

Hierarchy and Specialization On Institutional Integration of Higher Education Systems

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Summary¹

Over the last decades higher education systems in much of the Western world have become more integrated. Whilst public authorities have had to develop strategies for how higher education systems should be organized, higher education institutions have been forced to clarify their preferences and develop strategies in order to position themselves in relation to other higher education institutions. The paper first sketches a conceptual point of departure for the analysis of the relationship between institutions in higher education systems. Then it discusses how recent attempts at integrating higher education systems may affect the relationship between the institutions along two dimensions: a) according to the degree of standardization and hierarchization, and b) according to the degree of specialization and functional division of labor. Thirdly the development is situated in a wider context where the relationship between different types of institutions are considered in relation to global trends in higher education: in particular the extension of the concept of knowledge, the development of mass education and the universal proliferation of research based knowledge. Finally it discusses briefly a number of relevant topics for further studies in the field and considers briefly some possible future developments.

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Sammendrag

I løpet av de senere tiår har høyere utdanningsystemer i store deler av den vestlige verden blitt stadig tettere integrert. Mens myndighetene har måttet utvikle strategier for hvordan slike systemer skal organiseres, har utdanningsinstitusjonene selv måttet klargjøre sine preferanser og utvikle strategier for å posisjonere seg i forhold til andre høyere utdanningsinstitusjoner. Paperet skisserer først et begrepsmessig utgangspunkt for å analysere forholdet mellom institusjoner i høyere utdanningsystemer. Deretter diskuterer det hvordan de siste årenes integrasjonsforsøk kan tenkes påvirke forholdet mellom institusjonene langs to dimensjoner: a) etter graden av standardisering og hierarkisering og b) etter graden av spesialisering og funksjonell arbeidsdeling. For det tredje plasseres denne utviklingen inn i en videre sammenheng der forholdet mellom ulike typer av institusjoner ses i forhold til globale utviklingstrekk i høyere utdanning: spesielt utvidelsen av kunnskapsbegrepet, fremveksten av masseutdanning og den almenne spredningen av forskningsbasert kunnskap. Til slutt diskuterer paperet noen relevante tema for videre forskning på feltet og vurderer en del mulige utviklingstrekk.

Preface

This paper is based on a report from the Evaluation of the State College Reform commissioned by the Norwegian Research Council. The data was gathered as part of the Norwegian contribution to the International Study of Higher Education Reform funded by the Norwegian Research Council and the Meltzer Fund. At the Rokkan Centre the report was written part of the research effort carried out by the research group «Knowledge, leadership and working life».

Introduction

The steadily increasing integration of higher education systems in much of the Western world has made higher education institutions more important for one another. They have also become more dependent on how national political authorities believe this relationship ought to be organized. One aspect of this development has been formed by the idea of universities as quasi-market organizations striving to become entrepreneurial in their approach to teaching and research (Clark 1998). Another aspect is the development of national and international knowledge regimes that increasingly lay down the conditions under which the universities operate (Bleiklie and Byrkjeflot 2002, Dill and Sporn 1995, Kogan et al.2001, Nowotny et al. 2001).

The development whereby higher education institutions become part of formally defined higher education systems, is one among a number of change processes that have occurred in the last decades of the last century and still goes on. This paper is based on the assumption that this process of integration within emerging national and international knowledge regimes will increasingly be felt as a forceful influence on higher education. The process has a global reach, along with the introduction of an American style degree system and attempts at creating stronger leadership structures and systems for institutional evaluation and accreditation in order to turn the institutions into dynamic, entrepreneurial high quality enterprises. The integration of higher education systems therefore, raises at least three important questions. First, how should the relationship between the institutions be organized? Secondly, by whom should the integration be directed? Finally, what are the proper procedures by which the integration ought to take place?

The relationship between higher education institutions – be it universities, specialized vocational schools or liberal arts colleges – may be understood in terms of different concepts of social order. One concept is *the hierarchy* in which institutions are assumed to occupy different positions in a rank order. The position of a given institution in the hierarchy is determined by its score on a specific set of characteristics by which all institutions are evaluated. One way in which the hierarchy might be organized is according to the level of the degrees that the institutions give. In such a system institutions that offer doctoral degrees may make the top, whilst institutions that offer shorter bachelor level educations form the bottom of the hierarchy. Another concept is the *organism*, understood as a functional order. Within the organic totality, institutions have different tasks or functions that cannot be measured against a common denominator, to the contrary, each function is unique and must be fulfilled in order for the whole to function adequately. Such tasks or functions may for instance be the education of people to different occupations (engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers, etc.) that society needs.

