institutions and their staff and students appear only gradually as active actors. Cooperation and mutual trust are stressed, but not all actors involved in these are presented. Also, *Quality assurance mechanisms* or *networks* appear as actors, as if having a will of their own. This, in turn, passifies or excludes policy actors and makes the introduction and implementation of QA systems seem inevitable.

In the Finnish reports towards the Bologna process, the active role of the Finnish Ministry of Education and the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) is stressed, whereas that of the higher education institutions is toned down. Higher education institutions are presented as passive targets of Bologna process policy. However, as the Finnish documentation addressed to the national audience are analysed, the role of the Ministry and the FINHEEC is toned down and suppressed, or even made passive. In return, the role of the higher education institutions made more active, which is, in turn, in keeping with the Finnish tradition (see article II). This seems to make the HEIs appear more responsible for their action.

The analysis of social actors lead to questions of power in transnational vs. national decision making concerning higher education (see also Välimaa & Saarinen 2006). Different social actors represent their actions differently, and thus create and reproduce different kinds of relationships between each other (Ursin & Saarinen 2007), which in turn create policy. On the other hand, the purpose of this article was not to analyse policy intentions of the actors; that would call for a different approach, methodologically and theoretically.

4.1.5. Article [V]: "Speaking, doing and avoiding accreditation"

Article V differs from the others in that the focus is not on the word 'quality', but on 'accreditation'. It looks into the practices of quality assurance and particularly accreditation, and into the naming of those practices nationally and internationally. It could be described as a spin-off from article IV in that it deals with the interfaces of national and transnational policies, also within the Bologna process. The article is co-authored with Timo Ala-Vähälä so that the cases of Sweden and Finland were my responsibility, and the cases of the Netherlands and France Ala-Vähälä's.

In article V, we started with Bacchi's point about how definitions of the word make claims about how it *should* be used, rather than describe *how* it is used (see Bacchi 2000). Consequently, we assumed (see also article I) that the acts of 'accreditation' lead into some kinds of national operationalisations of it, depending on the current national political needs and situations. In addition, we assumed that the definitions and operationalisations of 'accreditation' construct and steer higher education policy debate, and consequently the policy actions related to accreditation.

In article V, the relationship between symbols and meanings was analysed by using the semantic triangle originally by Ogden & Richards (1989) (see 2.3.2):

We analysed the appearances of the word accreditation; the different meanings attached to it, and the (policy) practices it denotes. The basic questions were how accreditation appears in the Bologna process

- as a word (What word is used on the national level, what word to report to the European level, about the action attached to accreditation?)
- as a definition (What kinds of descriptions are given about

accreditation or related actions? How is accreditation defined in the documents?)
- as action (What practical actions have been suggested to respond to the demand for accreditation–like procedures in the Bologna process? What kinds of quality assurance related changes have been suggested?)

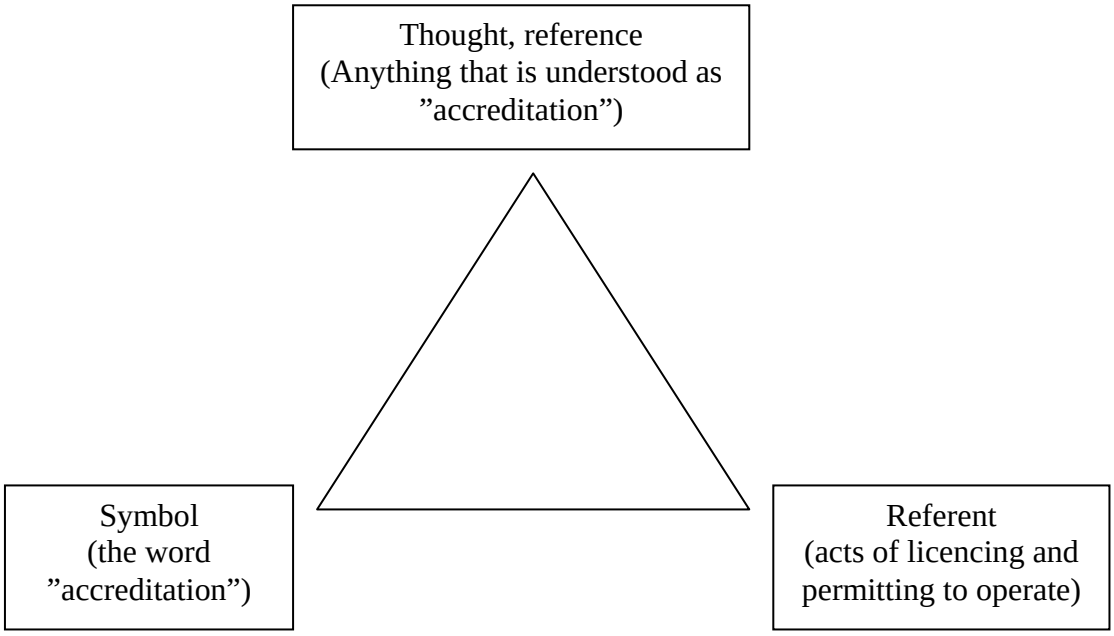

FIGURE 3 *Accreditation* in the semantic triangle.

