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THE EXPORT OF FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION SEEN THROUGH CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY
A Synthesized Model

ABSTRACT

Saara Pitkälä-Fu: The Export of Finnish Higher Education Seen through Cultural-Historical Activity Theory: A Synthesized Model
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This thesis presents a model of Finnish education export as a network of activity systems based on the cultural-historical activity theory. The study consists of a qualitative research synthesis of previous research on education export in Finland between 2016 and 2020, as well as a case study of five Finnish education export operators. The central dynamics and systemic tensions within education export in Finland at the end of 2019 are identified and contextualized.

Education export is a relatively new sector in Finland, with roots tracing back to the financial crisis of 2008. The sector has grown rapidly throughout the 2010s, with a goal of becoming a notable service export sector by 2030. The developing sector has evolved rapidly, and research has been conducted on its various parts, but apart from a literature review, no comprehensive overview has been produced before. This study aims to fill the gap.

Pro Gradu esittelee suomalaisen koulutusviennin mallin kulttuurihistoriallisen toiminnan teorian pohjalta. Tutkimus muodostuu koulutusvientiä koskevan aiemman tutkimuksen pohjalta 2016 ja 2020 väliltä tehdystä kvalitatiivisesta tutkimussynteesistä, sekä viittä suomalaista koulutusvientitoimijaa käsittelevästä tapaustutkimuksesta. Tutkimuksessa identifioidaan ja kontekstualisoidaan suomalaisen koulutusviennin keskeiset dynamiikat ja jännitteet vuoden 2019 lopussa.

Koulutusvienti on suhteellisen uusi ala Suomessa, ja sen juuret juontavat vuoden 2008 finanssikriisiin. Ala on kasvanut nopeasti 2010-luvulla, ja tavoitteena on kasvattaa koulutusviennistä huomattava viennin osa-alue vuoteen 2030 mennessä. Vaikka kenttä on kehittynyt nopeasti ja sen eri osa-alueita on tutkittu, yhtä kirjallisuuskatsausta lukuun ottamatta kokonaisvaltaista yhteenvetoa ei vielä ole. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus on täydentää koulutusvientiä koskevaa tutkimusta tältä osin.

Keywords: education export, transnational education, activity theory, higher education, internationalization, education policy, koulutusvienti

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

CONTENTS

TABLE 1.   A list of the abbreviations used throughout the paper

English term	Abbreviation	Finnish translation
Cultural—Historical Activity Theory	CHAT	kulttuurihistoriallinen toimintateoria
Education Export	EE	koulutusvienti
European Union	EU	Euroopan Unioni
Higher education, tertiary education	HE	korkeakoulutus
Higher Education Institution	HEI	korkeakoulu
Intercultural Communication	ICC	Kulttuurien välinen vuorovaikutus
Ministry of Education and Culture	MOEC	Opetus— ja kulttuuriministeriö
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	OECD	Taloudellisen yhteistyön ja kehityksen järjestö
Programme for International Student Assessment	PISA	PISA—tutkimusohjelma
Qualitative Research Synthesis	QRS	kvalitatiivinen tutkimussynteesi
Transnational education	TNE	valtioiden rajat ylittävä koulutus
University of Applied Sciences	UAS	ammattikorkeakoulu

1 INTRODUCTION

Global interest in Finnish education has been strong since Finland's success in OECD's PISA evaluation in 2001. After the financial market crash of 2008 and the destruction of Nokia as a pillar of Finnish economy, there has been a need to find new products to export, and in 2009, education was identified as a potential new export product. Education export has been growing in Finland throughout the 2010s (MOEC 2020). However, while it has reached growth targets set by policy goals and reached revenue of 358 million euros per year in 2019, it has not grown into an especially notable field of export in its first decade; total exports in the service sector alone accounted for 8,4 billion euros in Q4 of 2019. (MOEC 2020, SVT 2020.) The officially stated goal is that Finnish EE is word 1mrd euros by 2030, which requires "*long-term commitment and strategic activity as well as new types of value chains*" to succeed (MOEC 2020, 10).

The purpose of this research paper is to shed some light on the overall phenomenon of Finnish education export through cultural—historical activity theory and a qualitative research synthesis. There is a growing body of research on various aspects on Finnish education export, (EE). However, the only aggregative paper on the subject has been Juusola and Nokkala's review from 2019, and most of the research has been conducted on various aspects of EE and the discourse surrounding it, rather than its overarching dynamics. Qualitative research synthesis is a means to "contain the information explosion" (Major & Savin-Baden 2010, 12), and as such, it is well-suited for the purpose of gaining an overview of the phenomenon.

EE is a multifaceted phenomenon. On the one hand, policymakers and leadership in higher education institutions, henceforth called HEIs, show high interest in education export activities as means to boost revenue and the economy, as well as internationalize educational institutions. On the other hand, commodifying Finnish education is a controversial proposition. Arguments for education export point out the global need for high—quality education and the

variety and volume of education business conducted by other countries. Critical views on EE (e.g. Schatz 2016, Dervin & Simpson 2019) note that access to education is a fundamental human right, and how the commodification of education makes it less accessible to those living in poverty; the incompatibility of marketization and neoliberal education policies and Finnish education; cultural and ethical issues; and how EE in Finland has been led by government—policy rather than an organically development.

The stance of the author of this paper is pragmatic. We live in a world where Finnish education export exists. It is a complex field, and as such, it should be researched. Education export in Finland is a new phenomenon barely a decade old, and as there are both global demand and local interest in the export of Finnish education, it is important to know what it is, how does it function, and how could it be improved.

Education is one of the most important factors for development, and should be accessible to all, At the same time, there is an increasing global need for high-quality higher education that Finland can answer. Education export can be used as a tool of cultural imperialism, but also for intercultural dialogue and development aid. It can lift ordinary people from poverty, and at the same time, deepen societal differences. EE is contradictory and complex, and therefore, worth studying.

1.1 Research questions and limitations

EE is a growing field in Finland, but for some reason, it has not yet become the new export powerhouse that it was intended to be. This paper is an attempt to uncover and systematically analyze the factors that affect EE in Finland, for better or for worse, from the actors' — the HEIs, the EE companies, the nation of Finland, and the students' — perspectives. It is positioned and contextualized on the practical level of activity, where different institutional sectors, stakeholders and other actors are implementing their goals and strategies. By focusing on systemic and structural factors, this study aims to build an overall view of EE in Finland before the Covid-19 pandemic that functions as a major disruption to all forms of cross-border activity. This view is constructed from two parts: a

synthesized literature review based on previous studies on Finnish EE, and a case study of five institutional Finnish EE actors.

These research questions are answered by interpreting data with cultural: the HEI, the EE company, the Finnish nation, and the students -historical activity theory, which will be explained in detail in chapter 2.1. The practical aim of the thesis is to build a theoretical model of Finnish EE as an activity system: to identify its constituent parts, relations, and the contradictions within it using the Helsinki school of Cultural—Historical Activity Theory, or CHAT.

Activity systems have historicity (Engeström 1999, 25—26). In order to understand current activity, I offer a brief historical context for the current state of the Finnish EE ecosystem in chapter 2.4. A detailed, expansive look at the historical development of Finnish EE falls outside of the scope of this thesis.

The analysis is divided between chapters 3.2.1, in which the constituent parts of the analysis are introduced, 4.3 and 4.4, in which a more detailed look is given through the case study, and 5.1 and 5.2, which combine the two and offer a look at the systemic and structural issues found in EE. The results are summarized in tables 4—16 and figures 3—7 for clarity's sake.

1.1.1 Covid-19

The research was started before the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Its effects were felt immediately in EE, as one of Finland's major EE partner countries, the People's Republic of China, went into quarantine at the end of January 2020 to manage the spread of the virus. From the end of January and throughout February, international travel slowed down. By April 2020 the quarantine period inside China had ended, but during March the virus had spread across the rest of the world, and Finland had started a period of social distancing and quarantines, distance work, and the closure of education institutions. International travel has halted. Some EE organizations are more resistant to the cessation of international travel, but especially the smaller corporate businesses in the case samples mentioned the pandemic having an effect. One of the cases interviewed in this study was disbanded during 2020. The analysis of the company and its relation to higher education institutions has been kept intact as

shown in the data at the time of collection. The full effects and duration of the pandemic remain to be seen.

Due to the chaotic situation starting from March in Finland, it became apparent that gathering more interview data would not be possible. More data was nevertheless necessary, so a section using qualitative research synthesis, QRS, was added to support the building of an activity system model. This generated a much heavier workload than expected. By combining QRS and the cases, it was possible to build a fairly comprehensive picture of EE in Finland, and to identify more factors than the case interviews offered, such as contradictory discourses and various actors outside of the case interviews.

2 THEORY AND CONCEPTS

This chapter introduces the central concepts relevant to this paper, starting with cultural—historical activity theory (CHAT), higher education in Finland and the internationalization of higher education. The concept of EE as used in Finland is defined for an international audience, as the use of the term in Finland differs from the globally used definition, and a brief explanation of the context surrounding EE in Finland is offered. Different stakeholders in Finnish EE are conceptualized as activity systems.

2.1 Cultural—Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Cultural—historical activity theory, CHAT, can be used to model complex activity systems such as EE. In CHAT, the prime unit of analysis is an activity system; an object—oriented, collective ecosystem of activity, which exists in a network with other activity systems, and which evolves over time. Groups and individual actors, goals and actions are seen as subordinate units of analysis. (Engeström 2001, 130—138; Blackler 2009, 24, 29.) CHAT has its origins in the research and theories of Vygotsky, Luria, and Leont'ev. The theory has been further developed internationally by various researchers including Davydov, Il'enkov, and many others, and it is currently in its third phase, in which the minimal unit consists of the interaction between two activity systems (Sannino, Daniels & Gutiérrez 7—15). This paper draws upon CHAT from the work of Engeström and Sannino in "*the Helsinki school of activity theory, which is known for modeling of activity systems as prime units of analysis, for its emphasis on the object—oriented and contradiction—driven character of activity, and the theory of expansive learning.*" (Sannino & Engeström 2018, 44.) CHAT is a versatile framework that can be used to analyze large systems as well as individual actions (see e.g. Engeström 2000). This makes it well suited for the purposes of this research, as EE is a large and complex phenomenon.

Activity theory has undergone three generations of development. However, these generations should not be understood as separate, "updated" versions, as each generation builds on the previous one. The first generation was developed by Vygotsky, conceptualised as the idea of culturally mediated actions. In his model, the connection between the stimulus and response is transcended by a culturally mediated act or artifact, creating a bridge between an individual and the surrounding society (Engeström 2001, 134). The second generation of activity theory was developed around Leont'ev's work and added the distinction between individual actions and collective activity (Engeström 2001, 134—135). The second generation unit of analysis is introduced below in Figure 1, as it forms part of the basic 3rd generation unit, shown below in Figure 2.
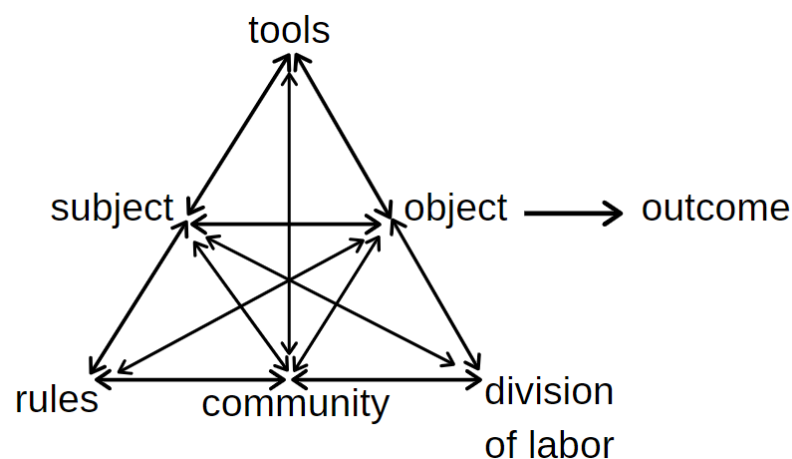
FIGURE 1. The basic activity system (adapted from Engeström 2001, 135).

The elements of an activity system are the tools, the subject, the object, the outcome or object2, rules, the community, and the division of labor. All of these elements interact with each other through mediating artifacts, which are represented by the arrows connecting each part inside the triangle. Additionally, integral parts of activity system and its functioning are contradictions and historicity. (Engeström 2001.)

The **subject** of an activity system is a collective organism of individuals working towards the object. Group and individual actions and actors are seen as subordinate units of analysis in CHAT. Activity systems are collective but contain multiple viewpoints and interests, which may be conflicting, and which require

negotiation. Individual actions and activity can only be understood in the context of collective activity, and collective activity is dependent on individual actions. Nevertheless, individuals are not bound by the collective; they can form their own goals and motives, disregard existing norms, et cetera. Thus, multi-voicedness is a key facet of activity systems. (Engeström 2001, 136; Lektorsky 2009, 75—83.) In EE, the actors and stakeholders themselves vary between individuals working for various kinds of institutions, students, and the institutions themselves. These different actors have different goals and motives for joining EE, and these goals, motives and viewpoints are partially contradictory. Individual members and groups within an activity system are seen as subunits, in this research listed under **community**, and they gain various roles through the **division of labor**. For example, the community members in the activity system UAS (subject) are the staff, leadership, students, external partners, et cetera. The activity system is governed by **rules** and norms which determine how the activity system should work towards its **object**. These rules may include laws and institutional guidelines but also social norms and unwritten rules. **Tools** are the methods and implements used to work towards the object, and they may be abstract, such as strategies and knowhow, or concrete items, such as computers.

Each activity system has a motive, an **object**, towards which the actors in the activity system work, and which shapes the forms the activity takes. (Blackler 2009, 27.) Objects are "*concerns — generators and foci of attention, motivation, effort and meaning*" (Engeström 2009, 304). The object is constructed by the subject based on the needs and wants of the subject, as well as the individual in the activity system, making it open for interpretation (Engeström 2016, 44). The subject and the individuals in the system formulate plans and goals based on the object. However, the object stays out of reach, as the it is continuously constructed and reconstructed through new immediate actions and goals. (Blackler 2009, 27—28). Goal-directed actions can be understood as subordinate units of analysis in the context of an activity system, as steps taken towards the object, whereas activity systems are evolving entities linked to each other through their shared objects, which evolve as the result of immediate actions and goals (Engeström 2001, 136). Objects differ from goals in that goals are attached to specific actions with clear beginning and end points, whereas activity systems

develop over time, and their beginning and end points are difficult to pinpoint. (Engeström 1999, 380—381.)

Different participants in the EE activity ecosystem see EE in different ways, although the policy—led definition of EE takes precedence, and participation in EE connects these diverse actors, resulting in a multi—voiced and complicated network of activity. In this research paper, **object[1]** is defined as the set of motivations that governs each specific activity system. **Object[2]** — the outcome — is the expected result of the activity. Finally, EE is treated as the **object[3]** in this research: a shared, jointly constructed object which stems from the results of the interaction of two object[2]s (see Engeström 2001, 136). The formation of a shared object is a massive collaborative achievement and objects of activity may be rooted in multiple activity systems (Engeström 1999, 397; Blackler 2009, 27—28). For the purposes of this study, EE is treated as the shared **object[3]** between different actors, each of which also has their own object. For the academic university, EE is a means of generating internationalization, research, funding and prestige. For the EE businesses, EE is a means of generating revenue and academic work; and for the Finnish nation, a new export sector that can generate revenue, intellectual capital and political influence. Each of these stakeholders is jointly constructing the object EE from their own premises and paradigms.

Activity systems evolve over time, and this development happens as the result of contradictions collecting over time. Activity systems can only be understood in the context of their own histories and the history of the wider phenomenon. Chapters 2.3 and 2.4 provide an overview of the development of EE in Finland. The history of EE explains its current state as well as some of the results of this paper. Additionally, activity systems are connected through their objects to other activity systems. These interactions beget new joint objects and results, and the object and results of an activity system therefore needs be seen in the context of several networked systems. Thus the basic unit of analysis in 3rd—generation CHAT is a network consisting of at least two interacting activity systems, both of which have historicity and which interact with each other. (Engeström 2001, 135—137.) This is apparent in the context of EE, as the various stakeholders have affected each other over the course of the development of Finnish EE.

Activity systems accumulate **contradictions** over time both inside and between themselves. These contradictions are the starting point of change and development of an activity system. The object of activity can be seen by looking at its historical formation and development, and through the emergence and resolution of the contradictions in the activity system (Engeström 1999, 382). Contradictions are structural tensions and dilemmas, not just problems and conflicts between the actors in the system. Disturbances such as new objects, tools and rules to the activity system cause contradictions as well, as the old means of activity cease to function in the new situation. (Engeström 2001, 137.) According to Engeström, these *"manifest themselves as increasingly serious disturbances and conflicts indicating growing mismatches between the way the activity system is functioning and the needs it should meet."* (Engeström 2016, 6). Contradictions are the key to transformations and development of activity systems. Activity systems change as the contradictions in them are mediated. (Edwards 2009, 199; Engeström 2001, 137.)