The two concepts thus may give us some notion about the social order to which the institutions belong. Even if the two principles are different, they are not mutually exclusive. In real higher education systems, hierarchy and specialization are likely to be combined in some way, and actual orders may therefore be more or less hierarchical and more or less specialized.

Historically institutional *autonomy* has been a central value for higher education institutions in general and universities in particular. In systems that are publicly owned and funded, institutional autonomy has always been limited in some way or the other. In certain respects academic institutions have always been *heteronomous*. They are governed or controlled from the outside and from above as parts of the civil service. The question of institutional autonomy, what aspects of institutional activity it encompasses and how extensive and limited it ought to be, make one of the core topics in higher education politics. With regard to the organization of the relationship between educational institutions, the question of institutional autonomy turns on the extent to which the institutions themselves are free to make the choices and formulate the strategies that shape the relationship.

In this paper I shall first sketch a conceptual point of departure for the analysis of the relationship between institutions within higher education systems so that we more easily can understand the strategies that are used by institutions and public authorities in order to affect the relationship in the desired way. Then I shall discuss how recent attempts at integrating higher education systems may affect the relationship between the institutions along two dimensions: a) according to the degree of standardization and hierarchization, and b) according to the degree of specialization and functional division of labor. Thirdly I shall situate the development in a wider context of knowledge where the relationship between different types of institutions are considered in relation to global trends in higher education: the extension of the concept of knowledge, the development of mass education and the universal proliferation of research based knowledge.² Finally I shall discuss briefly a number of topics relevant to the study of integration of higher education systems and briefly consider some possible future developments.

The position of institutions in higher education systems

It is commonplace to assume that the integration of higher education systems has had very specific consequences for the position institutions in relation to one another and in relation to the state. Before the integration process started they were relatively specialized and autonomous in relation to one another and in relation to the state (cf. fig. 1). During the integration process a hierarchical order has started to emerge. The reason for this development is that organizational integration implies standardization and the establishment of uniform principles for how the relationship between the institutions should be organized by means of such devices as common degree and career structures. The assumption easily follows that the hierarchical order eventually will completely replace the organic order.

The integration process seems to imply furthermore, that public authorities through legislation and other measures increasingly interfere in order to achieve an integration by which very diverse institutions are firmly requested to adapt to other

² I use the term 'global' about phenomena and processes that have a global reach in the sense that they affect countries and societies on various continents. This should not be taken to mean that 'global' phenomena are found everywhere (cf. Keohane and Nye 2000).

institutions that initially are quite different from themselves. This might in itself be considered a loss of autonomy. When the formal framework is established, the question remains of whether their autonomy after the fact has been reduced or increased. It is commonplace to assume, however, that integration of all institutions within a formally uniform higher education system means that the autonomy is reduced. These observations may form the basis for the following general assumption: National higher education systems in the Western world have moved from a *specialized regime*: an organic whole consisting of specialized institutions with considerable freedom to develop their own specific profiles towards a *hierarchic regime*: a standardized hierarchic and heteronomous system where all institutions are measured and positioned according to one single set of criteria.

Figure 1. Institutional positions in higher education systems

Relationship to the state	<i>Relationships between institutions</i>	
	Organic	Hierachical
Heteronomous	1	2
Autonomous	3	4