Our data consisted of the following higher education policy documents:

- Bologna process primary documents (declarations and communiqués)
- national documents produced specifically for follow-up or reporting purposes of the Bologna process, and directed either for European or national audiences
- national planning documents from the time before and during the Bologna process

The results of the study confirm that the concept of *accreditation* produces different kinds of action in different national settings. The outcomes of a seemingly uniform policy are, as it would seem, not uniform. Our conclusions were:

- In all the case countries, accreditation has been a policy issue and some changes have been made;
- In all countries, the initial situations have differed.

- In all cases, different terminology is used nationally (*akkreditointi*, *habilitaatio*, *audit*, *utvärdering*)
- In all cases, different actions have been implemented.

The Bologna process is relatively young as a policy process. Its goals appear uniform in the documents, but on the national level new demands are placed on them. Future research is needed in order to be able to see, whether this recontextualisation of the transnational process is permanent or whether the pressures for convergence, as also seen in article IV, will ultimately cause harmonisation of systems. Also, changes in policy structures do not necessarily mean that changes in policy processes would take place. An ethnographically oriented study of the effects of the process in the national and local level is needed.

4.2. Quality as a higher education policy phenomenon

Chapter 4.2 discusses first the results of the individual articles in the context of the purpose of the study, and then looks into discursive construction of higher education policy from the point of view of discursive policy.

4.2.1. Discussion of research questions and results

The research questions dealt with

1. *conceptualisation* and *contextualisation* of quality
2. *operationalisations* of quality and *actors / actions* connected with it
3. *the values* that are presupposed in quality discourse
4. *the historical development* of quality discourse in higher education policy

About the conceptualisation of quality, it seems that quality is mostly taken for granted (I and III). Quality is, unsurprisingly, presented as a self-evident good that everybody wants. Simultaneously, quality is rarely defined, but rather becomes a technical question especially in the Bologna process (I). This might suggest an argumentative tactic to persuade the reader that *quality* and the activities connected to it are shared, common understanding (III). Some metaphors refer, for instance, to quality as some kind of force-of-nature (I), others to its fragile nature and the consequent need for regulation and control (II). These appear relatively early in the historical process of introducing quality, but it seems that the technical aspects of quality gain more weight as time goes on. (I and II.) This would seem to frame (see Lakoff 2004) *quality* as a technical act of quality assurance.

Quality is an evasive concept, and receives meanings by the operationalisations attached to it (II). Again, presenting 'quality' as a self-

evident concept and attaching actions and actors to it gives the concept meaning (III). The actors are given different roles, depending on the viewpoint (articles I and IV). For instance the Finnish Ministry of Education may appear more active (and consequently, more powerful / commanding) towards the transnational Bologna process, and more passive towards the national scene. This, in turn, changes the power potentials of the higher education institutions, which may be represented either as passive or active (IV).

When quality is discussed as something other than a self-evident value-as-such, it is usually discussed with a concerned voice: quality is presented as "sick", and in need for care. These concerned voices reflect on the political and value concerns of those who speak them. The dominant values seem to be those of the economy, competition, and regulation (articles I, II, III). This is consistent with the findings that the relationship of higher education and (political) economy has changed as higher education is increasingly engaged in marketlike behaviors; a development referred to as "academic capitalism (Rhoades & Slaughter 2005; see also Shumar 1997 on commodification of higher education).

The voice of the academic community is more subdued (and consequently, its values less clearly presented). Traditional views of "quality as excellence" (Harvey & Green 1993) define quality as the virtue of the academic community. As the underlying meaning of "quality assurance" (QA) would, in turn, seem to be "quality as fitness for purpose" or "quality as perfection or consistency", it could be argued that in that sense quality is a production virtue, controlled by the administrative sections of the academe. Morley's (2003) suggestion that quality assurance was introduced more as a regulatory device for the process of production rather than as a check on the quality of the product itself finds support in the Finnish situation after the introduction of audits of quality assurance systems, as well as the Bologna process developments towards comparable QA systems.

Historically, the word *quality* is practically not used in policy texts until the turn of the 1980s. This might imply that the quality of higher education was either held self-evident, or it was considered to be a marginal concern of the academic community, or both. Welch (1998) reviews the historical developments of the demand for 'efficiency' in education and points out that "efficiency movements have coalesced around an agenda of cost containment, an increased business influence, a narrowing and vocationalising of the curriculum and an instrumental concern with enhanced system performance." In other words, it would seem that the demands for efficiency follow a cyclical pattern, appearing in particular political situations. As Rhoades & Sporn (2002) point out, based on their analysis of U.S. and Europe, adopting quality assurance terminology is also dependent on the position of public and private sector actors in the construction of quality policies and actions.

While the scope of this work reaches only from the 1960s to the present, it could be hypothesized that quality always becomes an issue with changes in attendance and access to higher education (see Scott 1995; Trow 1974) and with

the financial pressures which follow that development. In Finland, the traditional "state accreditation system" (article V) and the consequent implicit policy of "equally excellent" universities may also have been the reason for introducing the concept of *quality* relatively late in higher education policy.

The quality discourses of the 1980s reflect the accountability demands of the period. By the 1990s, q*uality* is mostly taken for granted and not particularly defined or questioned. By the 2000s, the uses of 'quality' have reached a kind of a technical level – quality refers to "*quality assurance*". And to accept the term "quality assurance" in everyday use means that we also accept the baggage that comes with it.

Table 3 presents the results described above in an overview.