Mediating tools in an activity system are means of controlling actions through the usage and creation of artifacts (Engeström 1999, 28—29). These mediating artifacts are internal and external tools, signs, implements and representations used to identify and describe objects, guide and direct processes and procedures, diagnose and explain the properties and behaviour of objects, and to envision the potential future development of objects (Engeström 1999, 381—382). This paper focuses on two mediating artifacts: discourse and recommendations. **Discourse** is used to conceptualize and reconceptualize EE through arguments, and therefore fulfills the role of a mediating tool. Discourse concerning EE concretely exists in artifacts such as reports, strategy documents, blog posts, et cetera, and these artifacts can be used to direct the actions and feelings of the members in the activity system. Communication is an inherent aspect of of all object-related activities (Engeström 1999, 24); discourse is created and reproduced through communication. Contradictions and potential mediating artifacts in Finnish EE are discussed in chapter 5.1.

FIGURE 2. The minimal unit of analysis (adapted from Engeström 2001, 136).
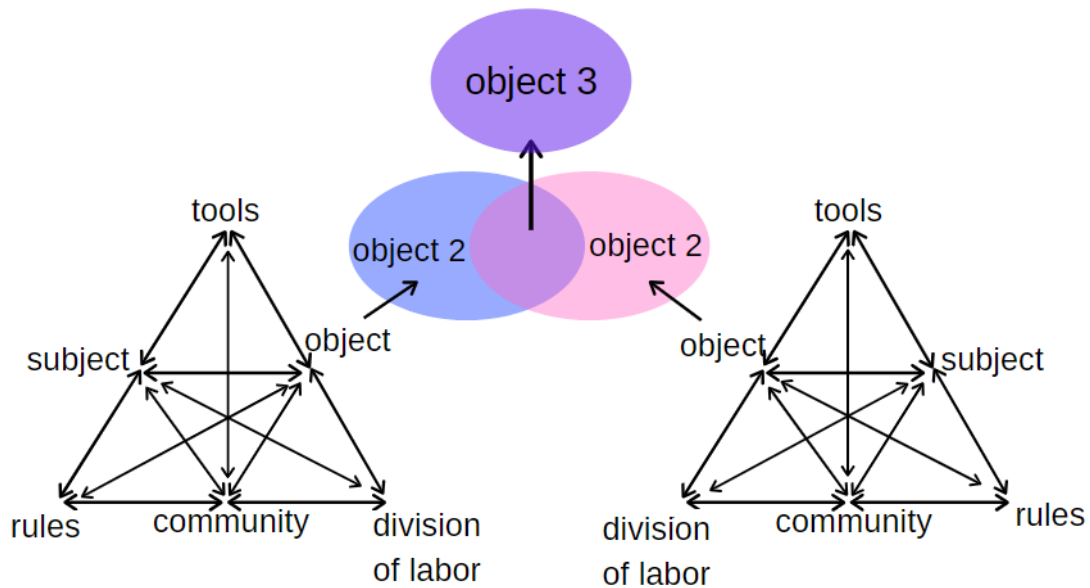
The prime unit of analysis in 3rd—generation CHAT is depicted in Figure 2: two interacting activity systems is seen as the minimal model. Activity systems are seen in network relations with other activity systems. (Engeström 2001, 136.) Activity systems in EE form networks of multi—activity collaboration (Engeström 2016, 45) through cooperation partnerships, service provider—customer relationships, and hierarchies based on national policy.

The aim of this research paper is to describe Finnish EE by modelling it through 3rd generation CHAT. The field of EE and its stakeholders such as different HEIs, companies and other actors are be broken into several different activity systems, but in the interests of building an abstract model of EE, different actors are aggregated into generic models based on their functions: the HEI, the EE company, the Finnish nation, and the students. The goal is not to portray a model that can accurately portray each possible action and contradiction in the field, but to gain an overall understanding of the current situation. There is a trade—off between generalizability and exactitude, and for the purposes of this thesis, a detailed look into specific actions and projects would be overly detailed. For example, the differences between various Finnish universities fall outside the scope of analysis, as do the different forms of businesses, if there is no meaningful effect on EE.

2.2 Education and Internationalization

In this chapter, the topic of the thesis is introduced and contextualized. Finland has traditionally diverged from the global majority on education policy (Sahlberg 2007) and presents a unique case for EE as a result (Schatz 2016). The marketization of higher education has been a somewhat controversial proposition in the education field in Finland if not in policy, and it creates a fundamental contradiction for EE activities. In short, Finnish educational policy has been resistant to the global education reform movement; standardized, outcomes—based education, high-stakes testing and consequential accountability are not a part of Finnish education policy (Sahlberg 2007), whereas EE is seen a market—oriented activity.

The Ministry of Education and Culture defines EE as "*any education—, education system— or skills—transfer—based product of service, which a foreign entity pays for*" (MOEC 2016). This definition of EE is wider than that of EE in the global context, and encompasses various kinds of commercial and internationalization activities, student and degree programme movement, offshore education, and more. EE is a new field of activity in Finland, and HE has traditionally been a noncommercial sector. This thesis is focused on EE in the Finnish context and uses the wide Finnish definition for EE, which encompasses all kinds of commercial transnational education activities (Schatz 2016, MOEC 2016). This understanding of Finnish EE does not include international or transnational activities such as student mobility free of tuition, e.g. ERASMUS or other student exchange programs. Degree programs offered to foreign students outside of the EU and ETA became a part of EE activities in 2017, as HEIs started charging tuition for them.

International education has been a global policy across higher education institutions worldwide for the last several decades. Internationalization and export efforts have been geared especially towards Asia, but also other regions such as South America. Education export has its roots in the 1980s as countries in the Anglophone sphere, e.g. the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand began introducing tuition fees to international students, and in the 2000s, an increasing number of European countries have started to adopt export strategies (Cai & Kivistö 2011, 59—60). EE has been a massive business sector globally until

2020; for example, Australia quadrupled its EE sector between 2000 and 2011, to encompass 40% of its service exports (Sahlberg 2012, 22), and even in 2020, Australia had over international 400 000 HE students (Australia Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2020).

The economy of Finland has met structural challenges since the great crash of 2008. As the population ages and national debt as well as the costs of healthcare and pensions increase (Ministry of Finance 2018), there has been a need for new means of generating national revenue. The development of Finnish EE as an export sector began in earnest in 2009, and while the discourses on internationalization include civic and academic rationales, EE itself has been policy- and economy-led (see e.g. MOEC 2010, 2013, 2020).

2.3 An Overview of Higher Education in Finland

Finnish higher education can be divided into two separate types of institutions: Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and traditional academic universities. The UAS are a much newer institution than the academic university. The first UAS were established in the 1990s (see e.g. Government proposal 319/1994) and given their own uniform legislative framework with the Universities of Applied Science Act in 2014. Legally, UAS are equal to academic universities, and the two types of HEIs constitute equal parts of the dual model. (Välimaa 2019, 278—282, 287.) There are thirteen academic universities such as Tampere University, and the University of Helsinki, and there are twenty-four Universities of Applied Sciences, such as Laurea, Lapland University of Applied Science, and Metropolia. HEIs in Finland are not profit-run, and degree programs have traditionally been tax-subsidized, free of charge for the students. Public expenditure on tertiary education in Finland was at 1.5% of the total GDP in 2017, with private expenditure covering 0.1% or less (OECD 2020, 287.) Public funding covered 93.1% of the spending on tertiary education in 2015 (OECD 2020). Funding goals are set by the Ministry of Education and Culture; the policy for 2021 onwards increases funding reserved for internationalization activities in both academic universities and UAS (MOEC 2020).

Since recent reforms, Finnish HEIs are technically autonomous entities as corporations or foundations instead of state institutions. UAS are set up as limited

liability companies, whereas eleven of the thirteen academic universities are public entities. Tampere University and Aalto University are foundations. Finnish legislation expressly forbids HEIs from seeking profits and distributing dividends (Universities Act 558/2009; Universities of Applied Science Act 932/2014, 5§; Foundations Act 487/2015). The goal of the recent structural reforms was to give universities more financial autonomy and responsibility, restructure the management and human resources policies, and to help support HEIs' research and innovation activities. (Universities Act 558/2009, Universities of Applied Science Act 932/2014, Wennberg, Korhonen & Koramo 2018.) However, as Finnish HEIs' main source of funding is the state, the new legislation and financial autonomy bring increased accountability and thus increased top-down managerial governance to HEIs. The government's funding models determine the framework for the universities' activities and strategy. While HEIs themselves are responsible for directing the funds according to their own strategies along with the results of these strategic choices, funding is granted based on external goals and measurements, thereby increasing both external control as well as internal management. Granting the administration more control and responsibility has resulted in increased top-down management and gaps between the management and the staff. This increased control conflicts with traditional academic culture, especially in academic universities. (Wennberg et al 2018, 17—26, 65—66, Kauko & Medvedeva 2016.)

Academic universities' stated goal in legislation is to further free research and scientific and artistic *Bildung*, to provide the highest form of research—based education, and to educate students to serve the country and humanity. *Bildung* (*sivistys*) refers to the process of knowledge—based cultural self—maturation and personal growth, and the term is frequently used throughout Finnish educational policy. UAS' goals mandated by legislation are providing professional education based on the demands of regional working life, industry and development, supporting students' professional growth and expertise, and practise applied research which serves regional development, business and industry needs, and to collaborate with both Finnish and foreign HEIs as well as other education providers. Both academic universities and UAS are required to offer opportunities for continued learning. (Universities Act 558/2009 2§,

Universities of Applied Science Act 932/2014, 4§—6§; Heikkinen & Kukkonen 2019, 264—268.)

UAS have a longer history of and experience in commercial activity than academic universities and university faculties, whose business competence and connections vary. UAS' stated national, legally mandated goals of providing professional education, serving the needs of regional development and cooperation, and providing applicable research and innovations have made them overall more connected to enterprises and business life than academic universities. (Heikkinen & Kukkonen 2019.) While UAS provide training to civil servants paid by the MOEC, they are also able to also offer paid training products to groups, e.g. practical training for private companies or professionals. As such, the marketization of higher education seems to be less controversial in UAS than in academic universities.

2.3.1 Tuition fees in Finland

In Finland, the central and long-standing goal of the national higher education policy has been to provide equal opportunities for students from all socio-economic backgrounds (MOEC 2005, p. 49). One of the major changes to the Finnish HE sector in recent years has been the introduction of tuition fees for non—Schengen students in 2017. Education has traditionally been free of charge to students both domestic and international, so this marked a profound change in the landscape of Finnish HEIs. Tuition fees are applicable to non-Schengen students in international degree programs — in practice, this means degree programs taught in English.

Globally, the cost of higher education has been increasingly shifted onto students. The reasons for the institution of tuition fees globally are ideological as well as practical; neoliberalism and growing pressures on public budgets due to increased enrolment and rising costs of higher education have led to the implementation of tuition fees in the majority of the countries in the world. Tuition fees and graduate population have a complicated relationship, as the number of enrolled students and graduates is not only governed by financial variables; countries with high as well as countries with low tuition fees see high numbers of graduates. Policies on tuition fees can therefore not be directly transported

between education markets. (Cattaneo et al 2020, 22—23.) Nordic countries have traditionally followed the low-tuition high-subsidy system, in which tuition fees are low and financial aid given to students is high. (Cattaneo, Civera & Meoli 2020, 11—12., Marcucci & Johnstone 2007, 27.) This has been the case in Finland: HE is tax-subsidized, not paid by the students, and students are eligible for benefits from *Kela*, the national social insurance institution.

The discussion on the introduction of tuition fees for international HE students began in the early 2000s with the Temmes et al report in 2002, the 2005 proposal by the Ministry of Education, and the OECD reports during the same decade. (Kauko & Medvedeva 2016, 102—105.) In 2007, legislation governing HEIs was amended to allow tuition fees for degree education programs in "made to order" education that is not paid for by individual students but by a third organization, and these fees must cover the costs of the education provided (Act Amending the University Act 1504/2007 8 a §; Act Amending the University of Applied Science Act 1505/2007 26 a §). Optional implementation of tuition fees for non-EU/EEA students in Masters' degree programmes was added to legislation in 2010, with the requirement that schools implementing tuition fees also implement scholarship programs to support tuition-paying students. In 2012, just over twenty programs had implemented tuition fees, and the number of enrolled paying students was low; the effect was minimal on both internationalization and revenue (Sirén & Vuorinen 2012, 11; Kauko & Medvedeva 2016). In 2016, select HEIs were given the right to run tuition-based pilot degree programs, which was expanded in 2017 to cover all HEIs. Legislation stipulates the lower boundary of yearly tuition fees but not the upper, enabling schools to respond to market fluctuations without allowing price competition. (Law 1600/2015 and Law 1601/2015.) Schools are required to offer scholarships programs that cover some of the tuition costs, but the practicalities of a program are up to the schools themselves, which has resulted in a variety of scholarship programs and policies. These changes have been made with the goal of turning EE a viable field and increasing possible means of generating funding for HE. (See e.g. Government Proposal 77/2015, MOEC 2013; MOEC 2016, 15—18.)

The introduction of tuition fees to international students has been a controversial proposition in Finland. On the one hand, majority of the countries in the world have tuition fees, especially the Asian countries a large part of Finnish

EE is directed at. Increasing global demand for international HE is seen as adding financial pressure on Finnish HEIs, as the number of international students in Finland has grown (MOEC 2017, 5). Thus offering free HE could, in the words of Cai and Höltta (2014, 326), be seen as a financial transfer *"from low-income Finnish taxpayers — to international students"* , which itself is problematic, considering international students tend to represent the middle-to-upper socioeconomic classes, whereas low-income Finnish taxpayers are underrepresented in HE attendance. Degrees from HE can be seen as investments that lead to increased intellectual capital and higher incomes. (Cai & Hölttä 2014, 326; Lönnqvist, Laihonen, Cai & Hasanen 2018; see also Marcucci & Johnstone 2007, 27.)

On the other hand, tuition fees can be seen as contradictory to the idea of equally accessible, non-marketized education that has governed Finnish higher education policy. (Sahlberg 2007.) According to Kauko & Medvdeva, the introduction of tuition fees is closer to the marketization of education than internationalization (2016). Tuition fees were instituted in connection with cuts to the education budget, following the international trend of shifting the cost of HE away from the state. The introduction of tuition fees has been understood to as a means of generating funds for HEIs (Hietanen, Hämäläinen & Seppälä 2012, 62). Financial concerns may discourage students from enrollment in HEI in a specific region or to encourage students to choose alternative options to HEIs (Wilkins, Shams & Huisman 2013, 136—137). The tuition paid by the students follows the market value rather than the cost of degree programs, which may deter students from lower socio-economic backgrounds from enrolling (Marcucci & Johnstone 2007, 35—39) despite potential aptitude in a specific field. All of this may result in fewer international students despite the stated aim of increased internationalization in Finnish HEIs. (Kauko & Medvedeva 2016.)

Indeed, international student enrolment dropped slightly in 2017, but it recovered the following year. (MOEC 2018.) The majority of Finland's main education export target countries have tuition fees, so the change was possibly more controversial in Finland than in international students' home countries. How the introduction of tuition fees affects student demographics in the long term remains to be seen.

2.4 Internationalization and Education Export

There are many different terms related to globalization in higher education. The terminology differs between regions and languages. As Knight explains, there are many different terms for the same phenomenon, and various phenomena are labeled with the same term (Knight 2014, 36). In the context of Finland, various terms are used yet again differently compared to the global discourse. This chapter clarifies the terms used in this paper, hopefully bringing some order to "the chaos" (Knight 2016) of terminology.

Internationalisation refers to the integration of an "*international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions of delivery of postsecondary education*" (Knight 2008). This concept encompasses international, transnational education (TNE), cross—border, borderless, and offshore education. (Alenius 2018.) International education is used to denote the movement of students between countries, as opposed to transnational education, which refers to the movement of academic programs and providers between countries (Knight 2016, p.36). The term transnational refers to cross-border activities and practices, without addressing the relationships between nations (Knight 2004, 8), the mobility of educational systems, and non-state actors across nation-state borders (Knight 2016). TNE can be conceptualized through a framework by Knight (2016) that divides TNE activities into two models, collaborative and independent. Collaborative activities, where local and foreign providers collaborate to provide the activity, cover twinning programs, joint degree programs, co-founded or codeveloped HEIs, and locally supported distance education programs. Independent TNE activities are activities where the foreign sender operates without collaboration with local HEIs. These consist of international branch campuses, franchise universities, and distance education. (Knight 2016 p. 41—42.) Home-based international degree programmes are absent from this list, and in global discourse the term TNE does not cover them. Offshore education emphasizes the location of the student away from the country where the education-providing institution is located, teaching practices, cultural differences and learning experiences (Knight 2005, Kosmützky & Putty 2016), while the term cross-border is used to refer to TNE with an emphasis on programmes, providers and trade regulations, i.e. systemic support.

