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From Inauguration to Commercialisation: Incremental yet Contested Transitions Redefining the National Interests of International Degree Programmes in Finland

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ABSTRACT

International degree programmes (IDPs) act as focal instruments for the internationalization of higher education in many non-English-speaking countries serving a variety of national objectives, with the commercial objective becoming increasingly common. This study analyses how IDPs have developed in one Nordic country, Finland, from a marginal activity into programmes that underpin commercially oriented definition of internationalization. The data consists of key policy texts and administrative documents analysed to trace policy changes. The findings suggest that IDPs have developed from the internationalisers of the universities and development aid to recruitment channels for bringing skilled labour to Finland and promoting education export. Having global similarities in their development, policy changes towards commercial understandings of IDPs has been contested, particularly regarding funding, which relates to equality principles in the Finnish higher education system. These shifts have had repercussions for the idea of IDPs, universities and students.

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Introduction

International degree programmes (IDPs) developed for and often targeted specifically at international students have become a global phenomenon facilitating international student mobility flows in higher education in non-English-speaking countries. Global increases in both the number of mobile students, from 4.1 to 5.1 million from 2012 to 2017 (UIS, 2019), and the establishment of international programmes denotes a significant change for higher education institutions (UIS, 2019; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014) in terms of degree structures, language of instruction and pedagogy, in addition to other issues. This increase is a result of several simultaneous global and local processes, including, for instance, the transition to a knowledge-based economy, the massification of higher education and the commercialization of education, that are driven by international organizations, national governments, institutions and private actors (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). Thus, it is critical to understand how these policy processes are produced and facilitated in national contexts.

With limited historical policy analysis in terms of understanding policy changes in international education, the focus in previous studies has been on major English-speaking countries and analysing the transition from aid-based to commercially oriented definitions for international education (Adams et al., 2012;

Rizvi, 2011). In terms of rationalization for the recruitment of international students, a growing body of research highlights the commercial significance of international education while also noting that the hybridity of such rationalization includes soft-power policies and internationalization at home (Airey et al., 2017; Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Bradford, 2016; Jokila et al., 2019; Kotake, 2017; Kuroda, 2014; Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012; Urbanovič et al., 2016; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). However, more research into understanding the development of IDPs in non-English-speaking countries is needed to comprehend the policy processes, including the formation and problematization of policy objectives and the employed policy instruments in contexts where the international education system is developed from scratch and provided in a foreign, mainly English, language. Previous studies of IDPs in non-English-speaking countries have focused on the language policy aspects (e.g., Airey et al., 2017; Saarinen & Nikula, 2013), the institutionalization and implementation of IDPs (Bradford, 2016; Kotake, 2017) and the rationales for the recruitment of international degree students (e.g., Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012). While policy analysis underpins the historical contextualization of a policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), only a limited amount of research has considered the historical transition of a non-English-speaking country's adoption of a commercially oriented approach to international education.

For Finland, a non-English-speaking Nordic country with a publicly funded university system and an equality-centred welfare state model, IDPs have become focal internationalization instruments in higher education (MEC, 2017a; MoE, 2001, 2009) and are offered at every comprehensive Finnish university. This latter point distinguishes programme provision in Finland from the overall IDP prevalence in Nordic countries (over 60%) and Central and Western Europe (over 44%), although great differences exist between individual countries (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). A 2014 Europe-wide survey found that relative to the size of its higher education system, Finland led in the provision of IDPs (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). From 2017 to 2018, there were 218 IDPs in Finnish universities (MEC, 2018), which is significant for such a small country. In 2017, a segregated tuition fee policy for students from outside the EU and EEA countries was implemented (MEC, 2017a), consequently detaching international students from their Finnish counterparts (as well as EU and EEA students).

Against this backdrop, this study analyses how the IDP policies have developed from marginal activity in the end of the 1980s to the focus of economic interest. More specifically, the focus of this study is on understanding how the policy objectives under the broader internationalization of higher education policy have been changed and problematized. To examine this, inductive and deductive content analysis, accompanied by Carol Bacchi's (2009) what's the problem presented to be approach, is employed. The structure of this paper is as follows: firstly, the paper introduces trends in the development of IDPs, globally and in the context of Finland; secondly, the analytical and methodological approach is outlined; thirdly, the historical development of IDPs is presented; and, finally, the discussion section outlines conclusions.

Global trends in the development of IDPs

A review of previous studies on international education and IDPs identifies parallel trajectories for the programmes' development in different countries and regions (Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012; Rizvi, 2011; Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018; Sidhu, 2004), pointing to the global diffusion, transfer or appropriation of policy ideas and reforms occurring in very different contexts (e.g., Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012; Verger et al., 2012). To begin with, organizing international education in the form of separate programmes offered mainly in English has become common in non-English-speaking countries (e.g., Airey et al., 2017). This can be seen as a consequence of the expansion of global student markets in major English-speaking countries. In the

EU, the drive to be competitive, the harmonization of degree structures through the Bologna Process and the fabrication of competitive student markets (e.g., EC, 2013), reflected in national contexts (Airey et al., 2017; Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012), have paved the way for the development of separate international degree programmes in Europe (Huisman et al., 2012).

The position of English as a lingua franca in education and science has led to normalizing the use of English as a medium of instruction in IDPs. This trend to develop separate programmes in English has evoked criticism; critics fear that the role of national languages and the quality of education will diminish. They also emphasize the role universities play in educating a nation's citizens (Maiworm & Wächter, 2002; Wächter & Maiworm, 2008, 2014). Advocates, on the contrary, see no alternative to the introduction of the IDPs, due to 'linguistic disadvantages' for non-English-speaking countries (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014).

