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**Abstract**

Numerous studies have addressed how state authorities and public funding bodies control, regulate, steer, supervise or oversee higher education institutions. There are fewer studies on how higher education institutions respond to the actions of the mentioned authorities. States have aimed at increasing the autonomy of higher education institutions. At the same time institutions are expected to generate social benefits and economic growth. There is an endless tension between a policy that will strengthen the autonomy and simultaneously retain a space for state steering. The Finnish polytechnic and university sectors have very different origins from which their financial autonomy takes its shape. This article sheds light on how six Finnish polytechnics aspire to enhance their financial autonomy. The polytechnics operate under two separate steering systems, the state and local owners, and both of these actors exercise their own steering. This article shows that polytechnics are willing and able to enhance their financial autonomy. They calculate their advantages and habitually engage with the

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Ministry of Education or their owners depending on the case in question. The financial autonomy of polytechnics does not culminate in a form of diversified funding sources, but as balancing between the two masters on whose resources they are heavily dependent. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)