Another perspective on cross-border education activities is offered by Knight (2006) with the division into two dimensions: that of movement, and that of the conditions for cross-border education activity, which includes development aid, academic exchange, and commercial activity; the trends in these two dimensions are a shift from student mobility to program and provider mobility, and a policy shift from an aid approach to economic rationales. (Knight 2006.) EE is a part of this increasingly economy-oriented trend, and although aid projects are distinguished from EE activity, development aid projects are seen as potential means of conducting EE through cooperation and networks (MOEC 2016, 22).

Huang (2007) distinguishes three categories in his model: import-oriented, import-export type, and transitional. Import-oriented refers to the importation of education programs and standards, usually from western countries. Import-export refers to a situation where a country is both importing educational standards and practices but also exporting them to other countries. Finally, transitional model refers to when a country is trying to move from importing to exporting. Finland is attempting to export education to countries in all three categories. Finland has moved past the transitional model and relies more on the export of education than the import. (Huang 2007.)

In Finnish education policy documents, the terminological chaos outlined by Knight (2016) tends to be avoided with the use of the concepts *liikkuvuus* and *kansainvälistyminen* to refer to various types of internationalization. The former term refers to the movement of students, teachers and education providers, while the latter means internationalization, and as in English, more of less encompasses the other terms. For the purposes of this paper, education export, or EE, is used as a translation for the Finnish word *koulutusvienti*. Schatz (2015, 330) defines education export as "*an intentional business transaction concerning educational practices, services, and materials from one country to another*", as there is no strong regulatory framework in Finland on what education export consists of, and the term is applied across a wide variety of international and transnational education activities. (Schatz 2015, 330.) Finnish actors in the field conceptualize EE in various, even contradictory ways, and thus Schatz's definition is apt for the purposes of this research, as it encompasses the majority of the points of view available. The same approach has been found by Juusola and Nokkala in their 2019 review (Juusola & Nokkala 2019, 6).

2.4.1 Rationales for Internationalization and EE in Finnish Education Policy

Knight (2004) lists various rationales for internationalization on sociocultural, political, economic, academic, national and institutional levels (23-28). The various economic, civic and academic rationales in Finnish internationalization discourse are complementary rather than competing, although the discourse on economic competitiveness is central (Nokkala 2007, MOEC 2009, MOEC 2013, MOEC 2017). Internationalization has been a priority in Finnish education policy for decades. The "globalization shock" and economic depression of the 1990s brought about the ideas of national competitiveness and international competition to the national education agenda, and since then, globalization has been used as a rationale for HE policies and calls for increased internationalization. (Kauko & Medvedeva 2016, 100-101). Traditionally, internationalization in Finland has been based on institutional agreements and networks, and program-based internationalization. However, the current trend is increasingly market oriented. (Hölttä 2007 in Cai & Kivistö 2011.)

The Finland Country Brand created by the Finland Promotion Board, lists "world-class education system" as one of the cornerstones of Finland. The internationalization of Finnish HE, as well as the development and marketing of EE rely heavily on the rationale of high academic standards and a strong worldwide reputation. (Knight 2004, 26; MOEC 2009, MOEC 2017.) Finnish education is used as a broadly and vaguely defined concept in marketing (Schatz 2015).

A central rationale directing the internationalization of Finnish HE towards the addition of EE is the opportunity for commercial trade and income generation; higher education is lucrative and has been included in the General Agreement on Trade in Services for decades. (Knight 2004, 24.) In 2013, the report International Markets and Finland pointed out that without removing legal obstacles to EE, i.e. commercially oriented internationalization, the resources of Finnish HEIs do not increase despite increased global demand and rising numbers of foreign students in Finnish HE. (MOEC 2013, 11.) As explained previously, legal obstacles preventing EE have been removed throughout the 2010s.

An increasingly important rationale for internationalization at the national level is the need for human capital, attained through recruitment and immigration policies as well as domestic teaching and research. Human capital also includes the development of intercultural skills and understanding of the local population. (Knight 2004, 22-24.)

This is also true in Finland, where the population is aging rapidly. There is an increasing need for skilled workers, especially in expert roles (Hetemäki 2019; MOEC 2017). Finland has been one of the few OECD countries suffering from brain drain, with more highly educated Finnish citizens emigrating than moving back (MOEC 2009, StatFin 2020). The 2009 policy on internationalization shows concern for the lack of foreign experts and students in Finnish universities and outlined a goal to attract more international talent and investments both via high-quality education and research as well as national services. (MOEC 2009.) These sentiments are echoed in the 2017 strategy, which sees Finland as an internationally interesting environment for talents, but which also must invest in attracting human capital in an increasingly competitive global market. The goal in 2017 is to not only attract students and researchers, but to create and attract a network of experts. HE is seen as a motor of economic development; human capital and innovations lead to investments and job generation. (MOEC 2017.)

Internationalization is seen as an institutional-level rationale related to the increased commodification of education. (Knight 2004, 26-27); economic rationales and the international reputation of Finland have been major driving forces behind the development of Finnish EE.

2.4.2 HEIs as generic activity systems

Academic universities and UAS as activity systems do not differ much on a basic level. There are certain differences between the two types of HEI, which are further delved into in chapter 2.2.1, but on a basic level, the university and UAS map out to similar models of activity. Within each system are also smaller activity subsystems such as different faculties and departments, student and researcher organizations, et cetera. These fall outside the scope of this research beyond the staff-administration divide.

TABLE 2.   The parts of generic HEI activity systems

Activity system	University/UAS
Subject	University/UAS
Tools	The facilities, methods, policies, and materials used to fulfil the object of the university/UAS. Includes degree programs and marketing and branding as well as internationalization.
Rules	Legislation, internal strategy and policies, MOEC policy, funding
Community	staff, students, leadership, administration, international affairs, EE partners (if applicable), MOEC, cooperation partners UAS: also regional partners (required by law)
Division of Labor	In universities, the main duty of the staff is research with teaching as an additional duty, whereas in UAS, the teaching staff mainly teach.
Mediating tools	Factors and features that help negotiate various contradictions within the activity system, e.g. discourse
Object	Education, research, applications and innovations, cooperation, regional development (UAS), internationalization, the production of professionals, experts, and researchers
Object[2] (Outcome)	*Bildung*, educated professionals, increased knowledge and understanding, development, research, funding, innovations, social stratification
Object[3] (Shared object)	Education Export

Internationalization is both a tool and an object of HEIs: it is both a motivation as well as means of approaching the object of the HEI.

3 THE ANALYSIS, PART I — LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter lays the groundwork for the thesis through a systematic literature review synthesized through CHAT. Qualitative research synthesis, QRS, refers to an iterative research process where the researcher systematically analyses and interprets results from several qualitative studies in order to synthesize new knowledge from previous results. (Major & Savin-Baden 2010, 10; Sandelowski & Barroso 2007, 3.) The main purpose of QRS is to organize and combine information. It helps gain a comprehensive view of a phenomenon, and may also bring attention to studies that may otherwise be ignored. (Major & Savin—Baden 2010, 11—13) It can also highlight research gaps. In relation to this study, QRS helps create a holistic picture of EE in Finland, as despite there being a multitude of studies around the subject, there is no comprehensive recent overview study besides the literature review by Juusola and Nokkala (2019).

The research used for QRS in this thesis is taken from the systematic literature review by Juusola & Nokkala (2019). This paper is not a repeat of Juusola and Nokkala's literature review, but rather uses its data sample as a basis for a deeper look into the dynamics and mechanics of Finnish EE. Juusola and Nokkala's review is the official MOEC report on Finnish EE research between 2010 and 2019 and maps out a total of 111 current Finnish literature on EE ranging from theses, peer-reviewed scientific articles, as well as strategy documents by MOEC. It uses the wide definition of "*any education— or skill transfer —related business that a foreign recipient pays for*" (Juusola & Nokkala 2019). It is directed at "*an expert audience of those conducting EE, officials, experts and researchers*" (Juusola & Nokkala 2019), and as such, it is suitable for the purposes of this thesis. The documents it covers are the same as the list of literature research results on current (post-2010) Finnish EE; the systematic review was conducted on Google Scholar, Academic Search Ultimate, Web of

Sciences and Arto, Theseus and Finna using search terms such as "*education export*", "*koulutusvienti*", "*transnational education*", "*cross-border education*", et cetera. It is possible there are research papers on EE which could not be found, but nevertheless the report offers a comprehensive sample of Finnish EE. (Juusola & Nokkala 2019, 7.)

3.1 Qualitative Research Synthesis

Qualitative research synthesis includes a variety of approaches, and there is some variance in how the term is understood. Qualitative studies differ from quantitative in their basis; whereas quantitative research looks for causal relationships and generalizable results, qualitative research emphasizes cases and gaining deeper understanding of various phenomena, without trying to generalize. Qualitative research as a methodological orientation was born from critiques against positivism and includes a multitude of methodological approaches with different ontological and epistomological orientations.

This does not make qualitative research incompatible with synthesis. The point of QRS is to interpret results and concepts from multiple qualitative studies and synthesize them into new interpretations that cannot be found in individual research reports. (Sandelowski & Barroso 2007, 17—18.) QRS is systematic and includes a variety of methods, and its priority remains credibility instead of generalizability (Major & Savin—Baden 2010, 20).

Qualitative research synthesis is systematic and comprehensive. Comprehensiveness means that theoretically, the researcher should find all the studies within defined research parameters. However, there is a case for purposeful sampling as well. If the sample presents "*sufficient evidence for achieving the synthesis purpose*" (Suri 2011, 9), the data is sufficient even without data saturation. It may not be possible or necessary to analyse each research publication on a topic; the synthesist must make pragmatic choices on how many samples are sufficient and the reasons for using these specific samples. (Suri 2011.)

The data from these studies is analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods, and the results are interpreted and integrated. (Major & Savin-Baden 2010, 32—49; Sandelowski & Barroso 2007, p.22). This is an iterative process,

in which the researcher first identifies codes and themes from the body of research, and then combines them into composite themes, that are interpreted. (Major & Savin-Baden 2010, 60—70.) The final interpretation of the synthesized research in this paper is the model of the Finnish EE activity system.

The research papers used in this thesis were randomly sampled from the report based on the following criteria:

- The research paper is from 2016 or newer, as 2016 marked a defining change in transnational Finnish higher education with tuition fee pilot programs.

- The research paper is a PhD dissertation, a Master's Thesis, or a thesis of acceptable quality from a University of Applied Science. UAS theses are normally considered to be on par with Bachelor's Theses, but they were included in the sample because several UAS theses have been written on topics untouched by academic theses. Academic Bachelor's theses were excluded in favour of Master's theses. This way the sample represents viewpoints from both academia as well as UAS.

- The research in the paper consists of qualitative research and/or analysis strategies.

- The research paper is centered around higher education. Focus on early childhood and/or comprehensive education was an exclusion criterion, as this thesis is focused on EE in the context of HE.

- Availability; if a research paper was unavailable, it was replaced with another sample until thirty papers had been found. The number thirty was chosen as a lower limit, as several of the 111 papers in the review had been written before 2016 or were unavailable, and the number of criteria-filling papers was not apparent at the start of sampling.

First, the research papers that fulfilled the inclusion criteria were identified. The data included were then sampled at random from the tables 3, 5, 8 and 9 in Juusola & Nokkala 2019 (p. 12, 23, 29, 30), from categories related to HE, national actors, other education actors, and multiple actors or/and areas. These theses, reports, articles and publications were read and categorized in a table to

identify findings from data (Major & Savin—Baden 2010, 57—61). Using reciprocal translation, the findings were further grouped into related themes based on the CHAT model.

3.2 Previous Research on Finnish EE

The sampled dataset is summarized in Table 3. It consists of 30 research papers, articles and reports between 2016—2019 listed in Juusola & Nokkala (2019).

TABLE 3.   QRS summaries

Name	Findings (summarized)
Aarva, A. 2018	Alumni have roles as customers, stakeholders, and partners. An alumni network could promote EE. Even though HEI alumni networks are not currently very well-developed, they nevertheless add value to HEIs.
Delahunty, D. 2016	There are various major issues related to cultural and societal differences, communication issues, ethical issues, practical factors and issues concerning bureaucratic processes, as well as factors that mitigate these issues, such as personal networks, local knowledge, ICC, and trust.
Delahunty, D., Phusavat, K., Kess, P., Kropsu— Vehkapera, H., & Hidayanto, A. N. 2018	The following factors for successful EE were recognized: the importance of giving decision making power to the people involved in EE projects; the importance of ICC, local knowhow, and trust; challenges from communication, administration and rigid bureaucratic processes on both ends of the project.
Heinonen, V. 2019	Teachers act as change agents in education, but support and trust are needed to strengthen this effect. Education systems must be contextualized and adapted for different regions. In Finnish education, teachers have high autonomy as well as formal training, with a trend towards teachers as coaches or facilitators of learning.
Huttunen, T. 2017	In HEIs, EE is accepted as a "common truth", but it is also seen as an externally set, unclear goal that lacks strategic basis, possibly due to the newness of EE as a field and the incompleteness of EE processes. There are various discourses around EE: global needs, Finnish education quality, potential for marketization, innovative solutions. There is a conflict between values and revenue.

Issakainen, S. 2017	EE services need sufficient resources, and a proper vision and strategy beyond gaining funding through tuition fees; the service promise of EE must be filled yearly, and basic degree education must not suffer due to investments in EE. Management can function as role models. Risk management is necessary, but processes may be incomplete.
Jaakkola F. 2017	EE is seen as a product with a core primarily in business practices, customer needs, knowhow and Finnishness-as-education-quality; sharing good practices is a secondary consideration. There are multiple challenges: the lack of a clear definition, and the need for common national basis for EE; competition between actors and the need for cooperation; the lack of skilled educators; lack of research to use as a basis for EE, lack of language skills; More investments cooperation, and larger projects are needed.
Jokila, S., Kallo, J., & Mikkilä-Erdmann, M. 2019	A shift from neoliberally toned crisis talk to opportunity rhetoric has occurred between 2009 and 2017, with national rhetoric remaining a constant feature. Strategies are justified with EE and linked to EE activities, and prescribed to actors in the field, resulting in top-down policies and increased marketization of Finnish HE. Despite strategies and political will to increase the number of foreign students for national benefit, student recruitment suffers from issues related to employment and integration.
Juusola, H. 2018	EE is seen as strategically important, but novel, resulting in incomplete processes. There is a need for a holistic perspective on quality assurance in EE. Stakeholders are not always aware of EE activities and their benefits; EE actors rely on various quality conventions at different points. Different quality conventions are based on different priorities and requirements, which means relying on just a few of them is risky. The lack of definitions around EE is confusing to both internal and external stakeholders and potentially leads to incoherence.
Juusola, H. & Räihä, P. 2017	Teaching staff join EE activities due to various professional and personal reasons and gain professional skills and experience from it. However, they are also faced with load factors and challenges. Adequate support from HEI faculties is important; the relationship between teaching at the home campus and EE activities, as well as recruitment policies affected by EE should be clearly defined.
Juusola, H. & Räihä, P. 2019	Different stakeholders (providers, teachers and students) evaluate and assess the quality in EE in various, even contradictory ways throughout the process. Thus EE cannot rely on just the market quality convention for successful implementation.
Kandelin, E. 2019	Teachers see various types of ethical challenges in, and have doubts about EE, and they feel a lack of professional agency in teaching. Ethical challenges may emerge at different stages during EE, and it is not possible

	to predict all the emerging challenges. The norms and expectations that underlie "Finnish education" may transform when exported to a new context.
Kauko, J. & Medvedeva, A. 2018	There are multiple contradictions in EE regarding education policy, the implementation of tuition fees, administrative processes, and the understanding of EE and internationalization at various levels of HEIs.
Kemppainen, H. 2016	HE as a "soft service" export requires high control over the core of a service, especially to mitigate threats; and market knowledge and experience. When choosing local partners, rankings and reputation matter. Standardization of education services is not possible.
Kiesi, I. & Nivanaho, N. 2019	EE startups in xEdu do not have direct connections, but they are loosely connected through partner networks. The majority of the startups' cooperation partners are in the Finnish public sector, but they also have e.g. digital service provider partners, incubator partners and both Finnish and foreign academic institutional partners. The Finnish partner network is more densely linked than the foreign partnership network.
Mansikkamäki, E. & Kuronen, J. 2017	Tuition fees lowered the number of enrolled international students, but the number is projected to increase again. Tuition fees may bring revenue to HEIs, but also necessitate the use of resources on changes, e.g. scholarship programs. In general, tuition fees have not had a huge impact on the operations of UAS.
Könkkölä, L. 2017	Internal opposition to EE is not strong in the University of Tampere, but the various discourses between stakeholders are conflicted, with academic capitalism and neoliberalism as the overarching discourses. MOEC discourses are hegemonic and integrate HEIs as notable actors in EE. EE is strongly tied to academic capitalism, but universities are not becoming corporations.
Lönnqvist, A., Laihonen, H., Cai, Y., & Hasanen, K. 2018	EE is both a business and a means of increasing various types of intellectual capital in developing regions at different levels: personal, structural and national. Intellectual capital transfer may widen the view of EE within scholarly community and motivate academics, and sets requirements for EE activity, e.g. information localization.
Manuel, E. 2018	There are various cultural and practical factors that affect EE programs in different regions, ranging from business practicalities to cultural differences, official systems such as certification and recognition, and timing. EE offers notable opportunities but these practical factors also set requirements for EE actors.
Medvedeva, A. 2018	Internationalization is a contradictory, reactive, separate activity that leans on policy and economics rationales rather than academic basis, which creates issues for HEIs in the form of gaps between different levels' viewpoints, planning and practice.

