

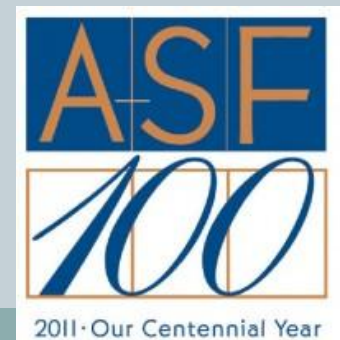
Tuition Fees for International Students in Finland:



A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF COLLECTIVE
ACTION AND CHANGE

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, USA
DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED BY: LEASA WEIMER
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LEASA@UGA.EDU



Aim/Purpose of Study



- Not an evaluation of the tuition pilot program.
- Theoretical analysis of move to introduce tuition fees in Finland.
 - Strategic Action Fields (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011; 2012)
 - Academic Capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004)



Tuition Pilot Program (2010-2014):

- Trial period 1.1.2010 – 31.12.2014
- 9 Unis (out of 16) & 10 UAS (out of 25) selected
- 131 (146) English-taught Master programs selected
- ONLY non-EU/EEA students
- University/program chooses to collect tuition fees or not and amount of tuition fee
- Must provide scholarship program



Tuition Pilot Program Participation (2011)



	Unis	UAS (polytech)	TOTAL
HEIs	9	10	19
Selected English Masters Programs	125	21	146
Programs collecting tuition fees in 2011	19	8	24

Korkeakoulujen Lukukausimaksukokeilun seuranta ja arviointi (30/4/2012).

Research Design



- Case Study-2 different Unis
 - Aalto: “World-Class”
 - University of Jyväskylä
- 25 Qualitative interviews (conducted Oct. 2011-May 2012):
 - 30-60 minute audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews:
 - ✦ 5-10 interviews per university (administration, program directors, academic staff, and student union)
 - ✦ 10 interviews @ national level (national level organizations affiliated with higher education)
- Document analysis
- Triangulation of data (Yin, 2003)



Research Questions



- 1.) Why has Finland introduced tuition fees (via pilot program) for non-EU students? (History, context)
- 2.) What rationales are actors using to guide social change or stability concerning tuition fees in Finland?
- 3.) How are HE actors responding to the tuition pilot program?



RQ1: Findings



- 20-year historical context shows a gradual shift from cooperative to competitive internationalization strategies.
 - This shift aligns with European NPM change processes.
 - Tuition fees in Finland: from taboo topic to policy instrument
 - "The tuition fees in Finland had been such a taboo that the idea had not been entertained until...I think it was in 2004 -5, [or] thereabouts when the Ministry came up with a proposal to introduce fees." -*National Level*

Path to the Tuition Pilot Program



- 1992 Legislation to collect fees after 7 years of study
- 1992 EU programs open up to Finland
- 1995 Finland joins EU
- 1990's: "Internationalisation as whole, in the beginning, was all about exchanges. It coincided with our EU membership and the opening up of the Finnish economy." –*Administrator*
- 2000's: "The political discussions focus on degree students and more and more on recruiting foreign students to Finland. So I think there is big thinking behind [this] that has changed and maybe it has to do with more of an economic rationale, from cooperation to economical thinking." –*National Level*

