

**The Connection Between International Student Mobility
and Employability: A Descriptive Study Among Finnish
Employers**
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ABSTRACT

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International study and training experiences are commonly thought to increase graduate employability. However, only a few studies have attempted to investigate how international experiences are viewed by employers. The purpose of the present study is to explore the perceptions of Finnish employers by focusing on the following questions: 1) What are the competences valued by employers when recruiting graduates? 2) How do employers perceive international competences? 3) What is the role of international experience in recruitment decisions?

A non-probability sample of 60 Finnish employers was used for this research. The data was collected with a web-based questionnaire which gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. A mixed-methods approach was applied for the data analysis, and the data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis.

The findings of the study revealed that international experience is not considered an important recruitment criterion for Finnish employers. The results suggest that employers desire competences, such as reliability and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, it was found that international competences are strongly associated with language skills and understanding of other cultures, but also with many other work-relevant skills. Employers' perceptions of international competences were observed to be closely related to twenty-first-century skills.

The findings imply that international student mobility may not be as crucial for employability as often presumed. All in all, the study suggests that even though the international experience of an applicant is not considered an

important criterion for recruitment, are the attributes associated with international experiences highly valued among employers.

Keywords: employability, student mobility, employers, higher education, graduates

TIIVISTELMÄ

Hyvärinen, Ida. 2019. Kansainvälisen opiskelijaliikkuvuuden ja työllistettävyyden välinen yhteys: kuvaileva tutkimus työnantajien keskuudessa. Kasvatustieteen pro gradu -tutkielma. Jyväskylän yliopisto. Kasvatustieteiden laitos.

Kansainvälisten opiskelu- ja harjoittelukokemusten ajatellaan usein parantavan korkeakoulusta valmistuneiden työllistettävyyttä. Aikaisemmin kuitenkin vain muutamassa tutkimuksessa on pyritty selvittämään, miten työnantajat suhtautuvat kansainvälisiin kokemuksiin. Käsillä olevan tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tarkastella suomalaisten työnantajien käsityksiä. Tutkimuksessa pyritään vastaamaan seuraaviin kysymyksiin: 1) Mitä ominaisuuksia työnantajat arvostavat rekrytoidessaan valmistuneita? 2) Millaisia käsityksiä työnantajilla on kansainvälisestä osaamisesta? 3) Mikä kansainvälisen kokemuksen merkitys on rekrytointipäätöksissä?

Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin 60 suomalaisesta työnantajasta koostuvaa näytettä. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin verkkokyselyllä, joka keräsi sekä määrällistä että laadullista aineistoa. Aineiston analyysi toteutettiin monimenetelmällisesti hyödyntämällä kuvailevia tilastollisia menetelmiä sekä laadullista sisällönanalyysia.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että suomalaiset työnantajat eivät pidä kansainvälistä kokemusta merkittävänä rekrytointikriteerinä. Tulosten mukaan työnantajat arvostavat työnhakijoiden ominaisuuksista erityisesti luotettavuutta ja ongelmanratkaisukykyä. Lisäksi havaittiin, että kansainvälinen osaaminen yhdistetään vahvasti kielitaitoon ja muiden kulttuurien ymmärrykseen, mutta myös moniin muihin työn kannalta relevantteihin taitoihin. Työntekijöiden kansainvälistä osaamista koskevien käsitysten havaittiin olevan yhteydessä useisiin tulevaisuuden taitoihin.

Tutkimustulokset antavat ymmärtää, että kansainvälisen opiskelijaliikkuvuuden merkitys työllistettävyydelle ei ehkä olekaan niin tärkeä kuin usein oletetaan. Kaiken kaikkiaan tutkimus osoittaa, että vaikka työnhakijan

kansainvälistä kokemusta ei pidetäkään keskeisenä rekrytoinnin kriteerinä, ovat monet kansainvälisiin kokemuksiin liitetyt ominaisuudet työnantajien suuresti arvostamia.

Asiasanat: työllistettävyys, opiskelijaliikkuvuus, työnantajat, korkeakoulutus, valmistuneet

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1 INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly popular among higher education students to study abroad or complete an internship abroad as part of their studies. The number of students participating in mobility periods abroad as part of their higher education studies has notably expanded in the past two decades (UNESCO, 2019). In Europe, a significant facilitator of student mobility has been the Erasmus+ program which is a European Union program that supports student mobility by providing opportunities for students to study and/or complete a traineeship in another country (European Commission, 2019; Teichler & Janson, 2007). Due to the expansion of the program, going abroad has become accessible to more students than before.

The importance of international mobility of students has been increasingly promoted in Europe, and it has often been assumed that international student mobility, in itself, is a positive thing (Flander, 2011). Commonly, international student mobility is promoted as an experience that increases the employability of graduates and improves their opportunities in the labor market (e.g., Van Mol, 2017; European Commission, 2019). It has been found that also higher education students themselves believe that studying or training abroad during studies will be beneficial for their subsequent employability (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016).

International study and training experiences gained during studies can be understood as a way to differentiate oneself in the increasingly competitive graduate labor market. Prior research suggests that international student mobility improves employability (e.g., Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Brandenburg et al., 2014). It has been found that international experience is beneficial for employability, especially through the development of competences, and that it may help increase one's opportunities in the labor market. Students who have studied or worked abroad during their studies often report that the experience has helped them in gaining employment after graduation and that it has increased their opportunities in the labor market (Teichler & Janson, 2007; Potts, 2015).

It is often presumed that employers will appreciate and reward applicants with international experience. However, studies dealing with employers' perceptions provide somewhat inconsistent and contradictory findings. It has been suggested that only a minority of European employers perceive international student mobility important or take it into account when making recruitment decisions (Van Mol, 2017). There has been evidence that employers making recruitment decisions often tend to place more value on other credentials, such as work experience, rather than international experience (Petzold, 2017a; Garam, 2005). On the other hand, it has also been suggested that employers consider international experiences increasingly important for employability (Brandenburg et al., 2014, p. 16).

So far, relatively little attention has been paid to the perspective of employers. Previous research on the connection between international experience and employability has typically focused on the perceptions of students rather than employers (Flander, 2011; Petzold, 2017a). To date, only a few studies have attempted to investigate whether employers favor graduates who have acquired international experience during their studies compared to those who have not (Petzold, 2017a). Especially in the Finnish context, research on the employers' perceptions has been limited in number; search of the literature revealed only two studies (Garam, 2005; Leppänen et al., 2013) that have concerned the attitudes of Finnish employers towards the importance of international student mobility. It is important to study the topic of employability from the employers' perspective, since, in the end, the employability of a graduate is dependent on the employer (Harvey, 2001). The main purpose of the present study is to explore the attitudes of Finnish employers towards international competences and experiences and to analyze the perceived importance of international student mobility in recruitment decisions.

In the following chapters, the study proceeds as follows. Sections 2 and 3 illustrate the theoretical frameworks of international student mobility and employability. Section 4 discusses prior research findings on the connection between international student mobility and employability and addresses a gap

in the literature. Section 5 presents the research problems, and Section 6 is concerned with the implementation of the study, including a description of the sample and the methods used. Section 7 then presents the empirical findings of the research, and finally, in Section 8, the research findings will be examined, and implications for future research will be made.

2 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY

2.1 Internationalization of higher education

Internationalization has been given increasing emphasis by higher education institutions in Finland and across the world, and during the past decades, the concept of internationalization of higher education has become a central issue (Pekkola, 2009; Teichler, 2004; Knight, 2012). In Europe, the process of internationalization of higher education has been affected by global development and especially by the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The development of such area was one of the main aims in the Bologna Process, which started from the Bologna Declaration in 1999. One of the main aims in the Bologna Declaration was to facilitate student mobility within Europe and to attract students from outside of Europe. (Bologna Declaration, 1999; Teichler, 2009.) In Finland, the process resulted in many reforms in higher education system, for example, structures of degrees changed, and universities began using the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) (Lahti & Ahola, 2009).

International student mobility is not the only aspect of internationalization, even though it might be the most visible one (Brandenburg et al., 2014; Knight, 2012). Internationalization of higher education is often divided into two interdependent pillars: “at home” and “abroad”. Internationalization at home refers to campus-based activities that help students to develop international understanding and intercultural skills such as the international dimension of the curriculum, teaching and learning processes, extra-curricular activities, and research and scholarly activities. Whereas internationalization abroad (also referred to as “crossborder education”) includes all forms of education that cross the national borders, such as international student mobility. (Knight, 2012; De Wit, 2013.)

Globalization and the emergence of the knowledge economy can be seen as the driving forces impacting the internationalization of higher education.

Globalization has been defined as “the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). Globalization is understood to have resulted in various changes, according to Altbach and Knight (2007, p. 291) these changes are “the integration of research, the use of English as the lingua franca for scientific communication, the growing international labor market for scholars and scientists, the growth of communications firms and multinational and technology publishing, and the use of informational technology”. It comes as no surprise that higher education institutions are also strongly influenced by globalization.

Internationalization of higher education is considered increasingly important (Knight, 2004). In general, the meaning of internationalization has been seen like Altbach, Reisber and Rumbley (2009) state, that it is a strategy for societies and institutions to respond to globalization. According to them, internationalization can be seen as a way for higher education to prepare students for the globalized world. In Europe, internationalization of higher education has commonly been linked to a range of positive outcomes. According to Teichler (2009, p. 95), internationalization of higher education has, for example, been linked to the development of personality traits, better academic quality, and technological innovations. Furthermore, internationalization has been presumed to enrich the cultural lives of European nations and to serve peace and consensus, and it has been expected to boost economic growth and improve societal well-being (Teichler, 2009, p. 95). According to De Wit (2002, pp. 83–102), four broad categories of rationales for internationalization can be identified: political, economic, social, and cultural and academic rationales. According to him, economic motivations are becoming more dominant, and there is a direct link with the globalization of our economies.

