



Education export in the Finnish higher education context: principles and tensions

Online seminar: "The ethics and politics of educational export: Japan and Finland in a comparative perspective" 16.2.2022

Henna Juusola, Tampere University
Kimmo Kuortti, Tampere University

Contents

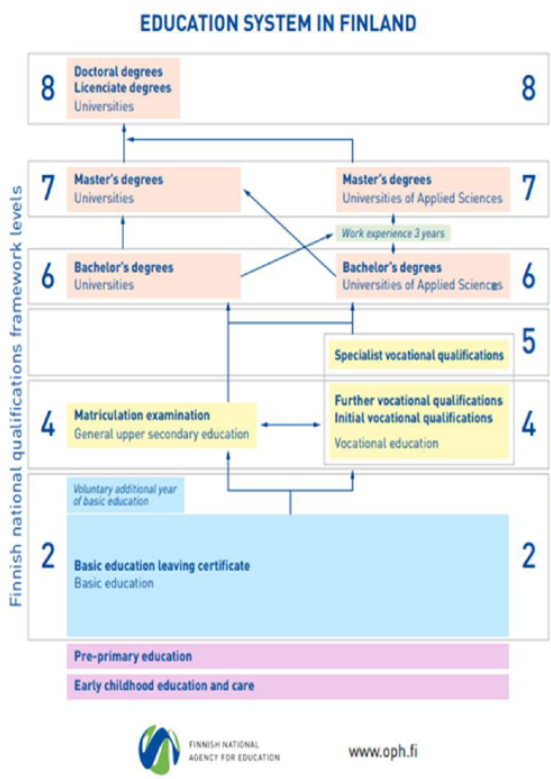
I Finnish context: terminology, actors and policies

II Principles and tensions

III Finnishness of Finnish education export and potential blind spot

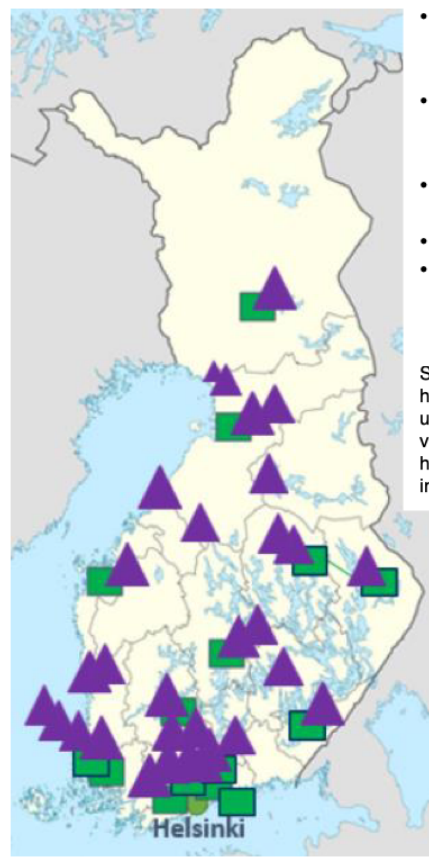


Context: Higher education system in Finland



Higher education is based on the publicly funded binary system:

- 14 universities (■) and 25 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) (▲) (www.minedu.fi)
- 154 700 university students (53,3% female; 7,2% foreign students)
- 142 000 UAS students (51% female, 7 foreign students) (www.tilastokeskus.fi)
- Tuition fees for foreign students 2017 onwards (min. 1500 EUR/academic year based on the legislation)



- Finland Facts**
- 5,5 million inhabitants
 - Finnish spoken by 86,9%, Swedish spoken by 5,2%
 - Foreign background (country of birth other than Finland): 7,2%
 - GPD (per capita): 42,936€
 - Capital: Helsinki
 - Member of the EU (1995)

Source:
https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa_en.html
<https://finland.fi/facts-stats-and-info/finland-in-facts/>

What is education export?