Signifying a common pattern in the recruitment of international students, in the OECD countries, degree students are often working towards advanced degrees: every tenth student in a master's programme came from abroad (OECD, 2016). This reflects the association of IDPs with labour policies. Due to the ageing population trend and connecting international student recruitment with policies related to knowledge-based economy, IDPs were promoted with the aim of attracting a skilled labour force that would enter the labour market after graduation (Stein & Andreotti, 2016; Ziguras & Law, 2006; Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015).

Economic, particularly commercial, interest in international education has been a widely noted trend first acknowledged in major English-speaking countries, connecting international education to education export (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015); for example, it was observed in the USA at the end of the 1980s and in Australia in the 1990s (Adams et al., 2012; Rizvi, 2011; Sidhu, 2004). Many commercially oriented countries charge (higher) fees to international students, segregating the student body; in some cases international students pay over twice as much as local students (in terms of the data available for bachelor's degrees) (OECD, 2018). This transition to charging fees is at times parallel to the decrease in public university funding (Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012; Rizvi, 2011), creating a justification for the chosen policy. This commercial rationalization has triggered the enlargement of marketing and student services functions and commercialized international student recruitment (Adams et al., 2012; Rizvi, 2011; Sidhu, 2004), or what Rizvi (2011) refers to as 'administrative technology': employing ideas from the business sector to facilitate international education as a business venture.

These marketing practices are linked to broader national branding operating beyond the education sector (Lomer et al., 2018), which also involves the privatization of education support services, leading to a reconfiguration of universities as consumers of these services (Komljenovic & Robertson, 2016). In Komljenovic and Robertson's (Komljenovic & Robertson, 2016) terms, international education can be positioned as an inside-out and frequently for-profit market wherein universities are the providers of the education service. This commercialization can be contextualized within broader ideological, political and economic shifts towards the marketization of education (Williams, 2013). Thus, commercialization is 'part of a broader policy shift away from the Keynesian welfare state settlement towards a new settlement based on neo-liberalism, which introduced market mechanisms and new managerialism into higher education' (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p. 270). These commercialization processes have generated a private-public debate on the nature of education (Williams, 2016), which is also debated in international education.

The central administration of nation states can be seen as a strategic factor driving IDPs. Universities formulate and practice their internationalization and recruitment policies in certain contexts (Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012; Stensaker et al., 2008; Trilokekar & Masri, 2017), with governments often exercising coercive power over the institutes (Trilokekar & Masri, 2017; Urbanovič et al., 2016), for instance, through economic means (Stensaker et al., 2008). Universities' strong national commitment, in relation to internationalization issues, is evident in the entrepreneurial imperative that encourages them to recruit international students (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Scott, 1998). The level and means of steering international education vary, but are nevertheless exercised; countries actively recruiting fee-paying degree students implement heavy regulation (e.g., through visa restrictions), whereas countries that control education provision more directly (e.g., through funding) do not employ the same regulative frameworks (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015).

Despite similarities in the development of IDPs, student flows are shaped in contexts. Serving as a major transformative power in international student mobility, social, political and economic developments have transformed the flows between countries and regions. At a very practical level, the global and internal policy climates shape the recruitment of students; for instance, in the USA after 9/11, new immigration policies affected the number of international students with tightened procedures for obtaining a visa (Choudaha, 2017; Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018).

In summary, IDPs have developed into a global phenomenon that facilitate the growing international

student body through instruction in English. Moreover, the rationales for their development are context-specific; however, there are common factors, such as economic interests, that have become emphasized in many contexts.

The Finnish context

The Finnish higher education system encompasses universities and universities of applied sciences, which have both developed international programmes. The focus of this paper is on universities, which have dedicated on IDPs at the master's level. Providing the context for the development of IDPs, universities in Finland have traditionally been characterized by uniformity within institutional structures, central administrative steering, free tuition and strong equality principles (Rinne, 2010). These equality principles have impacted international education, which has long remained tuition-free for all. In the 1980s and 1990s, international education was aimed to internationalize higher education for the benefit of the society and the economy (MoE, 1987) as a necessity for the economic development of a small economy (Airey et al., 2017; Nokkala, 2008). Later trends that were similarly seen in other European countries (such as the need to supplement an ageing labour force) have become a powerful rationale for the recruitment of international students (Jokila et al., 2019; MoE, 2001, 2009). This policy of expanding the international student body has been successful in the sense that, from the 1990s onwards, the number of international students studying for master's degrees has multiplied (see Figure 1).

Analytical and methodological approach

In higher education policy studies, policy changes are often analysed in policy texts with a focus on discursive practices (Saarinen & Ursin, 2012). For Saarinen and Ursin (2012), 'the discursive view [for analysing policy changes] takes a dialogical approach towards policy: policy texts both describe and construct policies' (p. 152). In this study, policy documents are perceived as both evidence of the IDP policy change and as constructions of the policy itself (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Saarinen & Ursin, 2012). Change is analysed as empirically identified in the policy text: what Hay (2002) refers to as 'to build empirically a picture of the process of change' (p. 149). However, unlike Hay (2002), in this study, change is understood as non-linear (Marsh & Stoker, 2010) and contested.