2.2 International student mobility

As already mentioned, this study focuses on international student mobility, that possibly is the most visible part of the internationalization of higher education. Student mobility has always been understood as “one of the key elements of the international aspects of higher education” (Teichler, 2009, p. 96). According to Brandenburg and colleagues (2014, p. 28), international student mobility can be used to refer to “any activity in the context of higher education institutions that moved a person beyond a national border”. Typically, international student mobility is divided into two main types of mobility; it can either refer to international students who are completing a degree abroad (diploma or degree mobility), or to students who are participating in a period abroad program (credit mobility) (Knight, 2012; Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016). In the present study, international student mobility is used to refer to temporary mobility (short-term study mobility and internships) in the context of higher education.

Today, international student mobility can be understood to include also new types of mobility. Knight (2012, pp. 24–25) has defined and described six categories of physical student mobility: 1. Full degree program in a foreign country, 2. Short-term study-abroad experience as part of degree program at home institution, 3. Crossborder collaborative degree programs between two or more institutions or providers, 4. Research and fieldwork, 5. Internships and practical experiences, and 6. Study tour and workshops. Alongside physical student mobility, distance learning, and virtual mobility can be seen as newer forms of student mobility (Knight, 2012).

The number of internationally mobile students has expanded in the last decades: in 2000, the number of outbound internationally mobile students was around 2 million, whereas, in 2016, the number had doubled to around 5 million (UNESCO, 2019). In Finland, almost 9000 higher education students participated in student mobility programs abroad in 2018 (Vipunen, 2019). In the European Union, there is a will to increase the mobility of higher education students even further. The goal that was set in the “EU Education and Training 2020 Strategy”,

aims to “double the proportion of European students completing a period of study or training abroad to 20% by 2020” (Brandenburg et al., 2014, p. 62).

One of the arguments for the promotion of student mobility has been the expectation that the mobility of students will bring positive effects on the participants. For example, the European Commission (2019, p. 29) has listed these expected effects of student mobility as follows: “improved learning performance; enhanced employability and improved career prospects; increased sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; increased self-empowerment and self-esteem; improved foreign language competences; enhanced intercultural awareness; more active participation in society; better awareness of the European project and the EU values; and increased motivation for taking part in future (formal/non-formal) education or training after the mobility period abroad”.

Furthermore, the motivations behind the decisions of higher education students to study or train abroad may be multifold. It has been found that internationally mobile students believe that studying abroad will increase their employability and have a positive impact on their subsequent career (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016). In a study conducted by Brandenburg and colleagues (2014), it was found that the most important motivations for students to go abroad are the opportunity to develop skills and language proficiency, as well as the chance to live in a different country and meet new people. Evidence from a study conducted by Trower and Lehmann (2017) suggests that the opportunity for personal growth plays a more important role in the students’ decisions to study abroad than reasons related to employment and career.

The ERASMUS program has made studying and training abroad possible for more students than before, and thus, most European students now consider spending a period abroad as a potential option (Teichler, 2009). Petzold and Peter (2015) suggest that studying abroad has now become a social norm. However, some barriers for participation in the ERASMUS program can still be identified, for example, personal and financial barriers (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, De Wit, & Vujic, 2013). It has been found that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are still more likely to take part in mobility periods, and that

women are more likely to go abroad than men (Jokila & Kallo, 2017). In the Finnish context, it has also been found that studying abroad prolongs the duration of bachelor studies (Lahti & Ahola, 2009).

3 GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

3.1 Conceptualizations of employability

As mentioned earlier, the promotion of international student mobility is often based on the expectation that international experiences will positively impact the employability of graduates. Over the past decades, graduate employability has received widespread attention across Europe. Since the beginning of the Bologna Process, promoting European citizens' employability has been defined as one of the main aims (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Graduate employability is frequently brought up in debates in the European Union, for example, the ministerial conference in 2015 stated that "fostering the employability of graduates throughout their working lives" is one of the main goals of the European Higher Education Area (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015).

In the research literature, widely varying and ambiguous definitions of employability have been used, and a generally accepted definition is lacking (Suleman, 2018; Thijssen, Van der & Rocco, 2008; Harvey, 2001). The term employability has been described as complex and challenging to define (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Due to the complexity of the term and the growing interest in graduate employability, Thijssen and colleagues (2008, p. 167) have described employability as an "attractive but confusing professional buzzword".

The concept of employability has been empirically studied only since the late 1990s (Thijssen et al., 2008), and since then, several definitions of employability have been proposed. The term employability can broadly be defined as the capability of a person to find and sustain employment (e.g., Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Thijssen et al., 2008). One of the most cited definitions of employability is the one by Hillage and Pollard (1998, p. 12), which defines employability in the following way:

"Employability is about the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (eg. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work."

Yorke (2006, p. 8) has provided a newer definition of employability:

“A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.”

The present study will use this definition of employability since the definition acknowledges that not only is employability important for graduates themselves, it also positively affects the workers, communities and economies.

Sin and Neave (2016) suggest that there are, in principle, two different interpretations of employability. One interpretation sees employability as an “individual responsibility”, which refers to the personal characteristics that enable individuals to find and sustain employment. Broader interpretations of employability also consider the “wider personal, social, economic, and labor market circumstances” (Sin & Neave, 2016, p. 1449). This notion is supported by Harvey (2001), who has distinguished “individual employability” from “institutional employability”. The first one refers to graduate attributes and the ability to demonstrate these attributes in order to get a job. Institutional employability refers to the role that higher education institutions have in providing opportunities for students to develop their employability.

As regards measuring employability, there has been a tendency to measure employability based on outcomes, for example, by using employment rates of graduates (Thijssen et al., 2008; Harvey, 2001). However, it should be noted that employment and employability are two different concepts. According to Knight and Yorke (2002, p. 263), it is important to distinguish “graduate employability” from “graduate-level employment. Therefore, the use of outcome-based measures of employability has been criticized (e.g., Harvey, 2001; Bridgstock, 2009; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). One reason for this is that measuring employability based on outcomes, does not consider the possibility that some graduates may have ended up in lower-level jobs where they are not using the knowledge and skills gained in higher education (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007, p. 278).

Since measuring employability based on outcomes is considered too simplistic, different models have been proposed to conceptualize the idea of graduate employability better. Many of the models make suggestions for the essential components of employability, for example, the USEM model of employability developed by Knight and Yorke (2002), proposed that employability consists of four inter-related components:

1. understanding;
2. skills (subject-specific and generic);
3. efficacy beliefs;
4. metacognition

This model highlighted the importance of individual's efficacy beliefs and metacognition as essential components of employability. According to Knight and Yorke (2002), less attention had earlier been paid to these two components.

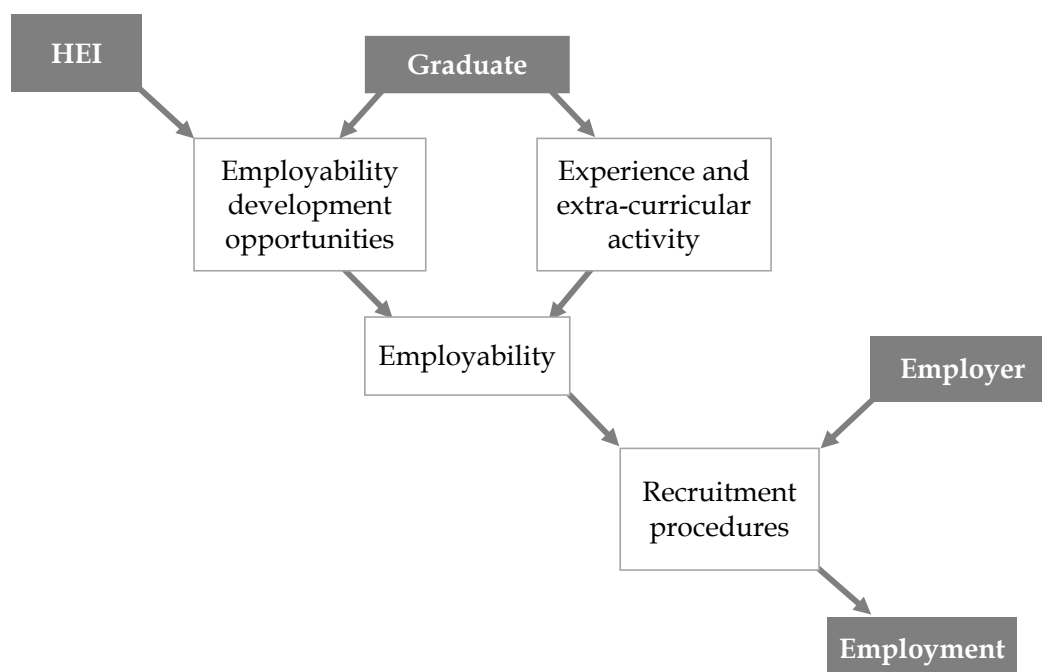


FIGURE 1. A model of employability-development and employment (Harvey, 2001, p. 102)

Another model, developed by Harvey (2001), helps to understand the development of employability and employment (Figure 1). The model assumes

that higher education institutions (HEIs) provide various opportunities for students to develop their employability and that engagement with these opportunities leads to employment. However, the model suggests that engagement in these employability development opportunities is affected by the students' previous experiences and extra-curricular activities.

Furthermore, the model takes into account the role of employers by presuming that the employment of the graduate is affected by the employer's beliefs. Harvey (2001, p. 102) argues that employers are the ones who eventually "convert the 'employability' of the graduate into employment". This approach to the development of employability is useful for the purposes of the present study since it acknowledges the essential role of employers. In the model, international mobility experiences could be understood as employability-development opportunities provided to students, with which students may or may not engage.

It is good to note that the use of the term employability in the context of higher education can also be criticized. For example, Thijssen and colleagues (2008, p. 167) have noted that the connotation of employability may sometimes be negative, particularly when it is used to refer to individuals who have problems with career self-management. Similarly, Teichler (2009, p. 103) has criticized the use of the term employability, because it usually refers to "youth at risk", of whom the universities do not have to be actively concerned about. However, he suggests that the concept of employability is essential in the search for new developments in competences and curricula.

