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# The European Conception of the University Knowledge Within the Bologna–Initiated Competence–Based Curriculum Modernisation: Repercussions at the National Policy Level in Estonia and Lithuania

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## Abstract

The European 'knowledge economy' policies and higher education policies and reforms associated with the Bologna process, as largely driven by efficiency concerns, have continually stressed the failures of European universities to meet efficiency targets. This has provided the justification for a radical European-wide modernisation of the higher education curriculum which has uniformly introduced a competence (outcomes)–based curriculum rationale to all European universities as a strategic device to enhance the efficiency and relevance of the university curriculum. Within the competence–based curriculum rationale, competence has been designated as a major component within the university curriculum, whereas knowledge, traditionally being the main educational category of the university curriculum and a fundamental pillar of the university research, has been increasingly given a scarce mention in the European policy documents despite the common European policy discourse on the 'knowledge economy' and 'knowledge society' and a new prominence of knowledge that these notions imply. Accordingly, the European assumptions about the nature of the university curriculum knowledge have had significant implications for the way university knowledge and the role of university have been defined at the national policy level in the light of the curriculum change. Thus, it becomes important to examine the explicit and implicit epistemological stances behind the Bologna–initiated competence–based curriculum modernisation and their repercussions throughout the national higher education policies. The aim of this paper is to examine the way the European assumptions about the nature of the university curriculum knowledge as implied within the Bologna initiated competence–based curriculum modernisation reverberate throughout the national higher education policies in Estonia and Lithuania. The objectives of this study are to examine the ongoing Bologna–initiated university curriculum modernisation as based on the competence framework and its assumptions about the na-



ture of the university curriculum knowledge and to map the way the European policy assumptions about nature of the university curriculum knowledge as implied within the curriculum modernisation reverberate at the national policy level in Estonia and Lithuania. The research methods served are qualitative research methods, namely, an overview of research literature and a content analysis of the official strategic European policy documents and Estonian and Lithuanian national policy documents. The main results of the study are the following: situating the phenomenon of the competence-based curriculum modernisation within a broader socio-economic and political context and, in doing this, providing the basis for a better understanding of the driving forces generating this curriculum change; discerning the main patterns of the Bologna-initiated higher education curriculum modernisation and its underlying assumptions about the nature of the university curriculum knowledge and the role of universities both at the European and national levels; providing insights about the way the higher education curriculum modernisation has been taken-up at the national policy level in Lithuania and Estonia; revealing the lack and the need for educational arguments as informed by curriculum theory to complement and challenge the currently predominant economic rationale underpinning the higher education curriculum modernisation in Europe.

**KEYWORDS:** knowledge economy, European higher education policy, reform, Bologna, university, curriculum knowledge, competence-based curriculum, competence, skill, Lithuania, Estonia.

It has been widely admitted that the Bologna Process with its associated higher education curriculum reforms as based on the competence framework implies an entire reconfiguration of the European higher education landscape. Within the competence-based curriculum rationale, competence has been designated as a major component within the university curriculum in order to increase the vocational relevance of curriculum. This establishes a tighter relationship between the higher education and the world of work, and, as a result, reformulates the purpose of the university curriculum and the university in society more in utility terms, which, in turn, inevitably has important repercussions for the conception of the university curriculum at the national policy level. The current ongoing curriculum reforms in the context of the European higher education have been, to a large extent, discussed and researched from the perspectives of their apologists as mainly focusing on the technicalities of its implementation such as the development of the most suitable methods for the implementation. Meanwhile, there seems to be lack of research on what kind of knowledge the policies addressing 'knowledge economy', as well as subsequent curriculum reforms refer to (Wheelahan, 2010; Young, 2011). The underlying epistemological assumptions of the higher education curriculum modernisation are taken for granted and naturalized without seeing them as fundamental question of educational debate. Provided that, it becomes essential to interrogate the underlying assumptions this Bologna-initiated curriculum change make and the way they shape the conceptualisation of the university curriculum knowledge and the purpose of universities at the national level.

The **research problem** of the present study can be outlined in the following research questions: what are the European assumptions about the nature of the university curriculum knowledge as implied within the Bologna-initiated curriculum modernisation? How the European policy assumptions about the nature of the university curriculum knowledge as implied within the Bologna-initiated curriculum modernisation reverberate at the national policy level in Estonia and Lithuania?

