"A Cross-cultural Analysis on the Transnationalization of Quality in Learning, Education, and Training: The Vocational Higher Education Sector in Finland and South Korea"

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Summary

The diversity of educational traditions and systems is currently challenged by the key competencies and qualifications development through the transnational lifelong learning policy, which reveals the dynamics of various actors/sectors at different levels showing the converging reality at macro-level and diverging character at the micro-level. It makes it even more challenging to define the identity of professionals and individual learners. This poses delicate questions for the issue of who is to and how to demarcate, justify and reframe the different sectors of education in line with lifelong learning and how different actors/sectors with accustomed negotiation mechanisms have developed their strategies to protect their status and ownerships while influencing, co-creating, reinforcing and challenging the relations with others on a linear timeline.

In this paper, the different roles of the inter-government agencies, the government, the market, the trade unions, the academic and training providers, the professionals and the individual learners will be reconfigured in the process of a paradigm shift to learning and find out in what way the vocational higher education sector in the course of historical development of industries and economy has been entangled and diffused in different educational settings for lifelong learning in order to promote the quality of learning, education and training. When analyzing how vocational higher education sectors of Finland and South Korea in a cross-cultural context have changed, re-constructed and located multiple identities at an individual and collective levels embedded at different times and spaces, the following fundamental and significant

insights can be gained for the social progress; (1) how to widen participation amongst researchers, policy makers, and practitioners who have different perspectives, concerns and issues, (2) how to embrace different views of various actors/sectors together, and (3) which actor should initiate, design and implement the innovative plan for advancing research, policy and practice.

For Whom the Qualifications and Quality Assurance System Made?

On all continents there are attempts to develop key competencies and comprehensive qualifications development through the transnational lifelong learning policy which would cover all fields of stages of education and training. However, it is uncertain how this will affect the internal variety and cultural diversity of education and training in a world of turbulence, uncertainty, and insecurity. Across the Asia Pacific region, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) projects are undertaken for harmonizing the qualifications and developing competitive human resources as a response to the view of Education Ministers' transnational policy since 2004. Their aim is to identify the formal and informal qualifications framework, associated with descriptors and quality assurance frameworks, and recognition agencies (APEC 2009). Likewise, with the recent development of European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the concept of knowledge, skills, and competence toward the common model has become important and has raised the vital question as to whether the different models are sufficiently compatible with the "one-size-fits-all" (Ensor 2003, 344) or "old wine in a new wine skins (Heikkinen 2008)."

Under such circumstances, the individuals, local and national academic and training providers, and national education systems are caught in a crosscurrent between the imperative of 'international competition' and the necessity for 'cross-border cooperation'. In fact, they cannot operate as if they are isolated from the outside world. As Critchley and Cederström have pointed out, the individuals, local and national academic and training providers, and national education systems have the

freedom to refuse a structured form of a humor, the transnationalization of qualifications framework and quality assurance systems, but it might produce a false harmony among the countries (Critchley and Cederström 2009, 48).

Research Goals and Rationale

This paper is to reflect on the complexities in the vocational higher education sector and to verify different tools and logics underpinning solutions to trans-nationalization of qualifications framework and quality assurance system and to find out how various actors of the vocational higher sector are perceived its concept of quality and responded differently on a liner time line.

The main reason for choosing different OECD countries, Finland and South Korea, is that the different national and institutional arrangements for regulating and assuring quality, their relations with and consequences to work and employability are deeply embedded in the different history, culture, socio-economic and geopolitical backgrounds of each country. Hence, the process of trans-nationalization is legitimized in different equilibrium while the various actors at different levels related with non-university sector are pursuing their identities and maximizing their utilities. Within such structural constraints, it is important to follow the pattern of growth and development of vocational higher education sector in what way the dynamic equilibrium is attained.

The empirical reasoning for analysis, despite their different models and backgrounds of vocational higher education and training, is as follows. Each country has been an ardent advocate of lifelong learning as a direct instrument for growth and prosperity in conjunction with economic policy since 1980s and the resulting skills revolution can be legitimately analyzed and compared in line with neoliberal educational policy. Furthermore, at the present time, Finland, belonging to European Union member state, is at the forefront of the reform process in devising and establishing its National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) within the context of

European Qualifications Framework (EQF). However, there are still no clear-cut boundaries on professional or occupational oriented education and it is on the process for negotiating among policy makers, professionals, education and training providers, labor market organizations, and researchers led by Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) and Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). To be sure, those who assure the quality during the audit process leave more room for local and institutional initiative and operate according to general national objectives.