When analyzing graduate employability, the occurring changes in the world of work should be taken into account. According to Tomlinson (2017, p. 2), graduate employability has "a strong economic dimension that is linked to the changes in the world of work and the movement towards a high-skilled and knowledge-driven economy". Recently, higher education institutions have increasingly been pressured to increase the employability of students (Prokou, 2008). Governments have started to recognize the vital role that higher education has in preparing students for the labor market, and they have started to more critically perceive the competences that are developed in higher education

(Bridgstock, 2009; Jääskelä et al., 2018). The following two chapters will move on to discuss employability in the context of today's changing labor market.

3.2 Competences integral to graduate employability – the growing importance of generic skills

As discussed above, employability is commonly understood as different attributes and skills that make graduates more likely to obtain and maintain a job. Previous research has attempted to identify and list competences that are integral to employability today, and these lists have included competences such as flexibility, problem-solving, teamworking skills, computer literacy, lifelong learning, adaptability, analytical skills, and communication skills (European Commission, 2010; De La Harpe, Radloff, & Wyber, 2000). Furthermore, it has been suggested that globalization and internationalization have increased the need for graduates who can operate in culturally diverse contexts (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). According to Li (2017), intercultural sensitivity and communication skills are now considered increasingly important components of graduate employability.

It has been argued that skills and attributes that can be transferred to different occupational situations are increasingly important in today's labor market, in contrast to the specific job skills that were desired in the past (Bridgstock, 2009). These so-called generic skills are now considered to be an essential component of employability (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Knight & Yorke, 2002). In literature, generic skills have also been referred to as "key skills", "core competences", "generic attributes" and "transferable skills" for example (Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018; Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). Generic skills are generally understood to include a range of different competences such as critical and scientific thinking, interpersonal skills, communication skills, teamworking skills, information literacy, problem-solving, and project working (Bridgstock, 2009; Jääskelä, Nykänen & Tynjälä, 2018).

Alongside with generic skills, the concept of “twenty-first-century skills” has been used for describing the competences today’s graduates need in order to succeed in today’s labor market. Binkley and colleagues (2012) have developed an often-cited framework for twenty-first-century skills, the so-called KSAVE model, which discusses knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and ethics that are necessary for the twenty-first-century. In the model, they have defined ten important skills and grouped them into four categories. The first category, “Ways of Thinking”, involves creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and learning to learn and the development of metacognition. Communication, collaboration, and teamworking skills are grouped under the second category, “Ways of Working”. The third category, “Tools for Working”, includes information and ICT literacy, and the fourth category, “Living in the World”, involves local and global citizenship, life and career, personal and social responsibility, as well as cultural awareness and competence. (Binkley et al., 2012, pp. 33–58.)

3.3 Shifts in the contexts of education-to-work transitions

The concept of employability can be used, not only as a descriptor of individual ability but also as a way to explain and theorize the transition from higher education to the labor market (Li, 2017). It has been argued that today’s higher education graduates are experiencing more difficulties when making the transition from education to the world of work than before. Investments in education are no longer considered to be a guarantee of an easy education-to-work transition as today’s graduates are facing a wide range of challenges, such as individualization and positional competition (Tomlinson, 2012).

The expansion of higher education has typically been referred to as one of the main reasons why finding employment has become more demanding. This argument has been presented, for example, by Salas-Velasco (2007). The massification of higher education has been one of the most visible changes in higher education over the past three decades (Tomlinson, 2012; Prokou, 2008). It

can be observed that participation in tertiary education has increased across OECD countries: in 2007, the share of 25-34-year-olds who had completed tertiary education was 34%, whereas ten years later the share was already 44% (OECD, 2018, p. 55). It has been suggested that the massification may result in credential inflation as more people are graduating with similar credentials.

In a study investigating the perceptions of university students, Tomlinson (2008) found that higher education students increasingly believe that in order to gain a positional advantage in the labor market, they need to add value and distinction to their academic credentials. Lehmann (2012) has argued that the importance of so-called extra-credential activities is increasing. Similarly, Tomlinson (2017, p. 7) suggests that “additional work is required to demonstrate one’s unique employment value”. In the present study, it will be investigated whether international study and training experiences could possibly serve as a way for higher education students to distinguish themselves in the increasingly competitive labor market. The next section moves on to discuss the theoretical findings of the value of international student mobility for employability.

4 THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY ON EMPLOYABILITY

4.1 International experience and employability

Several studies have investigated the impacts of international student mobility. Many of them suggest that participation in student mobility programs has benefits concerning the probability of getting employment and future career prospects. For example, a study among former ERASMUS program participants discovered that students who had been internationally mobile during their studies were half as likely to face long-term unemployment than the students who had not been internationally mobile. The findings of the study also showed that five years after graduation, the unemployment rate of formerly mobile students was 23% lower. (Brandenburg et al., 2014, pp. 113–116.) Another study investigating the experiences of former ERASMUS participants found that the majority of former ERASMUS students believe that their study abroad experience has helped them in obtaining their first job (Teichler & Janson, 2007). Similar findings have been identified in Australia, where it was found that most of the formerly mobile students perceived that their experience had had a positive or a very positive impact in terms of landing their first job. Furthermore, they reported that the experience had positively impacted their long-term career prospects. (Potts, 2015, p. 450.)

International experience is suggested to have a positive impact on career opportunities, especially when it comes to international assignments. Prior research suggests that graduates with international experience are more frequently employed in international work assignments compared to the graduates who have not been internationally mobile during their studies (Teichler & Janson, 2007; Bracht et al., 2006; Wiers-Jenssen, 2008). Additionally, a Norwegian study discovered that mobile students are also more likely to end up working abroad after graduation and that they more often work for an international employer, compared to students who have not been internationally

mobile during their studies (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008). Similarly, a study among Australian students revealed that students who study abroad multiple times are more likely to end up working for organizations that operate internationally (Potts, 2015, pp. 451–452).

As mentioned earlier, employability should not be measured only by using outcome-based measures (e.g., Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Harvey, 2001). Therefore, it should be considered how international experiences may enhance graduate employability through the development of competences and attributes. It has previously been discovered that competences integral to employability, especially generic skills, are developed through international study and training experiences (Brandenburg et al., 2014). A majority of internationally mobile students believe that they will turn out to be superior in many professionally relevant competences compared to the students who have not been internationally mobile (Teichler & Janson, 2007). It has been found that formerly mobile students perceive international experiences beneficial, for example, for communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, and problem-solving skills (Potts, 2015). In a study investigating the perceptions of students, academics and employers, Crossman and Clarke (2010) discovered that international experience is connected to the development of soft skills, such as cultural understanding, tolerance and new ways of thinking. The findings of their study suggested that there is a clear connection between international experience and graduate employability.

However, it should not be assumed that international experiences automatically lead to these different competences (De Wit, 2015; Castro, Woodin, Lundgren, & Byram, 2016). It has, for example, been suggested that individuals with certain attributes are more likely to go abroad; it has been discovered that, for example, students participating in the ERASMUS program tend to show higher values for personality traits, such as openness and adaptability, than students who have not participated in the program, even before going abroad (Brandenburg et al., 2014, p. 16). Additionally, De Wit (2015) points out that it is

not guaranteed that all students staying abroad will participate in activities and interactions that develop competences.

Previous research has shown national differences in the benefits of international student mobility. Students from countries that have joined the European Union late have been found to report substantially more often high professional value of temporary study abroad than former ERASMUS students from Western European countries (Teichler and Janson, 2007). It could be hypothesized that in Finland, there would be an increasing need for employees that can operate in the global market since Finland is a small country that is strongly dependent on other countries.

This chapter has discussed previous research findings on the connection between international student mobility and employability. The studies presented thus far, have mainly focused on graduate outcomes and the perceptions of students. The following chapter will move on to discuss evidence from studies that have approached the issue from the perspective of employers.

4.2 An employer perspective on the importance of international student mobility

Previous research on employers' attitudes towards international student mobility shows that employers generally value international experiences and associate them with many positive outcomes. Employers have been found to associate international experiences with the development of different skills such as language skills, adaptability, flexibility, problem-solving, social skills, and the ability to work under pressure (Garam, 2005; Bracht et al., 2006). A study conducted by Bracht and colleagues (2006) revealed that European employers believe that graduates with international experience have higher competences compared to graduates who have no international experience. It has been suggested that international experiences of graduates are considered increasingly important among employers, the share of employers who consider

international experience essential for employability has nearly doubled between the years of 2006 and 2013 from 37% to 64% (Brandenburg et al., 2014, p. 16).

However, previous research findings exploring the importance of international student mobility for employers' recruitment decisions have been inconsistent. For example, a study investigating the perceptions European employers has suggested that employers regard international experiences as an important criterion for recruitment (Bracht et al., 2006). Conversely, evidence from two Finnish studies (Garam, 2005; Leppänen et al., 2013) investigating the perceptions of Finnish employers, suggests that international student mobility is not an important recruitment criterion for Finnish employers. The results of the study conducted by Leppänen and colleagues (2013, p. 30) showed that international experience is rewarded only by 36,5 % of employers. Similarly, in a study conducted by Garam (2005), it was found that when recruiting graduates, more than half of the employers were not interested whether or not the candidate had acquired international experience.

A recent study among German employers (Petzold, 2017a), discovered that employers take international experience into account when considering hiring. However, the same study found that employers consider professional work experience and final grades much more significant for hiring than international experience. Similar findings have been identified in Finland, where it was found that in a hypothetical hiring situation, where two applicants are put against each other, one with study abroad experience and one with no international experience but the same amount of work experience in Finland, around half of the employers consider work experience as a better option while only 10% consider study abroad to be the better option (Garam, 2005). Similarly, a study conducted among Slovenian employers discovered that employers prefer work experience acquired at home more than study abroad experience (Flander, 2011).

The employer's operational environment has also been found to affect how employers regard the international experience of an applicant when recruiting. The findings of a German study (Petzold, 2017b), suggest that study abroad experience is a more important criterion for recruitment among employers with

foreign branches than among national employers. It was discovered that international employers respond quicker to applicants with study abroad experience and also more often invite them to job interviews, than the national employers. Similar findings have been identified in Finland, where it has been found that employers who operate internationally, consider the international experience of an applicant more critical for recruiting, compared to the employers who operate in the domestic market (Leppänen et al., 2013; Garam 2005).