“Education export (koulutusvienti), transnational education, education industry, osaamisen vienti, global education, commissioned education (tilauskoulutus), lukuvuosimaksulliset ohjelmat (tuition fees for foreign degree students)... “

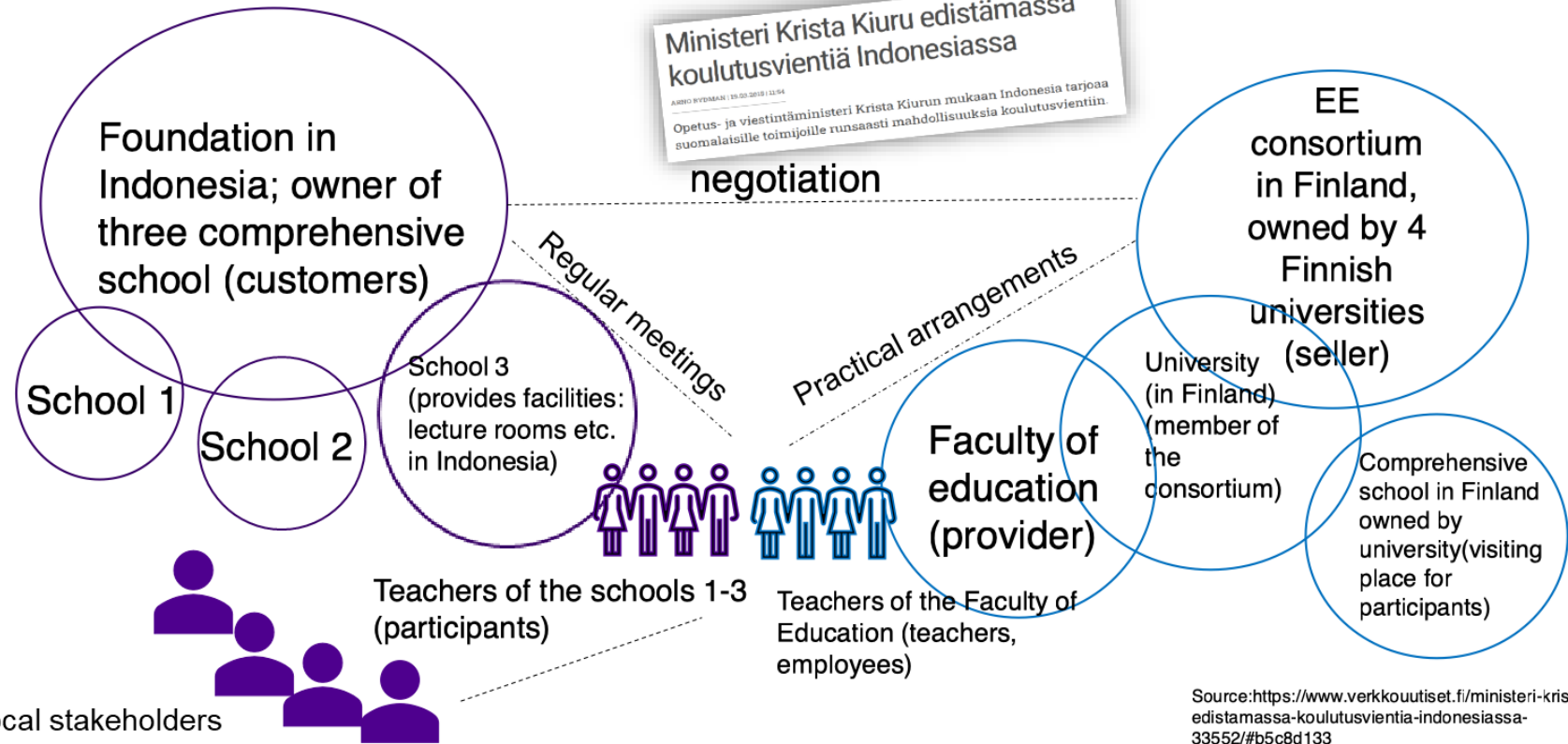
PHRASES
TERMINOLOGY
DESCRIPTIONS
VERNACULAR
LABELS
NAMES
WORDS
GLOS
TA

Actors (examples) in Finnish education export (EE)

National representatives	Educational institutions (HE sector)	Consortiums (owned by educational institutions)	Ad hoc consortia
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finnish Government• Ministry of Education and Culture<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team Finland Knowledge network• Finnish National Agency for Education<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education Finland• Finnish education evaluation centre• Ministry of Foreign Affairs<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embassies, consulates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universities + units/faculties• Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) + units	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EduExcellence (owned by three UASes)• EduCluster Finland (owned by three educational institutions in Jyväskylä region)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UAS Schools of Professional Teacher Education and Finnish Church Aid• OMNIA Education Partners and Finnish Church Aid• Consortia created for projects