To illustrate the policy change, despite noting the limitations connected to periodization in historical analysis (Phillips, 2002), periodization is employed in this study to illuminate differences in policy emphases, not to

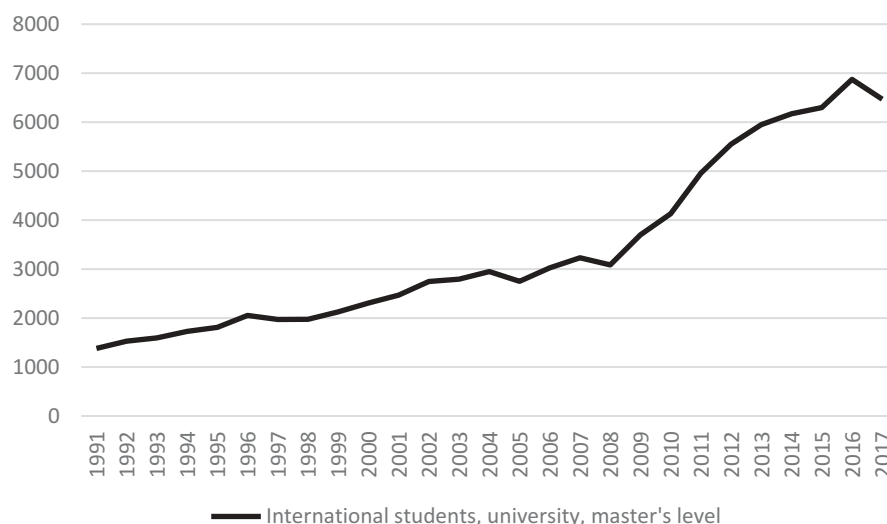


Figure 1. International students at the master's level in Finnish universities.

Source: Vipunen (2019); 1991-2009 data received from the Ministry of Education and Culture through personal contact. Statistical criteria may have varied during the 1991-2017 time period.

argue for fully detached periods in time. According to Phillips (2002), a period can be understood as a 'span of time, with a more or less determined beginning and end, during which phenomena may be identified that form some kind of coherent whole, showing "prevalent features or conditions"' (p. 366). Periodization may take dates and events as grounds for determining the periods. This can become difficult, as it requires determining which events actually do have such significance that they could mark the change of a period. Also problematic is how united a given time frame is in terms of it actually being definable as a period. Attached to the aforementioned issues is the subjectivity involved in making the decision on what to define as a period. Phillips (2002) asks, '[c]an we ever be certain, as we devise our carefully delineated historical periods, that we are not falsifying the characteristics of a flow of time?' (p. 371). Thus, in this paper, the limits embedded in determining periodization are accepted, and periodization is employed to illuminate transitions even though the identified phases are not separated by distinctive events. Moreover, it is worth noting that this periodization is used to support the understanding of change at the national level; thus, the individual programme and institutional contexts and events may have broader variations.

Thus, the aim of this study is to analyse how the Finnish internationalization policy for IDPs has shifted from a marginal activity to a commercialized practice from the end of the 1980s to 2018. The research question is how the IDPs have been developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland from 1987 to 2018. The time period selected for the study begins with an initial (unpublished) internationalization plan in 1987 and continues to 2018. This time period was selected because it signifies major transformations in the development of the international programmes; since 1987, within the

wider internationalization policy, international programmes have been systematically addressed and steered in the policy documents.

The first stage of the document analysis (Bowen, 2009) began with selecting the key documents for the analysis including an inductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The data consists of selected key policy documents from the central administration (Table 1). Focal policy documents defining the policy for IDPs are the four internationalization plans and strategies for higher education (MEC, 2017a; MoE, 1987, 2001, 2009). Additionally, memorandums and reports by the Ministry of Education and Culture that specifically discuss IDPs, international students and/or their relationship to education export were selected for analysis (MEC, 2013, 2014, 2016b, 2018; MoE, 1990, 2005a), in addition to country- or region-specific memorandums (MEC, 2012; MoE, 2003, 2006, 2007). Besides internationalization plans and strategies, the policy change has been further emphasized with the use of policy instruments (Lascombes & Le Galès, 2007) including legislation, funding and evaluations furthering the policies. The IDPs in Finland are provided within national legislative structures, prompting the selection of the main legislative documents for the analysis (Master's Programme Decrees; Universities Act, 2009). After each internationalization plan, the IDPs were evaluated; thus, all three programme evaluations (FINHEEC, 1999, 2005, 2013) and other theme-specific evaluations (FINHEEC, 2012; MEC, 2018) were included. Funding was traced in all the aforementioned documents.

At the second stage of the analysis, with the focus on internationalization plans and strategies, the following themes were analysed using deductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), which predefines the

Table 1. Data.