4.2.2. Discussion of discursive policy

Originally, as can be seen in the first research plans, I intended to look into higher education policy change from the point of view of quality, and from the point of view of how policy influences "trickle down" from international organisations such as the OECD or the EU. The discussions on different views on change in higher education policy, as presented in chapter 3.1 (Saarinen & Välimaa 2006) reflect this original concern.

Over the course of the research process, however, it became apparent that "change" is not such a simple concept in the theoretical frame of this study. Policies and their consequences to people do change, there is no doubt about that, but it seems that looking at change as a rational process (internal or external, balance seeking or conflict seeking; see figure 2) did not work. Policy appears different, depending on the point of view of the person observing it.

Regardless of whether we see change as continuity or conflict, it would seem that the need for change is built in the national and international decision making. Higher education policy is legitimated with continuous need for change – but the question is, whose view of change becomes the dominant one. Policy as discursive inevitably includes different and competing views of policy change (Ball, 1994). Consequently, it is not possible to view change as a single entity or process.

Figure 4 goes back to figure 2 which presented the external vs. internal and balance vs. conflict seeking nature of change. This time, however, the figure is used to depict the different discursive formations of a policy, using the Bologna process as an example. The purpose of the figure is to illustrate how "one" process can in fact be seen as many processes. What we see, in fact, are different discursive constructs of a policy. Change is construed in different ways, and these constructs have their effects on policy actions. A particular construct promotes a particular policy; consequently, there is no "Bologna process" but several, depending on the viewpoint (see also Article V).

This example illustrates the fact that an education policy field always consists of various actors, with conflicting needs. Policies are shaped as they are depending on the field of action. This becomes not a question of the success or

failure of a particular policy, but of the collisions and frictions of then policies of different actors, which produce and make visible different policies.

Consequently, the concern of the implementation theorists about the success or failure of the reform becomes irrelevant, as also reforms appear differently in different situations.

TABLE 3 An overview of the results

Research question	**Results (reference to article number in parenthesis)**
1. How is the concept 'quality' contextualised in higher education policy documents? What kinds of metaphors are used to give it meaning?	• In the Bologna process, the occurrences of *quality* increase over the years significantly, both absolutely and proportionately in relation to the total number of words in the documents. (I) • In the Bologna process, the use of metaphors seems to decrease over the years, as the political consensus over the actions of the process seems to grow. (I) • OECD& EU: need for or meaning of 'quality' not questioned. (III) • In Finland, in the early 1990's: quality achieved by the *liberation* of resources (II)
2 How is the concept 'quality' operationalised in higher education policy documents? What actions are linked to it? What kinds of actors are active?	• In Finland, in the early 1980's: quality in distress because of lack of clear goals; need for legislation. (II) • In Finland, in the early 1990's: quality achieved by the reorganisation of resources (II) • In Finland, by the beginning of the 2000's, quality operationalised as development of teaching on one hand and top/quality unit selections on the other (II); also accreditation operationalised as audit (V) • Finland: the expert position may have shifted from the academic community towards the bureaucratic definitions of quality (II); also the shift in assessment practises towards accreditation (V) • Bologna process: the active actors are *we* (inclusive) or *the Ministers* (authoritative, exclusive). Higher education institutions and their staff and students appear only gradually as active actors. Many actors suppressed. (IV) • Bologna process: *Quality assurance mechanisms* or *networks* as actors; => policy actors excluded, passified; makes the introduction and implementation of QA systems inevitable. (IV) • Bologna process: different operationalisations of "accreditation" in different national situations (V) • Finnish reports towards the Bologna process: higher education institutions are presented as passive targets of Bologna process policy; FINHEEC and MinEd as active (IV) • Finnish documentation addressed to the national audience: the role of the MinEd and the FINHEEC is supressed or made passive. The role of the higher education institutions is more active => makes the HEIs appear more responsible for their action? (IV)

(Continues)

TABLE 3 An overview of the results (continues)	
3 What kinds of textual means are used to argue for the need of a 'quality policy' in the policy documents? What is presupposed? What kinds of values does the 'quality policy' promote?	• OECD& EU: no need to argue the need for 'quality policy'; it is presented as common ground understanding. (III) • OECD & EU: in the 1980s and early 1990s, quality justified by the political need for increased public accountability. (III) • OECD & EU: in the 1980s and 1990s, the intrinsic value of consumerism and competition. (III) • Bologna process: varied values of customer ideology and European openness give way to the technical implementation details of QA systems. (I) • Finland: the shift towards QA a natural continuum to the management by objectives policy of the 1980s and 1990s and to the external accountability demands. (II)
4 What kind of 'quality' is predominant at different times / places?	• In Finland, period I, until the end of the 1970's: *quality* not a topic in the higher education policy discussion on the systems level. (II) • In Finland, period II, early 1980's: quality in distress, needed to be secured. Threat: a lack of clear goals and procedures, which needed to be secured by law. (II) • In Finland, period III, early 1990's: quality as a competitive factor in higher education policy. Improving quality required the reorganisation of resources (II) • In Finland, period IV, mid 1990's: quality assurance institutionalised. Quality now a solution to problems of higher education (previously presented as the problem). (II) • In Finland, period V, the 2000s: European convergence; emphasis on quality assurance; audit of quality assurance introduced. Big demands from Europe. (II; V) • OECD & EU: Depending on the political and economic situation (but especially 1980s and 1990s), quality may either need of top-down remedial action, or external regulation in order to improve. (III) • Bologna process: the occurrences of *quality* increase over the years significantly, both absolutely and proportionately. (I) • Bologna process: the use of metaphors decreases over the years, as the political consensus over the actions of the process seems to grow. (I) • Bologna process: 'quality' gradually becomes a technical term; the meaning is not questioned. (I)

Some of these different views on the Bologna process were visible in the documentation (particularly those of evolution and reform), and for others (intervention and revolution) other kinds of data would be needed. It is obvious that the official, ministry driven data used in this study does not include material for construing, for instance, discourses of revolution or even intervention.