Nikula, P. & Kivistö, J. 2019	There is a need for detailed, practical QA instruction for working with education agents. The most typical methods of QA oversight were feedback, field audits and analysis; using a variety of methods and diverse metrics to audit agents requires various competencies from EE actors.
Nikula, P. & Kivistö, J. 2018	Goal conflicts and information asymmetries that stop HEIs from monitoring and incentivizing agents undermine the relationships between HEIs and education agents. HEIs should emphasize quality instead of quantity when evaluating agents. The most effective ways to manage HEI-education agent relationships are hybrid governance models that include elements of both outcome- and behaviour-based contracts.
Nummela, S. 2018	There is a notable contradiction between the discourses at the leadership and staff levels in HEIs, with the leadership emphasizing and normalizing EE and staff engaging more in EE critique and worry discourse.
Puistolahti A. 2019	The role of the Finnish state has increased in EE between 2010 and 2018 along with the growth of the sector. Education is being commodified for EE without the quality evaluation requirements as in development assistance projects; EE may have little effect on the development of Brazilian society as such.
Roininen E. 2019	Students may face challenges when studying in a different culture, and their identities may change as a result of studying in a culturally different environment; student adaptation is affected by both cultural as well as individual features. Culture has a profound effect on education and education practices in e.g. student-centeredness.
Rytivaara, A., Wallin, A., Saarivirta, T., Imre, R., Nyyssölä, N., & Eskola, J. 2019	Culture is central in TNE. The major factors the customers perceived as transformative and/or successful were related to the content, the execution and the transnationality of the program. Failure scenarios were seen as related to personal challenges, e.g. motivational issues, lack of adaptability, and lack of social and institutional support in their own institutions.
Schatz, M., Popovic, A., Dervin, F. 2017	Marketing used to brand Finnish education for export lacks concreteness despite being based on claims of success and quality. This may be a marketing feature due to the possibility of including all kinds of educational products and services under it; however, it is ethically controversial to rely on unclarified "Finnishness" as a selling point.
Schatz, M. 2016	There are numerous contradictions in the dynamics of Finnish EE ranging from policy-practice gaps to the conflict between marketization and the ideological basis of Finnish education, motivations and ethical implications.

Vallin, F. 2017	EE has not fully reached national goals, even though the number of EE actors has increased. There are challenges in cooperation, investment and marketing. A call for more national cooperation and development in EE.
Vanhanen, R. 2016	UAS need more national and international cooperation. Systematic development of EE has happened, and UAS have gained knowhow in EE activities, but more work is needed. Digitalization offers support and new possibilities. "The Finnish way" is not concretely defined but features student-centeredness and involvement.

Before the analysis, the following expected categories were set: HEI; Business Entity; Customer. Each sample was analysed, and its results were grouped with results of a similar theme; these themed groups are depicted below in Table 4. The groups emerged naturally during the analysis process.

TABLE 4. Groups and First-Order Themes

Group	First-Order Theme
Justifications for Arguments against Features and Types of Discourse Contradictions and Challenges within Discourse	**Discourse** Why/why not EE? How is EE discussed?
Universities and UAS HEI staff HEI leadership	**HEIs** HE actors, strategies and policies in EE
Companies Marketing Business practices Business support Coordination and cooperation Other factors	**Business** Profit-driven private actors and systems in EE
Students and customer organizations Demands ICC Tuition (Student) Recruitment	**Customer Experience** The targets of EE and their needs
Outside forces that affect EE Funding Internationalization	**Policy** The effects of policy and politics on EE. Political actors and stakeholders in EE.

The State	
Other factors	
Cooperation	**Recommendations**
Business and marketing best practices	What should be done to improve EE?
HEI best practices	
Product recommendations	
Policy recommendations	
Challenges and contradictions	

The findings were categorized into naturally emerging categories, and grouped under wider natural themes, e.g. any results answering the question "*how is EE discussed*" was grouped under the category Discourse, any results related to private profit-driven actors were grouped under Business, and results directly pointing out ways to improve EE were listed under Recommendations.

Finally, the results were further simplified in Table 5, with five main categories: **Discourse**, **HEI**, **Business**, **Policy** (national), and **Other**. Customers were grouped under Business, as all students participating in EE have a double role as HEI students as well as customers of EE providers. Although a part of HEI communities, domestic and non-paying international students fall outside the focus of this study.

TABLE 5.   Overarching Themes Identified

Discourse	HEI	Business	Policy (nation	Other
Types of discourse	Leadership	Marketing	Tuition fees	Contradictions
Justifications for and against EE	Staff	Customers	MOEC	Challenges
Features of Discourse	Universities	Business	International	Recommendations
	UAS	strategy	Entities	Features of EE
		Support		

The results under these overarching themes were categorised according to the CHAT model as outlined in Chapter 2.1 into Subject, Tools, Rules, Community, Division of Labour, Contradictions and Mediating Tools. Contradictions and Mediating Tools in the sample are discussed further in chapter 5.1.

3.2.1 CHAT Synthesis

The subjects are defined as **HEIs**, **Businesses**, **Finland as a political entity** including MOEC, and **Customers**. HEIs include leadership and staff, which have been divided throughout the analysis due to their contrasting roles and the contradictions between these two groups. Each activity system is motivated by an object, listed in Table 6. The object[1] is the immediate set of motives that guide and govern the activity of the system itself. The outcome, objects[2], resulting from the interactions between these activity systems are explained in chapter 6.2. As previously outlined, the object[3] is the shared, jointly constructed object between several interacting activity systems: in this case, EE.

TABLE 6. Subjects and Objects

Subject	Features of Object[1]
HEI	Provide research and research-based HE
	Internationalization, research, innovations, support national and regional goals and worklife
	Gain funding
	HEI administration: manage and lead the HEI; fulfill HEI strategy; fulfill national education policy
	Factors motivating staff to join EE: cultural experiences, international teaching experience, improved self-confidence, professional curiosity, enthusiasm for new challenges, professional development, ethical reasons.
Business	Profit, sales of services
	Growth
	Entity-dependent and varied
Finland (political entity)	Function as a nation
	Generate export revenue
	Fund services e.g. HEIs and businesses
	Offer a business environment
	Gain and retain skilled workers
Customer	Varies depending on type:
	• Business customers: see Business
	• Student customers: increase intellectual capital, gain new experiences, gain credentials; individual and varied

HEIs' object[1] is to provide research and research-based education, generate innovations and funding, and support and fulfil national and regional goals and work life. Two diverging sets of motivations can be found inside HEIs: the administration and the staff. The administration leads and manages the HEI to fulfil its strategy and national education policy, which currently includes EE activity. There are various factors that drive HEI staff towards EE activities ranging from gaining experience to professional and personal development as well as ethical reasons. Internationalization is both an object and a tool for HEIs: it is a means of working towards the object[1] as well as an externally set goal that directs the activity in HEIs.

Businesses' main object[1] is to make a profit (Limited Liability Companies Act 624/2006 5§), usually via sales of services to customers or other businesses. Other factors such as growth, marketing and strategy depend on the entity, and direct the activities of various businesses. The result is a large variety of EE business activities in the field, ranging from education programs, cooperation with HEIs, marketing and support businesses to technology-based solutions and products.

Finland as a political entity governs the other actors in the field. Its object[1] is to function as a nation. Its object[1] includes the generation of sufficient revenue to keep running, funding services such as HEIs and businesses, offering a stable business environment, and attracting as well as retaining skilled workers. HEIs and businesses could be seen as subsystems of the Finland the activity system. For the sake of clarity, Finland, HEIs and businesses are treated as their own, interacting activity systems, as each of them has a distinct objects and other features.

While the Customer could also be characterized as a member of the HEI and business communities, it is clearer to represent Customers as their own activity system. Customers are a diverse group that facilitate the existence of EE and set certain requirements for the other actors in the field of EE. They can be divided into two distinct categories: businesses, e.g. intermediary agents, and end customers, usually students. Business customers' object[1] is the same as other businesses', whereas student customers' object[1] relates to their wants and needs on both the population as well as individual levels. In general, student

customers hope to increase their human capital in the forms of increased intellectual capital, and credentials and certificates, as well as gain new experiences. Customers are stakeholders in EE activity; students hope to fulfil their needs for human capital through EE, and business customers gain a profit from successful projects and cooperation with EE businesses.

TABLE 7.   The Communities

Activity system	Community
HEI	Leadership Staff Students Cooperation partners
Business entity	Stakeholders Owners Investors Staff Customers Network
Finland (political entity)	People living in Finland Public sector Policymakers Businesses in/cooperating with Finland International entities National cooperation partners
Customer	Nation of origin, family, relatives, peers Peer group in EE Other students in HEI Finnish society Cooperation partners

Each activity system consists of a community. In the HEI, the members are the leadership, the staff, the students, and external cooperation partners. In businesses, the community consists of stakeholders, investors and owners; staff; and customers; and external network partners.

Finland as a political entity includes the people living in Finland; the public sector and policymakers — the government, the parliament, and officials — private entities such as businesses operating in and outside of Finland; international entities like the EU; and national cooperation partners.

The customers' communities have the highest diversity. At the macro level, the customers' communities consist of the nation and culture of origin as well as Finnish society, which especially the student customers enter and interact with; approaching the at the micro level, the student community in HEIs, peer groups in the EE activity, and finally, individual social networks such as families. Business customers have cooperation partners and networks, in which e.g. Finnish EE actors, national entities, and end customers can be found.

TABLE 8.   The Tools

Activity system	Tools
HEI	Policies concerning administration, staff support and recruitment Resource allocation and funding Staff knowhow School location may give competitive advantage Learning models Rankings Internationalization
Business entity	Products, services Strategy, networks, investors Partner and cooperation networks in Finland and abroad, private and public. Marketing tools and methods Finland Country Brand; Embassies
Finland as a political entity	State policies and strategies Funding and budgets Finland Country Brand · PISA has a large effect on the country image Embassies Pro-EE discourse OECD and other multinational entities' recommendations

	EE offers new employment opportunities to both Finnish professionals and international students
	EE for national revenue
EE customer	Competition over paying students —> students/customers wield power over EE actors.
	Intermediary agents to gain access
	Customers use search engines, marketing materials, rankings as ways to determine whose business to frequent.
	EE as means to new employment opportunities for students both in Finland, abroad, and in the students' home countries, increasing their human capital.

The main tools in HEIs include administrative policy and staff capability. The former determines the allocation of resources and support given to staff, recruitment, and funding. Funding is both an internal tool for resource allocation and an external means of exerting control over HEIs despite their legal autonomy, as they receive funding mainly from the state. Internationalization itself can be used as a tool to generate revenue for the HEI. Recruitment and staff support are used as means of improving the capacity of the HEI, and increasing the staff knowhow, which is used by HEIs to fulfill their object (teaching, research, EE). In addition to skills related to teaching and research, staff knowhow includes EE-relevant skillsets such as ICC. Finally, the physical features such as equipment, buildings and location of HEIs can be used as tools to e.g. improve learning results and attract students. Learning models may be used in marketing and they are also used to fulfill the teaching object of HEIs. Finally, the results of the education and research in the HEI are linked to international rankings, the results of which HEIs can use as a pull factor. Exclusion from or low ranking, on the other hand, may be seen as a push factor by potential students, even if the de facto quality of the education is good.

Business entities' main tools are products and services. Without a product or a service to sell to customers, there is no profit. Strategy, networks and investors are used to gain funding for the development and sales of the product or service. Businesses are less reliant on state funding than HEIs; however, unlike HEIs, businesses are heavily reliant on their own profitability and external investors to start and keep functioning. Venues for funding include private

investors and state-governed entities like Business Finland. Available funding directs what kinds of business activities are conducted and shapes the products and services being sold. To sell the product or service, businesses use marketing tools and strategies as well as cooperation and partner networks. The use and form of these tools depends on the target audience. Finland Country Brand and embassies play a central role in marketing and legitimizing EE business activities abroad.

Finland as a political entity wields power over HEIs and businesses through legislation, policies and strategies, funding, official entities e.g. embassies, Finland Country Brand, as well as actions and policies that affect immigration and integration into the society. Funding is the ultimate tool that controls both HEIs and business entities, giving Finland as a political entity power over both; Finland can direct HEIs through funding models, and businesses through investment and legislation. For example, EE was only made possible through changes in legislation. Finland can also direct business activities through taxes and subsidies. Public entities Business Finland and Education Finland offer funding and networks for EE businesses, partially controlling what kinds of services and products are seen as viable and acceptable.

Finland Country Brand is used to legitimize EE and as a marketing tool; international recommendations and ranking such as OECD and PISA are used both as a tool of internal, HEI-directed discourse that legitimizes policies, as well as externally directed marketing as a part of the Finland Country Brand. Finland also uses EE itself as a tool to generate national revenue, to attract international talent and to create new employment opportunities.

The customers' financial means and choices give them power over EE actors through competition; the customer decides both whether they want to pay for EE products and services, and which ones they choose. To determine which and whose services to pay for, customers use a variety of tools such as intermediary agents, search tools, and materials such as ranking lists. EE businesses themselves may be used as means of accessing Finnish EE services. EE products and services themselves are tools the customers use to fulfil their object of increased human capital. However, customers' financial means also limit their options; they can only buy services and products within the limits of

their budget. This limitation makes EE inaccessible to those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

TABLE 9.   The Rules

Activity system	Rules
HEI	Legislation (also local laws and policies) National education policies HEI-specific strategies and policies
Business Entity	National legislation and policy Local laws and policies Profitability HEI policies Internal policies
Finland as a Political Entity	National legislation EU legislation Global agreements Bologna Process Policy Global institutions, e.g. OECD policy
Customer	Customer preferences, needs and norms

Both businesses and HEIs are governed first and foremost by national legislation. Their activity is also directed by Finnish national education policies and strategies, and entity-specific policies and strategies ranging from the content offered by the HEI to features such as brand strategy. Businesses are more strongly affected by foreign countries' local laws than HEIs, as businesses conduct more activities in target countries as well as Finland. When cooperating with HEIs, businesses are also beholden to HEI policy regarding e.g. degree rules. Finally, businesses follow their own individual internal policies, which are usually based on perceived profitability, while HEIs' strategies and resources come from the state.

Customers are governed by their individual preferences, needs and norms. For example, cultural norms may affect how the students behave in classes and how the student perceives the EE service or product. Customers are also affected

by the rules and laws shared by the other systems, but the effect varies; for example, in order to get a degree, a student must reach the required number of ECTs regardless of whether the student is an EE customer or not.

Finland as a political entity and its constituents are governed by its own legislation and rule of law, EU legislation, global agreements and policies, current policies by the MOEC, and global institutions. Finland has strongly resisted the mainstream education reform policies. Nevertheless, the Finnish education system has been affected by international policies such as the Bologna Process. Policymakers are also able to use OECD recommendations, PISA results and the like as rules to give basis for new policies and pro-EE discourse. The rules concerning policy are subject to changes with elections, as different governments may have different perspectives on how HE and EE should be run.

Due to the contrasting roles of HEI leadership and HEI staff in the data sample, they are separated into two categories in Table 10. A similar division did not emerge inside EE business entities, possibly because whereas HEIs' main object[1] is research and education, EE businesses' object[1] is centered around EE activity. Business entities therefore would not necessarily attract staff that had reservations over education business.

TABLE 10.   The Division of Labor

Activity system	Division of Labor	
HEI	**HEI leadership**	**HEI staff**
	Decide strategy	Develop their professional and personal skills, gain new experiences.
	Decide how resources are allocated	
	Create and maintain policies and administrative processes	Staff attitudes towards EE are generally favorable but with considerations.
	Recruitment processes top-down	
	Maintain pro-EE discourse	Skills necessary for EE: languages, ICC, readiness to travel, IT skills, service design skills
	Marketing capitalizes on Finnish education and the quality thereof through networks and Finland Country Brand.	
		EE affects recruitment processes.