Year	Author/ administrative agent	Citation	Title	Format
1987	MoE	MoE, 1987	<i>The development of international activities in higher education</i>	Plan/strategy/ guidelines
1990	MoE	MoE, 1990	<i>Foreign student working group memo (in Finnish)</i>	Memorandum
1999	FINHEEC	FINHEEC, 1999	<i>Teaching Through a Foreign Language: From Tool to Empowering Mediator</i>	Evaluation
2001	MoE	MoE, 2001	<i>An international strategy for higher education</i>	Plan/strategy/ guidelines
2002	MoE	MoE, 2002	<i>Report of the committee for the development of university degree structure (in Finnish)</i>	Memorandum
2003	MoE	MoE, 2003	<i>Finland, Russia and international cooperation. Ministry of Education's action plan for 2003–2007 (in Finnish)</i>	Memorandum
2005	FINHEEC	FINHEEC, 2005	<i>A follow-up assessment on foreign language teaching in higher education institutes (in Finnish)</i>	Evaluation
2005	MoE	MoE, 2005	<i>Memorandum on fees for higher education institutes' foreign degree students (in Finnish)</i>	Memorandum
2005	MoE	569/2005	<i>The Ministry of Education's decree on master's degree programmes (in Finnish)</i>	Decree
2006	MoE	MoE, 2006	<i>Finland, Asia and international cooperation (in Finnish)</i>	Memorandum
2007	MoE	MoE, 2007	<i>Destination: Asia. Towards goal-oriented educational, research and cultural cooperation with Asian countries</i>	Memorandum
2009	MoE	MoE, 2009	<i>Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education Institutes in Finland 2009–2015</i>	Plan/strategy/ guidelines
2009	MoE	558/2009	<i>Universities' Act 558/2009</i>	Law
2010	MEC	125/2010	<i>The Ministry of Education and Culture's decree on temporary fee-based educational programmes</i>	Decree
2010	MEC ¹	MEC, 2010	<i>Publications in foreign languages (in Finnish)</i>	Memorandum
2010	Country brand delegation	Country brand delegation, 2010	<i>Mission for Finland: How Finland will demonstrate its strengths by solving the world's most wicked problems</i>	Memorandum
2011	MEC	MEC, 2011	<i>Student and researcher housing services in Finnish higher education institutes (in Finnish)</i>	Memorandum
2012	FINHEEC	FINHEEC, 2012	<i>Evaluation of the Bologna Process implementation in Finland</i>	Evaluation
2013	FINHEEC	FINHEEC, 2013	<i>An evaluation of international degree programmes in Finland</i>	Evaluation
2013	MEC	MEC, 2013	<i>Finland to the international education markets. Memorandum: Action plan to improve the conditions for education export (in Finnish)</i>	Memorandum
2013	MEC	1041/2013	<i>The Ministry of Education and Culture's decree on abolishing the decree on master's degree programmes in universities (in Finnish)</i>	Decree
2014	MEC	MEC, 2014	<i>Follow-up and assessment of higher education institutes' tuition fee experiment</i>	Memorandum
2016	MEC	MEC, 2016b	<i>Roadmap for education export 2016–2019</i>	Plan/strategy/ guidelines
2017	MEC	MEC, 2017a	<i>Working together for the world's best. Policies on promoting internationality in higher education and research 2017–2025 (in Finnish)</i>	Plan/strategy/ guidelines
2017	MEC	MEC, 2017b	<i>Action plan report for global education brand Finland</i>	Report
2018	MEC	MEC, 2018	<i>Experiences of the tuition fees in 2017–2018 – interim report by the working group of monitoring and assessment</i>	Report

framing for the analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The analysed themes include the main objectives, characteristics and rationales for developing the IDPs, the means for steering IDPs and issues perceived of as problems in IDPs. Based on the initial inductive analysis, these themes were defined focal in understanding how IDP policy has changed. To complement the analysis of internationalization plans and strategies, the analysis was extended to related policy documents presented earlier. To further the analysis, Bacchi's (2009) what's the problem presented to be? approach was employed to analyse how the need for change is problematized and what kinds of repercussions the policy has for the definition of IDPs, international students and universities. With this analytical method, the aim is to understand the policy change comprehensively.

IDPs' transition from inauguration to commercial interest in Finland

This section discusses the policy changes to the IDPs through three phases constructed on the basis of the

analysis from 1987 to 2018. It should be further noted that these phases cannot be separated by events or specific dates, but rather are indicative. Table 2 summarizes the phases and their characteristics discussed in next.

Inauguration of international programmes (late 1980s to late 1990s)

After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar world order in the 1990s, Finland redefined its location on a political world map tending towards the West. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the following economic recession and joining the EU in 1995 affected the political climate and discourse in Finland (Heiskala, 2006). Accompanied by an increase in basic resources, from the end of the 1950s, the higher education system experienced a rapid expansion of both student numbers and education programmes (Välimaa, 2004), followed by steering reform in the 1990s. After a centralized planning period, Finnish public policy shifted to results-oriented policymaking using methods such as performance evaluations, which imposed competition

Table 2. Summary of the phases in the development of IDPs.

	Emergence of the international programmes (late 1980s to late 1990s)	Structural reform and tight legislative steering (early 2000s to early 2010s)	Commercialization and privatization (late 2000s onwards)
Main objective	Increase the number of international students Increase the number of IDPs		
Main rationalization	Participation in international exchange and internationalization of higher education systems Development aid	Internationalization at home Labour force Reputation and quality	Internationalization at home Labour force Income
Main characteristics	Emergence of the international programmes Establishment of service and administrative structures	Institutionalization of degree structure reform through the Bologna process (including decrees) Development of service and administrative structures	Connection of IDPs to education export Private agents entering the field Business orientation in student services and administration
Steering	Appropriations to establish programmes Evaluations of language and pedagogy	Legislative steering through decrees Decrease in basic funding Tuition-fee-related evaluations	Funding (tuition fees, decrease in public funding, performance evaluations steering discussions) Legislation (status of universities) Tuition-fee-related evaluations
Problems identified in the policy texts	Student selection Social services Study guidance Language studies Information dissemination Funding	Selection and entry Study and living services Integration into higher education institutions Connection to work Degree structure Quality of education Marketing Funding	Attractiveness Integration to HEIs and society Quality of education Career prospects Selection and entry Study and living services Recruitment Marketing Funding
Construction of student	Marginal	Part of the student body	Consumer/VIP
Construction of university	Pioneers	Institutionaliser	Service provider
Positioning of education	Marginal	Semi-product	Product

within and between institutes (Heiskala, 2006; Välimaa, 2004). Within this context, Finnish higher education has increased its international activities along a broader societal front since the 1980s (MoE, 2001).