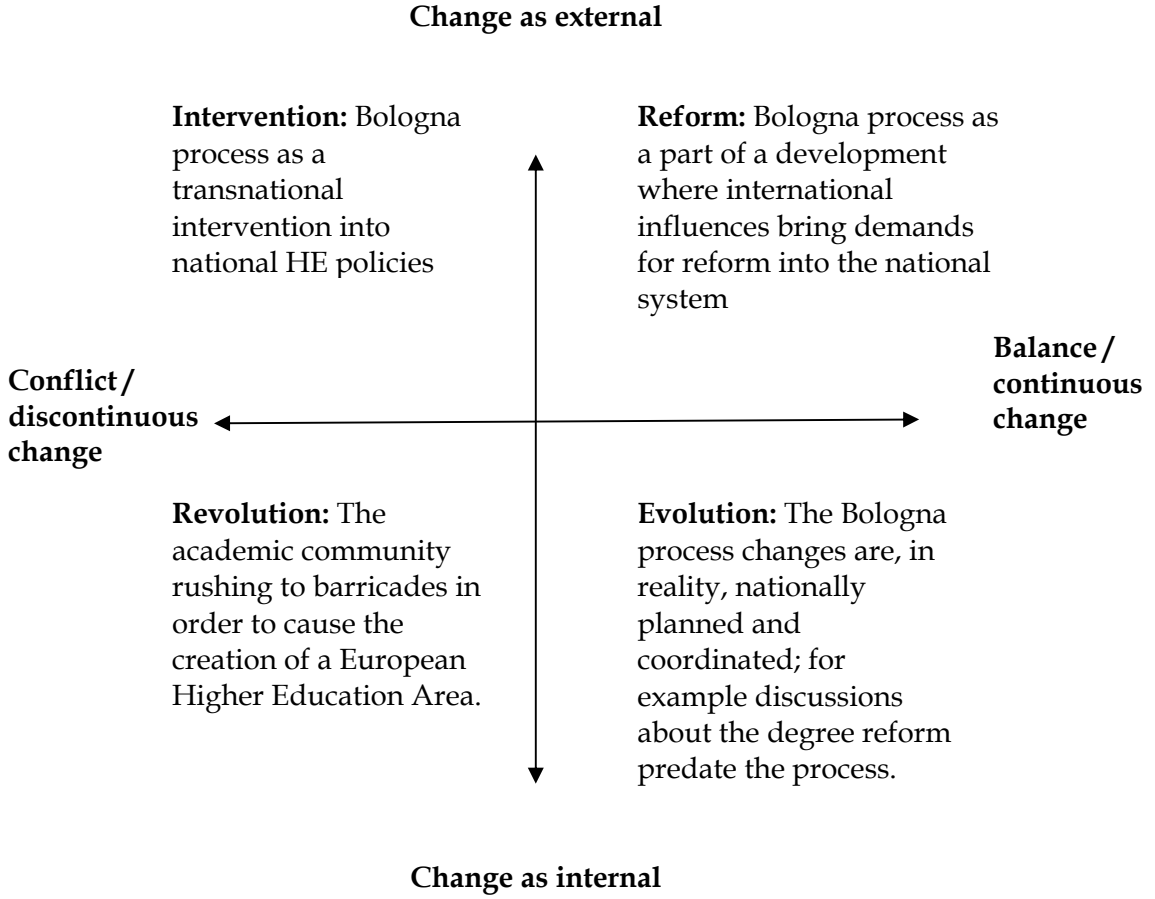

FIGURE 4 The Bologna process in Finnish higher education policy discussions: different discursive constructions of policy. (Saarinen & Välimaa 2006)

These different interpretations of the Bologna process are all true. It may be argued that the Bologna process is a transnational intervention into the traditional monopoly of nation states as definers and steerers of national educational systems. In this view, the role of the European Union as a supporter of the process, as well as the creation of a European Higher Education Area as an opposing power to the American and the Asian higher education in the globally competitive market is emphasized. (Saarinen & Välimaa 2006.)

5 EVALUATION OF RESEARCH

This chapter deals with questions of the quality criteria (how do I know what I have done makes sense?) and choice (what I have chosen, why I haven't chosen otherwise, what I could have chosen differently?).

There are some basic rules for evaluation of qualitative research, which also apply to this study. The analysis should be recognizable and transparent. In addition, the researcher has to recognize his/her own position as an actor in the field he/she is studying. Since the analysis should be understandable and open, the results are necessarily open to new information and interpretations (see Titscher & al. 2000, 163-164).