Case example of actors in EE implementation: teacher education in Indonesia 2016-2017 (master degree)

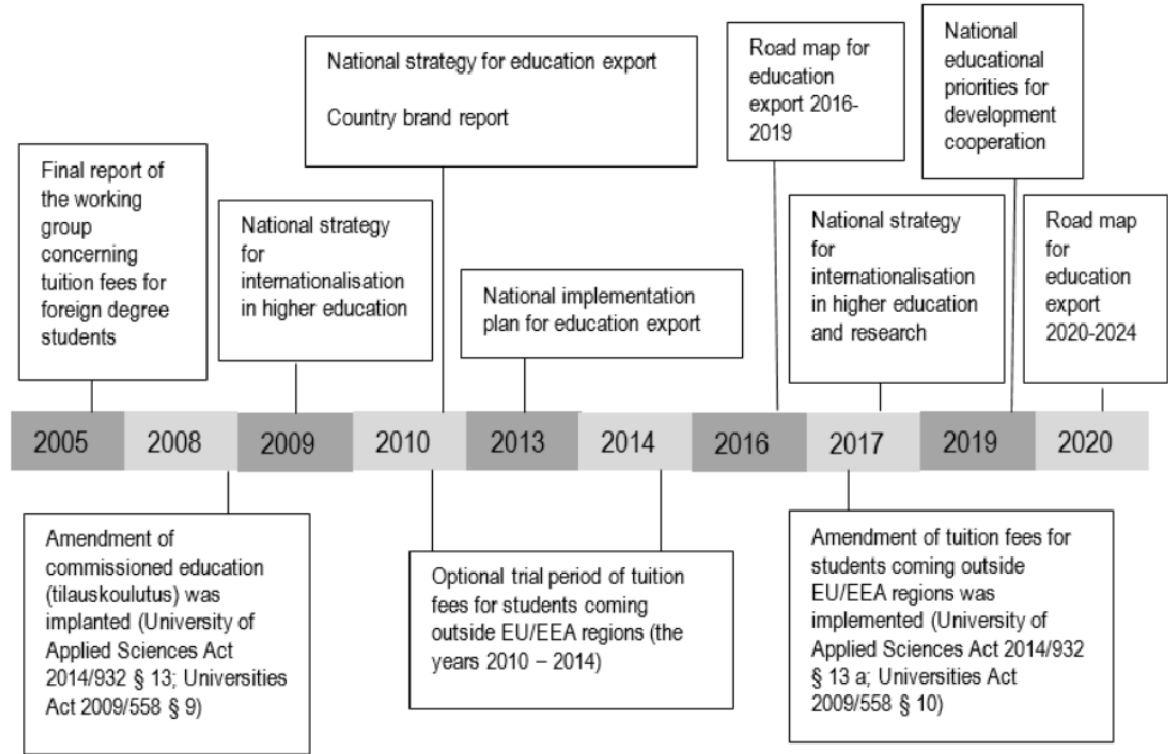
Potential actor(s): national representatives. E.g. Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland visited Indonesia in 2015 and signed agreement of collaboration (in the field of education)



Source: <https://www.verkkouutiset.fi/ministeri-krista-kiuru-edistamassa-koulutusvientia-indonesiassa-33552/#b5c8d133>

Education export policies: Main education export strategies and amendments to the Universities and University of Applied Sciences (UAS) Acts

National policy documents concerning education export



Education export related amendments to the universities act (2009/558) and UAS act (2014/932)

PART II: Principles and tensions

“Only quality will bring success.

Finnish operators in the education export field **must strengthen and step up their quality assurance**. Various certificates and documentation attesting to quality work are important requisites for operation in the international market. The forms of support available for exportation must be conditional on the ability of the operators to present a quality certificate or a similar documentation of the quality of operations.”

(Finnish education export strategy, 2010, p.6)

Concept and context of quality in Finnish EE

What is quality?

