

Commercialization of education and consumer vanity

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Approaching the question of consumer culture affecting the state of ‘sociability’, it is important to bare in mind the ambiguous nature of the process. The ‘modes’ of sociability have cultural bases, in a way that they are determined by cultural norms in a broad sense (Alvin M. Chan, 2009, p.332-337), from another point of view, cultural norms are being constantly vanished and shifted by social interaction, big part of which is consumption. One of the most influential factors of the process is market logic. It is represented on all stages of consumption practices. Slater notices that “consumption is always and everywhere a cultural process, but ‘consumer culture’ – a culture of consumption – is unique and specific: it is a dominant mode of cultural reproduction developed in the west over the course of Modernity” (Slater, 1997, p.8).

The aim of this work is to show the interdependence of the mentioned phenomena at the example of commercialization of educational system. On the one hand, educational institutions frame knowledge paradigms in society and such effecting identities and views. On the other hand, educational system is influenced by the commercial demand itself. There have been a lot of debates in Finland claiming that totally market-oriented priorities will exclude from the scene fields of studies/knowledge, which are not adjustable to this logic or will force them to rethink their internal values in order to follow the main-stream directions (Antti-Jussi Tahvanainen, Tuomo Nikulainen, 2011, p.27). Thus, this work studies the problem of commercialization of higher educational institutions in Finland in the connection with consumer culture. It makes an inside into how intellectual and material desires of the consumers of education services affect the formation of priority directions in studies and research in academic life and how it then influences the structure of education system in general. As an example Aalto University is chosen. It has been established in 2010 by merging of three major Finnish universities: the University of Art and Design Helsinki (est. 1871), the Helsinki School of Economics (est. 1904) and the University of Technology (est. 1849). This work examines how the current trends in research and study programs of the University correlate with the societal needs and based on these data presents the reflection on Finnish consumer vanity. The work is done based on the data collected at Aalto University archives.

References

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