In 1987, the first (unpublished) Finnish document targeting internationalization policy in higher education, compiled under the leadership of the Coalition Party, aimed to meet the need for internationalization in other sectors of society (particularly business). Internationalization was perceived of as a condition of existence for Finland, with its small linguistic profile and geographical area and its recently expanded higher education system. International education was connected to the internationalization of Finnish higher education, society and development cooperation. The rationale for the establishment of the international programmes was a domestic one, enabling student exchange programmes, particularly from the EU, to send Finnish students abroad. The problem as presented in the internationalization plan was that the higher education system as such did not provide graduates with sufficient skills to operate in an international environment. To address this challenge, reciprocal short-term student exchange programmes were needed (MoE, 1987). In terms of funding, universities received appropriations to establish programmes, which also served as motivators (MoE, 1987, 2001).

Further development of international education faced a language problem: at this stage, teaching in

English was rare; international degree students studied in either Finnish or Swedish, or they took book exams in English, positioning both the international degree students and the IDPs at the margins of the higher education system. In 1990, a Ministry memorandum on foreign students suggested that a preparatory year of Finnish/Swedish language and cultural instruction would be introduced for international students to facilitate the transition to subject studies. However, the memorandum also pointed out that developing separate degree programmes at the master level for international students was feasible, as students at the bachelor level were perceived to require a significant amount of extra work with the resulting benefits being less evident (MoE, 1990), which indicated a forthcoming policy change. The number of degree programmes taught in a foreign language was around 25 in 1996/1997, which rapidly increased to around 60 in 1999/2000 (MoE, 2001).

The administrative structures for the international (degree) students were in their infancy. The 1987 internationalization document suggested developing student admissions, which was considered problematic due to the burdensome entrance examination system, the recognition of previously earned foreign degrees, study guidance, the social aspect of studies, language studies and funding provision for the students. In addition, the marketing of educational opportunities in Finland was rare, limited to one guide book that was published every two years

(MoE, 1987). The Finnish Centre for International Mobility and Exchange Programmes was founded in 1991 (MoE, 2001), which indicated that promotion was centralized in Finland.

The significance and deliberate development of the international programmes became evident in the 1990s, when the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) was appointed to evaluate the programmes. During this phase, the programmes focused on language and the pedagogical advancement highlighted in the first evaluation report, *Teaching through a Foreign Language: From Tool to Empowering Mediator*, as part of the steering process. Engaging private-sector members in the evaluation group reflected the reputed value of the programmes to Finnish society and businesses from the early days onwards (FINHEEC, 1999).

This phase was characterized by the establishment of the international programmes in tandem with practical initiatives, such as establishing administration, services and decision-making for the future direction of international programmes. Thus far, international education and students were positioned at the margins of the system, and the participating universities could be defined as pioneers in the field.

Structural reform and legislative steering (from the early 2000s to the early 2010s)

From the early 2000s, the international programmes had stabilized in their position as facilitators of the international student exchanges; meanwhile, many of the programmes had gradually developed into degree awarding programmes. In fact, according to the evaluation report (FINHEEC, 2005), the non-degree programmes were decreasing. During this second phase, without problematizing the expansive policy as such, the national objective to expand the IDP provision was outlined in tandem with the harmonization of the higher education degree structure in the Bologna Process (Bologna Declaration, 1999; MoE, 2001) and the signs of the introduction of commercially oriented international education in the context of decreasing the public funding of the universities (Rinne, 2010) (see Table 2).

During this phase, policy texts and other documents describe the position of the IDPs as stabilized within the Finnish system. The transitional phase from international non-degree programmes to degree programmes is identified in the internationalization strategy (MoE, 2001), at the legislative level and in the FINHEEC evaluation report (FINHEEC, 2005) outlining that international programmes have shifted from side effects to be part of the system; the report also notes the new demands for developing structures, education and teaching, as well as addressing the administrative infrastructure. In the memorandum on implementing a two-tiered degree structure,

separate programmes are perceived of as feasible for internationalization due to the students' already identified study record thus lowering the possible cost to Finland (MoE, 2002).

Due to the IDPs not being subsumed under the same nationally defined educational responsibilities as the Finnish and Swedish programmes, in a sense, they can be seen as an addition to the education system. This is evident also in the FINHEEC (2013) evaluation report which referred to IDPs as a 'moving target' (p. 20) due to the fact that no systematic statistics for the programmes were collected, thus highlighting their position as an addition to the education system. Furthermore, they, along with separate degree programmes delivered in the Finnish and Swedish languages, were perceived to require structural steering in the form of transitioning them to a two-tiered degree structure. In 2005, the Ministry of Education promulgated a decree² on master's degree programmes that had a separate admission route (569/2005), giving the central administration the discretionary power to decide on the establishment of the programmes (HE 33/2013).³ This can be seen on the one hand as a sign of institutionalizing the IDPs in the Finnish higher education system, and on the other hand, considering them to be rather separate educational content within the overall education system in Finland. In other words, IDPs operate as internationalisers first, and provide education that is of relevance to Finland in terms of content second. Owing to a heavy coordination burden, obscurity in educational responsibilities and vagueness in the nature of the decree, this decree on master's programmes was abolished nearly ten years later (Government proposal HE 33/2013; 1041/2013). The abolition illustrates the easing of the programmes' regulation and the integration of these programmes in the degree structure.

