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## The Changing Meanings of 'Responsible University'. From a Nordic-Keynesian Welfare State to a Schumpeterian Competition State

Mikko Kohvakka, Arto Nevala, and Hanna Nori

### Introduction

In recent decades, responsibility has become a buzzword, but also a dilemma, in higher education (HE). Shared by all and faced by each alone, responsibility is a universal concept; yet there is no consensus on how to define it. Today, there is disagreement about the responsibility of universities. Many say universities have become more responsible, while others argue against this claim. Has this always been the case? And is it even possible to find one 'true' definition of responsibility? To find this out, we need to look back at history.

In this chapter we take a government perspective and discuss what a responsible university has meant in Finnish HE policy and how perceptions of it have changed from the late 1950s to the so-called great

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M. Kohvakka (✉) • A. Nevala  
University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland  
e-mail: [mikkko@uef.fi](mailto:mikkko@uef.fi); [arto.nevala@uef.fi](mailto:arto.nevala@uef.fi)

H. Nori  
University of Turku, Turku, Finland  
e-mail: [hanna.nori@utu.fi](mailto:hanna.nori@utu.fi)

university reform of the 2010s. To answer this question, we adopt a socio-spatial approach. First, we describe how the idea of the spatial (regional) responsibility of universities changed as Finland moved from the so-called Nordic-Keynesian welfare state era to a more international ‘Schumpeterian’ competition state period. Secondly, within the above-mentioned spatial and temporal framework, we examine socio-economic equality in Finnish HE, the promotion of which has been a key objective of Finnish social and education policy since the 1950s. We measure socio-economic equality in terms of the participation of different socio-economic groups in university studies, and we analyse which student background related factors are important for access to university studies. We thus examine responsibility in terms of equality of entry to university and the processes of student admission.

Access to university in Finland is limited according to the so-called *numerus clausus* system. For many disciplines, there have been, and still are, considerably more applicants than places to study. As a result, admission can be highly competitive, and especially in high-prestige institutions and disciplines (so-called elite fields) only a small proportion of applicants are admitted. In this competition for student places, the socio-economic position of parents plays an important role, as several studies have shown. Changes in the socio-economic background of students thus serve to indicate how the ‘responsible university’ has been defined in the Finnish HE system during the last five decades.

Theoretically, we claim that a key aspect of any modern social and political concept such as a responsible university is its ‘temporalized’ nature (Koselleck 2002; Kettunen 2012). Thus, researchers dealing with issues of responsibility in HE policy should also ask how the responsible university has been conceptualized and connected with political agendas and political agency in different times and places. From this perspective, emphasizing historical contingency, we claim that a responsible university should be seen—above all—as a tool for governing the tension between experience and expectation, which is an essential part of HE politics and policy (Rose 1999; Kettunen 2012). We recognize that responsible university is a current concept, used analytically by social scientists to make sense of HE policy and generate social cohesion in the twenty-first century. However, we should also seek to explain the historical

processes by which different political ideas of universities' responsible behaviour have crystallized in past decades. In this context, then, a responsible university could be defined as a category of practice or everyday experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors at different times and in different places (Brubaker and Cooper 2000).

On the one hand, our analysis is based on research carried out by ourselves and other scholars. In addition, our main research material consists of official university policy documents and the most recent statistics on the socio-economic backgrounds of students, and statistics related to the other background factors important for university access. In regard to research methods, we primarily use both qualitative textual analyses, especially policy document analysis, and quantitative methods, such as calculating different key ratios, to scrutinize contemporaries' interpretations of a responsible university.

This chapter proceeds as follows: firstly, the case of Finland and a brief examination of the history of the Finnish HE system will be introduced in the Nordic context. Then, the proceeding sections will analyse the changing meanings of a socio-spatially responsible university from the late 1950s to the beginning of the 2010s by paying attention both to the issues of regional responsibility of universities and socio-economic equality in student admissions. Finally, the concluding section will bring together the most important findings in the Nordic context. This section also looks at the current trend in Finnish HE policy and reflects on whether it is fruitful to discuss responsible universities generally and take them as pre-existing categories or whether it is more appropriate to see them as unique entities representing the strategies, values and viewpoints that are characteristic of a certain time and place.

## **The Case of Finland—From Welfare State to Competition State**

After World War II, political tensions and the struggle between different ideologies, both in domestic policy and in international relations, intensified demand for closer ties between nation states and their citizens. In

the Nordic countries, too, most politicians saw the preservation of civil peace as the highest priority and thus adopted a stance that equated responsibility with social and regional equality. Practically, this meant a need to build a welfare state, to strengthen the social responsibility of the state and improve the visibility of social responsibility in every part of society and in every corner of state territory (Giulianotti et al. 2017; Alestalo et al. 2009; Jalava 2012). This process, called spatial Keynesianism, was seen as a responsible way to act not only because the state territory was considered a valuable national resource and factor of production but also because the idea of equal opportunity was seen as the basis of state sovereignty during the Cold War period (Moisio 2012). Hence, the Nordic-Keynesian welfare state pursued de-centralized socio-spatial formations based on regional political ideas emphasizing national integrity and the creation of various regional institutions, like universities, throughout the state.