- Quality as exceptional, as perfectionism (or consistency), as fitness for purpose, as value for money, and as transformation (Harvey & Green, 1993).
- Relative, subjective, political concept (Saarinen 2007, Baird 2008)
- Quality assurance (QA), instruments&practices aims to ensure that goals set for activities can be achieved (Harvey & Green 1993)

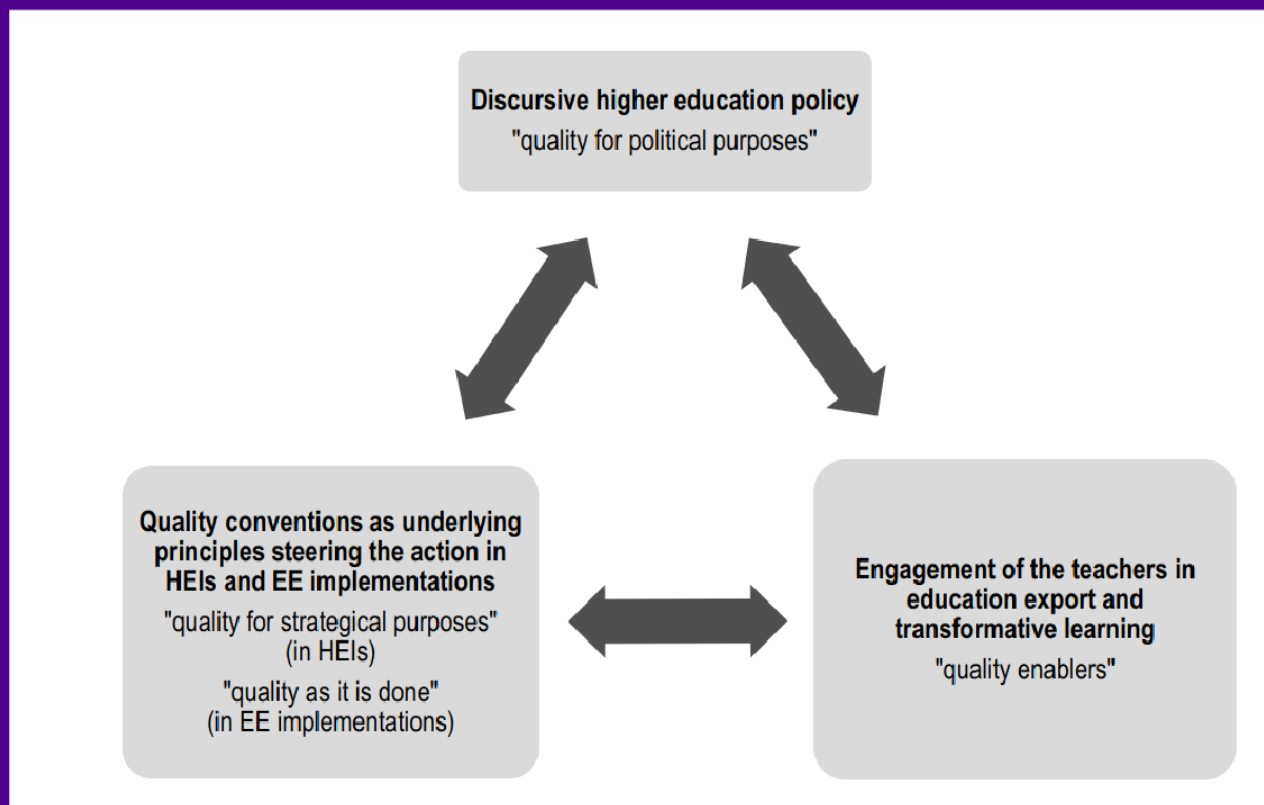
Quality and QA in EE

- Diversity of stakeholders, environment and policy perspectives (e.g. Sharp 2017; Altbach & Knight 2007).
- Also depending on type of EE (independently organised education or together with international partner etc.) (see e.g. Knight & McNamara 2016)
- International recommendations (eg UNESCO & OECD 2005; ENQA 2015) and agreements (GATS).

Finnish approach to QA

- Audit approach to QA (FINEEC's audit manual for HEIs)
- -> institutions own approach to QA matter + connections to international networks (e.g. AACSB accreditations etc.)

