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THE RISE OF NEO-LIBERALISM IN FINLAND: FROM THE POLITICS OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO THE SEARCH FOR SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

"As the resources and rewards of science are increasingly allocated by bureaucratic authority, the authority of the scientific community, derived from the goal of knowledge enhancement, can only diminish (Roger L. Geiger: "The Home of Scientists: A Perspective on University Research", 1985: 69).

The University as a Focus of Political Manipulation

Against the growing and rapidly changing societal pressures, the defenders of the university have pointed to its durability in contrast to many economic, social, and political institutions. The problem is, however: under what conditions has this stability been maintained ?

In principle, the traditionalist view, stressing the importance of the basic academic functions, has relevance as a means of legitimation. The university is still responsible for the search for a new knowledge and

for the provision of higher education. It also seems that scientific productivity in the form of freedom of thought and action needs the organizational structure of the university (Habermas 1990).

Although the traditionalist approach is increasingly necessary as a reminder of the lack of the scientific premises of the modernization effort of the university, its explanatory power suffers from an insufficient analysis of the politico-economic determinants and the functional changes in the state. Already the Enlightenment-inspired European university with its liberal intentions of free intellectual curiosity and of the moral commitment to intellectual values was relevant to the general ideological and political aspirations. As a matter of fact the liberal scientific orientation and the pluralist *laissez-faire* goals of the state were mutually complementary (Alestalo 1992).

Along with the modernization of society, the university has been increasingly supposed to assist the state in the consolida-

tion of national identity and in the achievement of the socio-economic well-being. After linking capitalist aspirations to parliamentary democracy and basic economic regulation, the states in many Western advanced countries have also been able to intervene into all sectors of society. During this process, demands for the development of the multiversity, responsive to the growing needs for higher education facilities and to the new requirements of the labor force and the economy, became evident.

The state intervention ideology has been adopted as an integral part of the welfare state program. Especially in the Scandinavian countries there has been a close correspondence between the range of political manipulation and the utilitarian and over-optimistic conception of the social value of science and higher education.

The orthodox welfare state program has been based on an assumption of a strong and economically stimulant public sector capable of realizing an extensive socio-political, economic, and cultural program with the assistance of linear economic growth. Currently, as a result of economic depression these proclamations have lost their political relevance. The trend is toward a re-evaluation of the basic functions of the state. Instead of a purposeful leveling of the hierarchies between various social groupings and institutions, an attempt is made to revitalize some old liberal principles. Market-force analogies are introduced with an intention to provoke intense competition between those concerned.

This situation has ruined the expansion of the university and radically restricted the scope of an epistemic discussion. In the name of development, governments have cut back on public expenditure. This strategy has been oriented toward a new pragmatism. Ideas of decentralization are proclaimed, although various kinds of centralization strategies are in fact constructed.

This article aims at analyzing the role of the university in the midst of the welfare state program and that of neo-liberalism. The case of Finland is used as a reference point. For

the most part the Scandinavian welfare state model was adopted in the country, wherein a high level of state activism was integrated with the promotion of science and the universities. However, it was characteristic of Finland that the idea of equal opportunity had a strong regional political content (Alestalo 1993).

Now, it is argued that this kind of political goal-setting has no political future. According to current science policy guidelines, it should be subjected to neo-liberal aspirations emphasizing the laws of market forces and the principles that attempt to guarantee the country's competitiveness in foreign markets (Science and Technology Policy Council 1993).

The Aims of the Welfare State

In fact there is little theoretical unanimity as to the reasons and causes of the welfare state development (Bryson 1992). In the Scandinavian context the social reformist perspective, which emphasizes the principle of equality and insurance against market uncertainty, has the most explanative power.

The paradox of this kind of a welfare state is in its complex relationship to economic determinants. In order to pursue a successful politics the state must reduce the tension inherent in the capitalist system and be able to solve the problem of the relationship between the means of public resource generation and steady economic growth (Alber 1988).

Especially the analyses of the crisis of the welfare state have shown how the state has limited opportunities to handle this problem. Furthermore, the underlying assumption of steady economic growth makes it vulnerable to market fluctuations. Nevertheless, the validity of strict economic determinism should be questioned. In the period of the economic recessions in the mid of 1970s and the early 1980s, the political consequences of rapidly rising public expenditures were criticized. Yet, most welfare states were able to continue their welfare strategies (Alestalo &

Uusitalo 1986). Therefore, the adopted political ideology, rather than the fluctuations in economic development, seems to be the most relevant issue. In relation to the present argumentation favoured by the Cabinets in many Western European countries this fact should be borne in mind.