In the Finnish HE system, the Nordic welfare state and spatial Keynesianism meant an immense increase in student numbers. In the early 2010s the number of university students (170,000) was more than 11 times higher than it had been in the late 1940s (15,000). It could be argued that since the early 1970s the elite form of Finnish HE, emphasizing privilege of birth and shaping the mind and character of the top social classes, was partially replaced by the mass HE system to which a much broader age group had possibility of access. However, certain features of the previous elite system remained embedded within the new mass education period (Trow 1974).

Due to this rapid expansion and massification, new universities were established. Today, 14 universities operate within the Ministry of Education and Culture's administrative branch, in addition to which the National Defence University operates under the defence administration. In addition, during the deep economic downturn of the early 1990s, Finland adopted a so-called dual system with new polytechnics (universities of applied sciences) founded alongside the universities to tighten the bond between the HE system and society.

The new dual system was an apex of the Nordic welfare state and spatial Keynesianism. At the same time, the collapse of the Soviet Union, European integration, and, especially, the steps towards globalization of

financial markets, industrial production, technology and communication opened windows to other ways of conceptualizing responsible behaviour and new spaces of social change. For many nations, territorially equalizing welfare state strategies appeared as an obstacle as states were increasingly adopting non-material and spatially differentiating policies and practices. This was also the case in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, where governments were concerned about national success in an international competitive marketplace. The new discourse of a Schumpeterian competition state arose, championing the ideas of urbanism, internationalization and high technology as new national survival strategies (Heiskala and Hämäläinen 2007; Moisio 2012).

In HE policy, the transformation from a Nordic-Keynesian welfare state towards a more international, Schumpeterian competition state meant that university funding was cut and it was necessary for universities to allocate scarcer public funds to carefully chosen fields that had the prerequisites to prosper amid fierce international competition without constant subsidies from the public sector. The new Schumpeterian HE policy aimed at improving cooperation between universities, reducing overlap and establishing bigger, stronger and more competitive scientific units. This so-called structural development of HE was, however, only partly realized during the 1990s, and the HE network remained almost untouched until the so-called great university reform in 2010 (Nevala and Rinne 2012; Rinne 2012).

The guidelines for the reform were defined in the 2010 University Act, which triggered a major structural and cultural change in the way universities are led. From then on, Finnish universities were either institutions subject to public law, or foundations subject to private law in which the authority for personnel policies, financial administration and strategic decisions was delegated from the state to the universities. Moreover, universities began to fulfil their commitments to society by strategically using their own external, supplementary funds, although the Ministry of Education and Culture, as the main funder, still had a strong steering influence on the universities' activities (Aarrevaara et al. 2009). These developments led to a radical departure from previous decades in how the socio-spatially responsible university was interpreted, as the following two sections will explore.

## Spatial Keynesianism and the Inward-Looking Idea of Spatially Responsible Universities

In Finland during the era of spatial Keynesianism, the ruling centre-left governments saw utilization of the resources of the state's peripheral regions as beneficial to the nation as a whole. In practice, the politics of one nation, aiming at a coherent nation state with balanced educational and economic opportunities throughout the state territory, were supported by education, investment and regional policies that became intertwined in the 1960s and 1970s (Moisio and Leppänen 2007). The centre-left governments became aware of the need to create an education system that would moderate regional differences and overcome differences between the social classes. It is no coincidence that the preparation of a new state-wide comprehensive school at the primary level and the enactment of a law on the development of a HE system over the period 1967–1986 were fulfilled at the same time, in the mid-1960s (Kohvakka 2016).

The Act for the Development of Higher Education, 1967–1986, fostered social and regional equality by facilitating access to universities and guaranteeing resources for HE during an era when six multidisciplinary universities, two technology universities and one business school were about to begin operating alongside Finland's eight existing institutions (Välímää 2005, 2018). Together with Norway, Finland implemented a more deliberate regionalization policy than, for example, Sweden (Dahlöf 1994) and created territorially the most encompassing network of HE institutions in the Nordic countries (Kogan and Bauer 2000; Dhondt and Nevala 2015). However, in Finland, all new HE institutions were research universities, whereas Norway, Sweden and Denmark placed their emphasis on the non-university sector, that is, vocationally oriented colleges (Hölttä 1999; Kyvik 2004; Välímää 2018). Leading politicians and civil servants of the time thought that the responsible behaviour of universities meant processes in which the intellectual capital of the whole state territory would be harnessed by the universities to support the national mission of state planning (Science Policy Council 1973). According to this logic, state administration and regional research and

education merged into a seamless whole in which government officials, professors and researchers worked together to strengthen the bond between the state territory and its citizens in every way (Moisio and Leppänen 2007).