	Maintain critical EE discourse.
Business entity	Marketing capitalizes on Finnish education and the quality thereof through networks and Finland Country Brand.
	Networks loosely connected or isolated.
	EE startups partner mostly with public partners in Finland; public institutions govern private EE startups via funding and partnerships.
	Networks offer motivational and planning help, support, and promotion.
	Customers and the target audience for marketing are defined based on the service or product being sold.
	Local partners bring experience and knowledge, reputation and visibility, market information, and share some of the risks.
Finland as a national entity	Control the funding of HEIs, thereby controlling HEI policy despite autonomy.
	The role of the Finnish state has increased in EE 2010—2018 through partnerships and promotion.
	Infrastructure and support; funding.
Customer	Customer roles: • Customer • Stakeholder • Partner Alumni networks are as of yet undeveloped but nevertheless add value to HEIs. EE as a vehicle for increasing intellectual capital in developing regions and helping students develop their own societies. EE offers new opportunities to students Students' identities undergo development during studies in a new culture. The students' ICC skills are central in how the students adapt. Provide local contacts and knowhow

HEIs' increased autonomy has led to increasingly top-down decision-making processes and growing managerialism. HEI leadership make decisions on the strategy, the allotment of resources, administrative processes and recruitment. The leadership also maintain pro-EE discourse inside HEIs. The leadership should ideally support the staff in EE activities, because the staff execute EE processes in HEIs, e.g. as teachers, and EE activities constitute a set of additional duties to the staffs' everyday work. The staff participating in EE face additional needs such as language, ICC and service design skill requirements, and readiness to travel. As a result, EE activities may also affect recruitment policies in HEIs. Staff motivations for joining EE activities vary from professional

and personal development to ethical reasons. The staff maintain critical as well as pro-EE discourse; staff attitudes towards EE are generally favorable but with considerations. Staff participation in the decision-making and planning processes regarding EE was recommended in several samples; see chapter 5.1 for more information on recommendations.

Education businesses and HEIs both capitalize on Finnish education and its quality. The official marketing tool is the Finland Country Brand. Education businesses are governed widely by public institutions through cooperation partnerships. Business networks offer support in planning, motivation and promotion, but networks in Finnish EE are as of yet loosely connected or even isolated, with space for more cooperation. From local (foreign) partners, businesses gain experience and market knowledge, reputation and visibility; foreign partners can also share some of the risks. Businesses define their target market and marketing strategies based on the audience and the product or service.

The role of the Finnish state has increased in EE through partnerships and promotion. EE policy itself is controlled by state actors, chiefly, the MOEC, which governs HEIs via funding, and the parliament, which affects legislation. The ministry's strategies and policies are formed by politicians and officials; however, although different governments may emphasize different facets of education and business support, Finland aims to offer a stable environment, and overall goals in e.g. EE are not likely to change radically between governments. Both businesses and HEIs alike may lobby the government to take actions regarding EE, but the final choices lie with officials.

Customers have three identifiable roles: end customer, stakeholder, and partner. End customers, or paying students, use EE products and services as vehicles for increasing their intellectual capital. This also affects their regions of origin, in two ways: on the other hand, these students can further develop their societies, and increase the overall intellectual capital in a region. On the other hand, EE as a for-profit activity may end up perpetuating inequality, as commercial education is only available to those with financial means as well as requisite skills. For example, EE service providers may require the customers attain a certain level of skill or credentials before enrolment. EE offers new opportunities to students, and the students' identities change through

participation in EE activities. ICC skills are central to students' adaptation to Finland. End customer alumni networks are undeveloped but add value to HEIs and could be further developed.

3.3 Summary

This chapter has introduced the basic parts of EE activity systems through CHAT: HEIs, Businesses, Finland as a political entity, and customers based on the results from the synthesis. Mediating tools and contradictions are presented in chapter 5.1; the focus of this chapter is to contextualize the basic structure of Finnish EE. The preliminary model is depicted in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3.   Preliminary Model of the Dynamics in Finnish EE.
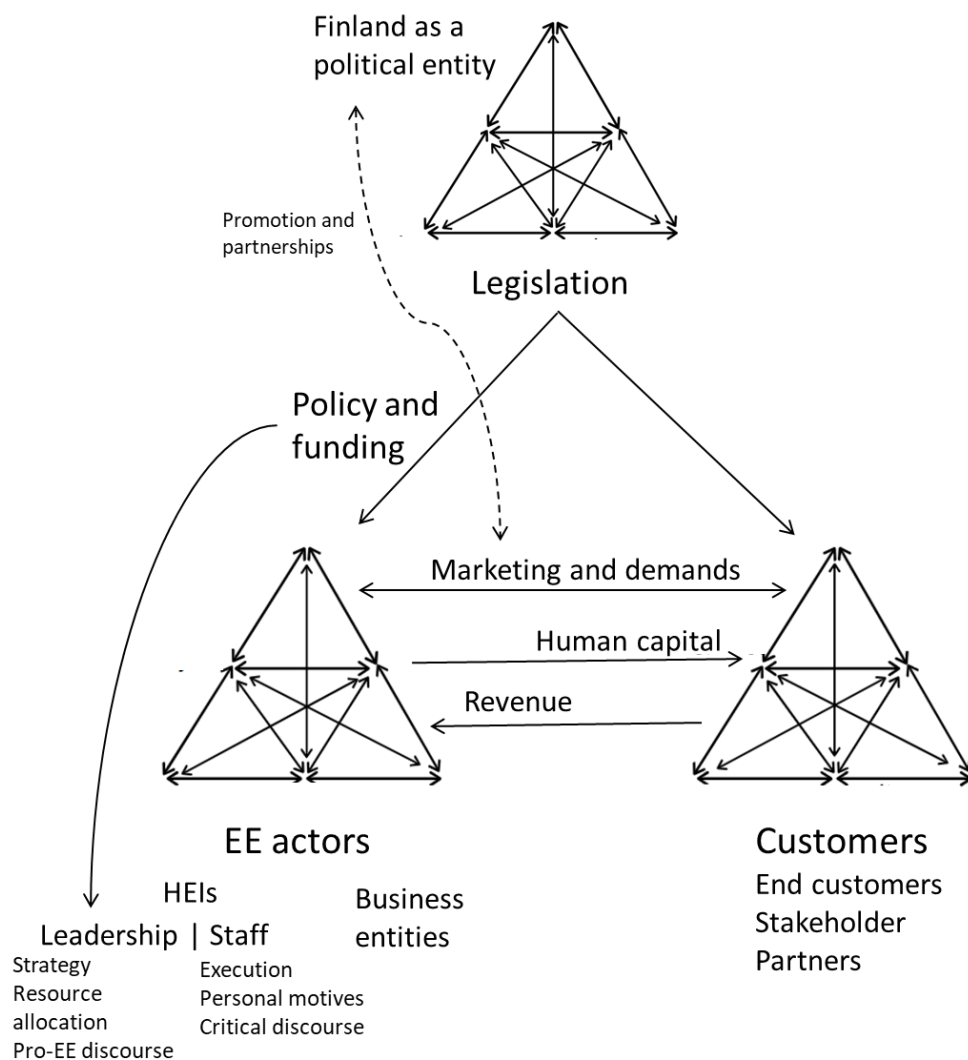
First, the EE activity system network is hierarchical. Finland as a political entity governs EE actors as well as customers through legislation. Education policy and funding models give Finland control over HEI leadership despite HEIs' increased autonomy; the same autonomy has led to increased responsibility on HEI leadership, which in turns has made HEIs' decision-making processes more hierarchical. This has led to a division within HEIs: the leadership are firmly pro-EE, whereas the staff is more ambivalent about it. The staff execute the strategy given by HEIs, but personal views on EE vary, and the staff's discourse on EE is more critical. Customers are also beholden to Finnish legislation when applicable, e.g. students entering degree programs in Finnish HEIs must follow the rules of these HEIs as well as Finnish legislation.

Second, EE marketing relies on the reputation of Finnish education and its quality. The Finland Country Brand is an official marketing tool; in addition, businesses and HEIs have their own marketing and branding materials. Learning models, HEI infrastructure, digitalized services, and even staff can be used as means of marketing EE.

Third, customers choose EE providers based on their own demands; customers can gain human capital in exchange for revenue, but this requires the customer has the means to afford it, and possibly requisite skills. Stakeholders and partners' relationships with EE actors are varied; in some cases, the revenue-capital relationship may even be inversed, as local partner companies provide Finnish EE businesses with local knowhow.

4 THE ANALYSIS, PART II — CASE STUDY

The aim of this thesis is to create a general CHAT model of Finnish EE before the Covid-19 epidemic by combining a qualitative research synthesis with a case study. EE is a complex, multifaceted and -voiced issue, which makes CHAT a suitable framework for it. By combining a case study with the QRS, the thesis combines specific micro-level examples with macro-level synthesized results which complement each other and offer a more comprehensive overview of the phenomenon than could be reached with just the one or the other method. The research aims to be descriptive rather than prescriptive; EE is an existing phenomenon, and in order to understand it, it should be researched as such. Therefore, this research does not offer a stance on the ethical debates around EE or the commercialization of education.

4.1 Qualitative Research and Case Studies

Qualitative research aims at creating deeper understanding of phenomena through interpretation rather than establishing causality or generalizability. Reality is seen as subjective and context—bound, and the researcher's point of view affects the interpretation of the data. This does not mean qualitative research is not rigorous or scientific; on the contrary, qualitative research aims to establish credibility through understanding that research is inherently subjective despite rigor and transparency in reporting. (Creswell 1994, 5—7; Alasuutari 2011) For example, the concept of *education export* conjures up various interpretations and opinions depending on the speaker and the listener. EE obviously exists as phenomenon, but what is it and what values it represents depend on the speaker and listener involved.

In a case study, the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon and collects a variety of data (Creswell 1994, 12). The case is described using various

methods and data, with the aim of understanding, through understanding the case, the wider phenomenon the case represents. (Laine, Bamberg & Jokinen 2007)

Data and method triangulation (Laine et al 2007, 23—31) are used to build a comprehensive picture of Finnish EE. The research paper combines a case study with a qualitative research synthesis in CHAT in order to establish a descriptive picture of Finnish EE before the Covid-19 epidemic in 2020. EE is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. CHAT, as an inherently multi-voiced concept, provides a functional and pragmatic framework for the research.

4.2 Methodology

In a case study, the researcher should identify a case or cases that represent the phenomenon being researched. Typical cases can be identified based on previous knowledge about the phenomenon. (Laine et al 2007, 27—33.) The cases chosen for this thesis consist of five interviews concerning six activity systems in Finnish EE: an academic university, a UAS, and three different types of EE companies. The interviewees were chosen using the snowball method: each interviewee recommended a person to interview next. The interviewees were a representative of an urban academic university and a linked EE company, represented by the same person; a student coordinator in an urban UAS; an international strategy and sales director in the same UAS, and two EE companies that cooperate with a UAS. The research was initially planned to include more interviewees, but due to the Covid-19 epidemic threatening the EE field as a whole, the research plan had to be redrawn. The cases represent typical actors in Finnish EE, but the perspectives of Finnish Immigration Service, politicians, and pure education technology product companies such as ThingLink, as well as EE support networks like Education Finland are missing from the research. The HEIs in the sample are typical urban HEIs; however, rural and special HEIs such as those focused on performing arts are not represented. The result is that certain perspectives are not represented in the study, and the focus of this study is limited to HEIs and companies working directly with them.

The data for the case studies was gathered using semi-structured thematic expert interviews, where the interviewer follows a set plan but asks open-ended

questions centered around a specific theme — the entity they represent from the perspective of CHAT — from each separate interviewee. This way each participant gives responses to the central questions, but there is a possibility to gain more information on something the interviewee did not consider beforehand. Interviewing is a flexible method of data collection, which imposes less demands on the informant than a written questionnaire. A semi-structured thematic interview allows flexibility in the discussion. Focusing on different topics related to the central theme may be necessary depending on the interviewee. (Puusa 2020.)

The interviewer filled a CHAT model during the interview based on the interviewees' answers. A linguistically accurate transcription or discourse analysis is unnecessary for the purpose of this study, so the interviews were not recorded. The cases are used to give more detailed information of the workings of various activity systems in the field of Finnish EE. Each interview was based on the CHAT model and yielded data for each part. Different actors in EE have different perspectives on the phenomenon, and there was a need to let the interviewee focus more on the topics they found important within EE; e.g. an UAS study program coordinator spoke more about the community than the UAS marketing executive. The interviewees represent two purely business-oriented companies in EE, a university-linked EE company, an international student coordinator in a Finnish university of applied science, and an EE sales director in the same university of applied science. The interviewees were chosen based on two factors: people representing different types of organizations, and snowball sampling, in which a previous interviewee recommends another. The study was initially going to include more cases, but the Covid-19 epidemic that began at the time wrecked these plans, as institutions and companies had to suddenly adjust to the quarantines and cessation of international activities and travel. However, the cases gathered represent common types of relevant service providers in Finnish EE: HEIs and three different types of EE businesses.

The data from the interviews is complemented with data from the HE and company websites, Business Finland's website, and company listings.

4.2.1 Ethical and Epistemological Stance

The researcher should strive for credibility and objectivity. However, the researcher always has a point of view, and can only strive to represent phenomena as accurately as possible, while still falling short of the factual reality. The researcher should strive for accuracy even when generalizability is not possible. In qualitative research, especially one concerning people, the researcher must walk a tightrope between accuracy and respect. In qualitative studies, the research subjects' consent and anonymity must be respected.

The interviewees' personal information and the specific institutions and companies they represent are unimportant details for the purposes of this research, and the cases are presented anonymously. However, as Finland is a small country with a limited number of educational institutions and people in the field of EE, there is a chance the cases and/or interviewees may be recognizable to those familiar with the field, despite them being unnamed in this paper. Each interviewee consented to the interview and was informed of its purpose. The interviews were not recorded, as the study does not require discursive data such as prosodic features of the interviewees. This choice was made in part to encourage the interviewees to speak more freely; there have been cases of EE researchers being denied the use of recorded data due to sensitive information featured in it (e.g. Schatz 2016) and the choice not to record the interviews meant that none of the interviewees would have to worry about their choice of words.

Qualitative Research Synthesis (see Part I) is based on published research, and in order to publish a legitimate work of research, the original researchers must consider the consent of the subject of their research. Thus, ethical concerns related to the consent of research subjects have already been solved by the original researcher. (Major & Savin-Baden p.21.) The qualitative synthesist must ascertain that they do not misrepresent the research or the opinions of the original authors.

No research method or orientation leads to completely objective truths, because the choice of research orientation and method automatically rule out potential data. When the data is based on people, human factors offer an avenue for additional error, as people respond to the researcher from their own subjective viewpoints. People may not even be aware of their own motives and biases.

(Alasuutari 2011, 73.) In a sample perspective, qualitative research data is seen as partial samples of reality instead of truthful, factual reflections, and therefore the question of absolute truthfulness is irrelevant. (Alasuutari 2011, 88.)

4.2.2 The Reliability of the Interviews

Expert interviews are conducted with experts on a limited topic or phenomenon, and the expert is generally not interchangeable with another person. Factually incorrect answers are a possibility in expert interviews, as the interview responses are the result of interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee as well as the subjective perspectives of all participants. (Alastalo & Åkerman 2010, 312—313. 316; Puusa & Juuti 2020.)

Therefore, the researcher is faced with the question of informant trustworthiness. Is the information given by the informant trustworthy? The researcher can approach the interview from a mechanistic or a humanistic perspective, or a combination of the two. The samples can be looked at as a source of indirect, indicative information, in which case the researcher's position is more mechanistic; the researcher hopes to avoid affecting informant reactions and narratives with questions or background information. A more humanist alternative relies on building rapport with the informant, thereby building trust, with the expectation that if the informants trust the researcher, they are more likely to give an accurate account of the phenomenon. The mechanistic and humanist viewpoints are not contradictory, and they can be employed simultaneously. Both viewpoints have their strengths and weaknesses, but neither offers a perfect solution. Additionally, the interview data can be compared to other relevant sources. (Alasuutari 2011, 71—73.)

Each interviewee in this research paper represents not only him- or herself but the entity they are a member of. This gives each interviewee an interest to give a favourable image of the entity they represent, as well as protect the interests and trade secrets of each entity. Crossing the wall of professionalism in a research situation may be challenging (Alastalo & Åkerman 2010, 321). In addition, the interviewees' responses are based on their subjective viewpoints of the situation, and represent their individual perspectives, and the results are

interpreted by the researcher based on the researcher's subjective understanding (Puusa 2020, 103—105).

However, there are factors which increase the reliability of the interview results: first, the researcher has worked in the EE sector, which increases rapport with the interviewees, and the interviewees felt comfortable enough to mention challenges in their operations. Second, the interview data can be compared to other sources such as legislation and strategy documents, as well as the QRS results. Most importantly, the epistemological stance in this case study is the sample perspective as outlined by Alasuutari (2011): the informants' subjective viewpoints offer samples of the phenomenon. As the purpose of this research is to build a general model of the phenomenon instead of focusing on specific details or events, combining interview and document data with the QRS data gives a sufficiently accurate understanding of Finnish EE as an activity system.