There is a discrepancy between the theoretical and the political promises of the welfare state. In fact, the classical viewpoint did not regard the welfare state as the provider of material abundance, perfect social equality or the fulfillment of the needs of various interest groups. The main strategy was to introduce an idea of a new social order with a broader awareness of state activism.

The present legitimization crisis points to the difficulties of balancing public, private, and individual interests, as well as the functional and structural elements of governmental administration. A serious problem is, how to maintain the principle of collective responsibility, and how to distribute diminishing public resources in a democratic way.

The Scandinavian welfare state model has been sketched to include an active state and an extensive variety of public services. This means that the state takes responsibility for providing markets for commodities which by their nature are marketless. In order to strengthen its economic power, it tends also to be willing to intervene into the functioning of the market forces. This kind of orientation does not, however, guarantee any automatic solution to the problematic relationship between the public and the private sectors: the Scandinavian countries are market economies.

The socio-reformist perspective of the welfare state strategy implies the state's responsiveness to group demands. This type of sensitivity has linked the state to specific political programs mostly emphasizing democratic aspirations. It aims at abolishing class-based effects on social mobility and at distributing human and material resources in a more equal way. However, in general these activities have not been a response to the need to promote qualitatively new in-

dividual satisfaction, but a reflection of a policy that was expected to satisfy the growing quantitative needs for a trained labor force.

The Expansion of the University System as a Part of the Welfare State Program

It was characteristic of the Scandinavian socio-reformist welfare program that the politics of equal opportunity was adopted as the main strategy. An integral part of it aimed at accomplishing a reform in primary and secondary education, and at expanding the university system.

In Sweden, a model of an integrated university system was created wherein the universities were opened to non-traditional student groups, and the university system was adapted for a broader student recruitment (Kim 1983). In Finland a decentralization program with a strong emphasis on regional policy was prepared.

In the Scandinavian welfare state effort the economic functions were integrated with the socio-reformist premises. They were focussed on supporting economic progress and the reproduction of the labor force. As a result, by the initiative of the Social Democrats, an idealistic growth program was prepared. It was based on the expansion of the public sector, on the idea of an overall rationalization and modernization of society, government administration, and the economy, and on the promotion of science and higher education.

Along with the legitimization of the welfare state program there was in the OECD countries a trend toward a science policy aiming at the promotion of societally relevant science, of a rationalized governmental decision-making, and of the components of steady economic growth (OECD 1980). Mostly the comparative analyses of science policy of those days have stressed the dominant role of the OECD ideology. Without under-estimating the OECD impact on national strategies, there is a need to search for new analytical tools. Within these limits

the theory of the welfare state fits the Scandinavian context well.

In Finland, being a late-comer in modernization, the welfare state ideology was integrated in the late 1960s and in the 1970s with the rapid process of socio-economic transformation. As a joint project of the Social Democratic Party and the Center Party (the former Agrarian Party), the Finnish approach reflected three kinds of purposes (Cabinet programs in Finland 1966–1983; The Center Party 1974; SDP 1976; Science Policy Council 1970):

First, in the name of democracy an attempt was made to assist the modernization process by offering new channels for social mobility, i.e. by establishing the comprehensive school and by expanding the university system as a response to the rapidly growing number of secondary-school leavers.

Second, in the name of modern society a specific state-regulated science policy was created that was focussed on raising the overall resources of science and technology in the country, on changing the prioritization of the scientific fields in favor of the natural and technical sciences, and on setting research priorities on the basis of their societal utility. Originally the science policy reform also included a call for the creation of a critical attitude towards the elitist nature of higher education and the laws of the market forces (The Communist Party 1974; SDP 1976). Soon it was buried under the economically specific instrumental pressures.

Third, in the name of equal opportunity the welfare state ideology was linked to regional policy. The aim was to resist the effects of rapid urbanization by decentralizing the university system and by abolishing the sources of asymmetry between various parts of the country. Accordingly, several new universities were established in the peripheral regions: in the 1960's there were 11 universities, in the early 1980's the respective number was 17. The choice of the scientific disciplines for the new universities was mainly based on their supposed impact on the local, mainly economic needs. It was also

expected that they would ensure a transformation in the local industrial structure.