The strong belief in the importance of state intervention and planning in producing economic growth and in the social utility of positivist scientific knowledge meant that some branches of science became more important than others. Particularly, social sciences, such as sociology, social policy, economics and regional studies, were crucial in supporting 'the power container' (Giddens 1985): the state's supremacy in politics, as well as in economic, cultural and social policy (Taylor 1996). The social sciences were ready to accept the special task offered to them and the privileged position that accompanied the offer (Allardt 2000). As a result, social sciences in Finland adopted a state-centric view in which other spatial scales, notably the international and the regional/local, became subsumed into the national frame of reference.

The dominance of spatial Keynesianism and the national scale overshadowed the scrutiny of corporate activity and other activities stretching beyond state-centric thinking. Technology universities and business schools experienced particular difficulty adapting to the state's normative regulation system, which restricted autonomous and non-public interaction between industry and universities in the 1970s. These universities took part in several initiatives that were contrary to state monopoly capitalism and favoured the institutional autonomy of universities and the interests of economic life (Michelsen 1994; Pihkala 2000). In addition, they adopted a critical stance towards the government's argument that the primary task of universities was to support regionally harmonious and equal territorial development of the state space (Kohvakka 2015).

Criticism of spatial Keynesianism emerged in the late 1970s at the same time as the dual crises of stagnation and mass unemployment that forced West European governments to raise taxes to cover growing social entitlement costs. All this put the Keynesian welfare state ideology in turmoil. During these crises, the prevailing idea of state-led regulation as a responsible way to act was challenged by a new way of thinking about responsibility that demanded market liberalization and new public management methods (Brenner 2004; Harvey 2005). At first, the Nordic

countries responded to the crises moderately by strengthening and widening the welfare state. However, at the beginning of the 1980s, trust in a strong public sector and state-centric practices as the cornerstones of responsible behaviour started to lose ground—first in Denmark (Hansen 1990; Degn and Sørensen 2015) and later also in other Nordic countries. The development of spatial Keynesianism reached its culmination in Finland in the mid-1980s. Since then, the gradual rise of Schumpeterian competition logic, based on a belief in all-embracing competitiveness, individualism and the efficiency of a free and open market, challenged the old, institutionalized principles of collectivism, conservatism and protectionism.

## A Competition State and a New Meaning of Spatial Responsibility

The deep economic depression of the early 1990s was the main driver of the gradual shift from the Nordic-Keynesian welfare state to Schumpeterian competition state in Finland. The new narrative brought to the public by market liberal politicians, officials and business leaders redefined a socio-spatially responsible university as an entity emphasizing private benefit over public enrichment. In this redefinition process abstract principles of egalitarian rationality, stability and procedural legitimacy were challenged by discourses valuing economic rationality, efficiency and legitimacy by results (Kohvakka 2015). Ideas of international competition and competitiveness gained prominence in university strategies and became closely connected with a drive to increase both universities' and the state's competitiveness through know-how and improved research activity (Ministry of Education 1991; Ministry of Education 1996; Heiskala and Hämäläinen 2007; Moision and Leppänen 2007; Kohvakka 2016). The previously dominating strategies of the spatially responsible university, which were mainly inward-looking, emphasizing the national scale and territorialized practices, were challenged by new outward-looking strategies stretching beyond the national and stressing new de/reterritorialization practices.



The new ways of thinking about the universities' socio-spatial responsibility entailed new concepts such as networks, innovations, clusters and city-districts that were all associated with the urban environment (Moiso and Leppänen 2007). In government programmes and national development plans for education and research, universities were no longer assumed to be the principal providers of regional stability within their home region. Instead, due to growing societal pressure, universities began producing new urban and transregional landscapes that transcended the traditional territorial boundaries of regions and created new university-city and university-industry alliances where membership was not based solely on geographical proximity but on the shared aims and abilities to cultivate knowledge, technology and innovations. Representatives of the engineering sciences and business studies who considered that the state authorities had regulated contact with economic life in the 1970s and the early 1980s now took their place in the spotlight as corporate activity and theories of institutional economics were no longer bounded by state-centric thinking (Husso and Raento 2002).

Despite new definitions of socio-spatial responsibility, the historically constructed Keynesian logic of regional development still had its impact on territorial practices in HE. As the universities in the late 1990s and early 2000s were creating urban-centric, transregional research and development hubs by establishing branch units, or 'university centres' (Nokkala and Välimaa 2017), in cities without a university, the new polytechnics that had been established throughout the country started to foster an 'old-school', inward-looking territorial regionalism. As vocational HE institutions, 32 polytechnics focused their practices on education with social relevance to meet the new needs of the knowledge-based economy and the labour market. Polytechnics were, above all, locally or regionally scaled institutions run by a single municipality or a federation of municipalities within a single region (Välimaa 2005). Polytechnics' activities were thus largely predetermined by their geographical location and therefore promoted collaborative activities that fostered the relatively uniform pattern of regional space associated with spatial Keynesianism and its inclusive approaches to regional development (Harrison et al. 2017).