The description of the process which lead to this study is a part of making this study transparent. The personal style (for instance the practice of writing in first person singular, which still seems to be rather unconventional in the circles of higher education researchers) is part of the description of this process. (Lincoln & Guba 2000; see Äyväri 2006 for an excellent discussion on the position of the researcher.) It demonstrates the choices and the developments which lead to this study. Since the research process and questions related to it were dealt with in the Introduction, I will refer the reader to that discussion.

I have utilized policy texts as data. All documents have been published (i.e. they are available to the interested reader), and most of the recent texts are available electronically. The empirical analysis for the individual articles has been described in detail in the articles to give the reader a chance to view the empirical procedure and, again, to make it transparent.

The research questions obviously evolved during the whole process. Even if the main interest (looking at the quality policy) remained the same, the focus of actual questions shifted, somewhat radically even. This confession is made easier by Potter and Wetherell's (1987) view that the raising of new questions can be seen as one test for validation of the project. As I have said earlier, the original research plan had a strong focus on rhetoric. After that, my interests turned towards Critical discourse analysis, and from there towards a more general application of discourse analytical methods in a social constructionist frame. This development is reflected, for instance, in the development of the

research question *"How does the "quality rhetoric" trickle down from international recommendations (the OECD, the EU) to national policies?* in the original research plan from May 2002 (Saarinen 2002). Some developments during the research process lead to it being finally dropped out of the research questions. First, as explained earlier, the rhetoric viewpoint was dropped early on during the research process. Second, the idea of "trickling down" was gradually abandoned as it reflects a view of a monolithic policy, and policy change as intentional.

Chapter 6 presents the new questions that arise from this process which could not be tackled within this study.

Potter & Wetherell (1987) also refer to the 'fruitfulness' of the study, or the 'aha' experience. This, for me, has been realized in a clearer view of the higher education policy field: there are things which I have known at some level, but which have become tangible to me only during the process.

The articles and their drafts have been discussed with a varied readership, in order to test their credibility (see Denzin & Lincoln 2000) from as diverse a point of view as possible. Drafts of the articles have been read by fellow researchers at the Institute for Educational Research and elsewhere. Earlier versions of the articles have been presented to national and international colleagues at seminars and conferences, and also to some Ministry of Education, Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, and National Board of Education officials both at seminars and privately. Also, drafts of the articles have been presented at national and international conferences and seminars (both research and administration oriented, and both to researchers of higher education and discourse analysis, as well as for practitioners of higher education).

The process of the whole study, the methodological choices, and the process of analysis have been described in order to ensure the dependability (Denzin & Lincoln 2000) of the study. The methodological choices were discussed in chapter 4 with the discussions on choices made with the articles. This applies also to the data and choices made with its selection. The methodological possibilities offered by text analysis are so varied that from the beginning it was obvious that only a tiny selection could be applied in this study. For this study, the focus was most notably on social actors and on argumentation strategies, and to a smaller extent, metaphors. Especially the applications of metaphors could be extended and deepened. Also, it would definitely have been interesting to take an ethnographic view on "quality" by using conversational analysis, conducting interviews, group discussions or observation.

I am aware of my own position as a higher education researcher (i.e. as a member of the academic community), which naturally has had an impact on how I have approached this study and, ultimately, how I have constructed this particular voice. I have described my own experiences and understanding of the field of higher education before engaging in this present study in the Introduction. As to my current position in this field, my understanding of myself as a higher education researcher has developped from the applied

higher education researcher of the 1990s (Saarinen 1995a and 1995b) towards being a theme-based academic higher education researcher (Saarinen 2002) towards becoming a 'discipline-based, continuous' higher education researcher, with a stronger basis in applied linguistics theoretically and methodologically. (Teichler 2000.) Further, it is obvious that while producing this particular discourse on higher education policies, and the position of 'quality' in it, I have for my small part contributed to the production of an understanding of that policy. Mostly, however, I have seen myself as an interpreter (see Juhila 1999) of the analysis and the social practices.

6 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As stated earlier, the present study is a result of a five year process, during which the original research purpose (of introducing discourse analytical tools to higher education policy research and of learning more about higher education policy through the phenomenon of quality in it) has more or less remained the same.

What has changed, however, is the methodological orientation (from rhetorical to critical discourse analytical approaches to generally discourse analytical views) and the theoretical view (from view of language describing to a view of discursive construction of policy). It would, consequently, be false to describe the present report as an end result of this process. Rather, this is the place where I – reluctantly, I might say – bring this process to a temporary halt, in order to be able to pursue my current interest further.

It is obvious to me that that (critical) discourse analysis (both as a methodological and theoretical approach) is extremely helpful in raising issues, constructing and making visible policy processes, their development and the values and power relations behind them. When it comes to the study of policy action, however, further methodological and theoretical tools are needed. It seems that a 'material turn' (as opposed to the 'linguistic turn') in discourse analysis of policy studies is needed.

1) Thus, the first question I hope to be able to continue with is that of 'discursive operationalisations'. By discursive operationalisations, I mean the discursive constructions of policy actions. Policy is about what should be done or what has been done in order to solve a policy problem. Suggesting that something should or has been done is an action in itself, which leads to further action, or further discursive operationalisations. It may also occur that some action is linked with some policy goal discursively. The question is not then, whether some policy has been implemented successfully (for a critique of top-down higher education policy analysis, see Kogan 2005), but what action is construed either as the cause or the consequence of some other action.