There are ample reasons to believe that the picture is somewhat more complicated than the above assumption indicates (Kogan et al. 2000, Musselin 1999). Firstly institutions within today's integrated higher education systems constitute a complex set, in which different categories of institutions have had varying relationships with public authorities and considerable variation with respect to their degree of autonomy. This might imply that to the extent that common norms of institutional autonomy are established within a unified system, some institutions may lose autonomy whilst others may gain more autonomy than they previously enjoyed. Yet another possibility is that the formal integration does not succeed in creating uniform practices. Consequently binary systems like the ones that prevailed in countries like England, Germany, Finland and Norway in the 1970s and 1980s are still de facto operating, and former research universities continue to enjoy more autonomy than vocational and liberal arts colleges even in those cases where the latter have formally become elevated to university status. Secondly, institutions may try to adapt to the integration by means of different strategies. While some institutions may accept the conditions laid down by the formal hierarchy, others may seek to maintain their autonomy, cultivate their specialties and gain acceptance as representatives of some kind of specialized knowledge. Thirdly, knowledge has gained importance in society, amongst other things because of the emergence of mass education and steadily more extensive use of research in private business as well as public administration. This contributes to rendering the interrelations between society and educational institutions more diverse and complicated and the criteria of valuation more complex, making it difficult to classify institutions in relation to one another in terms of simple, unambiguous functional or hierarchical principles (Bleiklie and Byrkjeflot 2002; Nowotny et al. 2001).

The material I shall present below indicates that the picture is quite complicated. The argument that I am putting forward here is that even if higher educational institutions are brought under one formally unitary and hierachical system, the two types of order will continue to co-exist, they will be supported and sustained by diverse forces that partly pull in the same direction and partly in opposite directions (Clark 1983).

How such forces will unfold depends again on the motives that drive the actors operating within the system, what limitations they face and what possibilities and resources they have at their disposal while pursuing their goals (cf. fig. 2).

Figure 2. Institutional strategies in higher education systems

<i>Motive for action</i>	<i>Relationship between institutions</i>	
	<i>Organic</i>	<i>Hierarchic</i>
<i>Goal</i>	1 Develop specialty	2 Compete
<i>Norm</i>	3 Define function	4 Determine rank

Institutions may conceive the order in which they find themselves as a *norm* that they have to satisfy continously so that each institution is expected to develop its function and find its place within the system. This may be done in different ways depending on the type of order in which the strategy is developed. Within the organic order their position is defined by the tasks, function, specialty or niche they occupy within the higher education system. Within the hierarchic order their position is defined by rank, by the score an institution obtains, compared to other instiutions. Norm oriented action strategies as they are defined here, imply that the actors will defend what they perceive as established positions and rights.

Alternatively the actors may perceive the order in which they find themselves as an arena where various *goals* may be pursued, and where each institution is jockeying for a position that matches their aspirations as closely as possible. Again different strategies are likely to developed within different orders. Within the organic order institutional aspirations are likely to focus on developing particular strengths such as a specialty or niche that is likely to secure an uncontested position within the system. Within the hierachical order institutional aspirations are likely to turn on how to compete in order to improve their position in the rank order with the ultimate goal of ascending to the top of the hierarchy and become the best. Goal oriented strategies imply that the actors actively strive to develop their specialties or to compete in ways that make it possible to fill the function or occupy the position they desire within the institutional hierarchy. Whereas the first goal of specialization indicate a push in the direction of a more differentiated higher education system, the latter competitive goal indicate a more unitary and standardized system.³

³ With the concepts of 'order' and 'motives for action' I have taken a pair of fundamental concepts in social science analysis – *order* and *action* – as a point of departure (cfr. Alexander 1982: 65). A similar distinction also forms the basis for the actor-context model that was used in our comparison of changes of the higher education systems in England, Norway and Sweden in Kogan et al. (2000).

Below I shall assume that the actors (universities and colleges) will take some conditions of action for granted and try to affect (amend, bend or eliminate) others. When major reform proposals about higher education system integration are launched, they may be perceived as harbingers of threats against the established order. The threat may come from two sides. One kind of threat means that established organizational forms and administrative arrangements are shaken and thus affect institutional as well as individual autonomy relative to administrative power and superior state influence. The second kind means that where institutions previously might find their place within an order by cultivating their peculiar character, they are now all in principle given their position by the government. Some institutions are likely to try to defend or resurrect the order that was because they want to hold on to their tasks and positions in order to protect cherished privileges and values. Others may see a possibility to redefine their tasks and opt for new positions if they find that the reforms will make it easier for them to gain access to privileges or prestige or to realize specific values that are important to them.

Essence of education – learning method or occupational knowledge?

One reason why higher education institutions will be shaped by opposite forces is that different types of institutions as already indicated, will form their impression of the reforms on the basis of different values and criteria of valuation. Higher education integration therefore, tends to come with conflicting principles for institutional order, as recent developments have demonstrated in a number of countries (Bleiklie 2002, Kogan et al 2000).