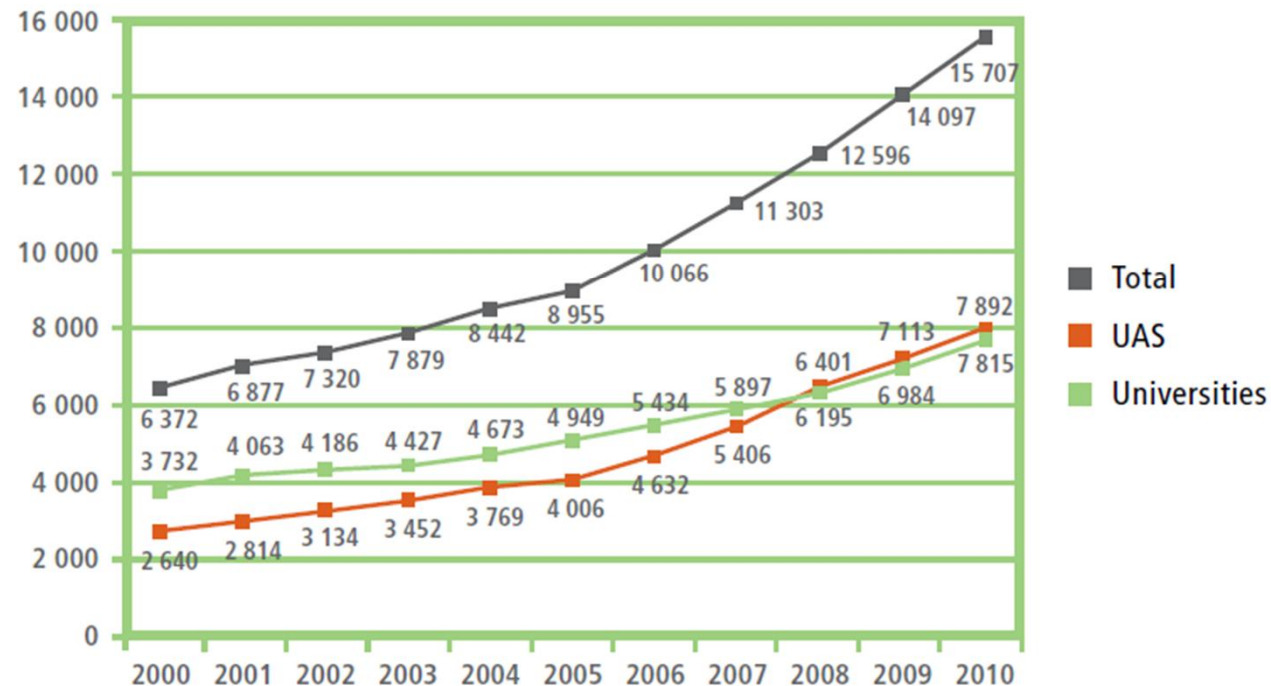
Genesis of the tuition pilot program



- Political non-consensus on tuition fees = political compromise
 - 2005 Ministry working group on tuition fees
 - 2005-2007 political standstill
 - 2007 General elections
 - 2007 Government plan included tuition pilot program
 - 2009 University Act
- "There was this clear political non-consensus about it [tuition fees]. It is easy to try to solve a difficult political problem [with] some kind of experiment."
-National level

International Student Growth in Finland (2000-2010):

Development 2000–2010



“The atmosphere here in Finland has changed, because we have more international students, we talk more about the costs of internationalization and since we talk about the cost someone always asks who is paying for this and then the answer is taxpayers. Then starts this discussion...is this right or wrong?”
-National level

RQ1 Findings: Collective Strategic Actors



- Collective actors identified & located:
 - ✦ Incumbents –AGAINST tuition fees
 - (student union & some academic staff)
 - “Student organizations [student unions] are very strong in Finland; they are very influential. Very many ministers and directors of big companies and members of parliament are former student politicians. For instance director of Nokia is a former chair and very many ministers had been active in national student policy and that makes the organization very powerful. I think that members of parliament or even ministries sometimes listen more to student organization [Union] than Rector’s conference or professors union.” –*National Level*
 - ✦ Challengers – FOR tuition fees
 - (some administrators, some governance unit actors, some academic staff)

RQ2: Findings

- Culturally specific rationales for and against tuition fees
 - Incumbents (AGAINST tuition):
 - 1.) “Gate theory”: protection of social welfare value: educational equality
 - “The whole student movement in Finland has been very skeptical about tuition fees in general and it’s been one of the biggest topics in the last decade or two to be against tuition fees in general. The student movement and we as part of it are also a bit worried that as a result of this trial that actually the tuition fees might spread to Finnish students as well. That’s one really big concern, so there have been demonstrations and big campaigns against the tuition fees.” –*Student Union*
 - “This tuition fee experiment is politically very sensitive in the sense that in the Nordic countries, especially Finland, it has been very difficult to discuss tuition fees because there is a gate theory in the background. If we have even an experiment of tuition fees then it will lead to tuition fees for all programs and all people.”
–*University Administrator*



RQ2 Findings (cont.): Against Tuition Fees



2.) International social justice: HE is a human right

"There would be a large aggregate benefit for humanity at large, or for those [developing] countries, if the students got access to education. It would benefit Finland to make it possible for people who cannot afford it." –*Academic Staff*

3.) Resistant to AC/market-orientation of HE

"You treat people the same regardless of where they come from and I don't see education as a product in that sense or a marketable good. I really dislike the idea of having a business model for universities or higher education in general or having this kind of idea on effectiveness that they want to push through and they have to make a profit and everything. It's just incompatible with my way of thinking." –*Student Union*

4.) Contradictory to natl internationalization efforts

"We also say that if tuition fees [become] common here it is bad for Finland and Finnish people because we would like to have more international knowledge here, more than we have now." –*Student Union*

Findings (cont.): For Tuition Fees



- Challengers (FOR tuition):

- 1.) HE not financially sustainable: need for revenue

- 2.) Taxpayer burden—aging population

- “I think, although it is not discussed much, the whole shift in the population age structure in Finland as in many of the European countries [is reason to introduce tuition fees]. For a welfare state, what we have been really since World War II, we cannot afford everything anymore. Our population is aging and we have to provide more and more services there. So, I think this is just a balancing act; we need to charge something to make this equation work out, so we can provide good and affordable services, including education.” —*University Administrator*

- 3.) Tuition proxy for quality and competition

- “We should have tuition because if you sell something for free, then the potential buyer thinks that all this cannot be worth anything because it is free. It would actually help our marketing to say that here we have this very high quality and prestigious program, and ‘oh by the way, it costs EU €8,000 per year.” —*Academic Staff*