In Finland, the decentralized university system was a great political maneuver in which President Kekkonen was very active by initiating the process and by following its progress. The aim was also to weaken the traditionally strong position of the University of Helsinki and of the two universities in Turku. This strategy was successful: in 1965 the share of the University of Helsinki in all government expenditures for the universities was 46%, in 1975 it was only 27%. In the beginning of the decentralization period the University of Helsinki had 80% of all students, while in the 1980s the respective figure was 44% (Haavio 1985; State budgets in Finland 1966–1990). It is worth pointing out that although it is relevant to call these years the expansion period of the university system in Finland (in 1965–70 real growth of government expenditure for the universities in Finland was 181 % and in 1970–75 44 %), the growth of expenditure was less in the three old universities than elsewhere (Alestalo 1993).

In principle, the planning of the new universities proceeded in a mechanical and state-regulated way. The process was tightly in the hands of the Ministry of Education which preferred the use of quantitative criteria. Instead of stimulating an analytical discussion on the development of the scientific traditions and on the optimum size of the new universities, faculties and departments as long-term efforts to raise the scientific potential and quality in the country, the Ministry produced a huge amount of quantitative figures. It manipulated the number of students, the ratio between the students and the teachers, and the space needed for the new universities (Haavio 1985).

Moreover, the university system as a whole was extremely responsive to the requirements and prospects of the labor force which at first reflected the pressures of the rapidly industrializing society and which soon thereafter were transformed into speculations of the coming of an information society. All over the university system the trend

was toward specific programs of vocational education. Institutions and courses of adult education were also established in almost every university.

On the Road to more Scientific Objectives

Despite the emphasis on the instrumental and quantitative aspects, the primary aims of the decentralization project of the university system and science policy were to improve the research potential in Finland on a broad front. When the economic recession of the late 1970s and the early 1980s turned into economic recovery in the mid-1980s, the political and science policy argumentation entered a new phase.

First, it was realized that the expansion of the university system does not guarantee the growth of basic research. The decentralization program resulted in an equalization of opportunity that did not satisfy the conditions for the promotion of the quality and quantity of basic research (Perustutkimustyöryhmä II 1984: 4, 6). Moreover, the emphasis on technology and on programs of technological and natural science goal-oriented research were seen as one-sided. In the words of the Academy of Finland (1988: 5–6): “if in basic research a continuous input is made one-sidedly into fields which offer a promise of rapid applications, various fashionable phenomena may have more influence on the formation of science policy than will thought-out and balanced development of the research system”.

Second, it was noticed that the emphasis on the quantitative aspects in the promotion of the university system weakens the development of qualitative issues.

Third, there emerged suspicions that the direct economic targets of regional policy had not been achieved: the structural socio-economic problems were difficult to solve. Strategically important economic activities, such as entrepreneurship, financing opportunities, and the amount of research and development activities were still under-

represented on the periphery (Jolkkonen 1987).

The shortcomings and the contradictory premises of the welfare state program activated two kinds of structural discussions, outcome both of the criticism of the missteps of the one-sided policy and of a change in the politico-ideological orientation. There was a new Cabinet consisting of a coalition between the Social Democratic Party and the Conservative Party (Prime Minister Holkeri's Cabinet, 1987–1991).

On the political level an attempt was made to stabilize the welfare state effort by a “planned structural change” (Cabinet program 1987) that was felt to be an indicator of modernization as such. However, as a future prospect of the Finnish economy this policy did not manage to pursue anything beyond a conventional growth policy with traditional ideas of the means of economic and industrial policy (Alestalo 1991). According to this program the focus in science and technology policy should increasingly be on technology. The primary aim was to guarantee the competitiveness of the economy in foreign markets.

On the level of science policy there was a motive activating a discussion of the scientific premises of the policy pursued. The Academy of Finland, the central government agency for science administration and science policy, declared in its “Outlook for a Science Policy” (1988: 3–4) that it is necessary: 1) to promote research of a high scientific standard, 2) to develop and maintain research work and scientific competence in nationally and societally important fields, 3) to evaluate the standards of and preconditions for Finnish scientific research and the needs for research, 4) to emphasize strategic planning and development in science policy, 5) to provide the research units, by a stable and systematic funding of basic research, the possibility to develop their own profiles at the long range, 6) to promote the composition, mobility, status, and renewal of research personnel and the formation of creative work milieus, and 7) along with the investments in technological research to

fund social, cultural, and environmental research.