Dynamics of quality (perspectives) in Finnish EE (micro-meso-macro)



Case example: Quality conventions in the exported Finnish master degree programme (teachers, students)

- Convention theoretical approach; conventions as socio-cultural frames steering the action, and providing principles for justification and evaluations (Boltanski & Thévenot 2006).
- Data included interviews (students, teachers, other staff members) and notes from participant observation.
- **Summary of the key factors:**

Participants	Factor	Quality convention
Students	Personal commitment	Inspiration, professional-academic
	Supportive learning environment	Interpersonal
	Education for the community good	Domestic-civic
	Finnish education as a promise of something better	Fame
Staff members	Professional commitment	Professional-inspiration, project-oriented
	Finnish approach to teacher education	Domestic, professional-academic
	Education for the common good	Civic-domestic

Potential tensions

- Quality is not stable (see also Saarinen 2007: “Quality on the move”): at different stages of the EE processes, dimensions describing quality can be different (marketing-negotiation-implementation-output/outcome/impact).
- Plurality of quality: the characteristics that describe the quality of EE varies; not only economic but also social, cultural, efficiency-oriented, political and academic.
- Aim of the EE and quality: EE activities appeared to be project-based activities, implications for both quality assurance and practical implementation; e.g. what kind of EE activity is considered successful (value for money, or value for something else as well?)

Society – education - ecosystem - business

- Education as social system
- Business ecosystem as a social system
- Ethos and goal of sustainability?

Principles and tensions cont.

“The removal of all trade barriers in education and the ensuing competition would endanger the free education and training for degrees and qualifications in Finland and thereby also undermine the realisation of equality. Finland has not entered, nor intends to enter, into commitments under GATS concerning free access to markets or national treatment in education and training.” (Education and Research 2003 – 2008)

”The working group proposes a model, where part of the costs is covered with tuition fees.” (MinEd 2005)

“Ministry of Education will appoint a cross administration committee to prepare a development programme, which will support networking of higher education institutions and export organisations and the consolidation of structures and a knowledge base of educational exports.” (MinEdu 2009)

“Service development work of small start-ups should be more candidly connected under the umbrella of English-taught degree programmes in higher education.” (MinEdu 2016)

“We will establish a company to accelerate investments and the pace of product development in Finnish education exports...” (MinEdu 2017)

“...a consistent and long-term partnership between private and public sectors is needed. Without activities in the domestic market the need for capital in companies aiming mainly for international markets is difficult.”FNAE 2020”

Principles and tensions cont.

Public – private

- What kind of effects will education export have in the domestic, non-commercial education? (c.f. Seppänen et al 2020 on creation of "eduecosystem")

PART III: Finnishness of Finnish education export

“We are not too shy to say that Finland has the best education system, and we are ready to share our know-how with the world. Understanding that this kind of transformation worldwide requires a shift of perspective and a mindset of partnership and collaboration, we invest in capacity building, curriculum development and re-modelling entire education systems, through varied consultancy services aimed at governments, schools and education authorities or at private institutions and actors.”

Education Finland’s www-pages: <https://www.educationfinland.fi/why-finland>

Research-based case example: legitimation of Finnish EE (Juusola & Nokkala 2021)

- **Empirical data:** School concept (case 1) and fee-based bachelor degree programme in BA (case 2); 6 semi-structured interviews
- **RQ1:** How Finnish higher education institutions legitimate education export actions?
RQ2: What kind of underlying conventions are emphasized in the legitimation processes?
- **Methods:** qualitative content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) & vignette approach (Hughes, 1998; Hughers & Huby, 2004), reflective workshops
- **Theoretical considerations:** French convention theory; convention as sociocultural frames that steers action in education export projects and are source for legitimation (Diaz-Bone & Salais, 2011, Boltanski&Thévenot, 2006; Boltanski&Chiapello, 2005)

Themes and their relations to convention theory

	Education for the further generation	Competing institution	Localisation of education export action	Project-oriented action	Finnishness of education export
Convention (Boltanski&Thévenot, 2006; Boltanski&Chiapello, 2005)	Civic	Market	Domestic	Project-oriented	Fame, domestic, industrial
Characteristic in this study	Societal impact, global responsibility	Competition, ability to respond to the clients' need	Domestic traditions and socio-cultural context (abroad)	Being active in networks and participating several projects at the same time	Being recognized in public(fame), Finnish teaching traditions (domestic), effectivity and standards (industrial)

**Example of vignette:
Finnishness in the Finnish education export activity (1/2)**

*In the education export activities **Finnishness actualises especially in the Finnish approach to pedagogy**. This is our special strength in the international education market. The Finnish pedagogical approach can be considered to be more student-centered; the standardised tests are not as widely used as for example in the UK. It is important for us to ensure that the Finnish way of teaching is implemented in education export activities regardless of who is locally responsible for the teaching. Finnish approach to pedagogy can be supported by practical examples such as video materials and visits to Finland.*

Also, we consider it important to ensure that the most essential elements of Finnish education are adhered to in education export activities. Therefore, the standards and clear procedures are important. In particular, learning outcomes must be comparable with the similar education in Finland. With the support of the standards and procedures we can have a trust-based collaboration with the customers as then the customers become convinced that they get what they have ordered, i.e. Finnish education.