- 4.) Need for new export

RQ3: Findings

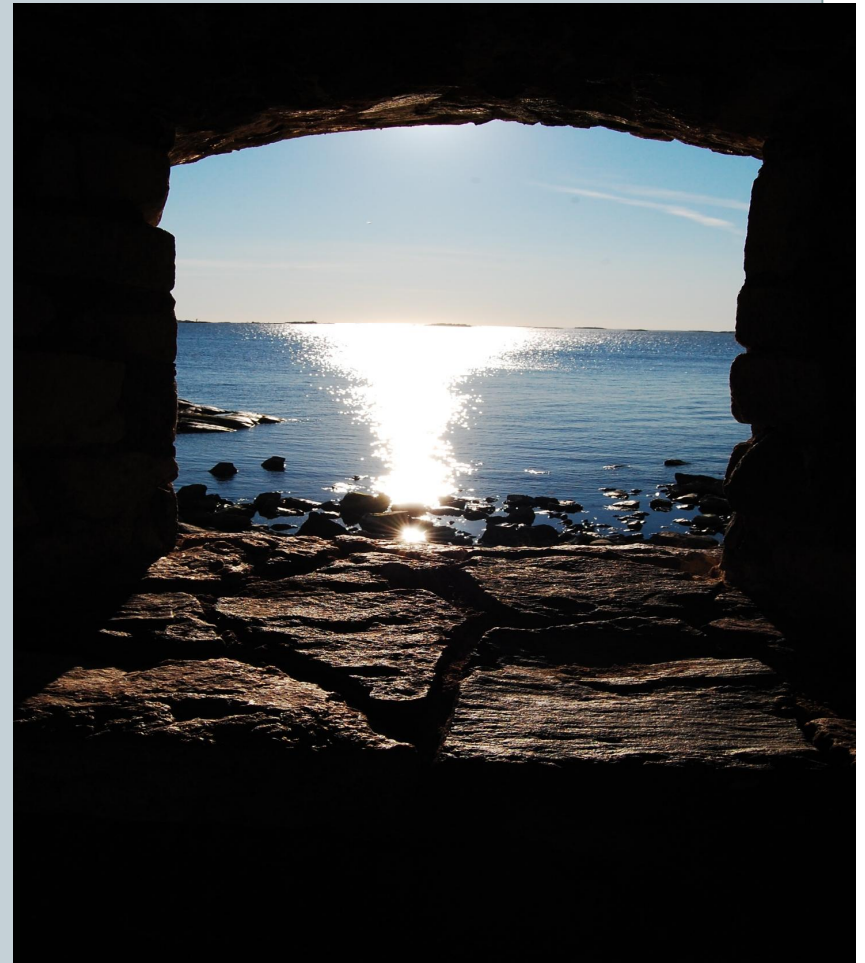


- Differential HEI responses
- NPM reforms of 2009 University Act propagate a new hierarchy among Finnish HEIs.
 - World Class Uni (14 out of 46 IDMPs)
 - ✦ Interstitial orgs: scholarship office
 - ✦ Development fund: incentive funding
 - Regional Uni (1 out of 15 IDMPs)
 - ✦ “Senseless pilot”
 - ✦ No scholarship program
 - ✦ No incentive funding

Take away: only 1 student paying full tuition (at Aalto).

Assumptions/Implications for Finland

- 1.) Assumption: International students offer a NEW revenue stream for universities
 - ✦ Does not take into account the amount of money needed to sustain a tuition driven international student strategy (marketing, scholarships, student services, development of programs, curriculum, teaching staff, etc.)
 - ✦ Will students come to Finland if there is tuition? International attractiveness: what makes Finland stand out when compared to other tuition based countries? (climate, cost of living, visa fees, safety, international environment of Finland, immigration policies, language, labor market, etc.)



Assumptions/Implications for Finland (cont.)



- 2.) Assumption: National economic development “We need international students for our labor market”
 - ✦ Disconnect: English language programs vs. Finnish language labor market



Assumptions/Implications for Finland (cont.)



- 3.) Assumption: “Putting a price tag on HE equals quality and competition”
 - ✦ Who distinguishes quality?
 - League Tables?
 - Consumer?
 - International student as consumer: Consumer mentality
 - Implications:
 - More accountability?
 - More demand for quality and services?
 - More assessment (student surveys)?
 - Value for money?
 - Branding & marketing?
 - Students as “active consumers”: co-creation of curriculum, classroom dynamics, etc.
 - ✦ Competition Fetish: policies are enacted to “promote, control, and maximize returns from market forces in international settings while abandoning some of the core discourses and functions of the welfare state” (Naidoo, 2012, 3).

Final Questions...



- ✦ What does Finland AIM to gain from having international students in HE?
 - Revenue? Talent? National economic development? Prestige/Reputation? Internationalization at home?
- ✦ Does Finland want to get into the business of competing for international tuition or talent or BOTH?
 - Tuition: national strategy needed in tandem with institutional strategies, what will attract students?, tuition infrastructure needed at each uni
 - International talent: liberalize visa regulations, offer competitive scholarships, employability services, language courses



Questions/Discussion