At the turn of the century, under the leadership of the Social Democratic Party in 2001, the MoE provided a new internationalization strategy for higher education that was rationalized by the changing internal and external working environments (MoE, 2001). At this point, universities were explicitly directed to establish more IDPs: '[u]niversities and polytechnics should devise high-quality degree programmes and study modules in English for both foreign exchange and degree students and Finnish students' (MoE, 2001, p. 53) and '[t]he targeted increase in numbers of first-degree students at universities should be carried out mostly through Master's programmes' (MoE, 2001, p. 55).

Although the 2001 internationalization strategy provided the IDPs with a variety of rationales, such as the need for a future labour force and internationalization at home, an argument for the development of commercial IDPs already had support. The content

of the IDPs was positioned at the core of universities' expertise, as identified in a profiling process, and this provision was developed within 'educational levels, fields and areas where there is foreign demand' (MoE, 2001, p. 53), subordinating the domestic need: 'attention should *also* be paid to the needs of the Finnish labour markets' (MoE, 2001, 53; emphasis added by author). In addition, focusing the marketing activities on certain areas (i.e. Russia, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia) signified a transition to a market-oriented approach, which was elaborated in country- and region-specific memorandums (MoE, 2003, 2006, 2007). The commercial character of education was also evident in how the IDPs were referred to as a service: "[t]he overall spectrum of educational services should be increased, taking the potential of virtual teaching into account" (MoE, 2001, p. 53). To define education as a service package includes not only education, but also other support services: "[t]he quality of education at institutes of higher education should be improved by making teaching, academic counselling and other key services support students' study progress and integration" (MoE, 2001, p. 52). Connecting the IDPs to Finnish labour markets continued during this phase, and was evident in labour market actors' participation in the planning of the study content, as identified in the programme evaluations (FINHEEC, 2005), which included incorporating traineeships in Finland into degree studies (MoE, 2001).

During this period, funding was used as a policy instrument through additional government and EU funding sources, particularly for structural development of the programmes and in an outcome-based funding scheme (FINHEEC, 2005, 2013; MoE, 2002). The establishment peak of the IDPs was identified as being 2006/2007, when additional EU funding was made available. According to the programme evaluation in 2005, although established with additional funding, programmes moved rather quickly to be part of basic funding (FINHEEC, 2005). At the same time, lack of funding was employed as a justification to introduce tuition fees. With the unquestioned objective to increase student numbers, it was simultaneously noted that the funding base was insufficient: '[i]n practice, implementation of action programmes and targets requires a broad capital base. According to the legislation on higher education, education leading to a degree is free to all students. In order to improve competitiveness, however, we should without delay review possible approaches which would also allow education provision through multi-funding' (MoE, 2001, p. 56). This was followed, in 2005, by the MoE's memorandum on fees for international students, laying the foundation for the implementation of tuition fees for students from outside the EU and EEA countries (MoE, 2005a). This

memorandum refers to the 2004 OECD report supporting the assertion that tuition fees can serve as an incentive for internationalization (MoE, 2005a). Previously opposed by the student associations, according to the MoE (2005a), tuition fees were not considered feasible until other Nordic countries considered implementing them.

In summary, this phase was characterized by the institutionalization of IDPs in the Finnish higher education system, broadening the international student body and locating it in the mainstream system. Indications of the commercialization of IDPs started to emerge.

Towards commercialization and privatization (late 2000s–)

During the third phase of IDP development, a deeper commitment to commercialization was evident in the integration of the programmes with education export activities, most notably in the charging of tuition fees (see Table 2). Alongside this commercialization, the question of who should provide support services arose, and even parts of the curricula became oriented towards private entities. From centralized, publicly supported administrative systems, the shift was towards the privatization of marketing and service providers, and even of knowledge production. At this stage, Finland followed the lead of its Nordic neighbours Denmark and Sweden (Elken et al., 2015). This turn was perceived of as enabling the Finnish policy imagined in the Ministry's memorandum (MoE, 2005a) in a commercial interpretation of IDPs along with other rationales, such as skilled immigration and internationalization at home. These will be discussed now in more detail.

OECD reports initiated momentous changes for Finland (MoE, 2005b, 2009), reinforcing the objective of recruiting more international students while emphasizing the need to expand funding sources and explicitly advocating for tuition fees (EC, 2013; MEC, 2013, 2017a; MoE, 2009). They further highlighted applying the commercial model to the IDPs. The MEC set a numerical target of 60,000 students for Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences by 2025 (MEC, 2013), which tripled the 2015 target. Key documents defining the policy development for IDPs during this phase were the two internationalization strategies. In 2009, the *Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education Institutes in Finland 2009–2015* was initiated by the government under the leadership of the Centre Party (MoE, 2009), linking the implementation of the strategy to a performance-based funding scheme (MEC, 2016a). In 2017, it was followed by *Better together for a better world: Policies to promote internationalization in Finnish higher education and research 2017–2025*

(MEC, 2017a), also under the leadership of the Centre Party. Both defined IDPs within a *commercial imaginary* as an education export: '[m]ade-to-order education leading to a qualification, and fee-based master's degree programmes for students from outside the EU/EEA area, are new tools for the internationalization of higher education institutes' (MoE, 2009, p. 23).

