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**Title:** Higher Education Research in Finland - What's going on?

**Year:** 2016

**Version:**

**Please cite the original version:**

Nokkala, T., Simola, M., & Friman, M. (2016). Higher Education Research in Finland - What's going on?. *Tiedepolitiikka*, 41(3), 6-8.

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~~Version 160920 TN, mf 22.9.2016 MS 220916 TN160923~~

**Terhi Nokkala, Mari Simola and Mervi Friman**

### Guest Editorial

#### Higher Education Research in Finland – What’s going on?

What is going on in Higher Education Research in Finland? What is being researched right now? What might the tertiary education look like in 10 years? What are, and could be, the emerging research questions and methodologies of today and tomorrow?

[\(Pitääkö Cherifistä sanoa tähän jotain/ mf: ehdotan loppuun\)](#)

This issue of Tiedepolitiikka has been done in collaboration with the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers in Finland (CHERIF), a Finnish scholarly association representing those [interested/engaged](#) in higher education research in Finland. The six articles selected for this issue explore the current and the future of the Finnish higher education and research on it. The call for articles was issued in November 2015 and the potential authors were invited to send their contributions in Finnish, Swedish or English by February 2016.

The published articles reflect the nature of higher education research as multidisciplinary, varied field rather than as a theoretically, conceptually or methodologically unified or coherent discipline. [Higher education research embraces studies– of policy, higher education organisations, academics as well as teaching and learning.](#)

~~This reflects the actual situation and spirit of Finnish higher education policy. The only common, shared worry in the field of higher education institutes is the lack of financing. All the pieces in the puzzle are moving, or missing. It is difficult, or even impossible, to find out the ultimate goal of higher education in today’s Finland. Is it the flexibility of structural changes, as emergings and alliances? Or is it something which improves the global situation and makes the future generations living possible.~~

~~Hmm, tähän pitäisi sanoa jotain siitä, ettei tällainen lehdessä esiin tuleva tutkimus kuitenkaan ole turhaa, vaan osaltaan rakentaa parempaa korkeakoulu yhteisöä.~~

The first three of the articles are empirical research articles discussing topical themes for Finnish higher education policy and practice. In the first article, by Sari-Johanna Karhapää and Taina Savolainen, discuss and examine the trust development process as a part of a major university reform in occurring in Finland. Their article, titled “Trust Development in a Changing University - A Longitudinal Case Study of a Merger from the Rector’s View”, the authors develop a conceptual model for the development of inter-organisational trust, as well as illustrate its operation in the context of the merger of two Finnish universities, University of Joensuu and the University of Kuopio

Kommentoitu [MF1]:

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in 2010 to create the University of Eastern Finland. They conclude that trust is a dynamic and multi-level phenomenon. The nature and development of trust changes through time, interaction, and the stages of negotiation in the organizational relationships.

Henna Juusola in her article "Lukukausimaksujen hegemoniaa ja myytti PISAsta - Diskurssiivinen analyysi kansallisesta koulutusvientikeskustelusta" discusses the discourse of exporting education in Finland. She recognises three discourses, obstacle discourse, justification discourse and, finally, responsibility and accountability discourse in the Finnish higher education policy, and argues that the obstacle discourse has reached a nearly hegemonic status.

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Johanna Lätti's article "Equality for Excellence? Justification of equality promotion in transforming Finnish academia" analyses the different ways of justifying the promotion of sex equality in Finnish universities on the one hand, and in the higher education policy on the other. She argues that in university documents equality is justified through legal requirements; through reaching university's strategic outcomes, and through creating the optimal working environment and community for all. In the national documents, the competitiveness of Finnish universities in acquiring and retaining talented personnel in international competition is used to justify equality work. The justifications are also linked to different dimensions of sex equality.

The next two articles review important, but little studied themes in higher education research.

Melina Aarnikoivu's article "'Not in my backyard but in my front room': A review of insider ethnography" is a review of a large body of literature constructing the methodology of insider ethnography; little used in higher education research. While distinguishing the methodology from ethnography, selfethnography, autoethnography and ethnography at home; the author formulates a working definition of insider ethnography, and outlines the challenges, rewards and ethical questions related to its use.

Pentti Rauhala, Mauri Kantola, Mervi Friman and Tapio Huttula have for their article "Ammattikorkeakoulutus tutkimuksen kohteena" reviewed research conducted on Finnish universities of applied sciences. The authors have analysed the research themes in academic dissertations, university research institute reports and scholarly articles in the field of education from two decades; categorised them according to [Teichler's \(2000a, 2000b\) categorisation of the different dimensions of higher education research](#) and discussed the temporal evolution of the body of research. The result makes visible the development process of universities of applied sciences: pedagogy and RDI activities has been in the focus of those researches who are worked inside the UASs. Research institutes have focused their studies to the dual system as a whole.