However, this division of labour of outward-looking universities and inward-looking polytechnics was to be short-lived. Already by the end of

the 2000s, polytechnics (now called universities of applied sciences) started to close campuses and branch units located in peripheral, rural municipalities. The strategic focus of the polytechnic was no longer on providing and guaranteeing equal study possibilities throughout its own region. Instead, their spatial (re)orientation and understanding of responsible behaviour began to resemble that of universities. By the early 2010s, there was broad consensus among politicians and officials that the mission of polytechnics was to provide HE for professional expert jobs and to carry out applied research and development and innovation activities that promoted industry, business and regional development in an urban, globally oriented environment (Salminen and Ylä-Anttila 2010; Välimaa and Neuvonen-Rauhala 2008).

To succeed in this urbanization process, the state authorities encouraged polytechnics to empower new 'spatial imaginaries' (Harrison et al. 2017), namely, city-regions and transregional alliances. This was done by supporting deeper collaboration both between polytechnics and with universities. Cooperative institutions were rewarded for merging themselves into a bigger, transregional units or consortia, which signalled greater alignment with the Schumpeterian (market-driven) understanding of more targeted and exclusive forms of regional development. The visibility of polytechnics in rural areas decreased in the same proportion as they decreased in number, from 32 in the early 2000s to 25 in the late 2010s. At the same time, multi-campus universities began to run down their branch campuses in small towns in the name of centralization, the concentration of limited resources in larger city-regions that, allegedly, shared aspirations to compete for elite status nationally and globally (Vartiainen 2017).

A form of urban-centric, internationally oriented elitism thus made its return to the spatial practices of HE institutions in Finland during the first decade of the 2000s. Next, we will turn our attention to the changes in the social background of students and the prerequisites for admission and examine whether a similar development towards the return of elitism as the representation of responsible behaviour can be discerned.

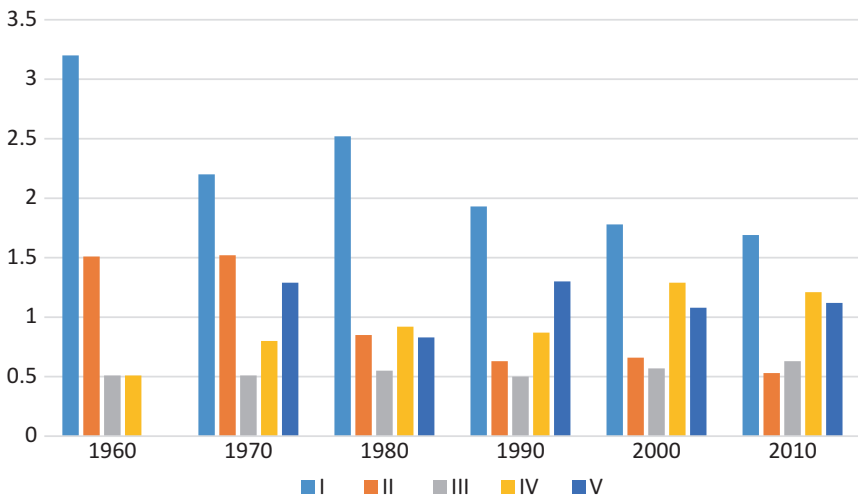
## Towards Socio-economic Equality?

As previously mentioned, one of the principal goals of Finnish education policy since the 1950s has been to equalize the participation of different socio-economic groups in HE, thereby promoting educational equality and thus 'responsible' progress. During the post-war decades the dominant trend regarding the socio-economic background of university students was equalization. As Fig. 2.1 shows, the differences between socio-economic groups regarding participation in university education have evened out, but have not disappeared by any means.

Proportional participation: Percentage of socio-economic groups in university divided by percentage of these groups in population aged 45–54 years. For example, group I in 1980:  $36.5\%/14.5\% = 2.52$ .

Figures greater than 1.0 indicate over-representation of the socio-economic group.

Socio-economic groups (based on parent/guardian employment): I: Upper white-collar and entrepreneurs, II: Lower white-collar and small



**Fig. 2.1** Proportional participation of children from different socio-economic groups in university education in the years 1950–2010. *Sources:* Socio-economic background of new university students from 1925 to 2010; Demographic statistics of Finland, years 1960–2010

entrepreneurs, III: Blue-collar, IV: Agricultural, V: Others (pensioners, unemployed, etc.).

The figure contains uncertainties with respect to classification and comparability, however. For example, pensioners were not classified as pensioners but according to their former employment prior to the year 1975. Furthermore, the socio-economic groups needed to be large to allow longitudinal comparison, which makes them internally heterogeneous. The figure nevertheless indicates the trend in development relatively reliably.