By concentrating on discursive operationalisations of policy action, the missing link between policy discourses and policy action may not only be

problematized, but it may also become possible to study it empirically. There are bound to be different kinds of (discursive) operationalisations of higher education policies depending on who is the active actor in voicing the policy. Naive, but important, if we want to look at the (possible) (mis-)matches of policy goals, policy actions and experiences from the ”receiving end” of the policy, the academic labour. This problem could be approached from the point of view of Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) (see for instance Scollon 1998; 2001), where the social action is in the focus, rather than the discourses produced in or by it. Fairclough (2005, 57) discusses this kind of dialectics of discourse as a process of political struggle “mediating the ‘internalisation’ of non-discursive in discursive elements, and discursive in non-discursive elements”.

2) The present study has concentrated on a macro-level analysis. It would be interesting to continue with a micro-level study on “how global becomes local” (see Wodak 2005). A related question is one of combining discourse studies and ethnographic approaches. Discursive constructions of policy problems, issues and actions need to be contrasted with analyses of situations where policy makers, administrators and the academics engage with these discourses (Wright 2005). Higher education policy problems could be studied for instance by following a policy process, its actors and the situated meetings of those actors in real time, instead of focussing only on the “textual residue” (Scollon 1998), the textual reports of those meetings and actions afterwards. (See also Scollon 2001; van Leeuwen 2005a.) This could be done with interviews with key actors, and observations and shadowing in particular policy making situations (meetings, conferences, everyday work at a research institute etc.) to track down the situations in which policy discourses and higher education actors (at different levels) meet. Thus, a dialogue between policy discourse and policy action could be initiated.

3) A continuation of a discursive viewpoint into higher education policy formation could give an angle into the present global policy processes, such as the Bologna process. These kinds of ‘voluntary’ processes and pressures brought by globalisation are especially difficult to tackle with traditional views on policy change (see Saarinen & Välimaa 2006). This kind of a study should be conducted in a multidisciplinary group; for instance historians and economists would be interesting additions to the more traditional groupings of sociologists, politologists and educational scientists. Weiss and Wodak (2003) refer to the potential pithole of ‘amateurism’ in doing interdisciplinary research on a strange disciplinary turf. By taking a pluralist or integrationist view (van Leeuwen 2005a) into interdisciplinary research, this problem could be avoided. In fact, interdisciplinary research would be fundamental not just for this study.

4) In fact, any research in the contact points of ”the local”, ”the national” and ”the global” remains an interesting topic (I use these terms aware of the fact that their boundaries are not altogether clear). Examples are provided for instance, but not exclusively, the relationships between the Bologna process and Finnish higher education policy making, or some current Finnish policy

processes (such as introducing the new salary system) in a transnational policy setting. Also these questions are, by nature, multidisciplinary. The Bologna process is a development where international influences find their ways into national policies persuasively rather than authoritatively, and which simultaneously stresses the local (institutional) level over the national one. There have been interesting suggestions on how to analyze this kind of internationalization (see Marginson & Rhoades 2002). If we assume that policy processes are (also) discursive or persuasive by nature, then discourse analysis would present a natural starting point for the analysis of policy processes such as Bologna, where simultaneous and parallel quality policies at the international, national and local level develop in interaction with each other. (For some beginnings on this, see Article V; Ursin & Saarinen 2007.)

5) An old interest (see Saarinen & Laiho 1997) of looking at policy deeds as communication resurfaced during this project. The universities are funded – and even rewarded - primarily for the efficiency and effectiveness of what they do. In other words, for the State, which is the primary funder of universities, quality is still defined in words by top/exceptional quality, and by development (of quality assurance procedures) but in deeds (funding) as efficiency. Which messages are the universities expected to accept, and which ones do they actually take? Do they continue to strive for exceptionality, or do they opt for those things which maximize their chances of getting efficiency rewards: producing graduates quickly and efficiently?

6) The analysis of social actors ignited an interest in situational analyses of the interfaces where the actors meet. It seems that the "discursive recognition" of policy problems requires more attention. In higher education policy analysis, we still seem to assume that the policy problems are somehow self-evidently recognizable in the policy structures. The fact that state that I am researching "higher education policy" positions me in some presupposed situation and a presupposed field. Would it be possible to recognize policy problems in another way? The question might be: "where is policy"; and the focus would then be different situations of policy making. Where and how are these policy making situations recognized? In other words, where and how is policy institutionalized as policy? One obvious (on the surface, that is) answer might be: in the structures of policy making. This may be so, but this is not always the most interesting answer, and certainly not the only one. A change in the way in which we recognise policy problems might help us get a grip on the dynamics that is created in the meeting of various actors and that we call policy.

YHTEENVETO

Laatu liikkeessä. Korkeakoulupolitiikan diskursiivinen rakentuminen laadun näkökulmasta

Tutkimuksen tausta ja tarkoitus

Tässä tutkimuksessa analysoin korkeakoulupolitiikkaa laadun käsitteen diskursiivisen rakentumisen näkökulmasta. Politiikalla tarkoitan tässä yhteydessä teksteissä tuotettuja politiikkaohjelmia (ks. Palonen 1996). Korkeakoulupolitiikkaa on tehty arvioinnin ja laadun nimissä läntisissä teollisuusmaissa 1980-luvulta alkaen. Laadusta onkin tullut kulttuurinen työväline (*cultural tool,* Scollon 1998), johon voidaan heijastaa erilaisia käsityksiä todellisuudesta ja jonka pohjalta sosiaalisia prosesseja ja käytänteitä voidaan luoda ja pitää yllä. Laatukäsitteen erilaisia merkityksiä on tässä työssä pyritty tekemään läpinäkyväksi, jotta nähtäisiin selkeämmin, millaista korkeakoulupolitiikkaa viime vuosikymmeninä on tuotettu ja pidetty yllä ja keiden toimijoiden tarpeita tämä politiikka tukee.