By its very nature the program of the Academy of Finland reflected the principles of scientific liberalism while it was still oriented to the idea of equal opportunity. The focus was on the promotion of a high standard research activity on a diversified and many-sided scientific front. There was an attempt to distribute resources in a balanced way from basic research to applied research, from technical and natural sciences to the humanities and social sciences. The term "creative work milieu" was also used to refer to the motivational factors which have often been buried under the organizational and economic requirements. Two years earlier the OECD (1986) in its review of science policy in Finland had come to similar conclusions by criticizing the ritualistic, limited, and too ambitious goals of the policy pursued.

In the years of economic depression of the early 1980s the decentralization process of the university system came to an end. Along with the reorientation efforts of the Academy of Finland the university system became a focus of external pressures demanding the formulation of more efficient programs of development. These demands resulted in an internal discussion of the needs for allocating more public funds for pure scientific purposes all over the university system and for reinforcing the role of the old universities.

There was also a vivid externally provoked discussion focussing on the problem of how slow the universities were to adopt the ideology of new effectiveness (Ministry of Finance 1984). According to Helsingin Sanomat (1983; the leading newspaper) "the trend is toward human powerlessness. Behind a few scientific meritocracies there stands a heavy layer of mediocrity that is unable to face the criticism arising from its incapability to meet the high standards of productivity". Although these kinds of proclamations became more hushed along with the economic recovery and the new flourishing of the welfare state program at the end of the 1980s, they expressed a coming of a new kind of liberal ideology.

The March of Neo-Liberalism

The definitions of Western democracy have idealized liberal determinants. Although there has been variations in the state's responsiveness to different socio-economic demands depending on institutional and ideological factors, the orthodox conception of liberalism has emphasized the principle of pluralism and the laissez-faire approach of the state. In this constellation, the state's interests are centered at repressive, infrastructural, and cultural functions. Science and higher education represent marketless commodities, which serve the aspirations of social mobility and those of raising the national potential and administration (Alestalo 1991).

By adopting the principle of pluralism the "old" liberal state was not interested in strengthening its capacity for intervention. According to the laws of capitalism, market forces are necessary for the functioning of the economy. The primary means to promote national well-being and economic progress are capital accumulation and the encouragement of the most profitable economic activities. However, according to the original liberal formula, it is not the state's responsibility to question their functionality or to define any standards for the evaluation of the investment value of social and cultural issues.

For the most part, the roots of neo-liberalism are in the attempts of governments to reverse the expansion of state provisions. The aim is to strengthen the market and to reduce the directly distributive role of the state (Bryson 1992). These attempts refer to two significant kinds of transformations.

First, in many welfare states there has been a shift in the political system from the left to the right. *Second*, over recent years a deep economic depression has been experienced all over the Western advanced countries. However, the linkages between the political and economic changes are not straightforward. The neo-liberal argumentation and the conservative politics became evident already before the economic disturbances. As a matter of fact, the present cri-

sis of the welfare state may mirror the crisis of the capitalist state to which the ideology of the conservative parties have limited solutions to offer. There is a growing discrepancy between the ideology of market economy and the utopia of the market forces' progressive impact on human well-being. Yet, the role of the public sector as the primary source of the dysfunctioning of the welfare state has been stressed by right-wing governments.

In contrast to the welfare state ideology with its emphasis on collectivization and equality, the key words of neo-liberalism are competition and privatization. Public services are regarded to have been unresponsive, inflexible, slow, and costly. The recipients of these services have become passive, lazy, and incapable of producing high standard output. Only a severe fight for money can show how the resources should be distributed. Measurable input-output relationships become important because they provide the criteria for evaluation.

In the neo-liberal argumentation the traditional *laissez-faire* approach with its emphasis on the elements of freedom and democracy is no longer valid. The means of competition are aimed at reconstructing deep hierarchies between various social groupings and institutions. Thereby, the grades of freedom are defined on the basis of the respective market value and public image, and the rewards are in the hands of the bureaucratic authorities and the government.