The attitudes employers' have towards international student mobility have been found to depend on the type of job. Employers have been found to place more value on international experiences when they are hiring employees for jobs that have international elements (Garam, 2005), and when they are considering an international assignment of a candidate (Petzold, 2017a). Furthermore, international student mobility appears to be more highly valued in some disciplines, for example, it has been found that international experience is particularly valued in business and economic fields (Bracht et al., 2006). It has also been found that different forms of student mobility may be perceived differently; employers have been found to place more value on international internship and work experiences than study abroad experiences (Van Mol, 2017; Flander, 2011).

5 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The present study aims to explore the gap found in the research literature pertaining to the benefits of international student mobility. As mentioned earlier, the connection between international student mobility and employability has mostly been studied from the perspective of students and based on outcomes, and only a limited number of studies have attempted to explore the perceptions of employers. Especially in the Finnish context, research is needed as there are only a few studies conducted on the topic. As today's higher education graduates are reportedly facing increasing challenges when making the transition from education to the changing labor market, it is increasingly important to understand which competences employers are seeking in graduates. The fact that a growing number of higher education students is deciding to go abroad as part of their studies, and the notion that international experiences are commonly promoted in terms of enhancing employability, make this topic an important area for research.

The purpose of the present study is to explore the connection between international student mobility and graduate employability from the perspective of Finnish employers. Firstly, the study attempts to identify which competences employers consider significant when recruiting higher education graduates. Secondly, the study explores employers' perceptions and attitudes towards international competences, first by investigating the characteristics that employers associate with international competences and experiences, and then, by exploring how employers describe international competences and their usefulness in working life. Finally, the role of international experience in hiring decisions will be analyzed. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the competences valued by Finnish employers when recruiting graduates?
2. How do Finnish employers perceive international competences?

- 2.1. What are the characteristics employers associate with international competences and experiences?
- 2.2. How do employers describe international competences?
3. What is the role of international student mobility in recruitment decisions?

The following section will move on to describe the implementation of the study. After this, the findings of the study will be presented, and a comparison to prior studies will be made. In the final part, conclusions and discussion will be provided.

6 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

6.1 The Research Process

The data was collected with an online survey platform Webropol 3.0. between 14 January and 18 February 2019. The target group of the research consisted of persons responsible for recruiting, working in Finnish expert organizations. The aim was to reach prospective employers for higher education graduates. A non-probability sample of 60 employers was used for this research. There are certain disadvantages associated with the use of non-probability samples. A major disadvantage of using a non-probability sample, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p. 153), is that “every member of the wider population does not have an equal chance of being included in the sample”, and therefore there is a higher risk of bias and skewness. However, since the present study is descriptive and not striving for generalizable results, was the use of a non-probability sample considered a suitable option.

In order to find employers that match the selection criteria, were the contacted organizations selected from the participants of a recruitment fair organized for higher education students and from Finnish employers’ job advertisements on an internet job platform seeking higher education graduates. E-mail addresses of persons working in leading positions or personnel administration were collected from the organizations’ web pages. All in all, 451 invitations were sent via e-mails. The invitations included information about the research and an individualized link to the survey. A follow-up e-mail was sent a few weeks later. Unfortunately, the response rate was rather low (10,5%), as only 43 responses were returned. In order to increase the response rate, a public link to the survey was shared on the researcher’s social media platforms, which led to 17 more responses. All in all, the welcome page of the questionnaire was visited 226 times, the questionnaire was started by 81 persons, and finished by 60 persons.

The research used an existing questionnaire, which has been used in the research project of the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) and Demos Helsinki (Leppänen et al., 2013). Permission to use the questionnaire was obtained by contacting the Finnish National Agency for Education. The questionnaire was chosen since it was found to contain questions relevant to the purposes of the present study. The questionnaire was adjusted to the needs of the present study by removing irrelevant questions and by adding two questions. The first question that was added, asked the respondents to address their position with respect to recruitment decisions, and in the second question, employers were asked whether or not they had recruited higher education graduates in the last five years, and whether or not they were planning on recruiting higher education graduates in the next five years. The final version of the questionnaire can be found attached to this paper in Appendix 1. The questionnaire was piloted with two respondents before distribution, in order to avoid bias and ensure the functionality of the online survey platform.

There are various advantages of using questionnaires for data collection. Firstly, questionnaires are considered useful when collecting data from a large group of subjects (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2009). Secondly, questionnaires tend to be more reliable compared to interviews due to their anonymity. Using questionnaires is also often considered more economical, for example, in terms of time and money. Disadvantages of using questionnaires include, for example, incorrect or biased responses, low response rates, and poor sampling. (Cohen et al., 2013). Furthermore, when using a questionnaire, the researcher cannot ensure whether or not the respondents are truthful and thorough in their responses (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009). The use of a questionnaire was considered useful for the purposes of the present research since the aim was to collect information from a large number of employers.

6.2 The Participants

This section provides information about the participants of the present study as well as about the organizations they represented. The total sample consisted of 60 respondents, precisely half of them were female, and half of them were male. Participants were aged between 24 and 64, and the average age was 46,1. Nearly all of the respondents held a degree from higher education, a majority of them (n=45) had graduated from a traditional university. The respondents were responsible for making recruitment decisions in the organizations they worked at, and a majority of them (n=44) were directly involved in recruitment decision-making processes. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in more detail below in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants (N = 60)

Demographic Characteristics	f	%
Age		
24-40	15	25
41-50	22	36,7
51-64	23	38,3
Educational level		
Basic education	1	1,7
University of applied sciences	14	23,3
Traditional university	45	75
The position with respect to recruitment decisions		
Managerial / director	44	73,3
Collegial participation in recruitment decisions	11	18,3
Colleague	5	8,3

The respondents had varying levels of experience of living abroad. Two-thirds of the respondents (n=40) had personal experience of living continuously in a foreign country for three months or longer, and almost half of the respondents

(n=27) had lived abroad for one year or longer. It could be presumed that the respondents whom themselves had experience of living abroad, would also be more aware of the benefits of the experience.

The organizations consisted mostly of private businesses (n=45). The organizations operated in a variety of different fields, a large number of them operated in information and communication (n=14); professional, scientific and technical activities (n=8); and education (n=7). The organizations were mainly located in the Helsinki-Uusimaa Region (n=43) or Southern Finland (n=10).

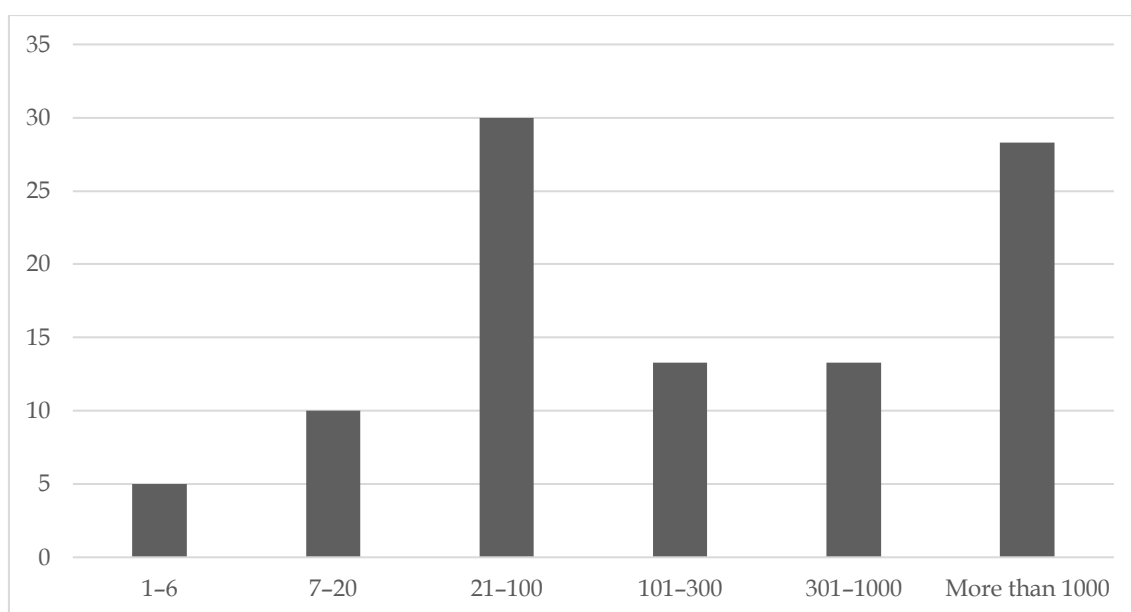


FIGURE 2. Sizes of the organizations (%)

The sizes of the organizations varied from small companies of 1-6 employees to companies with more than 1000 employees. Slightly more than half of the organizations consisted of more than 100 employees (Figure 2). The organizations represented potential employers for higher education graduates as a vast majority of them (n=50) had recruited higher education graduates in the last five years and also had intentions to recruit more in the following five years (Figure 3).