Korkeakoulututkimus on luonteeltaan monitieteistä. Itse lähestyn alaa kielitieteen , ja erityisesti diskurssintutkimuksen näkökulmasta. Kielitieteeseen liittyvä korkeakoulututkimus on keskittynyt akateemisten kulttuurien tutkimukseen tieteenaladiskurssien ja eri tieteenaloille tyypillisen argumentoinnin kautta (ks. esim. Bazerman 1992; Mauranen 1993). Korkeakoulututkimuksessa tekstianalyyttisiä menetelmiä on sen sijaan käytetty vähän (ks. Tight 2003), vaikka tutkimukset usein hyödyntävätkin suuria dokumenttiaineistoja. Katsaus kolmeen korkeakoulututkimuksen aikakauslehteen, *Higher Education, Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* ja *Studies in Higher Edcuation*, vahvistaa tätä käsitystä. Sama pätee diskurssintutkimukseen: korkeakoulupolitiikkaa ei joitakin poikkeuksia lukuun ottamatta (esim. Vidovich 2001) ole tutkittu diskursiivisesta tai tekstuaalisesta näkökulmasta.

Politiikan tekstejä luettaessa niiden oletetaan herkästi kuvaavaan politiikkaa sellaisenaan: ajatellaan, että tekstit kuvaavat jotain, mikä on "oikeasti" olemassa "oikeassa" maailmassa. Vaihtoehtoisesti politiikkatekstejä pidetään pelkkänä retoriikkana, jolla on vain vähän tekemistä tosielämän toimien kanssa. Politiikan sanoja ja tekoja ei kuitenkaan voi tällä tavalla kaksijakoisesti erottaa, vaikka arkipuheessa näin tehdäänkin. Politiikan sanat ovat samalla tekoja, ja ne ovat dialogisessa suhteessa keskenään.

Tutkimuksessa tarkastelen teksti- ja diskurssianalyyttisten näkökulmien sovellettavuutta korkeakoulupolitiikan tutkimuksessa sekä teorian että menetelmien kannalta. Tutkimuksen sisällöllisenä tavoitteena on myös tehdä läpinäkyväksi viime vuosien suomalaista ja eurooppalaista korkeakoulupolitiikkaa.

Tutkimuksen pääkysymys on, millaista korkeakoulupolitiikkaa tuotetaan ja ylläpidetään laadun nimissä. Pääkysymys jakautuu seuraaviin alakysymyksiin:

1. Miten laatu kontekstualisoidaan korkeakoulupolitiikan dokumenteissa? Millaisia metaforia sen yhteydessä käytetään?
2. Miten laatu operationalisoidaan dokumenteissa? Millaisia toimia ja toimijoita siihen liitetään? Mitkä toimijat esitetään aktiivisina?
3. Millaisin tekstuaalisin menetelmin laatupolitiikan tarvetta argumentoidaan? Mitä oletetaan ennalta ja mitä otetaan annettuna?
4. Millainen laatukäsitys vallitsee eri aikoina ja eri tilanteissa? Millaisia arvoja laatupolitiikalla edistetään?

Aineisto ja analyysi

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu korkeakoulupolitiikan suunnittelu-, päätöksenteko- ja ohjausdokumenteista:

1. Suomalaiset aineistot: valtioneuvoston periaatepäätökset, korkeakoulutuksen kehittämissuunnitelmat, opetusministeriön työryhmämuistiot, Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston toimintasuunnitelmat 1960-luvulta alkaen.
2. OECD:n korkeakoulupoliittiset dokumentit 1960-luvulta alkaen.
3. Euroopan unionin (ja sen edeltäjien) korkeakoulupolitiikan dokumentit 1970-luvulta alkaen.
4. Bolognan prosessin dokumentaatio (julkilausumat, kommunikeat, taustaraportit, seurantaraportit ja Suomen kansalliset raportit) 1990-luvun lopulta alkaen.

Aineisto sisältää yhteensä yli 4000 tekstisivua. Tästä syystä tutkimuksessa on keskitytty sanan *laatu* esiintymiin dokumenttien tai niiden laatua käsittelevien osien johdannoissa.

Tutkimuksen menetelmällisenä lähtökohtana olivat kriittisen diskurssianalyysin (Critical Discourse Analysis, CDA) näkemykset kielestä sosiaalisten käytänteiden tuottajana ja muokkaajana. Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi pyrkii kuromaan umpeen kielitieteellisen tekstianalyysin ja yhteiskuntatieteellisen tutkimuksen välisen aukon.