The problem of the neo-liberal orientation is that it is not based on a solid theory of what kind of society will be constructed. It is not clear to what extent extensive state intervention can be transformed into a market-led system.

In many Western countries the re-evaluation of governmental responsibility began by privatizing state owned companies. In this process, analogies borrowed from cost-benefit theory are used (Cabinet program in Finland 1987). Thereafter, the same political maneuver has been applied by privatizing several types of public services. The trend is to combine the economic effectiveness

accompanied by competition with service orientation.

During this process the concept of rationalization has lost its original meaning. As a substantive part of the welfare state program rationalization was regarded as systematic planning and the "scientification" of decision-making practices as well as as the establishment of research institutes and departments aimed at answering to practical, sectoral information needs (Alestalo 1991). The primary focus of rationalization in the neo-liberal argumentation is to reach the goals of effectiveness by privatizing the activities in the public sector.

In the welfare state program state intervention implied increasing the amount of government control. A paradox of the neo-liberal approach is that the reduced role of state does not mean a reduced amount of control. The state wants to keep in its hands the ultimate criteria of evaluation. It wants also to keep alive the illusion of the beneficial effects of the market forces by restricting the critical discussion of the underlying ideological problems.

It is characteristic of the increased cuts in public expenditures that there is no valid estimation of the outcomes of the radical cutback programs. What happens to the activities which have no market value and which cannot be evaluated by using simple cost-benefit calculations? What is the market value of the cultural issues? What is the role of the university in a society that has forgotten the importance of humanist values?

The University moving in a Market-led Direction

In Finland the expansion of the university system in the form of the decentralization program was regulated by the law (University Development Act 228/1966; 505/1978). Despite the severe resistance of the Ministry of Finance (1984) a new law for the development of the universities was passed by the Parliament for the years 1987–1996 (1052/1986). The aim was to guarantee a

steady growth of public funding. Thereby the growth of government expenditures for the universities was linked with the growth of the GDP. The optimism of steady economic growth was so strong in those days that this solution was regarded as reflecting the increasing cultural will and the awareness of the scientific objectives of the Cabinet. It was not realized that in reality the law might weaken the political position of the universities by setting their development in a direct dependency on the fluctuations of the economy.

At the same time the limits of the cultural will of the government authorities were precisely defined. The law consisted of a supplement with seven criteria of resource allocation.

As the indicators of an ideological change, these criteria have been marketed as representing new democratic aspirations of the government authorities and as increasing the amount of autonomy of the universities. The representatives of the universities have also been willing to believe that state manipulation will diminish in the future (*Universitas renovata* 1993). Nevertheless, these proclamations ought to be seen as the introduction of the neo-liberal principles. For the most part the norms are mere applications of the theoretical premises of the cost-benefit analysis. In the name of effectiveness and that of a managerial superstructure the activities of the universities should be rationalized. Resources should be allocated on the basis of systematic evaluations. The ultimate goal is to establish hierarchies by setting priorities.

The search for priorities has been centered at analyzing the number of students and examinations, and that of publications and doctorates. Paradoxically, the effectiveness thesis has been used in order to promote the qualitative dimensions of higher education and academic research; however, mostly quantitative criteria have been constructed (*Hosia* 1993). There has also been a strong confidence in the future of the vocationally oriented higher education. Thereby labor force prospects have become the central means of priority setting. At the same time

the growing dissatisfaction with the slow structural transformation of Finnish manufacturing has made these estimations highly sensitive to the requirements of the economy. All these pressures have strengthened the primary interest of the universities in the instrumental teaching function.

Searching for the most Beautiful in the Midst of Cutback Programs

In the welfare state program, particular attention was given to the setting of priorities fulfilling the requirements of societal needs. The first neo-liberal arguments pointed to effectiveness that served as a source of competition in a different context. In spite of the various ways of defining the concept of priority, both programs were based on the idea of a steady growth of government expenditures and on the responsibility of the state to guarantee this growth.

In 1992, Finland was thrown in the midst of severe economic crisis, to the great surprise of the Cabinet consisting now of a coalition between the Conservative Party and the Center Party (Prime Minister Aho's Cabinet 1991–). As a result the government finances were seriously weakened. During that year, two crisis statements were given by the Cabinet. The central message was that there is a need to re-evaluate the function of the state, to prepare a cutback program of public expenditures, and to define which functions should be privatized and commercialized (Ministry of Finance 1992).