South Korea has clear boundaries between professional and school-based occupational education system but it has significantly undervalued the vocational education. In particular, the historical influence of Confucianism, Japanese colonialism and American neo-liberalism results in the unfavorable perception of Korea's non-university sector as compared with Finland. Similar to the other OECD countries, the main driving force that leads to the emergence of vocational higher education and lifelong learning framework was the economic crisis in 1990s with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailouts and the lifelong learning policy has placed increasing responsibility for self-management on individual learners.

In addition, in order to enhance the linkage between education and work, a National Competency Standard (NCS) has been developed under the international standards since 2003. This is mainly led by the Human Resource Development (HRD) Service in Korea under the Ministry of Labor and the Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education & Training (KRIVET) directly under the prime minister. However, there are still conflicts from various actors/ sectors at different levels who have been involved since the quality assurance accompanying certification is highly centralized, standardized, and mainly run by public qualification authorities. The awarding body offering vocational qualifications is not the same as in the education and training institutions. In addition, the Korea Accreditation Board for Vocational Education (KAVE) within the Korean Council for University College Education (KCCE), authorized by the Ministry of Education and Culture, has started to evaluate the quality of vocational higher education and guarantee the quality of educational

institutions that satisfies the quality level of education specified by the KAVE since 2011.

Each case can be also a mirror to reflect on how the contents of quality have gradually shifted into learning from research, education, and training of vocational higher education sector including students' interest and may offer possible solution to the trans-nationalization. In a process of addressing and analyzing different perspective of the quality development, we can come to a mutually agreed upon a conclusion. In this way multi-actors can find a feasible solution to the dilemmas that each country faces and come to close take a proper shape of future vocational higher education to engage in a local community.

Background of Vocational Higher Education

The vocational higher education in each country has built on their own traditional, institutional structures as embedded in their different history and culture. Hence, their own responses for assuring the quality development to the competency-based education are different and the ways that institutional actors define their places and positions, compromise and negotiate with different actors/sectors in developing quality are also different. The following sub-section explains how vocational higher education in different countries has been developed and established in dynamics of society and working life.

Finland

Finland has traditionally been an agrarian society before the rapid industrialization driven by forest industry in 1970s. The emergence of Finish education is deeply rooted in the local community. Hence cooperation, integration and trust are regarded as important and valuable in forming the Finnish education. Since 1980s the standardized and outcome-based educational reform has been influenced by a late but the State-led industrialization and the Finnish education increasingly become adopted

official agenda in many parts of world in order to improve quality of education (Sahlberg 2007, p. 150). In particular, the economic recession in the early 1990s, when large deficit suddenly emerged, made it necessary to rapidly create a new non-university sector in higher education. Hence, the idea behind the establishment of Finnish polytechnic (here after Ammattikorkeakoulu, AMK) was to promote upper secondary vocational education and training and to meet the demands of upgrading the skills in labor market. In fact, Finnish Polytechnics have a longer history to materialize struggling between proponents of academic, vocational, and citizenship education (Heikkinen et al. 2010). At a present time, the Polytechnics have a variety of ownership both as a 'private' in the sense of being operated by such organizations as foundations, limited companies, municipalities, or federations of municipalities than the state and as a 'public' in the sense of being funded from public sources, mainly by the Ministry of Education and Culture on the basis of the student number (Välimaa 2008, p. 81).

The growing number of applicants to the Polytechnics has driven the shift of government policy in which they can carry out applied research relating to industry. On the contrary to the trends of *academic drift* arising from the Polytechnics, the general universities are forced to *vocational drift* to serve apprenticeships for students at an authentic workplace during their studies. Hence, the functions of general university and polytechnic are beginning to converge and to foresee the end of binary system. In this respect, Heikkinen pointed out the convergence or integration into unitary system would confront them with strong academic traditions and communities, and it would be hard to maintain their distinctiveness in competition in epistemological and occupational markets (Heikkinen et al. 2010). In general, however, the segmentation or hierachization in higher education can be favored when fears of "over-supply" or "over-education" of graduates dominates in a society.

In particular, with the recent development of meta-framework for European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning, whose concept of knowledge, skills, and competence toward the common model, the European Credit Transfer

System (ECTS) for Education and Training has challenged diversity in education and training, while raising the vital question as to whether the different models are sufficiently compatible with different models. Under the context of EQF the competition may reinforce academic drift rather than stimulating diversity. Therefore, the centralization under different cultures within the context of global competition forced higher education institutions to be "first among equals."