There are forces that clearly pushes for standardization and hierachization. Yet, the institutions are different in a number of important respects because they educate students for different occupations, are rooted in different traditions of education and occupational training and have ties with different parts of the labor market with their corresponding occupational or professional groups. This limits the extent to which it is possible to move unequivocally towards a hierarchical system because many institutions are forced to cultivate their peculiar form of occupational training whether they want to or not. Also in the future these institutions are likely to have the cultivation of particular skills as a more or less clearly formulated goal, and it will still be well and alive alongside the ambition of making the highest possible score in the general competition for resources and prestige among institutions.

The two kinds of order do not only express an abstract organizational principle that can be implemented without problems through political reforms, but represent more comprehensive and complex set of social relations. I am not going to give a detailed description of such relations here, but would like to point out some characteristics that may be useful for further analysis. The point of departure is the following thesis: The individual peculiarities of higher education institutions are to a large extent determined by their relations with the labor market. Education may mean that students are taught a specific occupational skill, where the content of their education by and large is determined by the needs for knowledge that are directly expressed during the conduct

of the occupation. This is the kind of education that characterizes the training we find in vocational colleges e.g. in nursing or engineering. However, education may also have as its purpose to teach students a specific academic discipline that provides no other direct occupational knowledge than teaching and research within the discipline itself. When we take about the value of this kind of education on the labor market beyond the specific research and teaching qualifications it may provide, we often refer to more general abilities that can be useful in a range of different occupations. I am referring to such qualities as the ability to work independently, to plan and to collect, analyze and present large quantities of information about complex subject matters. These are abilities that characterize education in academic disciplines at the so called free university faculties.

The relationship with the labor market is therefore tightly linked to the actors, the interests, alliances and ultimately the kind of knowledge regime that characterizes a higher education system (Bleiklie and Byrkjeflot 2001). An educational system that consists exclusively of vocational colleges – each one with its particular criteria of valuation of qualifications related to the ability to exercise a specific profession – has cultivated a purely organic, specialized model. An educational system that is made up by integrated disciplinary courses within a unitary system of degrees, exams and qualification criteria in which students may compose individual educational tracks, has cultivated a purely hierarchical model.

Institutional integration, whereby higher education institutions in a number of countries have been brought under common public, legislative and budgetary systems, has contributed to push higher education systems in the direction of a hierarchical system. Many of the objections that have been raised and the conflicts that we have seen in connection with these reforms must be understood as reactions from disciplinary and professional groups that feel pressured by the authorities in their attempts to exercise political-administrative control. Another set of objections may be caused by assumed or experienced negative effects of institutional mergers of previously separate universities and vocational colleges that bring together radically different educational models. In order to illustrate, we may safely assume that institutions based on an organic model of vocational education will experience a merger under a new academic hierarchical model as threatening, since e.g. teachers at a traditional teacher college emphasizing practical pedagogics, are not likely to be happy about the prospect of being judged by their contributions to academic research. But it is also a likely assumption that an institution based on a hierarchical disciplinary model will feel threatened by the prospect of being merged with institutions that are likely to challenge the hierarchical model. This may be illustrated by the negative reactions from Norwegian universities against the idea that was floated in the early 1990s of putting an equal emphasis on pedagogical and research qualifications throughout the entire higher education system when making faculty hiring decisions.

We may assume that the way in which institutions react to integration depends on the extent to which they see their interests better served by a new more integrated system than by the system of yore. This does not necessarily mean that institutions are merely looking to make a better deal in terms of resources and prestige. Traditions and identity may be equally important for educational institutions when they form their opinion about integration. The main point here is that motives aside, I assume that the

actors are goal oriented and that their attitude toward integration is determined by what they believe serves their interests and is compatible with their values.

If we take a formal point of departure, it is all very simple. An integrated hierarchic system will be organized according to the criteria of research excellence and research based teaching of the traditional university. Research qualifications is usually a *sine qua non* for access to resources and prestige, and educational programs that are supposed to distinguish an institution above others need to have qualified researchers as teachers and focus on research training in doctoral programs.