4.3 The Results

The results of the case study are introduced in this chapter. A CHAT chart was drawn for each interviewed entity. Finally, the cases are presented as networked activity systems. The cases are presented anonymously, with details such as exact statistics obscured.

4.3.1 Joint EE: Academic University and Uni-EE Ltd.

The university, known here as **University Z**, is involved in various internationalization and TNE efforts, and is a member of several international university networks. However, until 2020, its EE activities were outsourced to a company, here known as **Uni-EE Ltd**., which operated as a consortium of several academic universities in Finland. During the writing process of this thesis, this University-Linked Company was disbanded due to Covid-19. However, it is included in the paper as an example of a corporate organization built up by public HEIs, as it is not the only university-linked EE-related company in Finland, and it existed when the research on the topic was underway. At the moment, most universities and UAS offer degree programs and other EE services independently, but a few similar joint HEI-owned consortiums still exist.

The company was jointly owned by a consortium of several universities. It acted as an in-between with the customer and the university providing services. In the partnership, the university handles study-related matters such as curriculum and syllabus planning and creation, teaching and grading, granting degrees, et cetera, while the company handled EE-related practical and legal matters, productization support, marketing, budgeting, and so on. The university has the legal right to grant degrees, whereas the company did not.

Notably, the university and Uni-EE Ltd. have a narrower definition for EE than the mainstream understanding, as they do not consider tuition-paying degree programs aimed at individual students as EE. Their concept of EE is "*the export of academic knowhow*" (interviewee) via paid services and products ranging from courses and professional development programs to study visits offered to institutions like foundations, ministries and corporations, i.e. groups of students, not individuals. These projects could be offshore or local; students could be given training in their home countries, in Finland, or even both as necessary. This narrow definition of EE seems to be still effective in University Z, but not necessarily in other HEIs in Finland.

TABLE 11.   University Z and Uni-EE Ltd. as parts of an activity system

Activity system	University Z	University—Linked Company "Uni-EE Ltd."
Subject	University	University EE Ltd.
Tools	Strategy, multidisciplinarity, research projects, degree programmes, digitalization, staff, resources	Universities, resources, key partners, business knowhow, law knowhow, budgeting, productization
Object	Research Education Development	EE business activities Cooperation and coordination
Object[2] (result of following object)	Pull factors Internationalization	Increased academic work Cooperation
Rules	University Act 2009/558 Degree rule MOEC	Business entity University Act 2009/558

		Degree rules are not bent for customers
		Different university partners have different rules
Community	MOEC University EE Ltd. Staff Students Cooperation partners Global organizations	University partners/owners Customers Coordinators Cooperation partners
Division of Labor	Teaching Research Development aid cooperation Ownership of University EE Ltd. Representation on the board of University EE Ltd. Funding - MOEC and other sources	Business knowhow • marketing • legal contracts • productization Coordination Negotiation Budgeting
Result	EE (narrow)	EE (narrow)

FIGURE 4. University Z and University EE Ltd. as networked activity systems
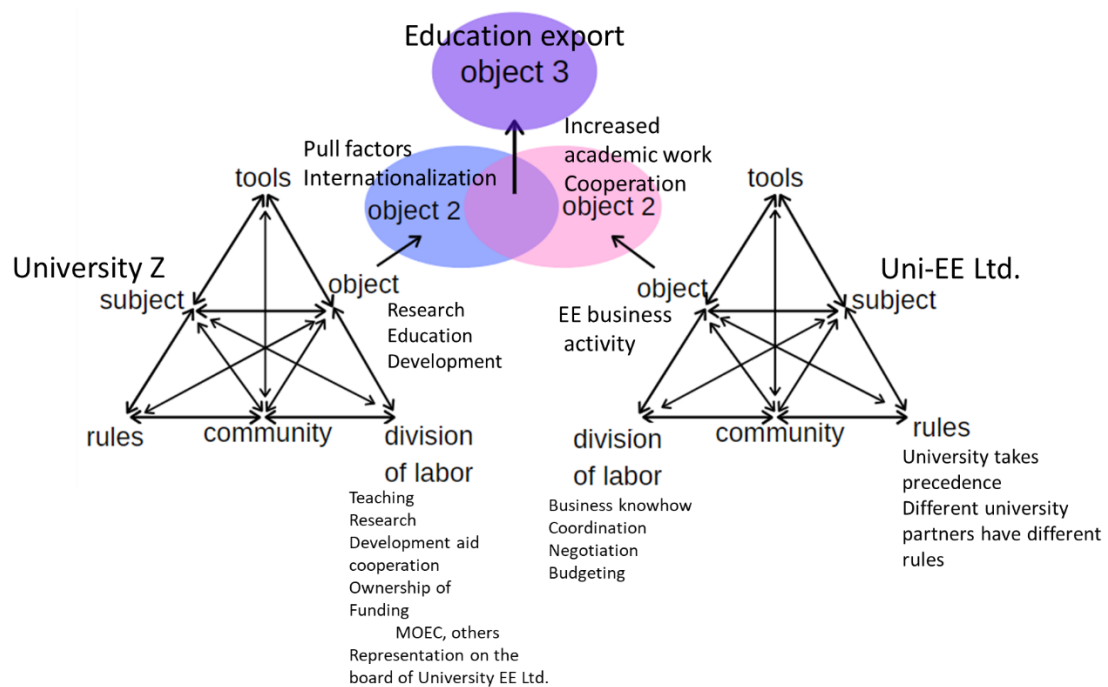
The university partially owns the company, and therefore has a representative on the board of the Uni-EE Ltd. The goal of Uni-EE Ltd was to increase academic work while taking off the strain of the business side of EE from universities. Universities' core activity has traditionally not included business in Finland, and students tend to choose universities based on the degree programs offered as well as the location of the university. For example, university branding is relatively new, and often controversial (Paasi 2020). Universities could focus on their core activities and externalize business activities such as budgeting, marketing, legal services, negotiation and coordination to Uni-EE Ltd. Customers would contact the company, which would then offer projects to faculties inside the university, whose staff create the final product, e.g. a course or a study visit in cooperation with the company. If the project was large, it could also be divided between the different universities that owned the company, which would require additional coordination as different universities follow their own rules and ways of doing things, within legal limits. Uni-EE Ltd. would also help universities with productization of services. The system was described as "smooth" by the interviewee. Interestingly, this was the only case that did not suffer from problems with the Finnish Immigration Service; according to the interviewee, their process and knowhow minimized issues in getting the student groups into Finland.

This way, the university fulfils its object[1], research, education and development, and the company its object[1], EE business activity. The interaction of these two systems results in increased internationalization and pull factors for the university, and increased academic work and cooperation for Uni-EE Ltd. Pull factors are features that entice customers abroad to approach Uni-EE Ltd. and the university for projects; for example, high-quality research, which can be used in marketing and productizing Finnish EE. Increased academic work, the object[2] of Uni-EE Ltd., refers to EE increasing the workload in the university, creating work and potentially increased employment opportunities. The jointly constructed object[3] is EE.

The situation after Uni-EE Ltd. was disbanded is that the activities of Uni-EE Ltd. return to the universities themselves. How it affects universities' operations, personnel needs and projects remains to be seen, but it is likely each university needs to acquire the business knowhow, and handle preliminary negotiations by themselves.

4.3.2 The University of Applied Science

UAS have a longer experience with commercial education that universities, and while UAS face certain challenges in attracting customer interest, they are an attractive choice for international students due to high employability rates after graduation. The challenges faced by UAS in attracting students are related to accreditation and exclusion from certain global rankings; abroad, the status and concept of UAS may be unclear to potential students, and being included in official listings in target countries is essential. Otherwise potential students and customers expect the service, or the service provider to be fake. Finnish academic universities avoid this issue, as they are usually included in official lists and rankings, and the concept of an academic university is known worldwide.

The EE definition employed by the UAS is fairly wide. EE is seen as societally important; through EE, knowhow and intellectual capital are spread to other countries, but Finland also benefits in the form of those students who decide to stay and find employment in the Finnish job market. The UAS sees EE as a service business. It covers all types of education services that the customers pay for, including PD courses, degree programs, study visits, visits to various institutions, offshore courses, and so on, and the UAS organizes it in the form of service packages. The definition excludes education services that are even partially publicly funded; EE "must pay for its own costs" (interviewee).

The legislation that set a requirement to charge tuition caused surprising issues in the UAS. General degree programs with tuition fees and scholarships do not bring in enough revenue, but they compete with the EE service packages offered by the same UAS, and cause confusion among students as students in general degree programs pay less tuition than those who opt for the EE service.

In addition to EE activities, the UAS has various international cooperation partners around the world, and offers both government-subsidized professional training as well as paid courses to Finnish customers, such as trade unions and companies. As one of the duties of UAS is regional development, the UAS has a lot of experience with cooperation with various institutions, including other HEIs, secondary-level education providers, and even universities. The UAS has several regional branch campuses in Finland, giving it a wide reach for regional cooperation.

As the UAS emphasizes digitalization and has created flexible processes for the purposes of EE, the EE operations of the UAS were not halted due to the epidemic. Digitalized services have been necessary for the UAS's service model due to challenges with the Finnish Immigration Services, not only the Covid-19 pandemic. This emphasis on digitalization seems to have had a future-proofing effect on the operations of the UAS.

Two UAS employees were interviewed: a student-facing coordinator, and a sales director in charge of selling the UAS degree programs abroad. Combining their perspectives gives insight into perspectives from two viewpoints: commercial and HEI staff.

TABLE 12. Table 1 The UAS as an activity system

Activity system	University of Applied Science
Subject	University of Applied Science X
Tools	Learning materials, resources, external partnerships, degree programs, learning models, digitalization, knowhow, strategy, accreditation (esp. local); marketing and sales strategy and skills
Object	Strategy, multidisciplinarity Service image and content
Rules	University of Applied Science Act 2014/932 Degree rule MOEC Local laws
Division of Labor	UAS: Teaching Students: study + tuition Regional development Practical research Cooperation partners in EE • EE sales for UAS (B2B) • International partners • MOEC: PD courses et cetera funded by MOEC • Other HEIs Funding

	MOEC, others
Result	Education, educated workers, regional development research applications, EE

The object[1] of the UAS is its strategy, which contains the core of the values and activities. According to the strategy, the aim is to be a leading UAS in Finland, with multidisciplinarity as a central value. However, in the words of the sales director, students do not choose the UAS only due to its quality and teaching substance. The customers of EE "buy something other than what the school is selling – a better life, which not all HEIs understand" (interviewee, paraphrased). Therefore the object[1] also contains the image of the service in addition to its content. This is consistent with the contradictions presented in chapter ##. The object[2] of the UAS will be presented later, in conjunction with the two EE businesses.

Different UAS have different strategies for conducting EE. UAS X, consistent with the education-as-a-service, has taken an approach that places heavy emphasis on integrating the students, and offers services such as help with finding housing. One of the interviewees from the UAS highlighted that in EE activities the UAS explicitly does not market itself to the agent; instead, selling relies on personal pledge and trust, which leads to the agent vouching for the EE provider. This means there is a need for trustworthy networks in target countries.

Productizing and selling education has been less challenging to the UAS than some other HEIs. The UAS has a long history of offering commercial education services. Despite this, EE has brought about certain challenges and highlights the staff-administration gap. According to one of the interviewees, the staff felt apprehensive of EE when the UAS started bringing in student customers to paid degree programs. Their fears were centered around cultural differences, ethical concerns, and the effect of tuition on teaching. This apprehension lessened as the staff started working with the EE students. The staff also had fears concerning student integration and motivation; however, at the time of the interview the worries had begun to dissipate, and the staff felt that the paying foreign students were more motivated than Finns.

Another challenge factor is coordination. As EE in the UAS incorporates several different actors — the UAS, an EE company, local agents, and the Finnish

Immigration Services — communication gaps happen. Differences in tuition costs between programs and scholarships cause confusion, and communicative as well as cultural differences lead to misunderstandings and confusion.

4.3.3 Companies: Cooperation with Businesses and Customers

There are many different types of EE companies in Finland. The cases in this study are both small but growing education businesses with different strategies and products. The two companies have synergy in their operations, and at times, collaborate on projects. Company A sells Finnish EE products to partner businesses abroad and cooperates with education institutions, but does not teach courses or classes; instead, it acts as a coordinator between the customers, HEIs and private companies that handle the practical execution of projects. Company B is a learning service solution company, which also serves the end customers by offering courses taught by external teachers. Company B is strongly focused on digitalization and e-learning, and its customers include UAS, international EE sales organizations, and customers in need of professional development courses.

Partners are important for companies; more so than for HEIs. Both companies interviewed externalize all functions that can be, from marketing and bookkeeping to the final delivery of EE products. This makes them versatile but also vulnerable to communication gaps, and increases the need for coordination between various stakeholders.

TABLE 13. Companies A and B as activity systems

Activity system	Company A	Company B
Subject	Company A	Company B
Tools	Key partners, materials, UAS, Financial and Law knowhow, externals, allocations, business knowhow	Resources, Key partners, UAS, externals, Learning solutions, digitalization, business and technology knowhow
Object	Profit Business to business	Profit

	Exporting owners' knowhow	Solutions for learning and development
Rules	Owners make the decisions Purely corporate Sales Legislation	Purely business entity Sales Legislation: UAS, Migri Mother company
Community	Owners Strategic partners Companies (technology) HEI partners Customers (B2B) (FinPro, Education Finland) (MOEC)	UAS EE Sales Organizations (e.g. agents) Mother company Partners (e.g. city) Customers (B2B) (FinPro, Education Finland) (End customer)
Division of Labor	Strategy for UAS Partners —> depends on the project (programmes, courses, workshops, visits, customer info to UAS, market analysis, pathway studies, consultancy)	EE < 50%/a Training, courses Workplace training Training individuals' learning capabilities and improving Finnish competitiveness Resources to UAS Mother company: resources
Result	Education export, education solution sales, strategy	Education export, education business

Company A is owned by a group of UAS, and it exports its owners' knowhow abroad. The owner UAS set the rules for the company. As a business, its main purpose is to make a profit by selling education services and solutions such as consultancy, training, and various programs and courses; however, the company targets exclusively other businesses, not individual customers. The company occupies a similar role as Uni-EE Ltd.; it coordinates between customer organizations and HEIs according to the needs of each project, manages business and legal knowhow, and functions as an in-between with the UAS and EE clients. Its network is large and includes various stakeholders ranging from its owners and strategic partners to various companies.

Company B is an independently functioning subsidiary under a large education-focused parent company, and offers training, courses and workplace training as well as digitalized services. Both Company B and its parent company

are private business entities. The strategic goal of Company B is to develop individuals' capacity for learning and development and increase the competitiveness of Finland. Currently, EE is not the main source of revenue for the company, but its goal is that EE activities should grow to cover over 50% of its yearly revenue. Company B specializes in digitalization and offers resources to UAS' EE activities, and offshore as well as transnational training and EE services to students.

Unlike company A, Company B handles paying end customers, the students themselves, but its services are sold business-to-business, not to individual customers. EE agencies abroad sell the service or the product to the final customers, and Company B delivers the service to the customer, but payments are handled through the agent. Using local partners like EE agencies means Company B must support the local partners, but they also get local knowhow and contacts without needing to hire experts of every region they export to. However, this cooperation structure means that coordination is vital, and there is a risk of communication gaps. Intermediaries may misunderstand instructions. For example, local agents may try to sell the services to unsuitable end customers, e.g. students who lack requisite skills or credentials, or give erroneous information regarding immigration or other processes.

4.3.4 The UAS and the Companies Networked

Each activity system features an object[2] and an object[3]: EE is shared by all three activity systems. The interactions between the UAS and each company generate two sets of outcomes, as shown in Table 14.