Finnishness in the Finnish education export activity (2/2)

***Finnishness is in a way an ideal.** Finland's good reputation in education is central in this, but the **reputation of excellence is also supported by other images linked to Finland** such as the Finnish society being safe and environment being clean, and there being high investment in societal wellbeing. Thus the Finnish education can offer participants a promise of a better life.*

*In practical implementations, however, **Finnishness is constantly being negotiated.** First, in each education export implementation we must agree with the customer about the focal issues. Second, the local socio-cultural and political context and participating students also have an effect on the implementation. Therefore Finnishness is always specific to each education export implementation. Finnishness is also identified in relation to something else: either big education exporting countries or the local educational culture in the country. Seen from this perspective, Finnishness is never a fixed product, but it is composed of temporal, local/spatial and cultural elements.*

Finnishness in the EE programme documents

• Connection between education and society:

“...Finland’s strengths in education export and in the field of education itself are a competitive education system...” (OKM 2010)

“Successful export of Finnish educational know-how will be built on the country’s strong education system and its continuous development.” (OKM 2010)

“The functionality of Finnish society, our close relationship to nature and a system of basic education that is among the best in the world are not just something to be proud of. If used properly, they can also be efficient tools. The delegation wished to approach global problems from a solution-focused perspective so that culture and the economy, for example, are not regarded as separate areas, but are interwoven under the same themes.” (CBR 2010)

“High-quality education based on equal opportunity has otherwise played a key role in the success story of Finnish society. Education has created prosperity, safeguarded democracy and evened out differences between regions and social classes.” (CBR 2010)

“The functionality of Finnish society, our close relationship to nature and a system of basic education that is among the best in the world are not just something to be proud of. If used properly, they can also be efficient tools.” (CBR 2010)

Are there any blind spot in Finnish education export?

- Ethical issues not much stressed (e.g. student legal position in EE activities, or position of vulnerably groups in Finnish HE in general).
- Potential imbalance of in north-south power relations ignored (is there “Finnish colonialism”?)
- The connection between the “organic” nature of Finnishness, embedded in education as a social system and its segmentation into products – is there something Finnish to be sold?
- Future of education export – is there need to regulate education export activities (in terms of e.g. quality)?

Kiitos - Thank you!



henna.juusola@tuni.fi

kimmo.kuortti@tuni.fi

References

- Altbach, P., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3), 290-305.
- Boltanski, L., & Thévenot, L. (2006). *On justification: Economies of worth*. Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press.
- Harvey, L., & Green, D. (1993). Defining quality. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18(1), 9-34.
- Juusola, H. (2020). *Perspective on Quality of Higher Education in the Context of Finnish Education Export*. Doctoral dissertation. Tampere University
- Juusola, H., & Nokkala, T. (2021). Legitimizations of Finnish education export : exploring the plurality of guiding principles. *European Journal of Higher Education, Early online*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2021.1923046>
- Knight, J. (2016). Transnational education remodeled. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(1), 34-47. doi:10.1177/1028315315602927
- Knight, J., & McNamara, J. (2017). *Transnational education: A classification framework and data collection guidelines for international programme and provider mobility (IPPM)*. Available from: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/tne_classification_framework-final.pdf
- Seppänen, P., Lempinen, S., Nivanaho, N., Kiesi, I. & Thrupp, M. (2020). Edu-bisnes peruskoulussa: Kohti "eduekosysteemiä". *Kasvatus : Suomen kasvatustieteellinen aikakauskirja*, 51(2), 95-112,275.
- Sharp, K. (2017). The distinction between academic standards and quality: Implications for transnational higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*, 23(2), 138-152. doi:10.1080/13538322.2017.1356615
- Simola, H., Kauko, J., Kalalahti, M., Sahlstrom, F., & Varjo, J. (2017). *Dynamics in Education Politics : Understanding and explaining the Finnish case (Edition 1) (1st ed.)*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203068793>