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From "different but equal" to "equal but different" : Finnish AMKs in the Bologna Process

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Abstract

As different forms of short-cycle higher education have developed along with traditional university studies, they are often perceived as 'different but equal'. In Finland, with the introduction of the AMKs (polytechnics) in the early 1990s, this interpretation was clearly a part of the rhetoric of government presentation. 'Equal but Different' was the title of the international evaluation report on Finland's postgraduate polytechnic experiment commissioned by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). Today, 'Equal' entails rounding off the AMK reform and, in the light of the Bologna process, granting the AMKs their own second tier degree. This article presents an analysis of the policy discussion around the current developments towards the second tier degree in the AMKs. It examines a special report commissioned by the Ministry of Education on the role of Finnish AMKs in the Bologna process and the comments solicited by major stakeholders. From a theoretical perspective, the 'harmonizing European degree structures' will be set in the broader framework of academic differentiation. Two future scenarios are presented. (HRK / Abstract

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