**Kommentoitu [2]:**  
Jättäisin pois teichlerin, jos muutenkaan ei laiteta viitteitä.

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The special issue is capped off by Pekka Hirvonen, Risto Leinonen and Mervi Asikainen, who in their article continue with the topic of research based development of higher education, focusing on teaching the physics and the research on it. The Finnish subject teacher education is based on the collaboration between the teacher education department and the teacher training schools ('normaalikoulu') being responsible for the pedagogic training, and the disciplines (e.g. physics) teaching students the actual subject matter. The [writers/authors](#) argue for the need [for connecting to connect](#) the substance and the pedagogic method more clearly in training, and give examples on the development work and pedagogic research done [at the in the discipline of physics discipline](#).

The articles also help us turn a critical gaze on to our own practices as scholars. As higher education research has largely been produced by people working in universities, has the field been dominated by a focus on universities. However, the policies and practices of the universities of applied sciences also deserve attention of scholars. Subject teacher education similarly provides an interesting case example for the discussion on the dichotomies between the practice and theory, and our usual tendency to separate the method from the substance. Trust, equality and ethics of methodology rise into focus as higher education institutions have to defend their legitimacy and capacity to produce relevant knowledge for the development of society, while educational export is often seen as an activity to save the higher education institutions from the predicament of underfunding. We hope that the article inspire readers for further research and dialogue in these topics which merit a discussion in the academic community beyond the arena of this publication.

***Sürretäänkö nuo alkuun kirjoittamani tänne? Saatte aivan vapaasti muuttaa tekstiäni.***

***Ja jotain tällaista alkupuolelle vaiko mitenkä:***

We hope that the articles inspire the readers for further research and discussion of the actual topics. Trust and equality, export of education and ethics of methodology are nowadays important topics for everyone who wants to research or work, or who is interested in, the higher education policy or institutes. Also, we have been delighted to see the widening basis of the higher education research. Methodological choices and researcher's own position impact on the kind of knowledge is produced. In many cases research on HE is done by the people working inside the institution themselves, which turns the critical gaze into the challenges resulting from this more or less autoethnographic position we hold. Universities of applied sciences produce a lot of research, also on their own functioning, but still the field tends to be dominated by the focus on the university. Subject teacher education provides an interesting case example for the discussion on the dichotomies between the practice and theory, and our usual tendency to separate the method from the substance.

(Jotain ajankohtaista keskustelua tänne)

ThankFinally, we would like to thank you for Edistyksellinen Tiedeliitto, Tiedepolitiikka, and chief editor-in-chief Kari Kuoppala, and reviewers for collaboration.

Terhi Nokkala, Mari Simola and Mervi Friman

Korkeakoulututkimuksen Seura Cherif

***Ehdotan loppuun lyhyesti Cherifistä:***

Korkeakoulututkimuksen Seura (Consortium of Higher Education Researchers in Finland Cherif) was founded in 1999. The purpose of the Consortium is to bring together the multidisciplinary and multi-sector research and development of higher education into one forum for action and discussion. The goal of the Consortium is to promote diverse and multidisciplinary research on higher education, and to improve cooperation between researchers, administrators and other parties interested in developing higher education. The Consortium also maintains contacts with the international community of higher education researchers. The Consortium promotes and publishes research, makes initiatives, and participates in debates on higher education and science policy. In addition to our own triennial Symposium of higher education, we organize seminars and other events with our partners. (https://korkeakoulututkimus.fi)

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*Korkeakoulututkimuksen Seura Cherif on perustettu v. 1999. Seuran tavoitteena on koota Suomen laaja ja monitieteinen korkeakouluihin kohdistuva tutkimus- ja kehittämistyö yhteiseen toimintaan ja keskustelufoorumiin. Seuran tavoitteena on edistää korkeakouluihin kohdistuvaa laaja-alaista ja monitieteistä tutkimusta sekä parantaa alan tutkijoiden, hallintohenkilöiden ja muiden korkeakoulujen ja korkeakoulutuksen kehittämiseksi kiinnostuneiden tahojen yhteydenpitoa. Seura myös ylläpitää suhteita kansainväliseen korkeakoulututkimuksen tutkimusyhteisöön.*

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*Korkeakoulututkimuksen seura harjoittaa tiedotus-, tutkimus- ja julkaisutoimintaa, osallistuu koulutus- ja tiedepoliittiseen keskusteluun sekä tekee esityksiä ja aloitteita. Esitelmä- ja seminaaritilaisuuksia järjestetään yhdessä kumppanien kanssa. (<https://korkeakoulututkimus.fi/>).*

Tuohon tarjoamaani ajatukseen maailman pelastamisesta sopisi lähteeksi. Mutta siis vain jos se teistä on ok.

Holm, T. 2014. Enabling change in universities. Enhancing education for sustainable development with tools for quality assurance. Annales universitatis Turkuensis. Ser AII, 289.

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