

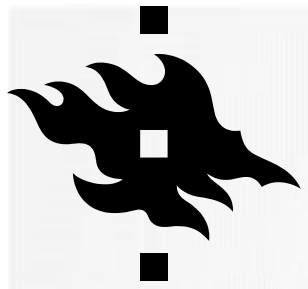


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GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY AND TRANSITION TO WORKING LIFE

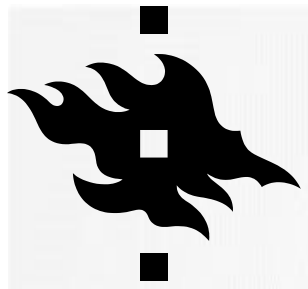
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NUAS conference 14.6.2023



CONTENT

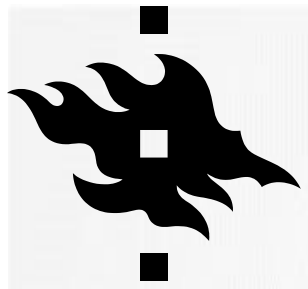
- Graduates' employability and transition to working life
 - 1) What kind of factors are related to employability?
 - 2) How are these factors related to early career success?
 - 3) What can we do to enhance graduates' employability?





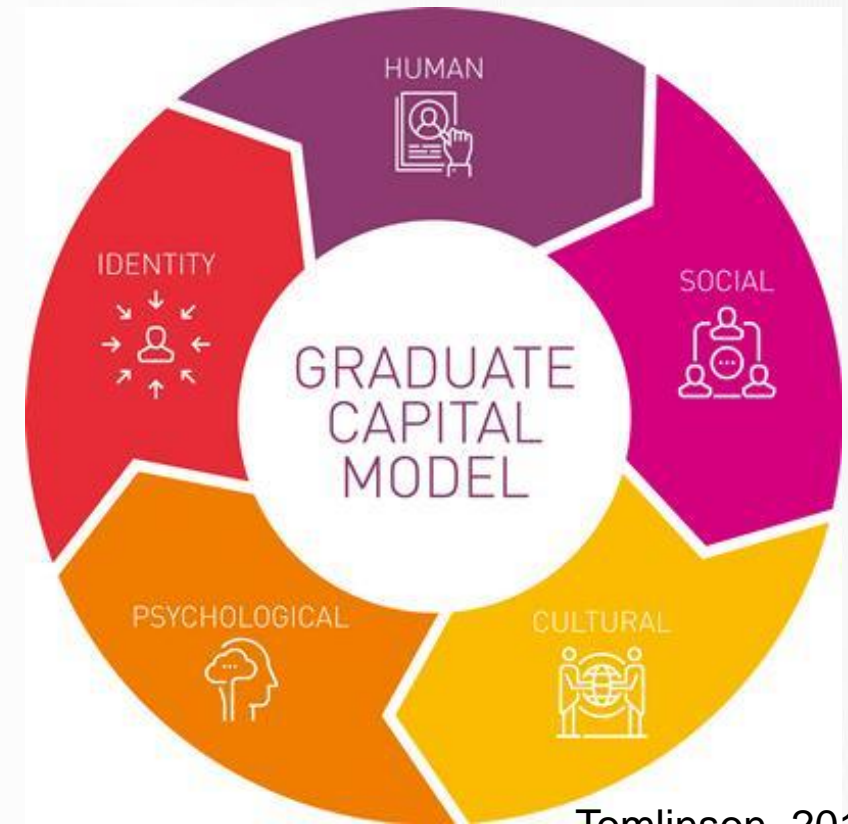
INTRODUCTION

- Graduates' transition to working life is a crucial phase and a smooth transition is important for individuals as well as society.
- Graduates' employability has been widely explored and it is also of interest in higher education institutions.
- Previous studies have identified various factors that are important in employability such as knowledge and skills, networks and work experience (Tomlinson, 2017; Tuononen & Hyytinen, 2022; Tuononen et al. 2017; 2019; De Schepper et al., 2022).
- Longitudinal studies of transition to labour market and early career success are rare.



DEFINITIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY

- It includes a combination of individual and contextual factors including personal characteristics and competences, but also the state of the labour market (Berntson et al. 2006; Clarke 2017)
- The ability of individuals to obtain and maintain employment throughout their careers (Fugate et al., 2004; Römogens et al., 2019; Knight and Yorke 2003).
- Various employability models
 - USEM-model: Understanding, Skills, Efficacy-beliefs and Metacognition (Knight & Yorke, 2003)
 - USEM-model + work experience and learning processes (Tuononen, 2019)

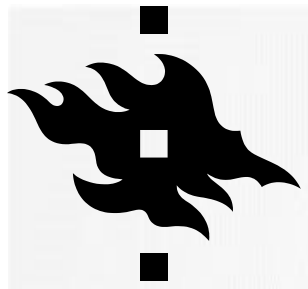


Tomlinson, 2017,
Picture: University
of Southampton

WHAT KIND OF FACTORS ARE RELATED TO EMPLOYABILITY?

SUCCESS

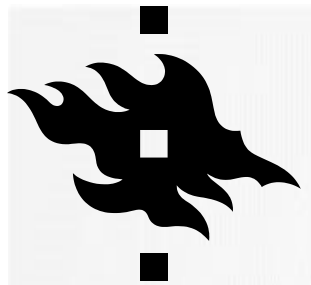




SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

- In addition to disciplinary knowledge and skills, learning of academic competences (generic skills, key skills etc.) such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and communication skills are important in all fields
- Academic competences are related to deep learning and study success and study progress



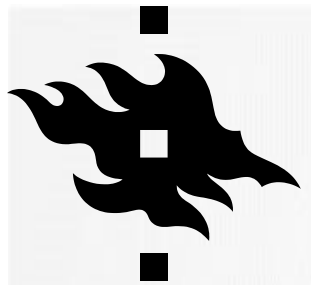


DESCRIPTIONS OF ACADEMIC COMPETENCES (1/2)

- Most of the graduates described various academic competences, for example, critical thinking, application of knowledge and collaboration and communication skills

→ Rich evaluation group

“Well, I think that the studies have developed my competences quite well, for example, my own thinking and my ability to see different perspectives, analyse and bring something new, and also my ability to think critically. All have been developed.”



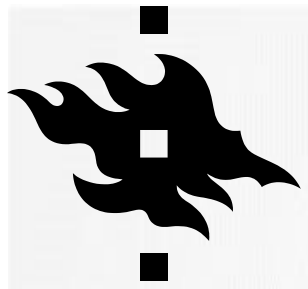
DESCRIPTIONS OF ACADEMIC COMPETENCES (2/2)

- Some graduates described only practical skills such as communication skills, language skills and IT-skills.
- Some had difficulties to describe any competences, or they perceived that they had developed no competences during studies.

→ Limited evaluation group

"Well, I was thinking that before and, unfortunately, I have to say that nothing [no competences have been developed]"

"Well it is quite limited, or at least it is difficult for me to analyse. Probably basic language skills and IT skills."

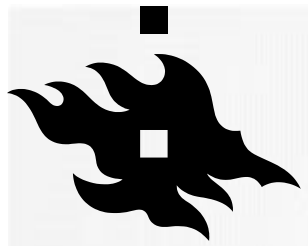


METACOGNITION

- Awareness of learning process and ability to reflect own actions (Knight & Yorke, 2003; Harrison & Vallin, 2018).
- Knowing what you know, how it can be used and knowing how you can get new knowings” (Knight & Yorke, 2003)
- Some students have difficulties to reflect (Tuononen et al. 2017; Tuononen et al. 2022; Smith et al. 2007)
- Graduates’ perceptions of the factors affecting employment:
 - **Ability to reflect own competencies and expertise 83 %**
 - Other work experience 77%
 - Study subject combination in degree 61%
 - Contacts and networks 56%
 - Internship(s) 54%

→ Metacognitive skills are needed!