The **aim** of this paper is to examine the way the European assumptions about the nature of the university curriculum knowledge as implied within the Bologna initiated competence-based curriculum modernisation reverberate throughout the national higher education policies in Estonia and Lithuania. To achieve this aim, the following **objectives** are set:

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## Introduction

- \_ to examine the ongoing Bologna–initiated university curriculum modernisation as based on the competence framework and its assumptions about the nature of the university curriculum knowledge;
- \_ to map the way the European policy assumptions about nature of the university curriculum knowledge as implied within the Bologna–initiated curriculum modernisation reverberate at the national policy level in Estonia and Lithuania.

The qualitative research methods, namely, an overview of research literature as drawn from curriculum studies and policy studies, and a content analysis of the official strategic European policy documents and Estonian and Lithuanian national policy documents, are served. In analysing the documents, it has been sought to select the European and national strategic policy documents which are most indicative of the assumptions made about the university curriculum knowledge and the purpose of universities.

The main results of the study are the following: situating the phenomenon of the competence–based curriculum modernisation within a broader socio–economic and political context and, in doing this, providing the basis for a better understanding of the driving forces generating this curriculum change; discerning the main patterns of the Bologna–initiated higher education curriculum modernisation and its underlying assumptions about the nature of the university curriculum knowledge and the role of universities both at the European and national levels; providing the insights about the way the higher education curriculum modernisation has been taken–up at the national policy level in Lithuania and Estonia; revealing the lack and the need for educational arguments as informed by curriculum theory to complement and challenge the currently predominant economic rationale underpinning the higher education curriculum modernisation in Europe.

The **novelty** of the present paper is its interdisciplinary analysis which draws on policy studies and curriculum studies in order to come up with a more all–rounded approach to interrogating the Bologna–initiated competence–based curriculum modernisation in the contemporary context of the European university education. What is more, the paper maps the epistemological assumptions about the university curriculum knowledge both at the European and national levels. Finally, it offers an original overview of the two national higher education policies as situated within the wider European context.

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## The European 'knowledge economy' policies and the changing Purpose of the University

The current Bologna–initiated competence–based curriculum modernisation has to be understood as part of broader European policies and as their strategic device to achieve socio–economic ends, rather than as a mere technical affair. The Bologna process has to be situated within the European 'knowledge economy' policies which have significantly affected the traditional conceptualisation of the purpose of the contemporary European university, as since the mid to late 1990s, they have assigned universities and knowledge they produce crucial roles in terms of their contribution to the economic development. In the light of the Lisbon Strategy, it is claimed that Europe's education needs to adapt to the demands of the knowledge society (Lisbon European Council, 2000). In this political context, the interrelation between investment in education and the growth of economy has been increasingly stressed (European Commission, 2012). Consequently, the conditions under which universities operate and the expectations from universities have changed significantly as universities have been increasingly demanded for the relevance of education provision.

If, traditionally, knowledge has been conceived to be the main purpose of higher education curriculum, and, in particular, university curriculum, and higher education institutions were largely oriented towards 'basic science', as well as followed their own disciplinary epistemic concerns (Ward, 2012, p. 4), a closer look at the European strategic policy documents reveals that the contemporary

'knowledge economy' policies have spawned a strong criticism of the traditional conception of the purpose of higher education and higher education at large on the basis of economic and employability arguments. It has stressed the failure of universities to supply the knowledge economy with more employable graduates who possess flexible competences and skills to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world of work and, in this way, to contribute to solving the contemporary socio-economic issues, such as youth unemployment in Europe (European Commission, 2012). The European higher education systems are criticised for being insulated from industry and that the traditional relationship between higher education and work is inadequate to ensure the relevance of higher education (European Commission, 2012). Consequently, it is claimed, the European higher education, including university education, fails in realising its vocational purpose and does not solve unemployment problems (*ibid.*). As a solution, a closer collaboration between the university and the world of work has been urged.

Against this background, European member states have become under intensified pressure to reform their national higher education systems in order to "boost" their efficiency (*ibid.*). From what has been said so far, it can be argued that the heightened demands set on universities to demonstrate their use-value in the market have had significant implications for the conception of the purpose of universities which has been increasingly conceived in more utilitarian terms – to prepare students for working in the 'knowledge economy'. Therefore, these demands are indicative of a current vocationalisation of the European university education.