This kind of system may work without a problem as long as candidates may all find work in teaching and research. To the extent that the subjects taught at an institution include vocationally oriented programs that provide skills in demand from specific businesses or client groups, the introduction of research based evaluation criteria are more likely to face resistance. It is not difficult to imagine that important interests in society are likely to be more interested in the ability of candidates to meet the practical requirements of a profession than previous academic excellence.⁴ Such tensions between theoretical qualifications and the demand for practical skills that we find in many forms of vocational training or the creative abilities that are conspicuous in art, mean that it is not easy to predict how institutions will respond to reforms aiming at institutional integration.

When the impression of drastic change that comes with the visible declarations and formal regulations of new reforms has subsided, the implementation and application of the reform measures have to be worked out in a process whereby the relations between institutions in the formally integrated system are organized in practical terms. Although it may be difficult to predict the exact course of future developments, one may be quite confident that the tension between the hierarchical and the organic principles will live on. The tension is not just found between traditional research universities and more vocationally oriented institutions. We find the same tension within research universities as well, clearly expressed for instance during the attempts at «vocalization» of university education during the 1980s (Berg1992, Gellert and Rau 1992, Lamoure and Lamoure Rontopoulou 1992, Neave 1992, Pratt 1992, Vabø 1994). However, there are important differences between traditional research universities and colleges, as well as between different types of colleges as to how such tensions are expressed and dealt with.

In relation to the binary system that was established during the 1960s and 1970s the current institutional integration means two things. The introduction of unitary degree and qualification structures clearly imply standardization and hierarchization based on standards determined by the universities. This again means that it is the academic ideals with their theoretical and methodological standards that form the basis of valuation and positions within the system. However, the hierarchy is open to mobility

4 The former Norwegian Education Minister Gudmund Hernes expressed this eloquently in an interview when he argued that most students are educated to do a practical job and not to do research, «...it is not a goal in itself that all doctors write articles in the *Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association* or in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, but it is quite important that they (surgeons) know where to cut and don't forget the scalpel inside while they're at it.» (Interview 18.11.94). He illustrated the same point by pointing out that he would prefer that college educated cooks know how to make tasty food that can get their restaurants stars in the Michelin guide rather than how to write learned reports on grammatical peculiarities in French menus.

on several levels. Student mobility has been strengthened by such things as the introduction of a standardized system for credits in Europe, thus facilitating student mobility at the European level as well as nationally. Modularization implies a break with traditional rather ideosyncratic study programs that have been common in a number of countries by breaking the programs down into formally comparable units in a way that greatly facilitates student mobility across institutional and national borders. These developments have opened up some attractive opportunities for non-university institutions that are based on subjects in the arts and sciences or in academic professions. These institutions will often evaluate themselves in terms of the academic criteria laid down by the universities. For other more vocationally oriented institutions these standards represent a problem. Colleges that are teaching practical skills necessary to professions such as teaching, nursing or engineering, may experience the theory based performance criteria of the university as a threat against the essential character of their education and profession (cf. note 3). The ambiguities and conflicts within and across different institutions are not just an outcome of the differences between vocational subjects and academic disciplines. They may also be understood in terms of the development of the concept of knowledge and the way in which knowledge is developed and appraised in modern societies.

The significance of an extended concept of knowledge

The distinction between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production formulated by Gibbons et al. (1994) is one of the most sweeping and widely known statements about a new extended concept of knowledge. One way in which to understand this distinction is to start with the tension within the concept of knowledge itself. Elsewhere we have done this by looking at what aspect of knowledge is emphasized (Bleiklie and Byrkjeflot 2002). Broadly speaking, there is one category of definitions that focuses on knowledge as some kind of *outcome*.⁵ What is called «practical knowledge» or generally 'utility oriented' knowledge belong to this category. As a contrast there is a definition that focuses on knowledge as *procedure*.⁶ This defining characteristic is shared by definitions that focus on knowledge as a process either widely defined as a set of cultural activities or as a specific procedure like in traditional definitions of scientific method. A number of frequently used pairs of concepts in the literature reflect this shared underlying distinction between *knowledge as outcome* and *knowledge as procedure*.⁷

The extended concept of knowledge means that we are facing a new ideological climate that moves the emphasis in knowledge production from procedure to outcome.

5 Cf. Daniel Bell's well-known definition of knowledge as «a set of organized statements of fact or ideas» (Bell 1973: 41).