(Career survey report, 2022)

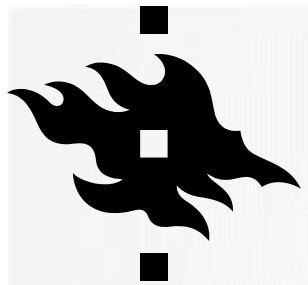


SELF-EFFICACY

- Self-efficacy belief refers to a person's belief in his/her ability to succeed in a particular situation (Bandura, 1977)
 - For example, in transition to working life and career success (Knight & Yorke, 2003; Tomlinson, 2017; Tuononen & Hyytinen, 2022)
- Efficacy beliefs were related to graduates' perceptions of competences (Tuononen et al., 2017)
 - Rich evaluation group had higher confidence of success in working life than limited evaluation group

"I'm one hundred percent confident. I'm proud to have a Master's degree. I've learned things, and I take, like, full credit for my own ability to do very challenging and complex, interesting things".

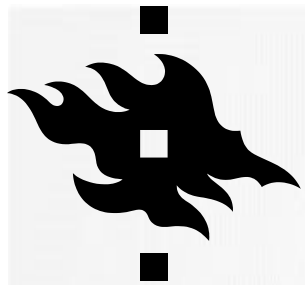
"I don't have good self-esteem or that kind of self-confidence at the moment in my own abilities."



WORK EXPERIENCE

- Work experience is associated with the development of generic skills
- It can help students to recognise the competences and skills
- Work experience in own study field can enhance deep learning
- Enhance students' self-confidence and self-efficacy beliefs of success in working life
- Help to make career choice and transition to working life

(Ehiyazarayan & Barraclough, 2009; Shaw, 2012; Shaw & Ogilvie, 2010; Tuononen et al., 2016; Tuononen ym., 2017)



BENEFITS OF WORK EXPERIENCE

Perceived benefits of work experience to studies

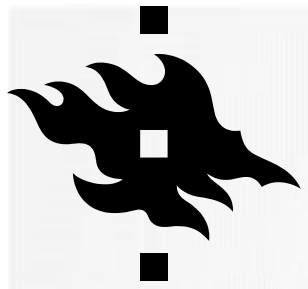
1. High-level of cognitive benefits

Develop own thinking, help to identify own strengths and weaknesses and apply theory to practice

2. Practical benefits

Work help to schedule studies, develop social skills, enhance motivation towards studies

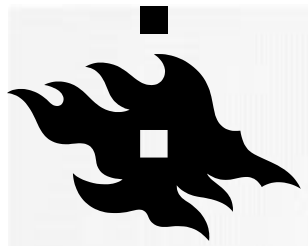
3. No perceived benefits



BENEFITS OF WORK IN RELATION TO EVALUATIONS OF COMPETENCES

Perceived benefits of work experience to studies	Rich evaluation group (n=37)	Limited evaluation group (n=21)
1. High-level of cognitive benefits Developing own thinking, helping to identify your own strengths and weaknesses and applying theory to practice	x	
2. Practical benefits Helping to schedule studies, developing social skills, enhancing motivation towards studies	x	x
3. No perceived benefits		x

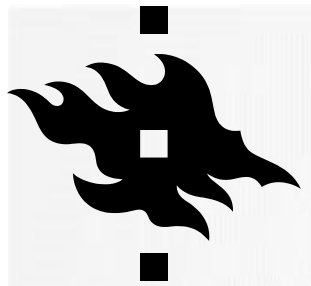
- Perceptions were not related to the nature of work → reflection skills and transfer of learning



CAREER ENGAGEMENT

- Career engagement refers to career planning, career self-exploration, environmental career exploration, networking, skill development and positioning behaviour (Hirschi et al. 2014)
- Master's students in humanities (N=302)
- Students were asked to evaluate to what extent have you in the past 6 months..
 - developed plans and goals for your future career.
 - collected information about employers, professional development opportunities or the job market in your desired area.
 - established or maintained contacts with people who can help you professionally.
- Scales of career planning and networking were identified