The proportion of children of upper white-collar personnel and entrepreneurs (group I) going to university declined rapidly in the early 1980s and has since steadily diminished. This can be partly explained by the change in the demographic structure in Finland: in the year 2010 there were almost three times as many people in upper white-collar and entrepreneurial jobs (age group 45–54 years) than there were in the 1970s. In other words, since the high-level white-collar group has greatly expanded, the number of their children entering university education has increased more slowly. In comparison, almost the same number of working-class students (group III) enrolled in universities in the 2000s as in the 1980s, and their relative participation rate grew only a little. The same phenomenon can be seen with lower level office workers' children (group II), whose representation in university education has diminished dramatically since the early 1970s.

The children of pensioners and unemployed (group V) increased their share of university enrolment initially, partly due to the change in the classification of statistics, but later their proportion dropped. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the children of pensioners were well represented in university education. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the number of pensioners stopped growing and, as a result, their children's participation in university education also diminished. The children of unemployed people have had a very slender representation in university education throughout, and that is still the case: the participation ratio of children of unemployed people in 2000 was 0.50 (socio-economic background of new university students, year 2000). The unemployed can thus be regarded as a marginalized sector of the population also with respect to university education. Interestingly, the agricultural population (group

IV) was underrepresented until the 1990s, but later their representation grew, and the figures show clear over-representation in the 2000s. One possible explanation is that although there are now much fewer agricultural entrepreneurs than before, they have bigger farms and more income and therefore better possibilities to send their children to university (Nori 2011).

In terms of the social background of students, in fields with high social status, such as law, medicine, business and technology, there were clearly more people from upper class families than in universities on average. In these so-called elite fields, as many as 47% of new students came from upper level professional, white-collar or entrepreneur families (group I) in the 1990s and 2000s. The difference is best illustrated by comparing these proportions with those of the opposite extreme, pedagogy (including teacher education), in which only some 30% of students came from the highest social group during the same period (Nevala 1999). It is important to note that graduates from these 'elite fields' often work in prestigious professions. Hence, the equalization of HE has taken place primarily in the lower status fields, such as the humanities and social sciences and education. This can be interpreted that the main differences in the socio-economic background were primary between the fields of study and thus the 'elite university' can be found in Finland inside the 'mass university' (Ahola 1995; Nevala 1999; Nori 2011; Kivinen et al. 2012).

To sum up the development to the beginning of the 2000s, we find two major changes: equalization on the one hand and persistent inequality on the other. The changes in Finnish society and educational policy from the 1960s onwards have unquestionably affected the recruitment and background of university students. Educational equality advanced and, at the same time, education functioned as a significant means of social mobility as there was a growing demand for a skilled university-educated workforce in the welfare state. Nevertheless, it should also be borne in mind that there have been, and still are, significant differences between universities and fields of study regarding enrolment in university education (Jalava 2012; Nevala and Nori 2017; Kivinen et al. 2012).

From the 1960s to the early 2000s, Finnish HE policy was mainly national, the state was one of the key players, and it was closely related to the general goals of the Nordic-Keynesian welfare state, such as regional

and social equality. The state controlled universities through different norms, that is, legislation, but universities had, however, extensive scientific autonomy. HE during this period can therefore be interpreted as having being responsible to the state, for the increased willingness of citizens to gain education, and for regional development. By contrast, the impact of business life on HE policy was minimal.

## Social Equality and the Fragmentation of Universities in the 2000s

Since the beginning of this century, Finland has transformed into a competition state. At the same time, structural changes in HE that started in the 1990s have continued and intensified. From our point of view, there are two essential aspects of change. On the one hand, the impact of so-called market forces on HE policy and HE practices has intensified. On the other hand, the fragmentation of HE is reflected in the fact that the routes to university education are nowadays considerably varied. Thus, the background factors affecting access to HE are now more diversified than in the past. To examine the changes in student admission from the 2000s onwards, we compared university applicants in 2003 (Nori 2011) and 2014 (Nevala and Nori 2017). The new University Act came into force in 2010, and by comparing datasets for 2003 and 2014, we can bring into focus the effects of the university reform on students' choices. We also studied the internal fragmentation of the Finnish university: what differences in student background exist between disciplines? The factors contributing to admission were studied using binary logistic regression analysis (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 clearly shows that applicant's age, municipality group, basic education, main activity (employment status) and parents' education have an impact independent of other background factors. Firstly, the older the applicant is, the more difficult it is to be accepted. In 2003, the odds ratio (OR) for age was 0.98, which means the probability of access reduces by 2% per each additional year of age. The significance of age has increased during the past 11 years; in 2014 the OR was as high as 0.93