6 Cf. Knorr Cetina's concept of 'epistemic cultures' that distinguishes between cultures on the basis of process, or on how epistemic cultures 'make knowledge' in different ways (Knorr Cetina 1999).

7 Cf. the distinctions between 'theoretical' and 'practical' knowledge, a 'cultural' and 'utilitarian' purpose for basic research and higher education (Kogan et al. 2000), 'applied' and 'pure' research modes (Becher 1989). A similar notion underpins the distinction between 'Mode 1' and 'Mode 2' knowledge production (Gibbons et al 1994).

Although the emphasis may be new, the concepts of knowledge involved have been around for a long time. It is no novelty that result oriented knowledge exists in academia (cf. law, medicine, engineering etc. and applied science), but its role and status have changed.

The change is visible in a number of ways. The process of justifying academia has changed, and new forms of organizing and funding research have emerged. Visible signs of this are the emergence of research parks, increased emphasis on externally funded research and the proliferation of thematic cross-disciplinary research centers.

In the follow-up to Gibbons et al. (1994) the authors emphasize diversity, and give a more contextual and 'thick' description of the topic (Nowotny et al (2001)). The analysis brings forth the complexity of the issue of knowledge and changes in knowledge production. Thus they argue that the movement from Mode 1 to Mode 2 knowledge production is neither a deterministic nor a uniform process. One of their main contentions is that 'science' or 'research' is becoming more 'contextualized': Whereas science traditionally has been regarded as an inner directed, intellectually self-propelled enterprise that has 'spoken' to society, it now increasingly finds itself integrated in society, embedded in a context that increasingly 'speaks back' to science. The process whereby this happens is extremely complex, as are its implications.

This process is easier to understand if it is seen in the context of the transition of higher education from an elite to a mass system in North America, Europe and elsewhere. The transition meant that a system that for centuries catered to a very small fraction of the population, in the matter of four decades grew from serving a few percent, to encompassing about one half of each new generation. Research has experienced a similar growth, which means that employers – private companies, organizations and public enterprises – increasingly need research in order to do their job properly. They express this need in various ways. Partly they start to buy or produce their own research. Partly they need research trained employees in order to apply research-based products. But as higher education institutions become more influential because research and scientific values become more widespread in society, they also become exposed to a stronger and more diverse influence from their surroundings – a steadily more informed and better educated public. Thus there is a two-way development of steadily stronger inter-relationships and mutual influences. The development also affects our notions about what research and academic activity is all about. Although this may expose universities to a pressure to be more useful, this utilitarian pressure is not uniform because the needs of those who express them are more varied than ever.

Among a number of factors that add to the development is the inclusion of a wide array of previously distinct vocational schools into the higher education system. This brings in new constituencies with their often idiosyncratic ideas about knowledge that contribute to the dilution of traditional scientific conceptions. Put differently: as society becomes more 'knowledgeable', higher education has come under pressure to expand the kinds and types of knowledge it provides and to diversify the criteria by which it is judged.

It is quite common to regard massification an international process that affected educational systems and societies, at least in the Europe, North America and Austral-Asia, in a uniform way with respect to a number of general characteristics. Increased

participation rates made higher education and research important to steadily increasing population groups, but at the same less exclusive, and less associated with elevated social status. At the same time the number of higher education faculty grew, and university professors in particular have felt considerably less exclusive than before, as they have experienced a declining income in relative terms and a loss of power and influence inside academia in absolute terms.

The changing social function of the universities, it has been argued, is sometimes confused with their scientific function (Kogan et al. 2000, Nowotny et al. 2001). Whereas there is little evidence to support the notion of deteriorating academic quality in students and faculty, it is obvious that both students and faculty have become less of a social elite than they used to be. Counter strategies aiming at preserving an elitist element within the higher education system by creating a binary or a stratified system in a number of European countries have failed. The idea that one can establish and preserve an effective formal division between institutions that are focused on pure research and institutions that are more utility oriented in their approach to knowledge production, in order to protect the former against «external influence», have so far been unsuccessful. Whilst non-university institutions have tried to become research institutions, research universities have never given up more utility oriented, applied research and vocationally oriented education programs. Once established, such formal divides have tended to break down. The reason for the failure therefore is that the attempts at isolating the 'scientific' core have been based on premises (the aim of preserving elite status) that underestimated the forces – of 'academic' as well as 'applied drift' – within higher education itself.⁸ Put differently: this illustrates how the 'scientific core' expands, whilst at the same it becomes integrated with 'social', more utilitarian demands and needs in new settings.⁹