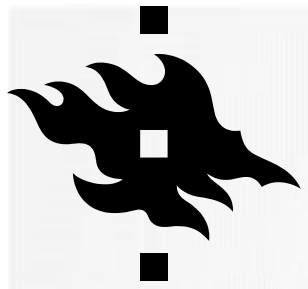




CAREER ENGAGEMENT AND WORK EXPERIENCE

- Students with work experience had higher scores on networking than students who had no work experience

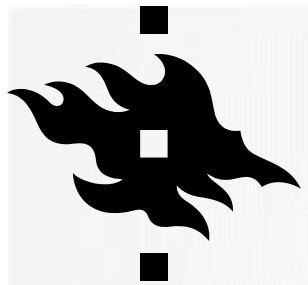
Career engagement			No work experience (n=89)		Work experience (n=213)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Career planning	3.28	.91	3.15	.90	3.34	.91	-1.65	.100
Networking	2.48	1.10	2.24	1.02	2.57	1.12	-2.40	.017*



CAREER ENGAGEMENT AND THE AMOUNT OF WORK

- Students who worked 35h or more had significantly higher scores on networking than students who worked less than 20h

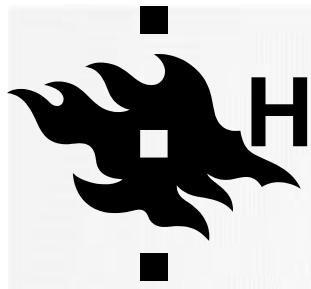
The amount of work	1. Less than 20h (n=124)		2. 20–34 h (n=45)		3. 35h or more (n=39)		F	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Career planning	3.29	.89	3.31	1.03	3.52	.85	.970	.381
Networking	2.45	1.03	2.58	1.30	3.06	1.08	4.52	.012
							*3>1	



CAREER ENGAGEMENT IN RELATION TO THE NATURE OF WORK

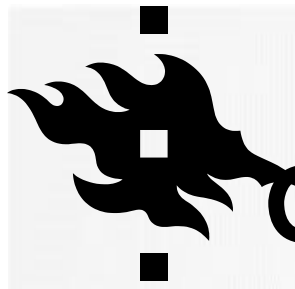
- Students who had work related to study field scored higher on planning and networking

The nature of work	Work related to study field		Work not related to study field		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Career planning	3.55	.83	3.17	.99	-2.84	.002*
Networking	3.00	1.07	2.16	1.01	-5.60	.000*



HOW ARE THESE EMPLOYABILITY FACTORS RELATED TO EARLY CAREER SUCCESS?