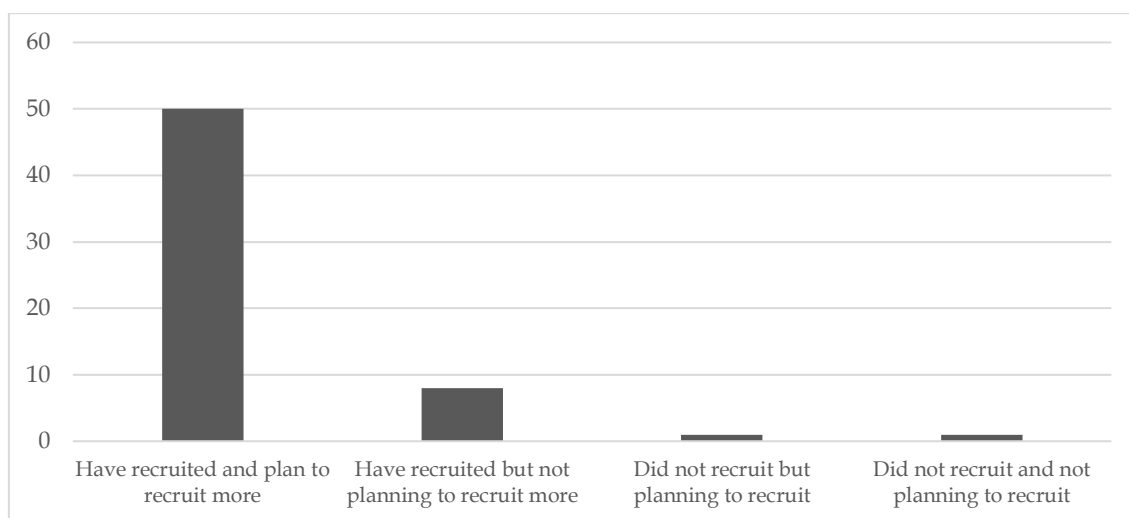


FIGURE 3. History of recruiting and intentions to recruit higher education graduates (n=60)

Furthermore, a majority of the organizations (n=51) operated internationally. Most of the organizations had cooperation with partners abroad (n=35) and were involved in international projects (n=34). Many of them also had offices abroad (n=23), export and/or sales abroad (n=19) and import from abroad (n=9).

6.3 Research Methods

Since the data in this research consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed-methods approach was selected. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 17), the use of mixed methods allows the researcher to use “qualitative and quantitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language” in the same study. The mixed-methods approach allows more in-depth insight into the perceptions and attitudes of employers. One of the advantages of using mixed methods is that the weaknesses of a single method can be overcome by combining it with another method. The use of mixed methods, for example, allows using words to add meaning to numbers. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004.) However, there are also certain drawbacks associated with the use of the mixed methods approach. Firstly, the researcher has to have a good understanding of both methods and understand how to mix them

appropriately, and secondly, the use of mixed methods may also be more time consuming (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 21).

As mentioned earlier, the data was collected with a questionnaire which included mostly close-ended questions and three open-ended questions. Except for the two questions that were added by the researcher, the questions are from the questionnaire originally constructed by Leppänen and colleagues (2013). The questionnaire also included some questions that, in the end, were excluded from the data analysis, and therefore, will not be presented here. The following sections will move on to discuss the questionnaire design in more detail.

As regards background information, the questionnaire included multiple questions collecting information about the participants and the organizations they represented. The respondents' age, gender, and educational background were addressed. Participants were also asked two questions concerning their previous experiences of living abroad. Questions about the organizations addressed the sector, industry, size, and location of the organizations. In addition, the international activities of the organizations were addressed with the question: "Does your business operate internationally?", to which the respondents could select one or several options from six response alternatives (e.g., "No", "Import from abroad", "Offices abroad").

Furthermore, the questionnaire gathered information about the employers' attitudes towards internationality. In order to explore the employers' attitudes towards internationality in general, the respondents were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with ten different statements about internationality (e.g., "Internationality is a positive thing", "Being international is part of everyday life for me"). Participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). A mean sum of variables, "internationality as a way of life", was constructed, however, before this, the following items had to be reverse scored: "Internationalization is a threat" and "I am critical towards internationality". Additionally, in order to increase reliability, two items were omitted. A mean sum variable of the

remaining eight items was used in the final analysis, and its Cronbach's alpha was .80.

The first research question attempted to determine the competences employers are seeking when recruiting higher education graduates. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rate the significance of a range of different competences such as "analytical thinking", "tolerance" and "creativity". They were asked to rate the significance of each of them by using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all significant) to 5 (Very significant).

The second research question attempted to explore the perceptions of employers on international competences. First, the study attempted to identify what types of characteristics employers link to international competences and experiences. Using a five-point Likert scale, the participants were asked to rate how strongly a variety of different characteristics were linked to international competences and experiences. The scale ranged from 1 (No link to international competences/experiences) to 5 (A very strong link to international competences/experiences). Furthermore, in order to gain a more profound understanding of employers' perceptions of international competences, three open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. The open-ended questions were as follows: "What are international competences in your opinion?", "What kinds of international competences/experiences do you find useful in your field?", and "What kinds of international competences/experiences do you find harmful in your field?". The first question was compulsory, and the following two questions were optional. Open-ended responses are considered useful since they can help gather such information that a questionnaire might otherwise not be able to gather (Cohen et al. 2013, p. 392).

The third research question attempted to explore the role of international experience in recruitment decisions. In order to investigate employers' attitudes towards international experience, the respondents were asked to select one option from five statements varying from "When recruiting we are not interested in whether the applicant has international study/work experience." to "We

require international experience in many positions in which we recruit new graduates from higher education.”. For the data analysis, these variables were recoded as a binary variable, indicating whether or not recruiters consider study and work experience abroad significant when making recruitment decisions (1 = not significant; 2 = significant).

6.4 Reliability and validity

This chapter moves on to discuss the reliability and validity of the present study. Firstly, the use of mixed methods can be considered to increase the reliability and validity of the study, since using both quantitative and qualitative approaches and methods may help to overcome the weaknesses of a single approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The issues of reliability were taken into account throughout the research process. Firstly, the reliability of the research was increased by describing the whole research process as much in detail as possible, and by using tables not only to present the quantitative data but also to show links between the qualitative data and results (e.g., Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In addition, Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the measure “internationality as a way of life”. Finally, it is important to note that the small sample size (n=60) can be considered to decrease the reliability of the study.

Furthermore, the issues of validity were taken into account throughout the research process. Invalidity during data gathering was minimized by conducting a pilot questionnaire to ensure that the questions were understandable. The use of an existing questionnaire could be seen as a way to increase the validity of the research since the questionnaire has already been used for another research and proven to measure what was wanted. However, it should also be acknowledged that the questionnaire was in English, a non-native language for the respondents, and thus, there is a higher possibility for misunderstandings. Also, the fact that all of the close-ended questions were compulsory may have affected the responses.

The issues of validity were taken into account in the data analysis as well. The validity of the research can be increased by using appropriate statistical treatments for the level of data (Cohen et al., 2013). The sample size of the present research was relatively small due to the difficulty in obtaining respondents for the questionnaire, and thus, the analysis was carried out using mostly descriptive statistics, which is a method appropriate for small sample sizes. When analyzing the qualitative data, the validity was increased by avoiding the subjective interpretation of data (Cohen et al., 2013). Finally, attention was paid to the correct way of reporting data. This was done by ensuring that the data was used representatively and presented without misrepresenting its message, furthermore, it was ensured that the data supported claims being made, reporting was accurate, and all of the research questions were answered (Cohen et al., 2013). However, the small sample size and the use of a non-probability sample can be seen to decrease the validity of the present study, and therefore, the results of the study should be interpreted with caution.

6.5 Data Analyses

The analyses for the quantitative data were carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 24). The data were analyzed mostly by means of descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Cross tabulation was used to find relationships between categorical variables, and the significant trends discovered through cross tabulation were examined through a Chi-square test. A t-test was used for comparisons between one continuous variable (“internationality as a way of life”) and categorical variables.

The data obtained from the open-ended question was analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which can be used to interpret text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The qualitative content analysis is considered a flexible method, that usually includes the following steps: selecting the unit of analysis, categorizing, and finding themes from categories (Cho & Lee, 2014; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Qualitative content analysis has been defined as “a research

method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

In the present study, the data was analyzed following the steps of inductive content analysis described by Elo and Kyngäs (2008). First, the written responses were read through to make sense of the data, the lengths of the responses varied between one word to 134 words. Next, the responses not answering the question were excluded. Responses included in the final analysis consisted of 53 responses for the first open-ended question, 41 for the second one, and 17 for the third one. Finally, the data was organized by open coding, creating categories, and abstraction.

6.6 Ethics

Prior to data collection, issues related to research ethics were taken into consideration. The anonymity of the respondents was ensured by avoiding questions that included personal information. The purpose of the research was clearly explained on the first page of the questionnaire, and the privacy notice for research participants was presented on the second page (see Appendix 1). Before continuing to the survey, the respondents had to confirm that they had read and understood the privacy notice and that they agreed with it by clicking the “I agree” checkbox. The research participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, and they were informed that the data would be stored on the researcher’s computer and destroyed after one year. The participants were also informed that the participation was completely voluntary and based on their consent and that they could resign from participation at any time. Furthermore, the researcher’s contact information was provided to the research participants, and they were encouraged to contact the researcher regarding any questions.

7 RESULTS

The aims of this study were (1) to explore the competences Finnish employers consider significant when making recruitment decisions, (2.1) to investigate the characteristics employers link to international competences and experiences, and (2.2.) to investigate how employers describe international competences, and finally (3) to examine the perceived value of international experiences for employment.

7.1 Competences valued by employers when recruiting

The competences employers value when recruiting were studied based on a question, that asked the respondents to assess the significance of different graduate attributes. Table 2 presents the values employers gave to different attributes, as well as their mean values and standard deviations (SD). As can be seen from the table, the skills employers value the most when recruiting graduates are reliability, problem-solving, and cooperation. In previous studies (Leppänen et al., 2013; Garam, 2005), these skills have also been found to be on top of the list of skills employers desire when recruiting.

Experience of studying and/or working abroad was not considered significant for recruiting. Only 28,3 %(n=17) of the respondents considered that it is important that the applicant has acquired international study or work experience. Twenty percent (n=12) of the employers reported that the international experience of an applicant is not at all significant. Similarly, the readiness to travel abroad for business was rated among the least significant attributes of graduates; less than half of the employers (46,7%) thought that it was important that the applicant is ready to travel abroad for business. These results may, for example, be explained by the fact that these employers did not, at the moment, have recruitment needs for tasks that require international travel or experience.