From the point of view of political authorities growth in higher education has changed the conditions of political control and management radically. The size of higher education budgets has gone from an insignificant fraction to a considerable percentage of national budgets. This has made higher education much more visible and for that reason politically salient. Furthermore, what higher education institutions do today directly affect many voters, as students, consumers of research or as employees. This creates a powerful political motive for controlling costs and performance. Growth has also affected the conditions of managerial control and academic autonomy. Whereas a small institutionally and socially homogenous system lends itself to informal mechanisms of management and control, the sharp growth and emergence of an institutionally and socially far more heterogeneous and functionally more complex system, has been followed by the introduction of more formal mechanisms of management control and the rise of stronger administrative apparatuses nationally as well as within institutions. This

⁸ This does not mean that such strategies generally are destined to fail. There are examples of successful differentiation strategies, according to some observers, with «The California Master Plan» as the most prominent example (Kerr 1995, Rothblatt 1992).

⁹ This being said, it is important to keep in mind that the tendencies described above do not mean that higher education systems necessarily are converging. Although they are faced with very similar challenges caused by growth and processes related to growth, we know from comparative studies of reforms and change in higher education that the way in which such problems are handled may differ considerably and often in ways that preserve rather than reduce nationally distinct characteristics (Kogan et al. 2000, Musselin 1999).

has also resulted in more visible demands to make universities more efficient and more accountable and raised controversies about the state and function of academic autonomy as we have seen in the discussions about 'the Evaluative State' (Neave 1988: 7) and New Public Management ideals in higher education (Bleiklie 1998).¹⁰

There is an additional argument that may explain why political authorities are supposedly more concerned with efficiency and less concerned about the traditional 'cultural mission' of academic institutions. The argument holds that the nation state is in decline, challenged by globalization and supranational political institutions such as the EU. This undermines the idea of a national culture and the idea of national identity as the basis for legitimacy of higher education institutions. Traditional academic values are transformed into values associated with economic enterprise and consumerism and underpin such seemingly academic concepts as 'quality' and 'excellence' (Readings 1996). There are no doubt several observations that may support this argument. The emergence of major US research universities as global players, the rise of virtual universities and the establishment of supranational research funding programs within the EU, may mark the beginning of a possibly accelerating development. Furthermore, supranational agencies such as OECD and UNESCO are working to develop international standardization and accreditation of higher education institutions. At the level of formal arrangements, phenomena such as the «Bologna process» where European countries have agreed in principle to introduce a common degree system based on an approximation of a US model, contribute to transnational standardization.

Furthermore, internationalization means that most disciplines and most kinds of knowledge production are increasingly based on international networks, and the tendency among academics has been to identify even more with international communities, networks and institutions than they used to. It is, accordingly, increasingly difficult for nation-states to serve as authoritative centers for production and certification of knowledge, and they have to rely more on international standards in their attempts to develop a policy for creation and communication of knowledge. Yet the national system for communication and creation of knowledge has not become a less important basis for research and development of experts and elite personnel. It still sets the conditions for what kinds of received knowledge shall be taken for granted and passed on to new generations, and for the norms that regulate career advancement and elite selection (Byrkjeflot 2001). However, national policy makers have increasingly themselves adopted internationalization as a strategy. Whereas national reform policies of the 1980s and 1990s aimed at making their national systems more competitive by improving their quality, the focus of at least some of the national governments that have joined the Bologna process has moved towards international standardization through the degree system, accreditation and mobility.

These observations should sensitize us as to the complexity of the relationship between higher education, state and society. They demonstrate how an apparently simple and straightforward process, massification, has become linked to a number of tendencies that raise the question of the consistency as well as the direction of future developments within higher education systems. In a brief last section of the paper I shall

¹⁰ This discussion should be considered in the wider context of the 'New Public Management' movement in public administration reform internationally (Lægveid og Pedersen 1999, Pollitt 1990).

sketch some topics for future research, pointing out a number of issues that I believe are significant and what kind of assumptions that may be raised in connection with these topics. In the development of higher education policies and the discussion about the role of knowledge in society, we find little support for the traditional privileged positions of the research universities in which their superiority as bastions of scientific knowledge was taken for granted. However, national and international attempts at standardization are by and large based on the academic hierarchical model where the same universities tend to come out as winners. This underscores the point already made that ambiguity and tensions still are likely to characterize future developments.