TABLE 14. Object[2] and Object[3] of the UAS and companies A and B

	UAS	Company A	Company B
Object[2] (result of following object)	Education Workers Development	Education export Services and solutions	Education business
Object[3] (Joint result)	**+**	Strategy Projects	Training, courses Improving EE customers' capabilities

(UAS + Company)		Sales	Offer resources to UAS
		EE	

The activity system network between the UAS and the companies is depicted in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5.   UAS and companies A and B as networked activity systems
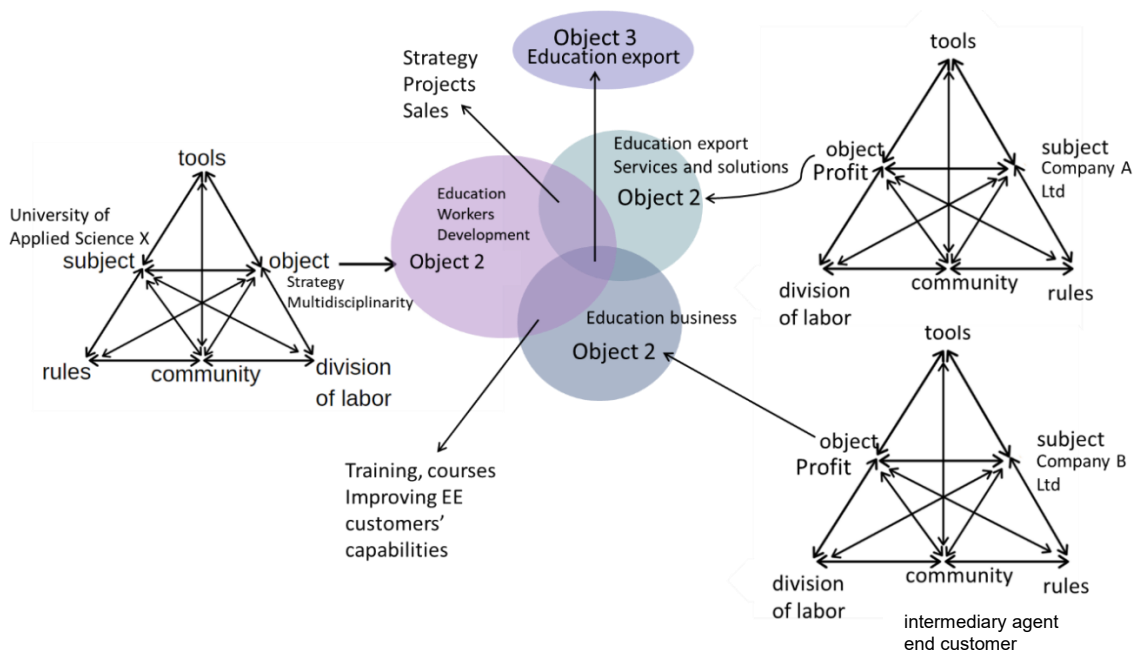
The result of the activity in the UAS produces educated workers and regional development. Interaction between the UAS and Company A results in EE projects, strategy and sales, whereas interaction with Company B results in the delivery of the EE service package and improved capabilities for the EE customers. Both companies defer to the UAS regarding rules concerning degree programs.

4.4 Networked Cases in the EE activity system

The object[3], the jointly constructed object between all of the cases is EE. The networked activity systems all contribute to the field of Finnish EE despite the

differences in the conception of EE. With both types of HEIs, EE business activities were at least partially externalized; this externalization was heavier with the university than with the UAS. As UAS have a longer history of commercialized education, this difference is not surprising.

However, after 2020, business activities fall back to the universities that jointly owned Uni-EE Ltd.; whether some of these universities' EE activities are scaled back is not yet known. Company A and Uni-EE Ltd. occupy similar roles for their target HEIs, whereas Company B works with the end customers as well, although the business relationship is conducted through an intermediary agent.

FIGURE 6. The cases as networked activity systems sharing the object[3]
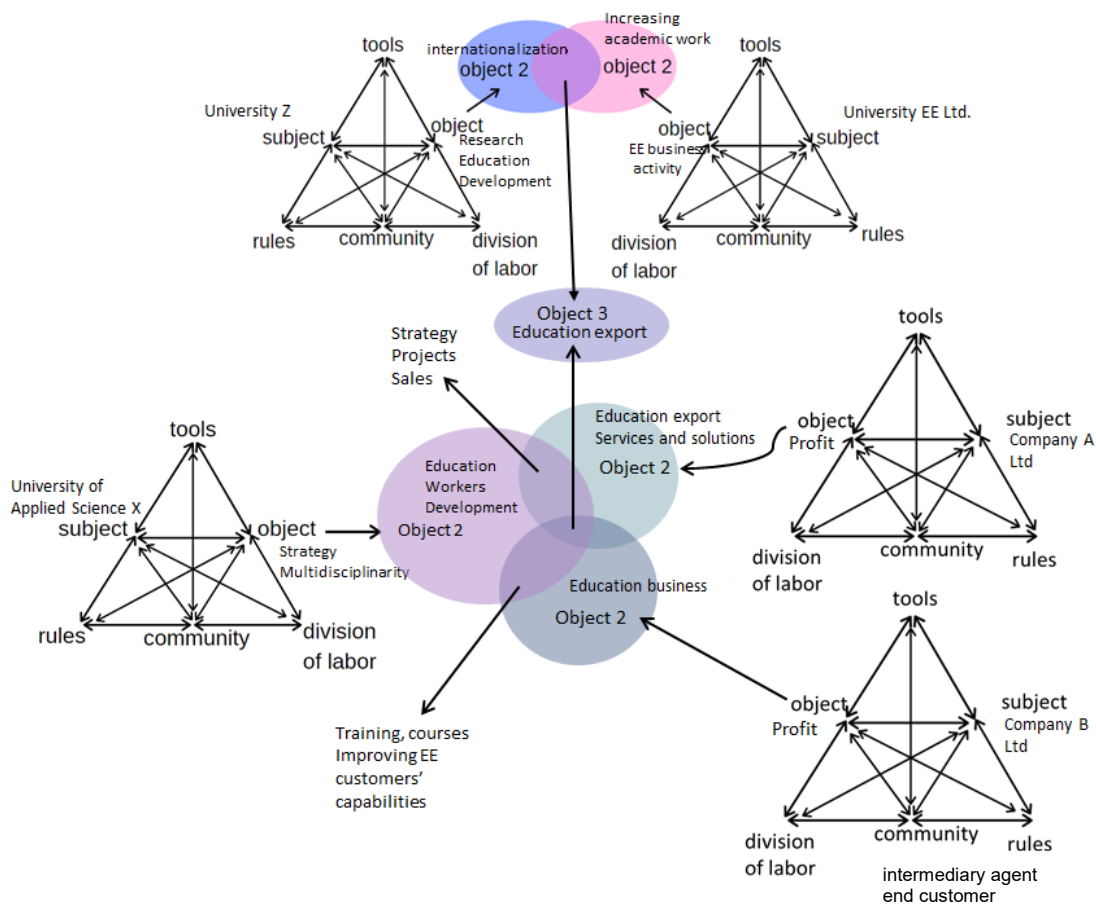
The university, Uni-EE Ltd., and both companies face or faced challenges due to the pandemic, but with the exception of Uni-EE Ltd., they survived 2020. The pandemic is not the only challenge faced by the cases, although it is the most urgent one.

Structural challenges identified by the participants include issues with the Finnish Immigration Service, lack of coordination and cooperation in the field of EE in Finland, a gap between academia and business and the gaps between HEI staff and those driving EE policies. These contradictions are consistent with the ones identified in chapter 5.1.1. The contradictions identified in the case study are explained in chapter 5.1.1.

5 EDUCATION EXPORT AS A NETWORK OF ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

This chapter dives into the contradictions and mediating tools in EE. By analyzing the contradictions that occur in EE, as well as mediating tools to alleviate these tensions and dilemmas, the results of the literature review and the case study are combined to gain a holistic overview of Finnish EE. The content in this chapter is based on the case interviews and the research synthesis (Table 3).

5.1 Structural Challenges: Contradictions and Mediation

5.1.1 Contradictions

In the words of Engeström, "recurring dilemmas may be read as manifestations of an evolving systemic contradiction in the activity they stem from" (Engeström 2016, 5). The conflicts and tensions listed in Table 15 are found in both research samples (see Table 3 in chapter 3.2, and chapter 4.3) and synthesized under recurring themes related to HEIs, business entities Finland as a political entity, customers, and general, which includes themes that were prominent in several contexts.

TABLE 15. Contradictions (continued from chapters 3.2 and 4.3)

Subject	Contradictions
General	**EE is an unclear concept.** • The wide range of products and services available makes Finnish EE hard to define. **Market and academic premises** • Ethical challenges • Education as a commodity to be sold vs. The right to education

	▪ National agenda for EE vs. academic agenda of free and accessible education • Standardization and context-sensitivity • Quality and International rankings • "Finnish education" and "global education" **Lack of cooperation** • Finnish actors are competing against the world and each other • Finland is small, which makes profitability difficult • EE networks and network activities not as impactful as they could be

HEI	**HEI autonomy**
	• Managerialism
	• Staff-leadership gap in HEIs
	   ▪ Top-down decision-making
	   ▪ Lack of staff agency
	   ▪ Staff may lack skills needed for EE activities, as well as the motivation to acquire them
	• Discourse gaps
	   ▪ Worry discourse
	• Communication gaps
	• Students as customers
	Cost and Investment in EE
	• EE is supposed to increase revenue, but may increase costs instead.

Business Entity	**Education and Commodification** • It is not possible to standardize products and procedures for all markets. • Differences between HEIs and businesses' premises may cause conflicts. • What is "Finnish education"? **Selling Finnish Education** • "PISA-winning Finnish education" despite falling PISA results; PISA is focused on comprehensive education, marketing focused on HEIs • External threats, knowhow
Finland as a political entity	**Integration and pull factors** • Language and culture gaps. • Discrimination in the work life. • Bureaucracy and EE agenda conflict.
Customers	**Market and Academic premises** • Enrolment and the availability of education mainly based on the students' financial capacity

	▪ May increase societal inequality in customers' countries as a result. • Fear that precedence is given based on the capability to pay, which may affect HEI strategy and content. **Student vs EE actor expectations** • Students' and EE providers' priorities differ. • Students may prioritize international rankings and HEI prestige over education quality. • Paying students may expect face-to-face teaching, while HEIs try to benefit from increased digitalization. • Students may expect truly global viewpoints in the education, not just Finnish. **Cultural factors** • Integrating the foreign students to the HEI student community and Finnish society may be a challenge.

There are general systemic contradictions shared by several of the activity systems centred around EE. First, the wide range of products and services it covers and the lack of a clear common basis make Finnish EE challenging to define clearly, which makes it more difficult to create clear marketing plans and products for it. Different stakeholders understand the term in different ways, which has effectively turned it into a wide umbrella term for various kinds of commercial education activities aimed at foreign target customers. This vagueness of definition seems to be tied to the second central issue in EE: lack of cooperation.

According to both prior research and the interviewees, despite the existence of networks such as Education Finland, the field lacks cooperation and coordination. Finnish EE actors compete against global actors and amongst each other. Finland is a small country and does not have comparable capacity for EE as Anglophone countries do, so competition between Finnish EE operators is unnecessary, and hinders the sector as a whole as different stakeholders work individually to market and build their own individual networks in target countries, compete for students and projects, and build knowhow. One of the interviewees expressed hope for a "Finnish version of the British Council" which would gather EE operators into a unified front; according to several interviewees, Education Finland is "*too broad and not very efficient.*"

A central contradiction of EE itself is the primary conflict of use and exchange value (Engeström 2016, 6), which manifests as a tug-of-war between market and academic premises. From a market perspective, HE is a commodity that can be productized and sold, whereas traditional academic values consider education as a basic right. This inherent contradiction between premises may cause friction between HEIs and EE companies. For example, companies are able to adapt their operations in sudden crises much faster than HEIs; on the other hand, HEIs are institutions with many more duties and roles than companies.

Free and accessible HE has been the mainstream value and policy in Finland for decades, which conflicts with paid-for education, as tuition fees exclude students without financial means. EE has been a national policy for a decade, and making HE in Finland compatible with EE has been primarily a strategic policy rather than an organic ground-up development; the historic cuts to education budgets throughout the 2010s have made it necessary for HEIs to expand their funding venues, and legislative changes have been made to turn EE into a viable field.

Another central dilemma is the conflict between standardization and education. Products and services carry an expectation of homogeneity; each customer gets what they pay for. However, education is context sensitive, and as such, not standardizable due to varying legislation, policies and cultural contexts.

EE is marketed with the premise of vaguely and very widely defined high-quality Finnish education, but in practice the content must be adapted for the local context, transforming the original premise. The wideness of the concept of "Finnish education" is apparent from the way PISA results are used to market Finnish HE; PISA assesses 15-year-old students in comprehensive education, and in recent years, Finland's results in the assessment have fallen. In practice, quality in EE is situation- and context-dependent.

A main secondary contradiction is the conflict between HEIs' increased autonomy, and state funding. Top-down decision-making processes have created a gap between HEIs' leadership and staff, as well as gaps between strategy and implementation. EE policies are created by HEI leadership, but implemented by the staff. Staff members are especially affected by the tension between economic and academic values, which is also reflected in the discursive

gap between the staff and the leadership. Top-down decision-making also prevents engaging the full potential of the staff, and lead to issues as strategy and practical implementation diverge.

Resources are necessary at all levels of EE activity. There are differences in how EE and internationalization are understood at different levels of HEIs, and a lack of communication between those planning internationalization policies and those implementing them, which leads to issues such as lack of support, out-of-synch result indicators, and increasing unfulfilled needs for resources. EE increases the amount of load factors placed on the staff and increases skill requirements, which increases pressure to allocate resources into further staff development. Lack of staff agency and support in EE processes lower engagement and increase fatigue. EE-related skill needs may also affect HEIs' hiring policies. However, not all staff members are necessarily motivated to acquire EE-related skillsets such as service design and marketing. The staff enthusiastic to participate in EE have needs for further professional development, resources for creating and adapting study materials for international audiences, and administrative support for participating in EE activities such as sufficient scheduling, travel costs and proper accommodations.

Although EE is used as a means of generating revenue, it may lead to increased costs of operation. The dilemma is that EE and internationalization have operating and marketing costs, but resources are finite. Shifting the cost of resources to customers may momentarily lower enrolment, as happened in 2017 as the result of the introduction of tuition fees. The potential risk is that if an increase in costs results in a momentary dip in revenue, the pressure on the budget may necessitate cuts in other areas, which could lead to negative effects on the quality of education, lowering enrolment further. In addition, the need for revenue hands power to the student customers, especially those in degree programs, as they decide yearly whether to pay the tuition or not; one of the worries in HEIs has been that the need to entice students-as-customers has effects on teaching and policies in HEIs. According to a UAS representative, initial staff worries over paying students' effects on teaching dissipated fairly quickly, however. Finally, the requisite scholarship programs decrease the de facto amount of revenue. Despite the costs, one of the main arguments given for EE and internationalization policies are financial benefits and revenue.

There are two main contradictions related to Finland as a national entity: the conflict between the EE agenda and Immigration Services, and challenges related to integration. The former issue is a conflict between government policy and practice; government policy encourages EE, but Immigration Services discourage end customers as well as EE providers with slow visa processes. This affects the image of Finland as a destination for EE and prevents students from fulfilling their own goals. Negotiations with the Immigration Services extensive knowledge of the procedures and prior planning. Only one of the interviewees felt the process did not cause problems.

The latter dilemma concerns discrimination. The sample indicates that international students may face problems finding work and internships in Finland. There is a need for educated professionals and experts in Finland, and degree students in EE programs need to complete internships in order to graduate. Employment discrimination prevents objectives. In addition, international students may face problems when trying to integrate into the Finnish student body and Finnish society due to cultural and language differences.

Activity systems contain multiple perspectives, and networks even more so. Different actors in EE rely on different criteria when assessing EE. These different perspectives may contradict each other. For example, students choose EE services based on different factors than ones considered salient by HEIs and education businesses, i.e. students may prioritize prestige and rankings more than the actual quality offered by the education provider. This is an issue especially if a HEI is excluded from rankings and official lists, as sometimes happens to UAS. Similarly, digitalization is seen as a potential venue for EE in HEIs and companies, but paying students may expect face to face teaching — which increases the costs of EE, as sending teachers to other countries is expensive and time-consuming.

While external threats pose challenges and issues to EE operations, they are external to these activity systems. Cultural differences, communication issues, issues concerning bureaucracy abroad, financial risks et cetera may result in tensions and dilemmas developing within activity systems and push activity systems towards change.

5.1.2 Mediating tools

Mediating tools can be divided into two distinct categories: discourse and recommendations. They are attempts to address the contradictions and conflicts inside the system. Recommendations were given throughout the datasets, and they are centred around specific issues recognized by the authors of the sample in chapter 3.2. A summary of the results is given in Table 16.

Discourse is a complex concept with a range of context-dependent meanings. In this research, the term is used to refer to groups of dialogical utterances and statements in the domain of EE. (Sara Mills 2004.) Simply, "discourse" answers the question "*what is being said about EE by members in activity systems surrounding EE.*" Several papers in the research sample either directly study the discourses surrounding EE, or touch upon them, with the result that a large amount of result data was categorized under the category 'discourse' (see Table 4).

Discourse concerning EE can be divided into pro-EE discourse and EE-critical discourse. The gap between HEI staff and leadership is visible in the discourses they engage in; leadership focuses on promoting and normalizing EE; all actors in EE participate in pro-EE discourse, but especially HEI staff participate in EE-critical discourses as well. Discourse is one of the ways the inherent multi-voicedness of activity systems is made visible.