TABLE 2. Descriptive statistics of the competences valued by employers (N=60)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Reliability	0	0	2	16	42	4,67	0,54
Problem-solving	0	0	0	22	38	4,63	0,49
Cooperation	0	0	1	24	35	4,57	0,87
Communication skills	0	0	4	26	30	4,43	0,62
Ability to search and process information	0	1	4	26	29	4,38	0,69
Analytical thinking	0	1	6	30	23	4,25	0,70
Ability to learn new subject areas	0	2	6	28	24	4,23	0,77
Ability to read situations and respond to them	0	2	10	29	19	4,08	0,79
Ability to make decisions	0	1	10	35	14	4,03	0,69
Ability to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds	0	3	14	21	22	4,03	0,90
Customer service attitude	0	3	12	27	18	4	0,84
Confidence	0	1	14	29	16	4	0,76
Adaptability	0	1	14	29	16	4	0,76
Persistence	0	1	11	38	10	3,95	0,65
Openness to new experiences	0	4	10	31	15	3,95	0,83
Ability to network	0	4	12	28	16	3,93	0,86
Language skills	2	2	14	24	18	3,9	0,99
Self-awareness	3	3	22	26	6	3,85	0,71
Creativity	5	9	28	18	0	3,78	0,94
Relevant education/training	0	3	21	25	11	3,73	0,82
Tolerance	0	2	21	29	8	3,72	0,74
Empathy, ability to put yourself in another person's position	0	7	19	22	12	3,65	0,94
Right level of education	1	6	27	20	6	3,4	0,87
Good references, the applicant is known by somebody you know	2	8	27	20	3	3,23	0,87
Readiness to travel abroad for business	9	9	14	19	9	3,17	1,29
Experience of studying and/or working abroad	12	11	20	14	3	2,75	1,17

1 = not at all significant, 2 = not very significant, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat significant, 5 = very significant

Even though international experience was not regarded significant when recruiting, for example, the ability to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds was considered significant by a majority of the respondents (71,7 %) as well as language skills (70%). These competences have traditionally been understood to be developed through international experiences.

7.2 Skills associated with international competences

Employers' perceptions of international competences were investigated based on a question that asked the respondents to determine what kinds of characteristics they link to international competences and experiences. The results show that international competences and experiences are most strongly linked to the understanding of other cultures and language skills (Table 3). A majority of the participants reported that these attributes have a very strong link to international competences and experiences. As can be seen from the table, international competences and experiences were also strongly linked to a variety of other attributes, such as adaptability, communication skills, and cooperation. The results are consistent with those of Leppänen and colleagues (2013) who have suggested that besides the traditional view, in which international competences are understood as language skills and understanding of other cultures, are international competences today more broadly linked to different skills and attributes.

A majority of the respondents reported that restlessness, laziness, and elitism only have a weak link or no link at all to international competences and experiences. This finding has also been reported by Leppänen and colleagues (2013).

TABLE 3. Descriptive statistics of the characteristics linked to international competences and experiences (N = 60)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Understanding of other cultures	0	0	1	14	45	4,73	0,48
Language skills	0	0	3	16	41	4,63	0,58
Communication skills	1	1	1	25	32	4,43	0,77
Adaptability	0	0	9	28	23	4,23	0,70
Ability to network	1	3	5	28	23	4,15	0,90
Cooperation	2	2	6	27	23	4,12	0,96
Interest in new things	2	0	11	27	20	4,05	0,91
Tolerance	1	2	7	33	17	4,05	0,83
Confidence	2	4	20	27	7	3,55	0,91
Self-awareness	3	3	22	26	6	3,48	0,93
Ability to solve problems	4	7	18	27	4	3,33	1,00
Empathy	5	9	14	26	6	3,32	1,11
Ambition	6	8	22	21	3	3,12	1,04
Persistence	6	8	24	18	4	3,1	1,05
Creativity	5	9	28	18	0	2,98	0,89
Efficiency	6	11	28	13	2	2,9	0,97
Reliability	9	6	29	15	1	2,88	1,01
Analytical ability	9	9	24	17	1	2,87	1,05
Restlessness	22	19	16	3	0	2	0,92
Laziness	41	13	4	1	1	1,47	0,83
Elitism	37	19	3	1	0	1,47	0,68

1 = no link to international competences/experiences, 2 = a weak link, 3 = neutral, 4 = a strong link, 5 = a very strong link

7.3 International competences – the essential skills in the twenty-first-century

In order to gain a more profound understanding of how employers perceive international competences, the research participants were first asked to describe in their own words what they think international competences are. Qualitative content analysis revealed three broad themes from the responses: “Ways of Working”, “Living in the World”, and “Ways of Thinking”. The categories were named after the framework of twenty-first-century skills, the KSAVE Model (Binkley et al., 2012), which is described in chapter 3.2 of this study. The categories with their subcategories are presented below in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Employers perceptions of international competences (n = 53)

Category	Subcategory
Ways of Working (n = 40)	communication; collaboration; cooperation; networking; social skills; people skills; team working; intercultural communication; networking; language skills
Living in the World (n = 28)	cultural understanding; cultural awareness; cultural knowledge; not feeling inferior to other cultures; cultural skills; international mindset
Ways of Thinking (n = 19)	flexibility; adaptability; open-mindedness; tolerance; attitude of equality; seeing things from another perspective; not taking things for granted

Most of the respondents described international competences as skills that can be included in the category “Ways of Working”, such as collaboration and communication skills and language skills. International competences were also perceived as a variety of skills that can be grouped under the category “Living in the World”, for example, cultural awareness and knowledge. The third category, “Ways of Thinking”, included skills such as flexibility, adaptability, and tolerance.

Next, the questionnaire asked the employers to describe what kinds of international competences they find useful in their particular field. The total number of responses to this question was 41, and the qualitative content analysis revealed the same three categories, "Ways of Working", "Living in the World", and "Ways of Thinking". Firstly, the category "Ways of Working" was mentioned by most of the employers (n=29), especially communication and networking skills were considered useful. In addition, the importance of language skills was emphasized by many respondents, especially the importance of English language skills. Secondly, skills included in the category "Living in the World", such as cultural awareness and understanding, were considered useful by employers (n=13). Only three employers emphasized the importance of having experience of working or studying abroad, one of them stated that: "We find it useful if an applicant has worked abroad in an organization involved in activities relevant to this field.". Thirdly, the category of "Ways of Thinking" was mentioned by 20 respondents, and it included skills such as curiosity, courage, and the ability to see things differently, and as one respondent put it "a fresh way to look at things and maybe solve the problems, new skills, and products for working life".

Finally, the questionnaire asked the participants to indicate what kinds of international competences or experiences they find harmful in their particular field. Only a little more than half of the participants responded to this question (n=34). One possible explanation for the low response rate could be that international competences were not regarded as harmful. It is also probable that the research question was misinterpreted by many of the respondents. Some of the responses, for example, concentrated on problems regarding foreign employees in Finland. Since the present study deals with international experiences that Finnish higher education students may have acquired, were some of the responses excluded from the analysis. In the end, 17 responses were analyzed.

Six of the respondents stated that they do not find international competences harmful. Other six respondents indicated that international

experiences might lead to feelings of superiority or arrogance, for example, one participant commented: “Often seen people with international experience to be more arrogant and more negative towards Finnish society.”. Furthermore, five respondents perceived that international experience could serve as a sign of restlessness, lack of patience, and unwillingness to commit. For example, one of the participants commented: “Sometimes those with lots of international experience are ‘restless souls’ with limited interest in long-term commitments for what we can offer.”. Another respondent suggested that international experience could be linked to limited professional experience:

“Competencies are seldom harmful but there may be trade-offs if international competences/experiences have been acquired at the expense of learning or experiencing something else that is useful. In practice, relevant training or professional experience may be something that those with better international competences have less of since they spent their time and efforts doing something else.”

Overall, the results in this chapter suggest that even though international competences may, in some cases, be linked to adverse outcomes, for the most part, they are viewed positively. International competences are linked broadly to a variety of different twenty-first-century skills; out of the four categories of the KSAVE model (Binkley et al., 2012), three were identified in this study. Only the category “Tools of Working”, which includes information and ICT literacy, was not included in employers’ perceptions of international competences.

7.4 Internationality as a way of life

The study also analyzed the employers’ attitudes towards internationality in general. It was found that a majority of employers perceive internationality as a positive and inevitable thing. Furthermore, most of the respondents reported that they consider themselves international, they have an international group of friends, and being international is part of their everyday life. A sum of variables, “internationality as a way of life”, was constructed to illustrate how international the group of respondents considered themselves.

A t-test revealed that employers' attitudes towards internationality differed between those who had lived abroad for more than three months continuously and those who had not ($t^{(58)} = -2.67, p = .01$). It comes as no surprise that those employers ($n = 40$) who had lived abroad (Mean = 4.49, SD = .54) were more positive towards internationality and more strongly considered internationality as a way of life than those employers ($n = 20$) who had not lived abroad (Mean = 4.13, SD = .45).

7.5 International experience helpful but not necessary

The role of international experience in recruitment decisions was studied by asking the respondents about their attitudes towards studying or working abroad when recruiting newly graduated students. The results show that a majority of employers (85%) regard the international experience of an applicant as a good thing (Figure 4). However, international experience is not considered an important criterion for recruiting; many of the employers (43,3%) do not take it into account when making recruitment decisions. These findings are mostly in line with those of Garam (2005) and Leppänen and colleagues (2013) who have also made the observation that Finnish employers appreciate international experience, but they do not consider it an important criterion for recruitment.