Norman Fairclough (1992) näkee diskurssianalyysin tekstuaalisen mikrotason (kielen piirteiden analyysi), diskursiivisen makrotason (intertekstuaaliset piirteet), ja sosiaalisten käytänteiden vuorovaikutuksena. Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi on teoreettinen ja menetelmällinen lähestymistapa, joka mahdollistaa erilaisten kielitieteen menetelmien käytön. Tämä tutkimus koostuu viidestä artikkelista, joissa tekstien analyysissa on käytetty metaforien, sosiaalisten toimijoiden, argumentaatiostrategioiden ja presuppositioiden käsitteitä sekä analysoitu lisäksi *laadun* määrällisiä esiintymiä dokumenteissa.

Keskeiset tulokset

Analyysin perusteella laatu esitetään eurooppalaisessa korkeakoulupolitiikassa usein itsestään selvänä. Sitä määritellään harvoin, ja laadusta onkin tullut teknisen ohjauksen kohde, jonka olemassaoloa ei kyseenalaisteta. Jotkut metaforat viittaavat laatuun luonnonvoiman omaisena, toisissa taas laatu on jotain haurasta ja sairasta, huolenpidon ja parantamisen tarpeessa olevaa. Sisällöllisesti laatu on vaikeasti tavoitettava käsite, joka saa merkityksensä konkreettisimmillaan siihen liitettyjen toimien kautta.

Politiikan toimijoiden valta ja aktiivisuus näkyvät eri dokumenteissa eri tavoin riippuen siitä, millaiselle lukijakunnalle dokumentti oli kirjoitettu. Toimijat saatetaan esittää kansainvälisessä yhteydessä aktiivisena ja kansallisessa passiivisena. Tämä viittaa erilaisten ja mahdollisesti toisilleen ristiriitaisten ”laatumaailmojen” olemassaoloon eri konteksteissa.

Laatu esitetään usein tavoilla, joilla lukijaa suostutellaan pitämään laatua ja siihen liittyviä poliittisia toimia yhteisesti määriteltyinä ja itsestään selvinä. Vallitseviksi arvoiksi tulevat etenkin OECD:n ja EU:n tuottamissa dokumenteissa talouselämän, sääntelyn ja kilpailuttamisen arvot, ja vastaavasti akateemisen yhteisön ääni jää taka-alalle.

Historiallisesti laatu esiintyy ensimmäistä kertaa korkeakoulupoliittisten toimien kohteena 1980-luvun vaihteessa. Korkeakoulutuksen massoittuminen sai aikaan huolen laajenevan korkeakoululaitoksen vaatimista resurssilisäyksistä, ja samalla myös luottamus akateemisen yhteisön kykyyn pitää yllä laatua perinteisin, sisäisen sosiaalisen kontrollin keinoin näytti heikkenevän.

Tässä tutkimuksessa korkeakoulupolitiikan tarkastelu diskursiivisena prosessina toi uutta näkökulmaa tuon politiikan muotoutumiseen. Tutkimus osoittaa, että ei ole olemassa vain yhtä laatupolitiikkaa vaan useita. Näennäisesti samaan politiikkaan kohdistuu eri konteksteissa erilaisia odotuksia, mikä väistämättä taas vaikuttaa näiden politiikkatoimien vastaanottoon. Politiikan onnistuminen on aina konteksti- ja toimijasidonnaista.

Jatkotutkimuksen aiheet

Diskurssianalyysin avulla voi tunnistaa erilaisia politiikan suunnitteluun ja linjauksiin liittyviä ongelmia ja hahmottaa niitä erilaisia tapoja, joilla nämä ongelmat esiintyvät eri tilanteissa. Korkeakoulupolitiikan vaikutusten selittäminen vaatii kuitenkin toisenlaista otetta. Diskursiivisia näkökulmia onkin hyödyllistä täydentää tavoilla, jotka mahdollistavat teksteissä tuotettujen diskurssien ja tekstien ulkopuolisen todellisuuden välisten jännitteiden tutkimuksen.

Politiikan makrotason diskursseihin keskittyneen tutkimuksen jälkeen olisikin kiinnostavaa tutkia korkeakoulutuksen mikropolitiikkaa. Viime vuosina on tehty useita suomalaisten yliopistojen toimintaan sekä välittömästi että pitkällä tähtäimellä vaikuttavia päätöksiä, joita on seurattu yksittäisinä uudistuksina, mutta ei kokonaisuutena. Tällaisia muutosprosesseja ovat esimerkiksi laadunvarmistuksen vakiinnuttaminen auditointeina, yliopistojen siirtyminen uuteen palkkausjärjestelmään, kansainvälisten politiikkavaikutteiden lisääntymi-

nen sekä koulutuksen että tutkimuksen alueilla, ja viimeaikaiset päätökset yliopistojen kasvavasta rakenteellisesta yhteistyöstä. Tässä tutkimuksessa käytettyjä tekstuaalisia menetelmiä olisi kiinnostavaa yhdistää etnografisiin analyyseihin tilanteista, joissa politiikan tekijät, hallintovirkamiehet ja akateemiset työläiset kohtaavat politiikkauudistusten diskursseja (ks. Wright 2005). Näin päästäisiin ylittämään politiikan sanojen ja tekojen välinen kuilu. Tutkimuskohteeksi voisi ottaa esimerkiksi sen, miten yliopistoissa ja korkeakouluhallinnossa työskentelevät ihmiset näkevät itsensä suhteessa kansallisiin ja kansainvälisiin korkeakoulupoliittisiin uudistuksiin.

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