**Table 2.1** Factors having an impact on university admission in 2003 and 2014

Variable	2003			2014		
	Odds ratio	95% confidence interval	<i>p</i> value	Odds ratio	95% confidence interval	<i>p</i> value
Age	0.98	0.97–0.99	0.000	0.93	0.92–0.94	0.001
<i>Municipality group</i>						
Province	1.11	0.95–1.29	0.181	1		
City	1.30	1.15–1.46	0.000	1.20	1.08–1.34	0.001
Conurbation	1			0.96	0.83–1.11	0.591
<i>Matriculation examination</i>						
No	1			1		
Yes	1.35	1.09–1.66	0.004	2.42	1.91–3.08	0.001
<i>Main activity</i>						
Unemployed	1			1		
Employed	1.28	1.14–1.44	0.000	3.00	2.54–3.54	0.001
Student	1.54	1.36–1.73	0.000	7.50	6.35–8.85	0.001
Conscript	1.37	1.18–1.60	0.000	4.90	4.06–5.90	0.000
<i>Mother's level of education</i>						
Upper secondary				1		
Lowest tertiary				1.04	0.97–1.12	0.242
Lower degree tertiary				1.04	0.95–1.13	0.425
Higher degree tertiary				1.33	1.23–1.45	0.001
Doctorate or equivalent				1.56	1.34–1.81	0.001
<i>Father's level of education</i>						
Basic education	1			–		
Upper secondary	1.06	0.97–1.16	0.205	1		
Lowest tertiary	1.16	1.05–1.29	0.004	1.08	1.00–1.16	0.045
Lower degree tertiary	1.19	1.06–1.35	0.004	1.18	1.09–1.27	0.001
Higher degree tertiary	1.36	1.21–1.54	0.000	1.29	1.20–1.38	0.001
Doctorate or equivalent	1.80	1.51–2.15	0.000	1.26	1.12–1.42	0.001

Source: Background information concerning university applicants in 2003 and 2014, Statistics Finland

Note: Odds ratio (OR) is defined as the ratio of the probability of success and the probability of failure. OR can range between 0 and infinity (note: OR is a different number from the participation factor in Fig. 2.1)

(one year reduces odds of acceptance by 7%). Today, a 30-year-old applicant's chance of successful admission is approximately 70% lower than that of a 20-year-old (Nevala and Nori 2017). This is a startling result.

Geographical origin also influences the applicant's odds of admission (in 2003, the reference category was conurbation, in 2014 it was province). The probability of urban applicants being admitted to university is greater than that of others, and there have been no changes in this respect over the past ten years. Urban applicants were over-represented among all applicants. There may be a number of reasons why urban applicants are accepted more often than applicants from rural areas. For example, the most successful upper secondary schools with the 'best' students are located in Finland's biggest cities—especially in the metropolitan area. Also, participation in preparatory courses is easier in cities than in the provinces.

In 2003, the probability of an applicant with a matriculation certificate securing a study place at university was 35% higher than that of applicants without matriculation. By 2014, it had risen to as high as 2.4-fold (or 140% higher). Applicants who have not completed a matriculation examination also often have non-academic parents. This means that they are twice as disadvantaged as others (Haltia et al. 2017).

An applicant's 'main activity' (employment status) also impacts their chances of admission. The situation of the unemployed is naturally the weakest. During the past 11 years there have been significant changes in the odds ratios regarding main activity. In 2003, the probability of admission was highest among full-time students, who had a 1.5-fold (50%) higher chance of compared to unemployed applicants. By 2014, this difference had increased to 7.5-fold (650%). This shows the beleaguered position of the unemployed in admission selection. Being unemployed may also be a result of poorer grades in upper secondary school or vocational school, which is, again, directly related to success in the student admission process.

In the 2003 data there was no variable describing the mother's education level. According to the 2014 data, it seems that mother's education has stronger impact on access opportunities than father's education. Admission odds increase in line with mother's education level. The offspring of a mother who has completed a doctoral education has a 1.6-fold (60%) higher likelihood of being accepted than a descendant of a mother