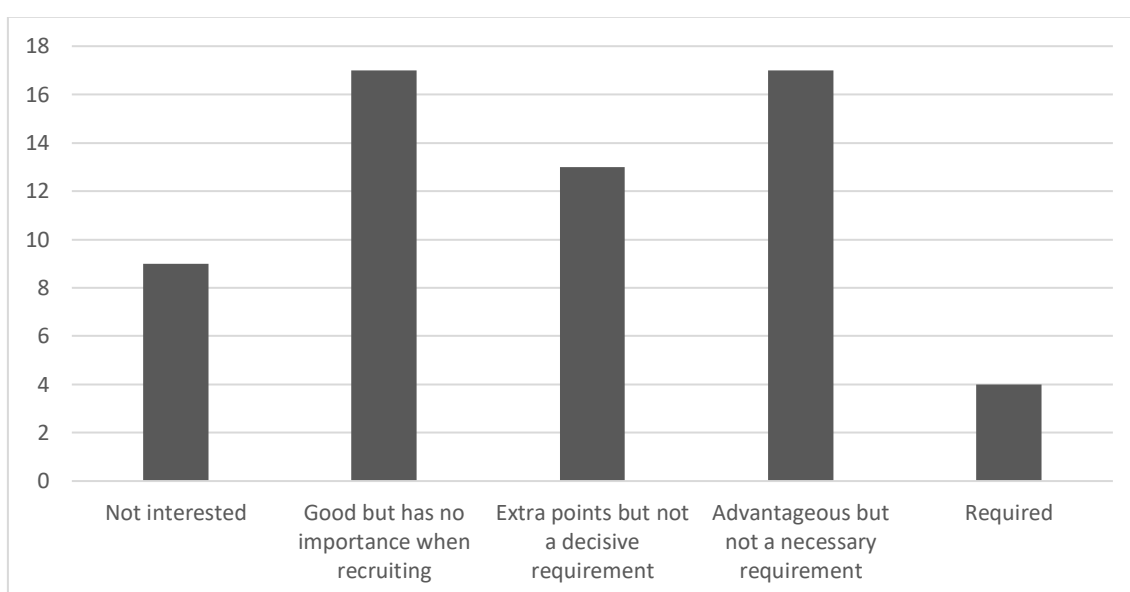


FIGURE 4. The importance of international experience for recruitment decisions (N=60)

The findings of the present study show that just over half of the employers (56,7 %) take international experience into account when making recruitment decisions. However, this finding is slightly more positive compared to what was found in 2013 when only 36,5% of employers reported that international experience plays a role in their recruitment decisions (Leppänen et al., 2013).

Cross tabulation was used for analyzing relationships between different characteristics of employers and the perceived importance of international experiences for recruitment. The Chi-square test was used to establish statistical significances. Surprisingly, the present study found a significant relationship between the age of the respondent and the respondent's attitude towards international experience when making recruitment decisions ($\chi^2(1) = 8.42, p = .004$). This finding suggests that employers aged under 48 perceive international experiences less important for recruitment compared to employers aged 48 and older (Figure 5).

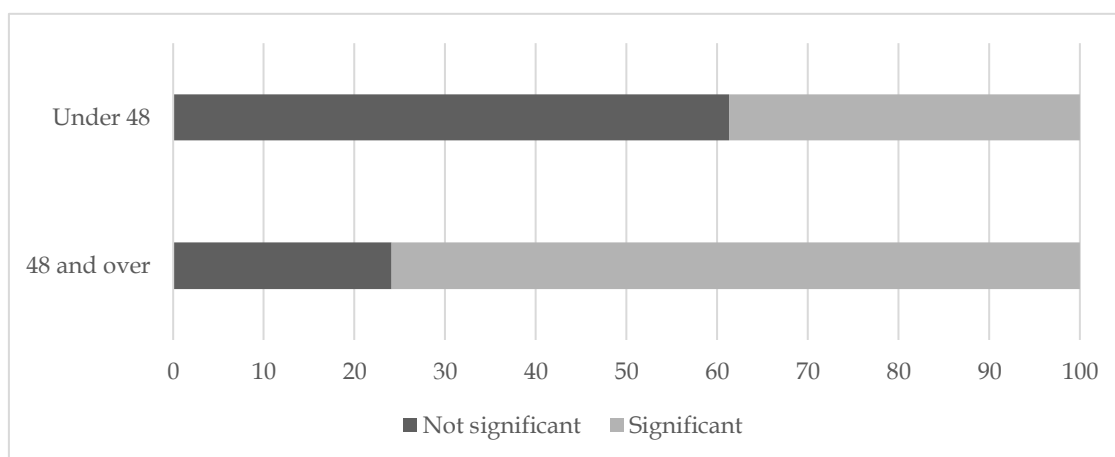


FIGURE 5. Attitudes towards studying abroad in different age groups (%)

The Chi-square test did not show a significant relationship between the size of the organization and the perceived importance of applicants' international experiences. Also, no differences in attitudes were identified between recruiters who had personal experience of living abroad and those who did not. Additionally, no gender differences were identified.

A t-test was used to examine the relationship between the variable “internationality as a way of life” and the perceived importance of international experience for recruitment. However, no significant differences were found in mean scores of “internationality as a way of life” between employers who consider international experience significant for recruitment, and employers who do not.

All in all, the results in this section indicate that even though a majority of Finnish employers perceive international experience as a positive thing, international student mobility is not an important recruitment criterion for Finnish employers. The next chapter moves on to discuss the conclusions of these results and implications for future research.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Examination of results

This study set out with the aim of assessing the importance of international student mobility from the perspective of Finnish employers. The most important findings of the present study can be summarized in the following points:

- Some of the most desired competences of graduates are reliability, problem-solving skills and cooperation.
- International competences and experiences are strongly associated with competences such as the understanding of other cultures, language skills and communication skills.
- Employers perceive international competences as different types of twenty-first-century skills that can be grouped into three categories: “Ways of Working”, “Living in the World” and “Ways of Thinking”.
- A majority of employers regard international study and work experiences as a positive thing. However, international experience is not considered an important recruitment criterion.

The first question in this research sought to determine the competences Finnish employers desire when recruiting higher education graduates. Competences such as reliability, problem-solving, cooperation, and communication skills were rated among the most important competences of graduates. The findings also showed that the experience of studying and working abroad is not considered a significant criterion for recruitment. A comparison with earlier studies shows that competences employers consider significant for recruitment have remained mostly the same (Garam, 2005; Leppänen et al., 2013).

The second research problem considered the employers’ perceptions of international competences. The first part of this research question attempted to identify the characteristics employers associate with international competences and experiences. International competences were understood to have a very

strong link to language skills and the understanding of other cultures. International competences were also strongly linked to a variety of other skills such as communication and cooperation skills, adaptability, and ability to network. Many of the skills employers associated with international competences and experiences were similar to the competences employers consider significant for recruiting. These findings reflect those of Leppänen and colleagues (2013) who also discovered that the attributes employers link to international competences and experiences are also valued when recruiting.

Employers' perceptions were further analyzed through qualitative content analysis. When employers were asked to describe international competences in their own words, it was found that employers understand international competences as a range of different skills such as communication skills, language skills, cultural awareness, and flexibility. These skills were discovered to be equivalent to most of the twenty-first-century skills that Binkley and colleagues (2012) have identified in their KSAVE model. The employers' perceptions of international competences were grouped under three categories, "Ways of Working", "Living in the World" and "Ways of Thinking", that were named after the categories of the KSAVE model.

Employers mostly believed that international competences are useful for employees working in their field. However, some respondents pointed out that international experiences could, in some cases, lead to some unfavorable outcomes such as restlessness and arrogance. This finding challenges the general assumption that international experience leads to positive outcomes. Similar findings have earlier been reported by Garam (2005), who suggested that some employers operating in the domestic market may perceive the international experience of a candidate as a disadvantage.

The third research question in this study sought to determine the importance of international experience for recruitment. The results indicate that Finnish employers are interested in the international experience of an applicant. However, international experience in itself is not considered a necessary criterion for recruitment. This finding further supports the findings of earlier studies

(Leppänen et al., 2013; Garam, 2005), which have shown that international experience is not an important recruitment criterion among Finnish employers. However, it was observed that the share of employers who take international experience into account when recruiting was higher compared to what it was in 2013 (Leppänen et al., 2013). Hence, it could conceivably be hypothesized that the attitudes of employers are slowly changing, and international experience is becoming more important for employers.

Surprisingly, the findings of the present study showed that employers in older age groups place more value on applicants' international experience when making recruitment decisions than employers in younger age groups. This result was unexpected and has not previously been described. One possible explanation for this might be that unlike younger age groups, who have grown up in a world where studying and working abroad is a common occurrence, older age groups may perceive international experiences as more exceptional. However, with a small sample size caution must be applied, as the responses cannot be extrapolated to all employers.

8.2 Generalizability and limitations

Some limitations of this study should be acknowledged, and the generalizability of the results should be discussed. One major limitation of the study is the small size of the dataset, which limited the possibilities of conducting statistical comparisons between different groups. Although the questionnaire included multiple questions that gathered background information of the employers, in the end, most of this information could not be exploited due to the small sample size. Another significant limitation of this study is that the findings cannot be considered representative for all Finnish employers, due to the use of the non-probability sample. The majority of the respondents of the present study represented private businesses, operating in Southern Finland. The results, therefore, need to be interpreted with caution.

One possible explanation for the low response rate is the length of the questionnaire, which may have limited the number of respondents. It should also be noted that the language of the questionnaire was English, a non-native language for the Finnish participants, which may have excluded some participants. The language issue may also have resulted in a higher risk of misinterpreting the questions. This problem can be seen in the responses of one of the open-ended questions, where a large number of employers had misinterpreted the question.

8.3 Applicability of research results

Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers new insights into the employers' perceptions of international student mobility and employability. Firstly, the study provides essential information for higher education students who are planning to study or train abroad. Students expecting that the experience will increase their subsequent employability should be aware of the employers' perceptions. This study has shown that international student mobility alone is not an important criterion for hiring and that it may not work as a way to differentiate oneself in the labor market. However, the findings suggest that many of the attributes employers desire when recruiting graduates are similar to the attributes employers link to international competences and experiences. Hence, it could be suggested that graduates should highlight the skills and attributes they have developed during their time abroad when applying for jobs.