In this situation the neo-liberal arguments have been used in a new way. A couple of years ago there was some awareness of the limits of the expansion of the public sector. Still, the privatization process was initiated in order to raise the quality of the services in the welfare state context. It was thought that by decentralizing the power structures and by strengthening the role of the individual "customers", the future course of state provisions could be estimated. At the same time, it was considered politically impossible to undermine the welfare state.

Currently, there is a change in orientation. Neo-liberalism, in connection with the ongoing economic depression, is still interested in finding new customers, but no more interested in the customer's actual choices. At the same time privatization and commercialization are used as a means of forming a variety of hierarchies.

By reducing state provision in the traditional welfare sector (health, social security, education), the state's trend is toward a class-society consisting of the winners and the losers. By making cuts in the public sector and by increasingly supporting the private sector, especially export industries, the state tends to strengthen the growing imbalance between the economic and the humanistic values and a new socio-economic transformation that radically differs from the picture sketched by the labor force forecasts and those of information society. If the estimation of the coming of a high level permanent unemployment is valid, the present programs of vocational and higher education are based on too many unknown factors.

Together with the institutes of elementary and secondary education the university has become a focus of severe cutback programs (Table 1). As a result the objectives of the University Development Act are no longer supported by the Cabinet (Council of State 1993). In the words of the Prime Minister, "the universities must adapt to the decrease of public expenditures so that the develop-

ment of a high standard quality of academic research and higher education can be guaranteed....There is the need of setting priorities and of striving in these fields for the achievement of the highest quality and level (Aho 1993).

It is worth observing how the premises of neo-liberalism have been integrated with the cutback ideology. In the good days the principle of competition, coupled with the call for new evaluation methods, was used to refer to the search for a high quality by raising the standards, by reinforcing the preconditions, and by solving the structural problems of the Finnish academic system (Academy of Finland 1988). Although for example the University of Helsinki (1991) began to discuss the establishment of centres of excellence and "superprofessorships", it spoke for stable and systematic funding of the scientific activities with no intention to concentrate the funding only to the scientific elite.

When cost-benefit theory was for the first time introduced by the government authorities and legitimized by law, external pressures for evaluation grew. Despite a growing motive of regulating the course of development of the university system, the evaluations were for the most part left to the responsibility of the Academy of Finland. The Academy emphasized the need to develop relevant scientific criteria, although it was not very consistent in performing the evaluations methodologically. However, its new science policy program shows that it has

Table 1. Average real growth of government expenditures in 1980–1993 in Finland by various research performing and funding organizations.

	1970–80	1980–90	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1991–93
Universities	3.0	6.8	8.9	-0.3	-8.8	-4.5
Academy of Finland	2.4	11.7	11.6	-1.8	-7.5	-4.6
Technology Development Centre	-	18.6	15.2	8.1	7.5	8.6
State research institutes	6.2	9.7	3.8	1.5	-7.5	-3.1
Other	13.1	0.7	-4.9	4.7	-2.0	1.3
Total	5.8	9.4	6.5	2.3	-4.2	-1.0

Source: Niskanen 1993:8.

also adopted the neo-liberal argumentation stressing the importance of the scientific elite and the concentration around big projects (A Forward Look 1993).

Now, the neo-liberal premises are applied for a variety of purposes which for the most part are contradictory. The great underlying idea is to develop a strategy of centralization on many levels.

First, there is the quality argument, attempting to legitimize the radical reduction of state provisions. Accordingly, an attempt is made to point to the beneficial effects of the cutback programs on the quality of respective activities. This type of reasoning is an application of crisis theory. During economic or political disturbances, only those will survive who are worth supporting (Aho 1993).

Second, there is the excellence argument, which is an application of the cost-benefit theory. By searching for scientific excellence and by establishing centres of excellence both the quality aspects will be reinforced and the risk of investments minimized (A Forward Look 1993; Council of State 1993; Science and Technology Policy Council 1993).

Third, there is the development argument, which is a political counter-tendency of the decentralization project of the universities. The funding of the established university system has become a heavy financial burden for the state. Therefore the cutback programs are legitimized by referring to the structural weaknesses of the existing system. The key words are structural development, cooperation and the elimination of "overlapping" university departments and scientific fields (Council of State 1993; A Forward Look 1993).