Along with this commercial rationale for IDPs, policy texts (MEC, 2017a; MoE, 2009) also referred to labour availability and internationalization at home as important reasons for degree student recruitment. The internationalization strategies highlighted the need to connect international students with Finnish labour markets (MEC, 2017a; MoE, 2009). Thus linking a number of issues to IDPs, such as the national need for skilled labour, the vocational value of education and the role of employability, which were all positioned as attractive features: '[t]alented non-Finnish students and researchers who choose Finnish higher education institutes are attracted by the high quality education and research, as well as by the opportunities afforded by Finnish working life' (MoE, 2009, p. 33). The 2009 internationalization strategy proposed the value to labour markets as an inducement and highlighted the position of international students as consumers of the package offered (MoE, 2009).

Subsuming the IDPs under education export, along with implementing tuition fees, continues to be a contested process, as suggested earlier. The Universities Act of 2009 redefined universities as 'independent legal entities', aiming to give universities a stronger financial and administrative position (Universities Act, 2009; Rinne, 2010) and enabling them to legally charge tuition fees during the trial implementation period. Decrees from 2010 to 2014 provided direction and framework (MEC, 2014; 125/2010). In 2015, under the auspices of Prime Minister Sipilä and the Centre Party, priority was given to the internationalization of education and research and to removing obstacles to education export (Sipilä, 2015). As a result, in 2016, the MEC published a roadmap for education export, emphasizing the central role of degree studies (MEC, 2016b).

Despite a discouraging tuition fee trial period (2010 to 2014) due to only a few universities and programmes participating, starting in autumn 2017, a selective tuition fee policy was implemented that requires universities to charge tuition fees to students from outside the EU and EEA countries who attend a bachelor's or master's degree programme taught in English (HE 77/2015; HE 77/2015; Universities Act, 558/2009; HE 77/). The expectations for the outcomes of charging tuition fees varied, for instance, in terms of how the student body would develop (MEC, 2014). The minimum annual tuition fee is

set at €1,500, there is no maximum fee and a scholarship programme is required (Universities Act, 558/2009). Currently, the tuition fees per programme in Finnish higher education institutes vary from €2,100 to €18,000 (MEC, 2018). A tuition fee evaluation report in 2018 noted that the implementation had not been successful, in the sense that the fees had not served their purpose of providing additional financial resources due to the provision of extensive scholarship schemes (MEC, 2018).

Throughout this period, marketing activities and increasing the attractiveness of the education services within the education export framework have been key concerns. The universities are constructed as marketing agents: '[t]he higher education institutes themselves have a key role to play in marketing their competence. Added income derived from commercial activities is an incentive for making marketing more effective' (MoE, 2009, p. 40). Since the early years of IDPs centralized marketing has been the responsibility of the publicly funded Centre for International Mobility and Exchange Programmes, which still continues its work under the lead of the Finnish National Agency for Education. In 2010, signifying a conscious and systematic effort to centralize marketing activities, the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared a memorandum in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders to publish brochures on Finnish education in foreign languages (MEC, 2010a). Marketing has developed greatly over the course of nearly a decade. Since the framing of the IDPs has shifted to the education export industry, the responsibility for marketing has partly shifted to private companies, simultaneously defining the universities as buyers of marketing services and sellers of education products (see Komljenovic & Robertson, 2016). An excerpt from the internationalization strategy illustrates this point: '[t]he company markets Finnish know-how using a one-stop-shop principle and supports the access of Finnish know-how to global markets with education products created on the basis of the strength and cooperation of higher education institutes and other institutes' (MEC, 2017a, 25; transl. by author).

According to the Ministry's evaluation, the majority of Finnish higher education institutes have employed the services of private companies in the recruitment of international students (MEC, 2018). Other potential fields for companies to operate in are entry service packages and domestic language teaching services (MEC, 2017a). The latter hints at privatizing some of the universities' content, particularly language teaching. These marketing initiatives are connected to country branding that employs, for example, accolades received in PISA studies (CBD, 2010). In 2017, a new report providing guidelines for building a 'global education brand for Finland' was published, with an American author recommending various methods

of promoting Finnish education globally (MEC, 2017b).

The student services and administrative functions have been an issue of concern throughout the development of IDPs. Intended as a means to integrate students into Finnish universities, society and labour markets (MEC, 2011; MoE, 2009), these services and agents have increasingly employed commercial logic. In particular, in 2017, the latter strategy defined student services as packages: 'service concepts' that entailed 'service promise' (MEC, 2017a). Students were defined as VIPs (that can be seen as separate from other members of the academic community): '[t]he premise is that young people and experts in different fields entering Finland feel welcomed as VIPs' (MEC, 2017a; 26 transl. by author) with service orientation: '[w]elcome to Finland! We will simplify study and work related processes to ease your entry to Finland. We give you a service promise: in Finland, you are served in English' (MEC, 2017a, 13; transl. by author). These services are individualized at the student level; hence, this process of becoming a member of the academic community is portrayed as a service provided to students (see Williams, 2013). In addition, the latest IDP evaluation on the implementation of tuition fees in 2017 and 2018 enquired of universities whether they provided separate services for fee paying international students, emphasizing the special status of this group. Universities did not find it necessary, and referred to the principle of equality among students (MEC, 2018). This may indicate further segmentation of the student body into local/international students and fee-paying /non-fee-paying students.