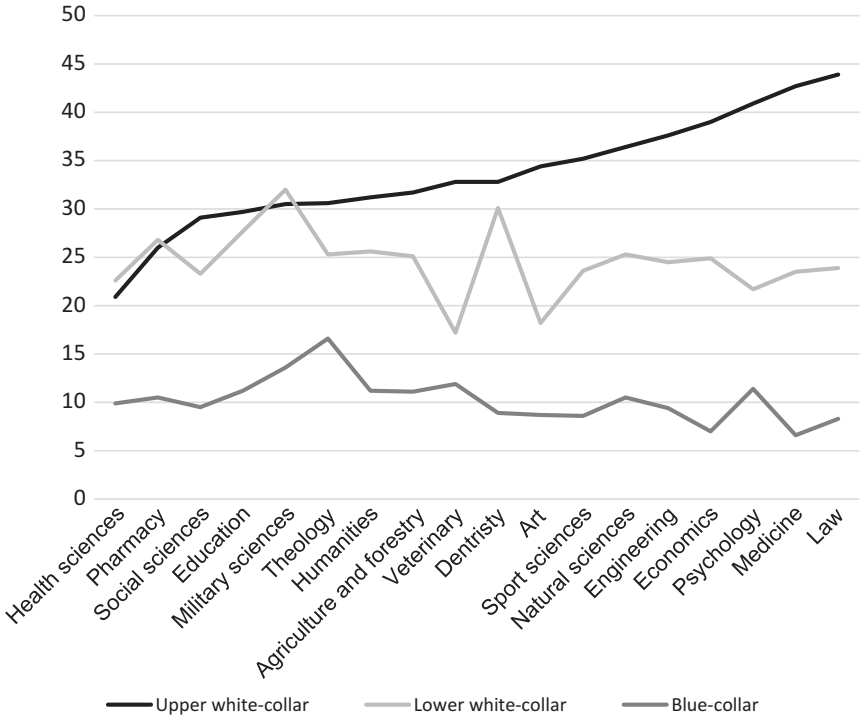


who only has an upper secondary degree. With respect to father's education, the years 2003 and 2014 are not fully comparable. In 2003, the reference category was basic education and, in 2014, secondary education. In both years, the probability of admittance increases as the father's level of education increases. It seems, however, that the significance of father's education level has somewhat diminished over the years.

The effect of family background is manifested mainly through parental education, and, again, the mother's education seems to be more relevant. In Finland, as in the other Nordic countries, social mobility is more common on average than in other Western nations. The social and cultural capital of parents does not, therefore, determine the future status of their offspring, but education does nevertheless continue to play a role as a channel of social rise—albeit to a lesser extent than in previous decades.

Today, new university students are selected from different social groups more equally than ever before. However, there is an increasing variety of access rates and admission levels between different institutions, disciplines and training programmes. For example, students from privileged backgrounds typically choose, and are admitted to, highly selective disciplines such as medicine, dentistry and law, whereas students from lower social backgrounds typically enrol in less selective and vocationally orientated programmes (Nori 2018). Consequently, even in the 2010s, students' socio-economic backgrounds differ between disciplines. Figure 2.2 shows the representation (%) of white-collar and blue-collar parents of university students in different disciplines (mother's and father's socio-economic status as combined averages) in 2014.

The lines for lower white-collar employees and blue-collar workers are in many respects similar. On the right-hand side, the shares of upper white-collar employees are the highest, and on the left they are the lowest. Law, medicine, psychology, economics and engineering have a considerably high proportion of upper white-collar employees. Psychology appears to be a field in which social selectivity has risen considerably over the last 20 years. In the mid-1990s (Kivinen and Rinne 1995) the field was classified as quite popular across the board; nowadays, the sector is more elitist in terms of students' parental social status. The share of blue-collar parents is the highest in military science. Other fields that have been defined as popular include health sciences, pharmacy, social sciences



**Fig. 2.2** Representation of university students’ parents (upper and lower white-collar employees and blue-collar workers) per discipline (%), mothers and fathers combined, in 2014

and educational sciences. These fields have the fewest students with upper white-collar parents. These are also typically women-dominated fields.

There are also regional inequalities in student admission. Universities in metropolitan areas admit more students with a high social background, while relatively more students with a lower social background are admitted to small provincial universities (Kivinen et al. 2012; Nori 2011). Compared to universities of applied sciences, traditional universities recruit students from higher social backgrounds (Potila et al. 2017). Within the traditional university sector, differences between disciplines are also much deeper than in the non-university sector (Saari et al. 2015).

When we consider student selection from the perspective of responsibility, it seems that responsibility has shifted from the state to individuals and, in part, to their families. The importance of the applicant's age, previous education and 'main activity' in accessing university has clearly increased over the last ten years. This means that the choices made by individuals and families are becoming increasingly important.

The state is no longer responsible, either, for implementing regional equality. The main mission of universities in the view of the state is to boost national and international competitiveness. Structural changes and political decisions have led to new developments in university admissions based on principles of competition and availability of choice. This means that universities must acquire the best students with the highest potential, and to this end they actively market their educational offerings. Student admission is one of the key mechanisms through which the 'market value' of universities and other HE institutions is produced. Within the market, students are expected to choose the 'best' institution for them, and institutions are supposed to choose the 'best' students. Under these conditions, students are expected to be individually responsible for their educational choices. Marketization, in that sense, is embedded in competition for status and prestige in the rank hierarchies of HE.

## **Finland, the Nordic Countries—And Beyond: Conclusions**

The strategy of the Nordic-Keynesian welfare state regime emphasized major public investment in the development of infrastructure and equal opportunities across the state territory. This interpretation of responsible action lasted from the late 1950s to the late 1980s. From the 1990s onwards, the emerging Schumpeterian competition state strategy put less stress on territorial and social equalization processes in HE and focused, instead, on growth and success through privatization, specialization and international competitiveness. However, the change in the definition of what a 'responsible university' means was gradual. It could be argued that

the narrative of socio-spatial responsibility in HE, which was quite diverse in the 1990s and the early 2000s, became rather uniform in the 2010s.

The period from the 1990s to the beginning of the 2010s was a critical turning point. It triggered pressure for far-reaching changes throughout society. During this critical period many issues, such as the definition of socio-spatial responsibility, became fluid and open to debate. Ultimately, the Schumpeterian logic pushing for more selective and exclusive socio-spatial and socio-economical arrangements prevailed over the Keynesian practices of governing and managing development regionally and across different social groups. The reason why the struggle between the Keynesian and Schumpeterian logics continued for nearly two decades can be found in the historically constructed socio-spatial structures which generated friction, causing Schumpeterian practices to lose energy.