Fourth, there is the internationalization argument, which is the outcome of Finland's growing political interest in international integration. In this context internationalization is regarded as a value in itself. It also serves as the primary criterion of the politically manipulated quality estimation and of the centralization program of the universities.

From Political Bluff to Awareness of Scientific Objectives

It has been politically relevant to blame the university as being slow to modernize. The experience of Finland implies that in responding to specific political ideologies it has been almost too eager to proceed. The decentralization of the university system as a part of the welfare state program was accomplished by giving only minor attention to the scientific preconditions of the equalization of opportunity. The outcome is that there are many small universities with a national and a regional orientation that are politically powerless in front of the neo-liberal arguments of the Cabinet in general and the demands of internalization in particular.

The decentralized system has also evoked a deep gulf between the old and the new universities. In order to win the competition for scientific reputation, most new universities have imitated the university model from the old universities. Therefore there are many one-professorship departments with thin communication networks and with a limited ability of advancing science in a diversified way. There is also a strong protective tendency all over the university system.

Moreover, in order to strengthen their social value there has been a change in orientation in the old universities. Responding to the short-term requirements of labor force, they have emphasized a one-sided definition of the teaching function. As a result they are in the present situation as confused as the respective authorities and the labor market organizations. What is the relevance of the need to search for scientific excellence in this context?

In the name of new societal responsibility and economic awareness an extensive evaluation process has been initiated by the government. In order to achieve cuts in the public sector, the goals and activities of every governmental unit and institute have been estimated (Valtionhallinnon rakenne 1992). Up until now, the Ministry of Education has requested two external evaluations of the universities (e.g. Evaluation of the University of

Jyväskylä 1993; Evaluation of the University of Oulu 1993). An international group has also evaluated the Academy of Finland which is the primary governmental funder of basic research (Academy of Finland 1993). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has requested the individual universities to make a self-evaluation on the basis of the outlines sketched by the Ministry. The aim is to identify the fields of strength and specific profiles.

The growing interest in evaluation can in itself be seen as a progressive proceeding. If it is taken in an analytical way, it may reveal the weaknesses and the strengths of the academic system and provide standards for further development. All depends on the choice of the evaluation criteria, on the goals of policy, and on the ability to consider the scientific and the societal preconditions in a balanced way.

The state-regulated evaluation process in Finland fulfills these requirements only partly. The whole process has taken a period of a few months. It took over 10 years to establish the decentralized university system. The retrenchment is expected to happen at once.

There is also a strong tendency of underestimating the capability of the universities to self-criticism. As the visiting evaluation group of the University of Jyväskylä (1993) has stressed, priorities ought not to be determined on over-simplified assumptions. Even in the midst of economic recession, the search for excellence cannot mean that all the expenditures should be concentrated on a few scientific heroes who come to monopolize the national scientific system. The process of internationalization cannot flourish in this kind of a monopolized science, either. On the contrary, the result may be that instead of an expected rise to the top, the elements of peripheralization will be strengthened.

In a small country the problem of internationalization is a very complicated one. There are national needs that cannot be solved by relying only on international science. A conception of an active periphery also points to the need to promote originality and to de-

velop dissociative activities (Alestalo 1991; Kaukonen 1990; Senghaas 1985).

For the most part the new internationalization arguments are based on political premises. Along with the application for the membership of the European Union in 1992, Finland has joined in many expensive international scientific undertakings almost at the same time. Thereby the government authorities have begun to worry about what is going to be the financial share of the Finnish science in the international competition.

As an integral part of the centralization and the retrenchment strategies, the quality of the Finnish academic system has been discussed as if the earlier scientific achievements had not reached the international level. The primary goal is, however, to apply also here the cost-benefit theory. A serious problem is that for example the European Union is a politico-economic undertaking pursuing a science policy with the same kind of orientation. These quality standards do not necessarily have anything to do with the actual scientific ones.

In order to legitimize the ongoing evaluation process in Finland, the Ministry of Education has been eager to show how the neoliberal goals and the actual policy go hand in hand. When working on the cutback program for 1994 it published in a great hurry a list of elite research units and institutes to which it wanted to award a prize. Afterwards the universities and the Academy of Finland have joined in the search for scientific excellences. This type of political purposiveness is very far from the Weberian ideal of an excellent scientist for whom an intensive search for a new knowledge is in itself the most rewarding and motivating scientific activity.

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