Recently, demonstrating the construction of students as consumers of higher education services, emphasis has been placed on students' experiences. The Finnish National Agency for Education has supported Finnish universities' participation in the International Student Barometer survey provided by a private British company: i-Graduate (Garam, 2018). The results are closely monitored by the MEC, and the themes of the survey were considered in the latest internationalization strategy (Garam, 2018). The use of surveys provided by a private company signifies a privatization of knowledge production. To conclude, this period increasingly encourages commercially oriented international education, changing the concept of the university, students and IDPs.

Discussion

This paper has provided an analysis of how IDPs have developed from the margins to the centre of commercial attention in Finland through a policy analysis. The analysis shows that, from the 1980s onwards, the main rationales for developing IDPs shifted from defining the programmes as internationalisers of society, the universities and development aid to positioning them as

channels for recruiting skilled labour and being flagships of education export (see also Jokila et al., 2019). For a country with equality principles embedded in welfare-state ideals, the most profound change in organizing the IDPs has been in their gradual commercialization. The findings suggest that the transition to a commercial approach to IDPs has been continuous yet contested, and has been developing through discursive changes and employed policy instruments, such as funding and evaluation. This commercial orientation of the IDPs is articulated in their tuition fee policy, administration, student services and the vocabulary used to describe IDPs, universities and students. The latest trend shows that the administrative system is moving towards privatization (e.g., using third-party recruiters), parallel to transitions in other countries that are commercializing international education (e.g., Komljenovic & Robertson, 2016; Rizvi, 2011; Sidhu, 2004). In addition, the commercial interest in IDPs has triggered evaluation at different levels, including student experience and satisfaction surveys.

The stated low number of international students is a constructed problem in the policy documents from the end of 1980s to 2018; the objective to expand the international student body has not been problematized. Throughout the analysed time period, the problems the IDPs have faced have been persisting yet changing in volume, meaning and future objectives. Since the 1980s, for instance, issues of funding, language instruction, entrance procedures, marketing and student services have been perceived of as problematic in terms of facilitating a growing international student body.

Based on the analysed Finnish data and the developments identified in the literature, the adoption of separate international degree programmes as a form of organization of international education is not only a national process, but one that develops and is constructed within external and internal policy contexts. The development of IDPs is influenced by the EU-supported Bologna Process harmonizing degree structures (Huisman et al., 2012), the globally shifting conceptualization of education within neoliberal imaginaries (Rizvi, 2011), and internally ageing populations and reduced public funding for universities (MoE, 2001, 2009; Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012; Rizvi, 2011). Similarly, as is the case in other (particularly non-English-speaking European) countries (Elken et al., 2015; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014), Finland has adopted separate international programmes as a means of recruiting international students despite the reality that other options would have been possible. The decision was made to establish programmes in English instead of requiring students to initially study in Finnish and/or Swedish and then continue their subject studies in a domestic language. The latter might have been beneficial for the integration of international students into Finnish labour markets, as the question of students' Finnish language skills has been under consideration.

The changing role of IDPs, from marginalized to centrally focused, has repercussions for IDPs, universities and students. The main question raised by the development of the IDPs is who should pay for them – a question steering IDPs everywhere (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). From the end of the 1980s, the development of IDPs has shifted from incentive-based to results-based funding and, more recently, to tuition fees. This transition reflects two changes. On the one hand, universities are object to results-based funding narrowing their autonomy. On the other hand, the possibility of charging tuition fees to all students outside the EU and EEA countries can be interpreted as giving broader autonomy to universities to expand their funding, which has been justified by the proposals supporting the introduction of fees. Similarly, in other countries, decreasing the public funding of universities runs parallel to the introduction of fees (Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012; Rizvi, 2011; Sidhu, 2004). Within these tightening budget conditions, universities have no other option: they are obliged to participate in competitive and commercially oriented global student markets. This finding has parallels to previous studies highlighting the balancing act between the external and internal environments of the universities that adopt an internationalization policy (Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012; Stensaker et al., 2008; Trilokekar & El Masri, 2017; Urbanovič et al., 2016).

In addition, the entry of new private agents into the field has driven universities to form partnerships with these agents. For instance, as the use of third parties in the recruitment process increases, the quality of the activities and the information provided are not fully in the hands of the universities (Komljenovic & Robertson, 2016). Furthermore, as noted in the study, moving students from the margins of the higher education system to a distinctive position as VIPs changes their position into consumers, rather than members, of academia (see Williams, 2013). This may have several profound consequences for administration and pedagogy in universities.

For a country that has developed a free education system for all, the developments identified in this study have had, and will have, consequences for the concept of education, redefining it as selectively private and changing the positioning of the students and universities. This selective tuition fee policy segregates different student bodies within universities and reinforces the competitive positions of the universities, the full scope of consequences of which remain to be seen.

Notes

1. The Ministry of Education changed its name to Ministry of Education and Culture in 2010 (MEC, 2010b).

2. Universities have not been obliged by law to establish IDPs; instead, the Universities Act and decrees on master's Programmes have only defined the main legislative framework for the operations.
3. This decree entitled universities to establish, significantly change or discontinue predefined programmes; changes to the decree were made through annual negotiations between the universities and the Ministry (569/2005). Decrees are used when there is a noticeable technicality or rapid change needed in legislation (e.g., annual changes in the provision of IDPs) due to specific expertise or the extensive volume of steering (Mäenpää, 2013).

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