The findings of this study will also be of interest to employers recruiting higher education graduates. The results of the present study indicate that employers' conceptions of international competences and experiences are not consistent. It has earlier been suggested that employers and students are often not aware of the hidden skill requirements in study abroad learning experiences and that these skill requirements should be better articulated (Nilsson and Ripmeester, 2016). The findings of the present study support the idea that both

employers and students should be better informed about the skill requirements of international experiences.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are of importance to policy-makers. The present study has discovered that the perceptions of employers are somewhat inconsistent with the rhetoric that has often been used for describing the benefits of student mobility. In the following years, an even greater share of higher education students will be completing a mobility period as part of their studies. In Finland, increasing investments are being made to increase the international mobility of students, for example, the Ministry of Education and Culture has set a goal to double student mobility by 2030 (Teeri, 2019). At the same time, graduate employability remains a central issue, and it is agreed that employability is an important influence on economic growth in today's knowledge economy (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 40). It is thus increasingly important to explore how international student mobility can contribute to the issue of graduate employability.

8.4 Challenges for future research

The present research has raised many questions in need of further investigation. Further research with larger sample sizes should be undertaken to explore how different characteristics of employers may explain the attitudes towards international experiences and competences. In future studies, more comparisons between different characteristics of employers should be made, for example, concerning the organizations' field of operation, type of ownership, location and size. Further research should also focus more on the personal characteristics of recruiters. The present study has raised the possibility that there may be a connection between the employer's age and the attitude towards international experience when recruiting. Further research should examine more closely the links between the recruiter's age and the perceived importance of international experience.

Further work should not only focus on the benefits of international student mobility. The findings of the present study have shown that some employers may regard international experience as a hindrance. In future studies, it could also be useful to distinguish between different types of student mobility since prior studies suggest that employers' attitudes may be different towards different types of student mobility (Van Mol, 2017; Flander, 2011). The present study used the term "international experience" broadly, without specifying the extent or type of international experience. All in all, more work will need to be done to understand better the perceptions of employers towards international student mobility, and research with more representative samples is needed in order to get a more realistic idea of the entire group of Finnish employers.

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Appendix 1.



Employer Survey on International Competences

The purpose of this research is to clarify the connection between international student mobility and graduate employability from an employer perspective. The study investigates employers' perceptions of international competencies and their significance for hiring. The target group for this research consists of expert organisations operating in Finland. In particular persons responsible for hiring and recruiting are requested to participate in this research. This research is part of a Master's Thesis conducted by Ida Hyvärinen at University of Jyväskylä.

The following questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participation in this research project is completely voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. The results of the survey will be published together with the Master's Thesis. Individual answers cannot be identified from the report. In case you would like to have further information, please contact Ida Hyvärinen.

By answering the survey, you accept that your information is used for the research described in the privacy notice which will be presented on the following page (you must tick "I agree" before continuing to the survey).

Thank you very much for your time.

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PRIVACY NOTICE FOR RESEARCH SUBJECTS

1. NAME AND DURATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research "International Student Mobility and Employability" is part of a Master's thesis. The research is a one-time study and the results are estimated to be complete in 2019.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The consent of the research subject.

3. CONTROLLER, SCIENTIST-IN-CHARGE AND CONTACT PERSON

All data will be processed by Ida Hyvärinen only.

Contact person: Ida Hyvärinen, +358 44 300 1665, ida.a.hyvarinen@student.jyu.fi

Scientist in charge of the research: Maarit Virolainen, +358 40 805 4286, maarit.ha.virolainen@jyu.fi

4. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to clarify the connection between international student mobility and employability from an employer perspective. The study investigates employers' perceptions of international competencies and their significance for hiring. The target group for this research consists of expert organisations operating in Finland. In particular persons responsible for hiring and recruiting are requested to participate in this research.

5. PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

It takes about 15 minutes to participate in the research. The research is implemented so that individual respondents cannot be identified. Findings will be reported as group averages and anonymous examples.

6. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS

The research produces information on the connection between international student mobility and graduate employability from an employer perspective.

7. PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

The data collected during the research and the research results are processed confidentially in compliance with the data protection legislation. It will not be possible to identify you from the research results, clarifications or publications.

The following have been considered when designing the research:

- There is a designated person or a group of persons responsible for the research
- The data pertaining to a given individual are not disclosed to outsiders
- Direct identifiers are not registered when answering the questionnaire

8. RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the survey will be published together with the Master's Thesis. A short summary of the results will be posted on the LinkedIn profile of Ida Hyvärinen in 2019 www.linkedin.com/in/ida-hyvärinen-a41b11175

9. RESEARCH COSTS AND FINANCIAL CLARIFICATIONS

Participation in this research will not result in any costs for respondents. Your time and careful answers are highly valued

10. RIGHTS OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECT AND DEVIATION FROM THEM

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time.

11. STORAGE AND ARCHIVAL OF PERSONAL DATA

The data is stored on researcher's computer until the research has ended without identification data. The material will be archived in an anonymised format for two years.

1. I have read and understood the privacy notice considering this study and agree that the information I give in this survey will be used for the study "International Student Mobility and Employability"

I agree

2. Age

3. Gender

- Female
- Male
- Do not wish to say

4. Level of education

Please select the option that most closely describes your level of education. (If you are currently studying, please select the level of education you will achieve once you complete your studies.)

- Basic education
- Secondary School
- Matriculation examination (from general upper secondary school)
- Vocational qualification
- Qualification from upper secondary college
- Degree from a university of applied sciences
- Degree from a traditional university

5. What is your position with respect to recruitment decisions made in your organisation?

- Managerial /director
- Collegial participation in recruitment decisions
- Colleague

6. What kind of education/training is useful in your particular field?

1 = not at all useful, 2 = not very useful, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat useful, 5 = very useful

	1	2	3	4	5
Practical training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training consisting of long theoretical studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training that prepares for a specific vocation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training that provides wide knowledge about a variety of subjects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training that provides experts for a specific field	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training that provides participants with international competences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training with a technical focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training with a focus on interaction with people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training with a business focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training with an arts or cultural focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. In which sector do you operate?

- Private business
- Association, foundation etc.
- Local authority
- Government

8. Please select the option that best describes the field in which you operate

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Mining and quarrying
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- Water supply; sewerage; waste management and remediation activities
- Construction
- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- Transporting and storage
- Accommodation and food service activities
- Information and communication
- Financial and insurance activities
- Real estate activities
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Administrative and support service activities
- Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
- Education
- Human health and social work activities
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Other services activities
- Other

9. How many employees are there in your organisation?

- 1-6
- 7-20
- 21-100
- 101-300
- 301-1,000
- More than 1,000

10. Where is your business located?

- Helsinki-Uusimaa
- Etelä-Suomi
- Länsi-Suomi
- Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi
- Ahvenanmaa

11. Did you recruit higher education graduates in the last 5 years, or are you planning to recruit higher education graduates in the next 5 years?

- Have recruited and plan to recruit more
- Have recruited but not planning to recruit more
- Did not recruit but planning to recruit
- Did not recruit and not planning to recruit

12. How significant do you regard the following competences when you recruit young (newly graduated) employees as permanent members of staff?

1 = not at all significant, 2 = not very significant, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat significant, 5 = very significant

	1	2	3	4	5
Analytical thinking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Empathy, ability to put yourself in another person's position	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good references, the applicant is known by somebody you know	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problem-solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevant education/training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tolerance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to make decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooperation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Right level of education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer service attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experience of studying and/or working abroad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Openness to new experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Readiness to travel abroad for business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reliability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to search and process information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to understand the significance of one's work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to learn new subject areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to read situations and respond to them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Which of the following options reflects most closely your attitude towards studying or working abroad when you are recruiting newly graduated students?

Please select one option.

- When recruiting we are not interested in whether the applicant has international study/work experience.
- We regard international study/work experience of students as a good thing but it has no importance when recruiting.
- Applicants get extra points for international study/work experience, but it is not a decisive requirement when recruiting.
- International study/work experience gives applicants some advantage but is not a necessary requirement for getting a position.
- We require international experience in many positions in which we recruit new graduates from higher education.

14. Does your business operate internationally?

You may select several options

- No
- Export / sales abroad
- Import from abroad
- Offices abroad
- Cooperation with partners abroad
- Involved in international projects

15. Please estimate how many of your employees are foreign citizens living in Finland.

- 0%
- 1-10%
- 10-20%
- 20-40%
- 40-60%
- More than 60 %

16. Please estimate how many of your Finnish employees have studied abroad.

- 0%
- 1-10%
- 10-20%
- 20-40%
- 40-60%
- More than 60%

17. How do you rate your languages skills?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 = weak 7 = excellent

18. How do you rate your English language skills?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

1 = weak 7 = excellent

19. How often is English used in your work place?

Please select the option that best describes your situation.

- Never
- Only in very exceptional occasions
- Several times a month
- At least once a week
- Almost daily
- Daily / main working language

20. How often do you use other foreign languages than English in your work place?

Please select the option that best describes your situation.

- Never
- Only in very exceptional occasions
- Several times a month
- At least once a week
- Almost daily
- Daily / main working language

21. What is the longest continuous period you have lived abroad?

- I have not lived abroad
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-2 months
- 3-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- More than 5 years

22. How many times have you lived abroad for more than three months continuously?

- Never
- Once or twice
- Three, four or five times
- Six times or more

23. How do you feel about the following statements?

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Internationality is a positive thing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internationalisation is inevitable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internationalisation is a threat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People in general regard internationality as a positive thing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am critical towards internationality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I regard myself as international.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an international group of friends/acquaintances.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being international is part of everyday life for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work community has a positive attitude towards internationality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work community is international.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. What are international competences in your opinion?

25. What kinds of characteristics are international competences/experiences linked to in your opinion?

Please indicate for each characteristic to what extent you think it is linked to international competences/experiences.

1 = no link to international competences/experiences, 2 = a weak link, 3 = neutral, 4 = a strong link, 5 = a very strong link to international competences/experiences

	1	2	3	4	5
Language skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to solve problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elitism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analytical ability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Efficiency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Empathy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding of different cultures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restlessness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reliability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooperation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tolerance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ambition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Laziness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interest in new things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Persistence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adaptability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confidence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. What kinds of international competences/experiences do you find useful in your field?

27. What kinds of international competences/experiences do you find harmful in your field?