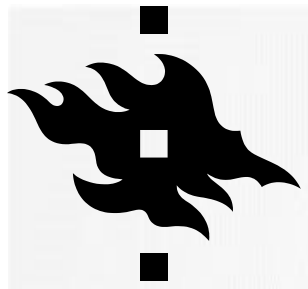




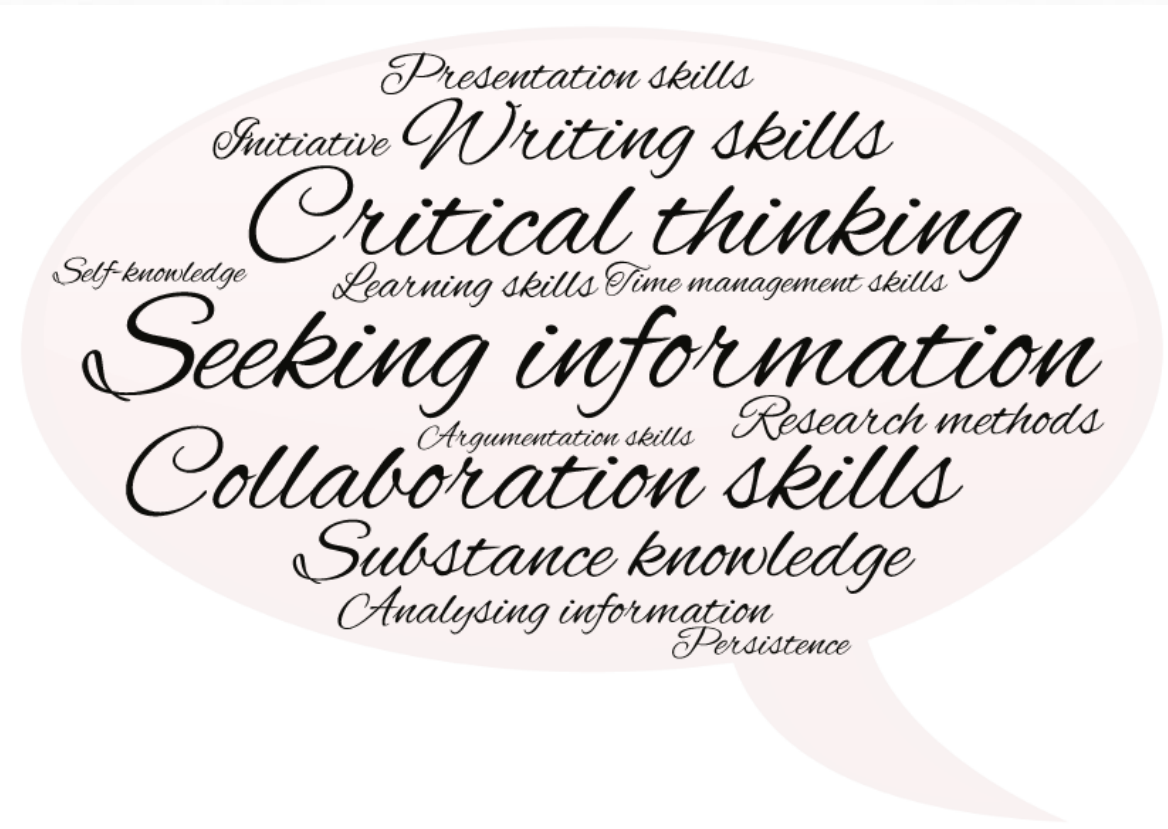
THINK A MOMENT: HOW ARE THESE GRADUATES SUCCEEDED IN WORKING LIFE?

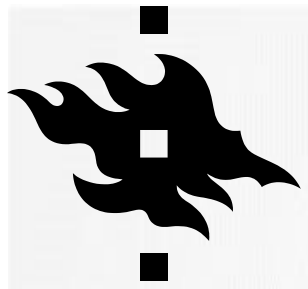
“Well, I think that the studies have developed my competences quite well, for example, my own thinking and my ability to see different perspectives, analyse and bring something new, and also my ability to think critically. All have been developed.”

“Well, I was thinking that before and, unfortunately, I have to say that nothing [no competences have been developed]



WHAT KINDS OF ACADEMIC COMPETENCES ARE NEEDED IN WORKING LIFE?



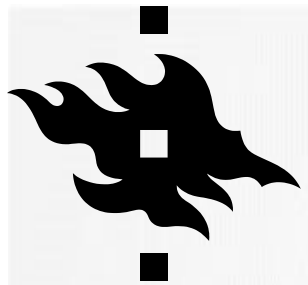


WORK SITUATION AND JOB SATISFACTION

- Majority of the rich evaluation group had own academic work after graduation

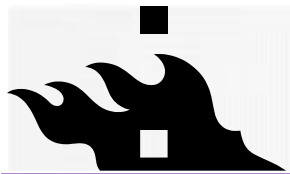
Item	Rich evaluation group (n=29)	Limited evaluation group (n=28)	t	p
Employment situation	Own academic work 21 (72%) Non-academic work 2 (8%)	Own academic work 11 (39%) Non-academic work 5 (31%)		
Average length of unemployment period (months)	Mean 7.8 SD = 6.4 max 17 months	Mean 8.9 SD = 11.4 max 32 months		
Job satisfaction	4.24 1.09	3.58 1.28	1.93	.059

- Graduates in Limited evaluation group mentioned **employment as a challenge** more often (11 mentions) than graduates in Rich evaluation group (4 mentions).