The Bologna competence-based curriculum modernisation and university knowledge concept European universities are undergoing a supranational curriculum reforms as based on the Bologna Declaration (1999), which, at the broader context of the EU policy, fit into the economically driven Lisbon Strategy (2000) and the European 'knowledge economy' policies at large. The Bologna is aimed to strengthen the role of higher education in the development of 'knowledge economy' and create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which is to increase employability and strengthen the competitiveness of the European system of higher education (London Communiqué, 2007) against the rest of the world. Against these strategic goals, the Bologna Process, with its associated curriculum reforms, implies an entire reconfiguration of the European higher education landscape (The European Union, 2013).

The present analysis of the European policy documents shows that throughout the Bologna, the 'traditional' input (subject or knowledge)-based curriculum model has been strongly criticized. It has been argued that "higher education curricula are often slow to respond to changing needs in the wider economy, and fail to anticipate or help shape the careers of tomorrow" (European Commission on Quality and Relevance, n.d.a.). The input-based curriculum has been claimed to be a reason for higher education curriculum to fall short in providing the graduates with the right skills to enhance their employability and not being relevant to the realities of the the world of work (European Commission, 2012). Also, it has been maintained that input-based curriculum "leads to programmes or rather loose units which might not be sufficiently balanced and most effective". (Tuning, n.d.a., p. 11). Therefore, it is argued, the higher education curriculum, including universities, is to be restructured to break with the input-based curriculum rationale which has operated within a 'traditional' model of qualification structures and move towards a uniform competence (outcome)-based curriculum model, which has designated competence, rather than knowledge, as a key learning outcome (Tuning, n.d.a.).

The competence rationale has provided the basis for new European qualifications framework and national qualifications frameworks. Thus, qualifications frameworks, as implemented throughout the Bologna, are to be conceived as 'competence-based' or 'outcomes-based quali-

fications' (Mehaut and Winch, 2011; Allais, 2014). The assumption of shifting to the competence (outcome)–based curriculum rationale has been that, contrary to the input–based curriculum, it could possibly lead to more balanced, efficient and more relevant study programmes. The competence framework is expected to ensure the responsiveness of the university curricula to the needs of society and the world of work by producing more 'employable' graduates with the 'right' competences and skills for the labour market (European Commission, 2012). In particular, the policy focus (Tuning, n.d.a.; European Council and Commission, 2012) has shifted to generic competences or transferable skills which are said "to offer more possibilities for employment" in a rapidly changing labour market and society at large (Tuning, n.d.a., p. 20).

However, against the background of these new policy demands, a number of authors (Wheelah-an, 2007; 2010; Young, 2011) have noted a paradox within the contemporary policy discourse on the 'knowledge economy', which, while declaring a new significance of knowledge in the 'knowledge economy', have actually focused not on knowledge as such but competences and skills. When referring to this controversial situation across the international higher education landscape, Wheelahan notes the following: "The paradox is that while education is supposed to prepare students for the knowledge society, the modern curriculum places less emphasis on knowledge, particularly, theoretical, disciplinary knowledge" (2010, p. 3). The present overview of the European strategic documents, too, confirms the before–mentioned existing controversy within the European 'knowledge economy' policies. A closer study of the documents reveals that what is actually required in so called 'knowledge society' or 'knowledge economy' is not knowledge as such but conceptually and content–neutral skills and competences, whose value is determined by their applicable nature as well as economic and employability concerns. Meanwhile, the need for knowledge acquisition or development within the higher education curriculum is hardly ever explicitly articulated in European policy documents. The present overview of the European documents discerns the way the European higher education curriculum modernisation has been mainly pushed by an assumption that all curricula, including university curricula of differentiated disciplines, must be justified for their relevance to the 'knowledge economy'. These economic considerations underpinning European policies have been increasingly steering curriculum–related decisions at the national policy level, the issue we will turn to in the next section.