The Nordic-Keynesian welfare state period was also a period of advancing educational equality in Finland. Reform of the basic education system and expansion of secondary education, together with the expansion of the university institution, significantly increased the participation of children of previously marginalized socio-economic groups in university education. Thus, in the 1980s, university students in Finland were more selectively drawn from different socio-economic groups compared to most other countries. At that time, educational equality in HE in Finland was on a par with Sweden (Nevala 1999).

Sweden was, at the time, one of the world's most equal countries in terms of the socio-economic background of university students, based on a broad international comparison. For example, in the UK, France and Germany, over-representation of the highest socio-economic groups among university students was clearly greater than in Finland, Sweden or the other Nordic countries. On the other hand, differences between disciplines regarding the socio-economic background of students were clearly visible in the 1980s both in the Nordic countries and elsewhere. However, the differences were not as big as they were to become in later decades (Erikson and Jonsson 1996; Nevala 1999).

Despite similar trends in HE in the Nordic region, differences can be found between the four major Nordic countries—Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Expansion does not seem to be a universal remedy for narrowing the participation gap between different social groups.

From 1985 to 2010, Finland and Norway achieved the most substantial reductions in overall HE inequality, the decrease in Denmark was more modest, while Sweden showed no signs of decreasing inequality. There were also large disparities in selectivity between different fields of study during this period, although the majority of fields had moved towards greater equality. The 'elite' fields, such as law and medicine, still favoured socially privileged students, although the social gap has narrowed in Finland and Norway. Socio-economic inequality is thus most visible between fields of study than between universities, although there are also notable differences between universities regarding student background (Thomsen et al. 2017). Comparing the Nordic countries internationally, two essential issues arise. The Nordic HE systems are quite unified in history, structure and function, and stand out in this respect from other countries (Willems and de Beer 2012; Rinne 2012). Another essential feature is that, despite the above considerations, the impact of home background on access to HE is lowest in the Nordic countries. For example, the impact of parental educational background on access to HE is lower in the Nordic countries than anywhere in the world (Marginson 2015).

Since the 'great university reform' in 2010, universities have been made more responsible for competitiveness, efficiency and internationalization and less responsible for socio-spatially equal educational opportunities. In addition, state control over universities is stronger now than it has been for decades. This time, however, state control is not only normative, but also financial, for example, through the employment of cash distribution models. At the same time, the impact of increasing alliance with industry on HE policy has intensified, especially in the 2000s. All of these changes have created a new interpretive framework for Finnish HE policy for perceiving the central aspects of responsible behaviour, which, currently, are closely associated with targeting and exclusion. For example, universities aspiring to academic excellence on the international stage have partly outsourced their regional tasks to nearby polytechnics, while municipalities and regional councils have a say in university affairs only if their expectations, discourses and activities are in line with their respective universities (Moisio et al. 2018).

From the points of view of educational equality, exclusion of people groups, and the concept of responsibility, the ongoing reform of the student admission system is crucial (Ministry of Education and Culture 2016). The reform will increase the significance of general upper secondary school achievement (i.e. matriculation examination), and a quota for students applying for their first study place in HE has been established. The ministry has stated that more than 50% of applicants must be selected on the basis of the matriculation examination, although it is the responsibility of universities to decide on this exact percentage. We expect that the stratification that has subsequently emerged within HE systems will also lead to equivalent changes in student admission patterns. One critical consideration is the impact on ‘second chance’ applicants, that is, those who have not completed the matriculation examination and whose motivation and desire to continue their studies is born later in life, for example, after vocational studies or working years. It is also likely that low-educated families in rural and semi-urban areas located far from large urban settlements will be among those most affected by the reform. In short, the former interpretation of responsible behaviour in HE policy that emphasized socio-spatial equality will give way increasingly to a new interpretation of responsible university highlighting individualism and competition.

However, as the ongoing reform of student admissions in Finland has not yet fully materialized, the long-term effects on recruitment patterns are yet to be seen. Likewise, it remains to be seen how the elitist Schumpeterian logic will endure in the future as socio-spatial unevenness—or injustice, as the critics put it—rapidly grows between and within regions (Saari et al. 2016). Critical voices and active political resistance against this logic is currently thin on the ground.

Finally, regarding the concept of responsible university, we have used the concept in a way that reveals its flexible, time-dependent and place-dependent nature. We should not think of responsible universities as pre-assigned, static arenas of universalistic, coextensive activity. On the contrary, responsible universities are relational and political constructs. As this chapter has tried to illustrate, politics and policies always tend to favour certain people or social groups, disciplines, places and geographical scales of social action over others, and to reshape the concept of

responsible university in line with certain ideological, socio-political and politico-economic values and attitudes. In a truly responsible university, therefore, political struggle and friction must be ever present.

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