South Korea

Like Finland, Korea has also been a traditional agricultural society before the rapid industrialization of the past five decades. The main driving forces that lead to the emergence of contemporary Korean vocational higher education are Japanese colonialism and American neo-liberalism. In particular, the historical influence of Confucianism results in the unfavorable perception of Korea's VET as compared with the general higher education. These three major constituent ideologies have influence on the contemporary vocational higher education, while agitating social and economic polarization, accelerating inequality between regions and classes, and partially causing *academic drift.*

The vocational higher education system in Korea was originally initiated and strongly regulated by the State. In particular, an export-driven industrialization policy during the 1970s promoted vocational education and training, coupled with heavy and chemical industries. In order to meet the demands of skilled workers in these industries, the State had to invest in building an infrastructure on technical high schools, public vocational training centers and junior vocational colleges.[1] Although

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[1] The Korean IVET generally consists of 'vocational technical high school', 'junior technical colleges', and 'polytechnics' and the CVET are mainly the 'open technical Colleges' for the employed, 'public job training centers' under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour especially for the lay-offs or the unemployed, 'private technical training institutes'. The Korean Polytechnics as a formal education has a strong characteristic of IVET, partly charging of retraining the employed or unemployed.

the national support for VET slightly changed the public perception on the VET, the curricula of formal vocational high schools, centering on the education for the admission of general university, mismatched with the demands of labor market, and became irrelevant to the industries with respect of students' competences. Furthermore, there was no clear-cut distinction of training and education between vocational high-schools and vocational colleges. The consequences were a persistent shortage of lower level skilled workers and temporary workers in 1980s, and high unemployment rates resulted from oversupply of non-technical graduates since 1990s.

Facing with these challenges, the State in particular largely fostered public VET institutions and allowed private sectors in Vocational Higher Education to build and expand the infrastructure for medium-level technologist and technician in order to meet the demands of post-industrial society in the late 1990s. It has brought its quantitative growth in private vocational colleges at the national level, but the quality has not been successfully achieved due to the lack of college and industrial partnership, little linkage between curriculum and industry demands, and the absence of appropriate quality assurance system (OECD, 2009).[2]

Junior vocational colleges were renamed as a part of the university system since they have entitled to autonomy to act from the Ministry of Education in 1998. While academic education has traditionally been hegemonic in epistemological and occupational hierarchies, it is important for policy makers to assimilate in existing scientific knowledge structures, under the supervision of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Heikkinen et al. 2010).
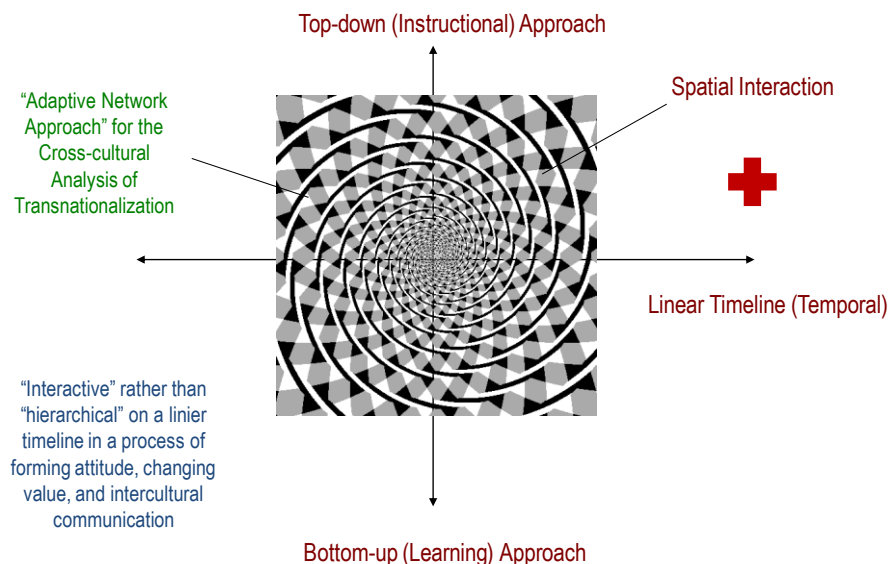
Theoretical Frameworks

With a view to understanding the complexities of qualifications frameworks and quality assurance systems for lifelong learning in different traditions and cultures, the

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[2] The number of private junior vocational colleges in 2011 is 136, predominantly in number out of 145. The number of national or public one is only 9.

"adaptive network" theory will be applied (Taylor 2003; Lee 2010). What is special about the "adaptive network" different from the fluid dynamics of turbulence is that it highlights the process of negotiating, reinforcing, co-creating, and challenging the relations, of locating identities of various actors/ sectors at different levels, and of generating "hybridity" on a linear timeline.