## The Competence– Based Curriculum Modernisation in the National Higher Education Context: Lithuania and Estonia

The endorsement of the competence framework at the European level is expected to be followed by its endorsement at the national higher education level. This section gives a special attention to the way the assumptions underpinning the European curriculum modernisation reverberate throughout the national conceptualisations of the university curriculum knowledge and the role of universities in Estonia and Lithuania.

To date, it has been acknowledged that not all countries are positive about the benefits of the Bologna–initiated curriculum changes and that perceptions differ sharply not only between countries (Mehaut and Winch, 2011; *European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015*; Sursock, 2015) but also within countries (Mehaut and Winch, 2011). As Mehaut and Winch note, even though the endorsement of the competence and skills agendas at the national level cannot be directly influenced by the EU, the designation of competence–based qualifications frameworks, which are to correspond to the competence–based European qualification framework, nonetheless, has served as a medium through which to "put pressure on national systems" to focus on competences (2012, p. 369). Moreover, the competence framework is being further reinforced and monitored through the EU mechanism of funding (Oxenham, 2013, p. 109), which, as can be anticipated, positions economically more vulnerable member states to respond to the European higher education curriculum reform more eagerly, at least at the formal level.

Before we look at the national policy documents, it is pertinent to briefly note some contextual similarities and differences between Estonia and Lithuania. On the one hand, Estonia and Lithuania are similar countries in a way that they are two post-soviet countries. Also, the education traditions of these countries have been historically influenced by German *Bildung* tradition and Continental and North European tradition of didactics. This means that historically, the university curricula in these countries have been input rather than outcome (competence)-based, as is the case with the current Bologna-initiated Anglo-Saxon curriculum rationale. After the restoration of independence, the two countries have undergone a flurry of policy reforms, including higher education reform, and have been pursuing “neoliberal shock therapy politics”<sup>1</sup> (Translation mine – R.P.). On the other hand, Estonia, according to Norkus (2008), has come out as the most successfully developing country from the three Baltic countries and “the extremeness of liberalism in Estonia has surpassed everything what one could see in the transformation period in post-communist countries”<sup>2</sup> (Translation mine – R.P.). Norkus cites Mattusch to argue that the starting-point in Estonia was more favourable for the ‘invasion’ of capitalism and its successful and fast consolidation based on protestant tradition than in Lithuania as formed by catholic tradition (Mattusch, 1996 in Norkus, 2008, p. 607). Based on this, it could be assumed that Estonia may be, at least to a certain extent, more open to the Bologna-initiated Anglo-Saxon curriculum rationale than Lithuania.

The Bologna-initiated higher education reforms have been changing the Lithuanian higher education landscape significantly. Nevertheless, Lithuanian education system has been criticised by the European Commission for its inadequate collaboration with the labour market and a failure to meet the needs of the labour market (2015, p. 3); therefore, “improving the labour market relevance of education” has been suggested and urged (ibid.). Accordingly, the articulation of an urgent need to increase the relevance of higher education curriculum can be increasingly traced throughout Lithuanian strategic documents.

The recent amendment of the Law on higher education and research (Republic of Lithuania, 2015) exemplifies attempts of Lithuanian policy-makers to make higher education study programmes more relevant to the labour market. Also, other strategic Lithuanian policy documents reflect attempts to strengthen the link between higher education and the labour market by including employers and other social partners into the studies process and taking their needs into account (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012), as well as orienting education to the development of entrepreneurship (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 2013).

As a result of the current heightened policy concerns with the relevance of the higher education curriculum to the world of work, the discourse of the Lithuanian strategic policy documents, despite the used rhetoric on the “knowledge-based economy” and “knowledge-responsive society” (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012), has shifted away from the need to develop knowledge to the development of competencies which have, allegedly, more relevance for employability (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012; Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 2013). It has been argued that “Lithuania will focus on (...) development of competencies required for future jobs (...)” (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012, p. 4). It is important to note that in Lithuania, the competence approach has been endorsed as a uniform approach to curriculum through law and regulation since the last decade. Fur-

## Lithuanian higher education context

1 “neoliberalią šoko terapijos politiką” (Norkus, 2008, p. 595)

2 “liberalizavimas Estijoje savo radikalumu pranoko viską, ką apskritai buvo galima pamatyti transformacijos metu pokomunistinėse šalyse” (Norkus, 2008, p. 595)

thermore, in 2010, the Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework was approved. As it is indicated in the excerpt below, the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework is based on competences:

*The Lithuanian Qualifications Framework corresponds to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (...) on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (...) and 8 qualifications framework levels set out in it. Qualifications described in this Description are attributed to qualification levels set in this description which define functional, cognitive and general competences necessary to perform the activity of similar complexity, autonomy and changeability (LR Vyriausybė 2010, p. 1)*

However, despite the fact that in Lithuania “the implementation of the NQF has started (...) study programmes have not yet been completely re-designed on the basis of the learning outcomes included in the NQF” (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015, p. 68). To explain this under-achievement, the assumption is made that society does not know about the newest educational aims and desirable competences because of the lack of its inclusion into the competence formation process; otherwise, it is assumed, the development of competences would receive more support (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 2013, p. 5).

Meanwhile, Želvys critically observes, that Lithuanian education policy tends to follow the European imperatives for education reforms because they are treated as inevitability of the Western world and, even more, approaching the standards of the Western world (2009, p. 25–26). Similarly to Želvys, Duoblienė maintains that Lithuania is fast to respond to the European imperatives to develop a wide range of narrow competences and emphasise employability aspect (2011, p. 145), while, at the same time, she adds, lacking methodologically based strategy for the curriculum change and a well-thought-out educational discussion on the possible consequences of these curriculum trends, which implies a simulation of the curriculum change rather than responsible action (2009, p. 134). Here it is pertinent to stress that Lithuania, contrary to Estonia, does not have a separate higher education strategy as such. This could at least partly explain the current confusion in higher education strategising. Also, it is possible that the lack of the national higher education strategy, and, thus, educational vision, can make the university curriculum more susceptible to extrinsic socio-economic pressures.

## Estonian higher education context

Estonia, in a similar vein to Lithuania, has been experiencing changes in higher education which have been taking place within the frame of the Bologna-initiated reforms. However, it is important to note that Estonia clearly indicates that the quality standards of the Estonian higher education is oriented not only to the quality standards set by the European Union but also the Nordic countries (Estonian Higher Education Strategy, p. 2006–2015). Also, Estonia, contrary to Lithuania, has a separate higher education strategy, the fact which hints that policy-makers in Estonia find it important to highlight what makes higher education distinct from other educational sectors and to bring more clarity to the role of higher education institutions and consistency to the national vision of higher education.

The European Commission (2015), when commenting on the strength and weakness of the Estonian higher education system, notes that Estonia, despite its recent efforts to launch a system for labour market monitoring and forecasting future skills, still needs stronger links with the business sector within the knowledge triangle. Accordingly, these European assumptions have been reverberating throughout Estonian strategic education documents, such as Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2006–2015 and The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy

2020 (Republic of Estonia/ Ministry of Education and Research, 2014). They, too, emphasise inefficiency of Estonian education institutions in collaborating with the representatives of the labour market and meeting the demands of the labour market. For this reason, the involvement of representatives from the labour market in developing curricula and taking into account their needs is stressed (Estonian Higher Education Strategy, 2006–2015; Republic of Estonia/Ministry of Education and Research, 2014). Also, promotion of enterprising initiative and entrepreneurship has been articulated to be one of the key goals (The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020, 2014). What is even more, it has been declared that the traditional purpose of higher education has changed and higher education has become a ‘transnational commercial activity’ and ‘an important export article’ (Strategy for the internationalisation of Estonian higher education over the years 2006–2015). This shows profound changes taking place in the Estonian policy conceptualisations of the purpose of higher education, including universities.

Following the before-mentioned arguments, as well as the results of the international comparisons, which show that Estonian youth with higher education, when compared to other countries, have lower level of problem solving skills and ability to use different skills in new contexts (Republic of Estonia/Ministry of Education and Research, 2014), the competence-based approach to curriculum has been endorsed in Estonia during the past decade. Currently, the efforts are directed towards the implementation of this curriculum change (Republic of Estonia/ Ministry of Education and Research, 2014). Similarly to Lithuanian case, the implementation of these changes is reinforced by legislation (Estonian Higher Education Strategy, 2006–2015, p. 6). The EHEA implementation report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) notes that Estonia has fulfilled all the steps in the implementation of qualifications framework, which are described on the basis of learning outcomes (competences). The study programmes in higher education, including universities, are to include descriptions of the required competencies as “described in various national and international regulations and professional standards” (Republic of Estonia/ Ministry of Education and Research, 2014, p. 14). Thus, the competence-based approach to curriculum has been given a firm policy support in Estonia. Despite the declaration of such national strategic development plans as “Knowledge-based Estonia” (Republic of Estonia/Ministry of Education and Research, 2014), the Estonian strategic documents discussed are essentially concerned with the development of competences rather than the development of knowledge.