Higher education knowledge regimes – topics for further study

The relationship between higher education institutions – traditional research universities and more or less vocationally or academically oriented colleges – may be studied at a number of different levels. In conclusion let me point briefly at a number of topics of strategic importance to how the relationship eventually develops: a) *Administrative structure*. The core question here is to what extent administrative arrangements, such as faculty and department structures of the research universities are copied by other institutions. b) *Qualifications, professional and scientific development and personnel policies*. In this connection one might look at the extent to which the academic positional hierarchy (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, lecturer) with its specific requirements of research qualification (such as a PhD), working conditions (research regarded as a mandatory task), and incentive systems that are designed to motivate research or related disciplinary and professional developments are in place. c) *Disciplinary or thematic structure*. This aspect turns on the development of subjects and teaching programs that can be integrated with the universities' bachelor, masters and/or doctoral programs.

For non-university institutions it will make a difference whether the system as a whole moves in the direction of the university model on all these dimensions, or whether such a movement only affects parts of the system, for instance only academically oriented colleges, as opposed to more vocationally oriented colleges. The former alternative indicates that the colleges will eventually become integrated in a hierarchic regime based on an academic rank order. The latter alternative indicates that the university model will have a fragmenting rather than an integrating effect within a higher education system that may become increasingly specialized. In this case traditional research universities will have to find their place among institutions with different educational ideals within a specialized regime, where some may want to cultivate their practical and vocationally oriented peculiarities whilst others will commence a process of 'academic drift' and start climbing in the academic hierarchical system.

Conclusion

The relationship between universities and other types of colleges has been shaped by a number of factors, among which are conscious reforms by public authorities. Above I made the point that at a number of partly contradictory trends have characterized developments the last years. However, there is little doubt that integration and hierarchization have proceeded and become more prominent over the the years. The development consequently implies a move away from a specialized towards a more hierarchical regime. The tendency has been most clearly pronounced at the ideological and formal level. On the other hand the strategies have become more complex and varied over time. The strongest negative reactions and resistance against reforms and radical change is therefore likely to follow immediately in the wake of new reform proposals based on a normative defense against real or perceived threats to established positions. As institutions get used to the reforms and new working conditons, goal oriented activity aiming at developing specialties and advancing academically are likely to make themselves more strongly felt. It is still possible that a further strengthening of hierarchical regimes eventually will lead to fragmentation, the emergence of more specialized regimes and eventually more pluralistic higher education systems.

One important factor that will affect the development is how changes in the economic structure affect alliances between sectors of the economy with occupational groups, educational institutions and the state. One assumption might be based on the observation that much of the institutional specialization within educational systems is based on trades and occupations of the industrial economy. As industrial society fades away knowledge alliances between industry, its occupational groups, and the state become weaker and makes it difficult to protect the cultivation of the specialized skills associated with it. However, to what extent this will weaken specialized knowledge regimes in general is still an open question. Although it is tempting to speculate that since many occupations in the expanding new sectors of the economy are based on academic skills and forms of education that more easily lend themselves to integration in hierachical regimes, one cannot deduce directly from particular forms of knowledge to the organization of educational institutions and systems. Cross national variation in the organization of educational systems should be sufficient to prove the point. Future developments of actual knowledge regimes is therefore likely to be determined by what occupational groups, businesses, educational institutions and public authorites in various sectors consider to be in their knowledge interests and what kind of alliances they will form in the future.

Institutional integration and internationalization of higher education systems underscore the observation that the development of knowledge society with mass education and proliferation of research based knowledge make it more difficult to predict the future development of higher education and research. When the interests and needs that are affcted by the system become more numerous, the specter of preferences and possible outcomes is also extended. A more pluralistic and varied higher education system is therefore likely to emerge although it does so within an increasingly standardized formal framework. However, still we have only seen the contours of how transnational developments together with nationally based internationalization strategies will affect higher eucation systems. What we already do know is that they will

represent major challenges for those who wish to integrate higher education within a unitary and planned system.

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