The function of pro-EE discourse is to normalise and justify EE practices and policies, and mitigate and explain the conflicts and contradictions within EE. From 2009 to 2017, the national discourse on international student recruitment has shifted from crisis and preparation rhetoric towards increasing opportunity rhetoric and increased commercialization. National crisis discourse was used as means of creating space for EE to grow, preparation rhetoric as justifications for policy changes, and opportunity rhetoric is used as a current justification. (Jokila, Kallo & Mikkilä-Erdmann 2019.)

Critical EE discourse is concerned with current issues and contradictions, as well as worries about EE and the future of Finnish education. Critical discourse has a similar but opposing mediating function as pro-EE discourse, as it allows participants to voice their concerns and suggest solutions, pushing EE towards expansive development. Critical discourses focus on the critique of

commodification of education; postcolonial perspectives; and worry discourses concerned with practical issues concerning EE. HEI staff were identified in the data samples as the main demographic engaging in worry discourse.

TABLE 16. Mediating Tools (continued from chapters 3.2 and 4.3).

Mediating Tools	
Discourse	**Recommendations**

Critical discourse
 	
• Voice concerns
• Suggest solutions
• **Arguments**
 ▪ Marketization and academia
 ▪ Postcolonial perspectives
 ▪ Ethical issues
 ▪ Worry discourses:
  ▪ Practical issues
 	
Pro-EE Discourse
 	
• Normalize EE
• Justify EE
• Mitigate and explain contradictions
• **Arguments**
 Economic
 ▪ Financial benefits.
 ▪ The need for new export sectors.
 ▪ The business and growth potential of EE.
 ▪ More professionals needed due to dwindling generations.
 Internationalization and demand
 ▪ Global demand.
  ○ Finnish education should be made available to foreign customers.
 ▪ Increased international and national cooperation and sharing.
 Development
	Practical
	
	• The service and its target audience should be clearly defined.
	 ▪ What degrees or certificates does the customer receive?
	 ▪ Other benefits, e.g. VISA?
	• Forms of support for EE in HEIs
	 ▪ Staff support
	 ▪ Student support
	 ▪ Processes and policies
	• Business
	 ▪ Marketing and study materials should be available in English and/or target language.
	 ▪ Sell the service the customer needs and wants.
	 ▪ HEI profiling and branding.
	 ▪ Maintain control over the core service to mitigate threats.
	 ▪ Being the first in a target market gives an edge.
	• Bureaucracy regarding certification and immigration should be fluid.
	• ICC
	Coordination and Cooperation
	• There should be more peer communication and cooperation.
	 ▪ Competition between Finnish actors is not sensible.

▪ EE as a method of intellectual transfer and development.
▪ Innovations.
Quality
▪ High-quality Finnish education
▪ Finnish EE fulfils recipients' needs for quality HE.
Other
▪ Fairness: other countries export education too.
▪ EE actors' justifications often based on policy rather than their own goals.
Discourse Shift
• Discourses evolve over time
• 2009-2017: shift from crisis to opportunity rhetoric
	• Education export programs could be further segmented to increase coordination.
	• The benefits of local partners and networks.
	• Partner networks need focus and development.
	Policy
	• EE needs a common definition.
	• There is a need for national discourse on the marketization of Finnish education.
	• EE needs a proper vision beyond economic gain.
	• More resources and investing needed at all levels.
	• Ethical guidelines should be followed in EE.
	Conflicting
	• Learning models should be systematized.
	  ▪ EE is context-sensitive
	• Digitalization is an opportunity to offer fee-based offshore and TNE.
	  ▪ Paying students may expect face-to-face teaching.

Pro-EE discourse includes economic rationales and justifications, internationalization and demand, development and quality discourses, and other justifications such as arguments of fairness. EE-critical discourse is focused on the market-academia contradiction, postcolonial critique on EE, other ethical issues, and worry discourses that include practical concerns.

Recommendations were found in several of the samples in the datasets as well as the interviews, and the content of the recommendations repeated throughout, which indicates that recommendations are potential mediating tools identified in response to specific contradictions. Recommendations are given by the authors of the original research papers, but they have been synthesized under the themes **practical recommendations**, **coordination and cooperation**,

policy needs, and **conflicting**. Whether recommendations are fulfilled or not is outside the scope of this research, but contradiction-recommendation pairs may be a fruitful topic for future research. A preliminary model is given in Figure 7 in Chapter 5.2.

Practical recommendations are given mainly to HEIs and EE businesses and highlight situational challenges and questions, such as the need to define the EE service and target market. Increased coordination and cooperation were called for in the majority of the samples and further underlined in the interviews. Policy recommendations highlight the status of EE as an externally set object, and viewpoints critical of EE, such as the calls for ethical guidelines and the need for national discourse on the marketization of Finnish education. Finally, research papers from different fields and perspectives offer conflicting recommendations, which highlight the presence of contradictions in EE due to the different premises of academia and the market. For example, from the point of view of marketing, systematizing and standardizing clear learning models and education services is sensible, but from educators' point of view, this is impossible due to the context-sensitive nature of education.

5.2 Finnish EE Modeled with CHAT

The aim of this thesis is to uncover the structures of EE and create a model of the state of the field in 2020 based on a literature synthesis and a case study. The situation depicted is based on the state of Finnish EE before the Covid-19 pandemic. The structure of the Finnish EE activity system network is depicted in Figure 7 along with its central contradictions and mediating tools.

EE as a field contains various different actors, here grouped into three networked activity systems: EE operators in the form of HEIs and EE businesses; EE customers, individuals who use the services offered by the former, and the institutions EE operators sell services to; and Finland as a political entity, which sets frameworks for both of the former systems.

Contradictions are shown in red, and mediating tools in green. The blue and purple circles represent the objects of each activity system, with the jointly constructed object[3], EE, in the center. The object[2]s are depicted as the

overlapping areas of each object, with the contents written outside the area for the sake of clarity.

FIGURE 7. The structure of the EE activity system network with contradictions and mediating tools
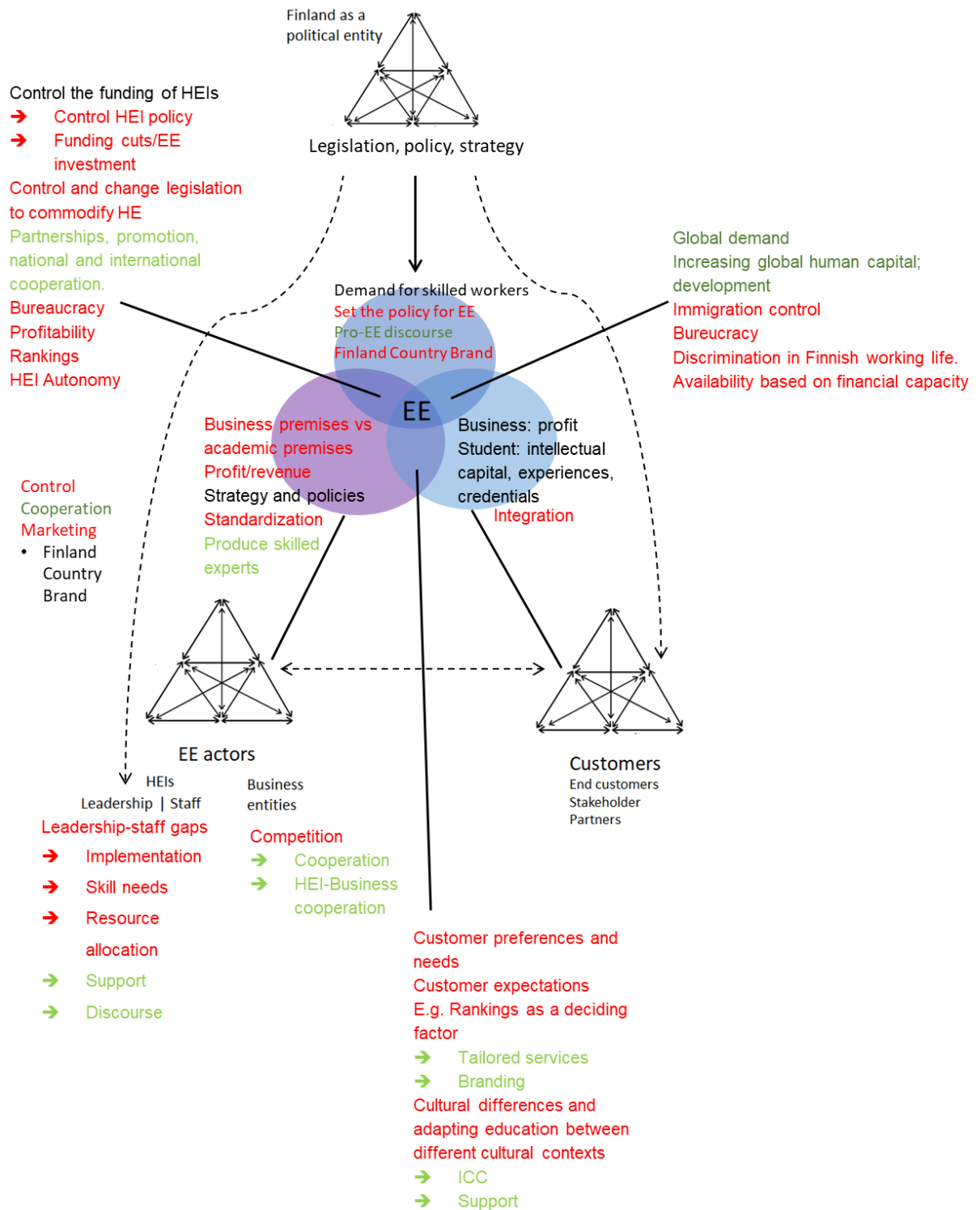
EE in Finland began as a politically set project, and Finland wields power over the other EE actors. The state's EE policies are adapted and promoted by the administration of each HEI, as despite HEIs' increased autonomy, the state maintains control over them through funding models. Funding cuts between 2010 and 2020 have pushed HEIs into searching for more sources of revenue, and during this same time frame, the state has changed legislation to allow the sale of HE to foreign customers. Discourse concerning internationalization has, in the same time frame, evolved from need-creating crisis rhetoric to opportunity rhetoric stressing the potential benefits of EE. Political will has created the basis for Finnish EE.

Finnish education services and products are sold on premises of Finnish quality, but the concept of "Finnish education" is left vague to encompass the maximum variety of educational products and services. This creates a paradox, as the central premises of Finnish education have been equality and free access. Additionally, PISA is used as a selling point for the export of HE, despite PISA measuring students in comprehensive school.

Increased autonomy in HEIs has resulted in increased accountability and managerialism, which has created gaps between the administration and staff. Top-down set EE strategy and its implementation may differ, and resources are needed for EE activities. However, beginning EE activity may require investments, so it may take time for EE operators to gain revenue or profit from the activity. Tight budgets and a lack of resources and support may hinder EE activity and also affect the staff. The staff's attitude towards EE tends to be cautiously positive but with considerations; badly managed EE may turn staff members' attitudes increasingly negative.

EE as an outsider-created object has not been clearly defined, resulting in a variety of definitions covering a large variety of activities by a large variety of operators. The lack of a common basis has resulted in fragmentation and a lack of cooperation in the sector, as different EE actors understand the term in different ways, and the term covers vastly different types of organizations and activities.

The lack of cooperation weakens the sector as a whole. Finland is a small country with capacity much lower than the global demand for HE. Finland's small

size makes it relatively unknown amongst potential end customers. Increased coordination through partnerships, networks, promotions and international cooperation would bring visibility to EE operators across the sector. This is especially relevant to UAS, as while academic universities are generally well-known and easily verifiable by students, the concept of UAS is less ubiquitous, and UAS may be excluded from official HEI lists and international rankings. Competition between EE operators "ends in a melee that hurts everyone" (paraphrased, interviewee), whereas cooperation between EE operators would result in increased capacity as well as less knowhow and market redundancies.

The customers and EE operators' relationship is on an even level: on the one hand, customers hold power over the operators through their financial choices and priorities, and on the other hand, EE operators set financial and skill requirements to the customers. EE operators control potential students' access to credentials and human capital, but customers make the decision to pay tuition fees on a continuous basis. Thus, there is a risk of customer preferences and needs affecting HEI strategy and policy. In addition, customers' preferences diverge from EE operators' expectations, necessitating wide market and educational understanding from EE operators. For example, customers may evaluate EE operators according to completely different criteria than the EE operator would use, e.g. rankings and school prestige over quality. This combined with the situatedness of education as a concept leave ample room for tailored services, which makes pure marketing and commercialization challenging.

More factors than education quality and Finland Country brand affect the image of Finland. Finland governs the entry of customers; despite customers' demand for EE services and Finland's demand for skilled experts, internationalization and EE activity in HEIs, and EE businesses' demand for customers, immigration services and policies hinder EE activities. Slow and lengthy visa processes may prevent or halt large projects completely. Despite the demand for skilled workers, foreign students and experts meet discrimination as well. Discrimination in Finland may act as a hindering factor for EE, as it both affects the image of the country as well as students' degree studies; without an internship, students may not be able to graduate on time. This is an important factor for tuition-paying students, especially those whose scholarships depend on graduating on schedule.

6 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Education export is a multi-faceted, complex phenomenon. This thesis has presented a synthesized model of Finnish education export as a network of activity systems based on the cultural-historical activity theory through a literature review and a sample of five case studies. The case study of three education export companies, a university, and a university of applied sciences generated results that confirm and add to the results of the qualitative research synthesis. The results are limited by the complexity of EE. It is not feasible to contain a sufficiently large amount of data in a single chart or a study. The findings of the study can be condensed to the following:

Stakeholders in EE are the state of Finland, universities and universities of applied sciences, education businesses, and customers, who can be divided into intermediary customers (e.g. education agents) and end customers (students). The state of Finland controls the other EE stakeholders through legislation, funding and immigration policies and processes; the HEIs fulfil the national education policy as well as their own strategies and duties, e.g. development, research and education; businesses sell education services and may take on some of the HEIs' EE business activities; customers buy and, in the case of intermediary agents, sell these services to end customers. The EE operators interviewed cooperate with and sell education services to other businesses, not the end customers, and the majority work with intermediary agents instead of the end customers. However, the end customer makes the final choice to buy EE services, and their priorities may diverge notably from the operators' expectations. Additionally, there are gaps between the administration and staff inside HEIs, which may affect the implementation of HEI-specific policies and strategies. EE itself may shape HEIs' policies and strategies to increase their attractiveness to students, and in e.g. staff duties and recruitment policies.

The export of commercialized higher education in Finland began in earnest in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008 as a matter of political will. Legislation has been amended to allow the sale of HE as a service throughout the decade in combination with cuts to HEIs' budgets, creating domestic demand and possibilities for EE activity in higher education. The sector has grown and reached growth targets but has nevertheless not grown into an export powerhouse. Due to EE's origins in externally created policy rather than an organically grown area inside the field of education, Finnish EE encompasses a large variety of operators, services and products with their own definitions and perspectives of EE. Despite official networks such as Education Finland, there is a lack of cooperation in the field, which weakens the overall sector. There is ample global demand for commercial education services, which Finnish EE operators are not able to meet even combined.

> "*The societal relevance and impact of activity theory depend on our ability to grasp the changing character of objects. In the present era, we need to understand and deal with what I have called "runaway objects" (Engeström 2008b). Runaway objects have the potential to escalate and expand to a global scale of influence. They are objects that are rarely under anybody's control and have far-reaching, unexpected effects. Such objects are often monsters: They seem to have a life of their own that threatens our security and safety in many ways. -- They often remain dormant, invisible, or unseen for lengthy periods of time, until they burst out into the open in the form of acute crises or breakthroughs.*"

(Engeström 2008b in Engeström 2009, 304.)

The EE industry collided with a runaway object in 2020. As the Covid-19 pandemic swept over the globe it left the global EE industry in tatters, as international travel was heavily restricted, lockdowns instituted and HEIs across the world turned to distance teaching. The Covid-19 pandemic suddenly put a stop to Finnish EE projects as well. One of the cases interviewed in this thesis was disbanded; another had to momentarily scale down and focus on other projects. Only one of the HEIs interviewed claimed their EE projects were proceeding without excessive problems; this was due to their robust digitalized learning platform and curriculum.

Therefore, the conclusions drawn in this thesis are applicable to EE in Finland at the end of 2019. At the time of writing in late 2020, there are various estimates on the projected length of the pandemic (e.g. Moore, Lipstich, Barry &

Osterholm 2020), but it is not yet known when the pandemic will be over, and how. Its final effects on Finnish EE are unknown; while one of the cases used in this study was dismantled, the other EE cases have been able to continue operations in some capacity. The demand for international higher education may decrease during the pandemic and its aftermath, but as the population of the world grows and nations develop, so does the demand for HE.

"Runaway objects are contested objects that generate opposition and controversy. They can also be powerfully emancipatory objects that open up radically new possibilities of development and well-being." (Engeström 2009, 304.) The new normal is as a chance for EE to develop as a field. Further research is needed to determine the effects of the pandemic on international education and commercialized education both in Finland and abroad.

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