To conclude, the present overview of Estonian and Lithuanian strategic policy documents indicates a significant influence of the European neoliberal knowledge economy policies on the conceptualisation of the higher education curriculum in the two countries at the national policy level. This is reflected in a new focus on the economic significance of university education and increased involvement of employers in the development of study programmes to enhance the vocational relevance of the higher education curriculum. This goes along with the new emphasis on competences which are served as a means to strengthen the position of higher education institutions within education market and highlight more vocational utility goals of higher education curriculum. In Lithuania and Estonia, the introduction of the competence-based approach to curriculum has been steered through laws and regulations. Meanwhile, the need to develop knowledge in curriculum, despite the frequent policy references to the ‘knowledge society’ or ‘knowledge economy’, has been systematically under-articulated throughout the national policy documents.

The current national policy discourse of the two countries implies unproblematic nature of the current shift from the ‘traditional’ input-based university curriculum as historically influ-

enced by German Bildung tradition and Continental and North European tradition of didactics to a new competence-based curriculum, which is an Anglo-Saxon outcomes-based curriculum model. What is more, it implies a logic of inevitability of this change and the questions surrounding the new competence framework are largely presented as technical questions requiring a mere training and practical adjustment, while its conceptual underpinnings are unstressed. Here, on the contrary, it is argued that the inherent national curriculum tradition inevitably influences the present-day conceptions of the university curriculum and practice. Therefore, the radical shift from one curriculum rationale to another is problematic and inherently conceptually complex if not treated only as a formal change.

## Conclusions

- The present analysis of the European, Estonian and Lithuanian national policy documents has captured the way, in the light of the European ‘knowledge economy’ policies and the Bologna-mandated curriculum modernisation, the traditional conceptualisations of the university knowledge and university education at large have been increasingly determined by economic rather than educational rationale. It has shown that the national higher education policies of the two countries have been largely responsive to the European imperatives to break from the traditional input-based curriculum and shift to the Bologna mandated competence (outcomes)-based curriculum in order to increase the relevance of higher education curriculum. The competence-based approach to curriculum has been gaining ground both in Estonia and Lithuania at the national policy level. Thus, the current national policy trends of the two countries can be described as ‘policy borrowing’ from the European policy framework without a greater consideration of the national localities of the two countries. However, it is important to stress that Estonian policy has demonstrated more attempts to come up with a distinct national higher education policy line than Lithuania.
- The present analysis has revealed the emergent predominant policy suppositions as to the nature of university education and knowledge to be developed in the so called ‘knowledge society’ or ‘knowledge economy’. The higher education policy focus in Lithuania and Estonia, as influenced by the European neoliberal ‘knowledge economy’ policies, has shifted to generic competences and skills which are to ensure graduates employability. Furthermore, the present analysis, by demonstrating a currently prevailing policy objective to respond to the needs of the labour market and a repetitive policy references to such notions as outcome, competence, skill, and employability, as traced throughout strategic higher education documents has also highlighted the reduction of the focus of higher education policy to economic issues. It has been noted in the present analysis that a more holistic notion of knowledge seems to become taken-for-granted and, thus, unstated educational concept within the policy documents, which, it can be assumed, runs risk of trivialising knowledge as such, which traditionally, has been conceived to be the main pillar of the university curriculum and university research. It has been observed that despite the frequent policy references to the ‘knowledge economy’ and the declaration of knowledge and universities to be the key drivers of innovation and growth of Europe, the ‘knowledge economy’ policies and the associated educational policies, paradoxically, challenge, rather than reinforce the role of knowledge. Thus, the present analysis sheds light on the lack and need for educational arguments as informed by curriculum theory to complement and challenge the current hegemonic economic rationale driving the ongoing curriculum modernisation in the European higher education context.

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