Figure 1 Adaptive Network Theory

Top-down (Instructional) Approach

Spatial Interaction

"Adaptive Network Approach" for the Cross-cultural Analysis of Transnationalization

Linear Timeline (Temporal)

"Interactive" rather than "hierarchical" on a linier timeline in a process of forming attitude, changing value, and intercultural communication

Bottom-up (Learning) Approach

This can contextualize individual and collective identity deriving from different cultures while bringing out individual and social ethics from different social participation, political cohesion and economic growth under the influence of neoliberal corporate accountability on educational and training governance. Hence, the theory can be said to go beyond different discourses of Foucault and Habermas which explains the existing tensions of the micro- and the macro- linkages and the communicative actions and linkages between local interaction and emergent global structure. While previous researches (Kendel, G. & Wickham, G. 2003; Besley, T. & Peters, M.A. 2007; Walshaw, M. 2007) focus on Foucauldian discourse which discuss

the gaps, tensions, or conflicts in linking individual behaviour (individual identity) and macro-level phenomenon (collective identity), my paper tries to unfold the macro-level phenomenon beyond the discourse of Foucault and Habermas by finding out the rules and patterns which occur in the relation and interaction among emerging actors such as the EU, the APEC, work organizations, education and training providers, professionals, individual learners, external quality assurance agencies. Under such analysis of comparing patterns in adjusting or negotiating transnational policies for lifelong learning in different cultures, how the seemingly similar discourses connect to sub-national and local micro-polices will be unfolded.

The figure one above also demonstrates how the research centered evaluation of quality paradigm has increasingly shifted into the instruction-based, the learner-based evaluation like what the learners perceive and understand are markedly revealed, and finally how they all can permit interaction. In order to bridge the gap of quality concept, the role of schooling or instruction is gradually transformed into and integrated with individual learning processes for occupational purposes. Rather than a top-down and bottom-up approach, the adaptive network approach permits an on hand interaction among all actors on a liner timeline in a process of forming attitude, changing value, and intercultural communication. In the continuing process of quality evaluation combining both qualitative and quantitative indicators, one can produce "mode 3 knowledge" in a spiral dimension from the bottom-line and realize the desirable learning society while observing, interacting, and sharing other and more experienced colleagues in the collaborative environment (Jiménez, 2008; Lee, 2010; Smith and Mockler 2009).

Research Method

This study adopts a mixed research method, which can use both qualitative and quantitative elements, by describing and analyzing how different OECD countries are reacting and solving to the holistic perspective of trans-nationalization of

qualifications and quality assurance. Therefore, this research is being conducted by means of both inductive and deductive reasoning processes of survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews with multi-leveled actors/sectors through the combining of various literatures available on the subject.

In a process of inductive and deductive reasoning, I am finding out whether the observation and data collected from multi-leveled actors/sectors are relevant to my theoretical framework. Hence, this study, which is primarily qualitative, also measures the extent of how the degrees of tensions among various actors/sectors are and how each actors/sectors from different levels tries to pursue and maximize its individual utility for education and social progress. This type of research design is particularly appropriate because there are multiple perspectives and components to interpret the results of education and social progress under different context, which is focusing on the relation between different actors/sectors under trans-nationalization of qualifications, and strengthened findings when compared with other international cases.

This research also adopts cross-cultural comparative and longitudinal studies. In this respect, the spatial ontology can be extended to the epistemology under the context of different culture embedded at different times, while interactively creating and implementing one's identity around a particular issue. The relevance of my theory and hypothesis can be consolidated while testing the patterns of whether different actors/sectors from same levels fall with same or different views on the trans-nationalization of the qualifications framework and the quality assurance system. Finally, this analysis leads to clarify whether "citizens" and "communities" are estranged or entangled in pursuit of agenda of lifelong learning.

The preliminary empirical evidence with each actor (sector)'s map of each country will be presented and discussed in the workshop.

The Expected Outcomes and Impacts

This research can offer various actors/sectors at different levels in leading to share and elaborate strategic discourses and policies. On the other hand, the reconfiguration of actors/sectors and negotiation patterns involved in qualifications and quality assurance for lifelong learning can defend and revise existing interpretations, principles and practices, by extending them beyond local and national context. Hence, this research helps to understand individual and collective identities in different cultures, to find out the linkages with other constellations of individuals or groups, and to discover the mechanism to what extent to keep, enlarge, increase, decrease, or reduce the typical emergent phenomenon by impacting on the degree of linkage in a different time line. In the end, the following fundamental and significant insights can be gained from the results; (1) how to widen participation amongst researchers, policy makers, and practitioners who have different perspectives, concerns and issues, (2) how to embrace different views of various actors/sectors together, and (3) in what way each actor should build trust to initiate, design and implement the innovative plan for education and social progress.

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