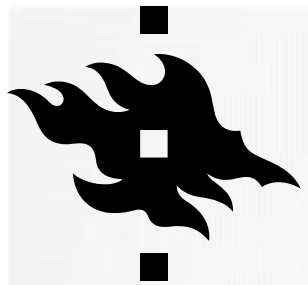
REASONS FOR DIFFICULTIES TO FIND EMPLOYMENT

Items	Rich evaluation group (N = 12)	Limited evaluation group (N = 18)	t	p
Poor employment situation in field	3.08 1.51	4.39 1.04	-2.82	p <.05*
Unclarity of own goals	1.83 1.11	3.11 1.32	-2.75	p <.05*
Lack of work experience	2.92 .10	3.61 1.29	-1.58	p >.05
Inadequate networks	3.17 1.47	3.06 1.39	.21	p >.05
Degree (subjects)	2.92 1.31	3.39 1.09	-1.07	p >.05
Uncertainty of own competences	2.17 1.34	2.94 1.21	-1.65	p >.05



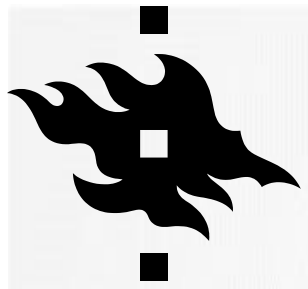
TRANSITION GROUPS (Tuononen & Hyytinen, 2022)

<i>Employability factors</i>	Smooth transition (n=27)	Progressive transition (n=7)	A rocky road (n=7)
Career plans and goals at the time of graduation	Clear	Unclear	Unclear
Perceived competences provided by the degree at the time of graduation	Diverse	Varying: from diverse to limited	Varying: from limited to none
Self-efficacy: abilities and confidence in success in working life at the time of graduation	Strong	Uncertain/ ambivalent	Rather low or low
Activity: moves and choices during the studies and after graduation	Plenty of activities	Some activities	No activities
Work experience and networks	Extensive networks and work experience	Some work experience	Little or no work experience
<i>Career success</i> Job satisfaction and employment situation three years after graduation	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied



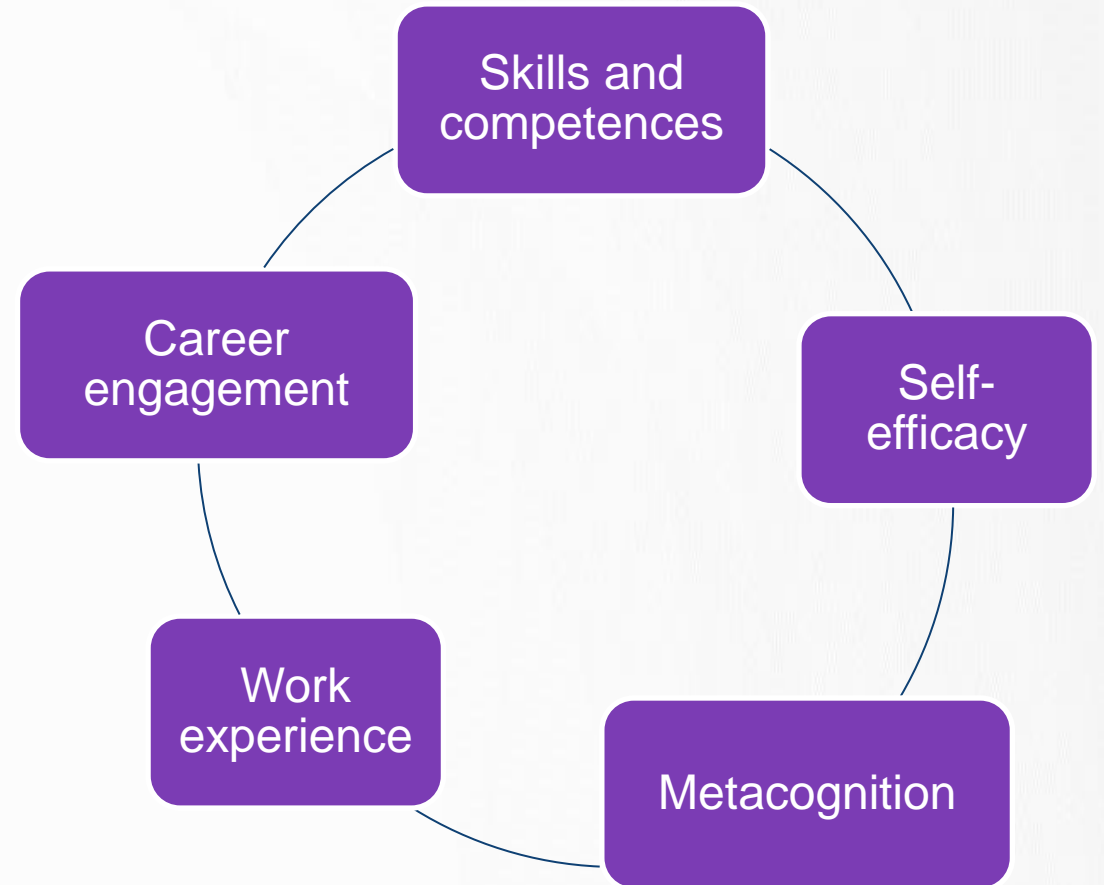
HOW CAN WE ENHANCE STUDENTS' EMPLOYABILITY?

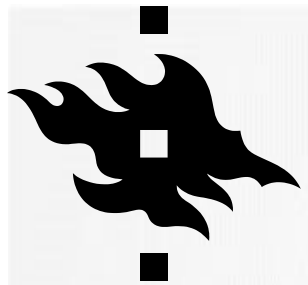
- Integrating factors that support employability in studies
 - Developing academic competences throughout the studies
 - Developing reflections skills; providing opportunities to reflect during studies, giving feedback
 - Study and career planning and other career engagement
 - Personal study plans and career courses, internships etc.
- Collaborative projects with working life, alumni
- Study and career guidance
- Enhancing teachers' and staff members' awareness of employability factors and ensuring the needed pedagogical skills of teachers



CONCLUSIONS

- Employability is the sum of many factors that intertwine and accumulate
- The recognition and reflection of one's own skills and competences is crucial and need to be supported
- Career engagement during studies and afterwards is important



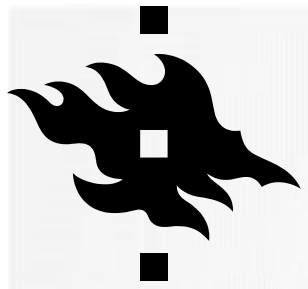


FUTURE RESEARCH



- Students' mental health problems and learning disabilities are associated with higher intention to dropout as well as feeling of not belonging to in higher education in Finland and Sweden (Kleemola et al. under review)
- Students with lower socio-economic status and autistic graduates had fewer capitals, and they have more difficulties in transition to working life (De Schepper et al., 2022; Duta et al., 2021; Pesonen et al., 2022; Rodrigues, Butler & Guest, 2019)
 - How is socio-economic status (SES) related to graduates' employability and their early career success?

How to ensure equal opportunities to obtain employability and transfer to work life for students with disabilities and different backgrounds?



REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What is the most important factor in students' employability?
- How can we enhance students' employability and support transition to working life?
- How to address individual needs?
"One fits for all" is not best the model.





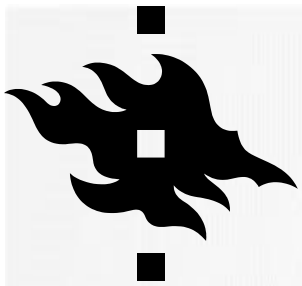
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THANK YOU!

Questions or comments?

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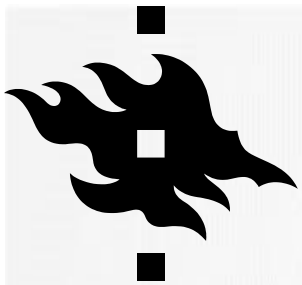
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