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Graduate Employment in the Era of Globalisation

Challenges, Opportunities, and what Finnish Tertiary Education Could Learn from the UK

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<p>This thesis reviews globalisation and the way it can affect higher education and student employability using secondary research complemented with findings from exploratory interviews. Emphasis is on Careers and Employment services provided to students in the UK, with the goal of identifying examples that could benefit the Finnish higher education sector especially now that government funding to universities may become more strongly linked to student employment levels and career survey findings (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a).</p> <p>Key challenges and opportunities linked to globalisation such as increased competition, Americanisation of education, technological development and increased student mobility are introduced, followed by discussion on their significance to higher education and student employability. Moreover, the role of higher education in society and the concept of quality education are discussed. The objective is to explain why there should be emphasis on teaching not only technical but also transferable soft skills such as adaptability, negotiation skills and ability for lifelong learning, and why therefore universities should pay more attention to student careers and employment services and support.</p> <p>While there are political and cultural differences between Finland and the UK, and higher education is financed and organised differently, this thesis seeks to show that Finnish universities can benefit from employing dedicated Career Advisors and Career Consultants who support student employability and skills development. This could contribute towards the institution's performance on global university rankings and increase attractiveness to international students, as well as helping graduates achieve faster transition from academia into working life, which benefits the wider community.</p>	
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1 Introduction

The nature of work is changing due to globalisation, technological development and subsequent interconnectedness, which creates challenges and opportunities to higher education providers (Aggarwal, 2008; Institute of Directors, 2017, OECD, 2017). Fierce competition can arise from beyond national borders, and technological innovation and other changes in the knowledge-society mean many manual-labour jobs are being lost while new roles with new requirements are constantly being created, suggesting workers need flexibility, a mixture of transferable skills and willingness for lifelong learning to increase their employability. These external forces shape the environment in which academic institutions operate, meaning they can affect university strategy, degree content and funding. In addition to challenges linked to resources and increased competition, opportunities arise from international cooperation, online learning and increased student mobility (Balan, 2017; Ghemawat, 2008; Pfefferman, 2016).

Educational strategy and curricula are influenced by requirements of the changing external environment both at the global and local level. There is ongoing debate on whether academic institutions can or even should adapt to the rapidly changing external demands and needs of different stakeholders. While some suggest it is the role of universities to supply skilled graduates into the workplace, simultaneously others acknowledge academia has a responsibility to wider society. Therefore, they need to ensure students graduate with adaptability and a mix of soft and technical skills that allow them to adapt to changes and pursue various career paths, rather than being trained as experts of a niche that may become obsolete as the external environment changes (Barnes, 2017; Klimorski, 2008 in Jurse and Mulej, 2011; Thomas et al. 2013). This links to discussion on student employability and what will be the essential skillsets for future.

There are various opinions on whether there should be more emphasis on technical or soft skills teaching going forward. A study from 2013 analysing the skillsets making staff successful at Google, a company known for its technological expertise, found that seven top characteristics of success at Google were soft skills i.e. good communicating and listening skills, having empathy and being a good critical thinker (Davidson, in Strauss 2017). This suggests that while students may think technical skills such as the use of certain software are key to ensuring employability, technical knowledge is

insufficient if the person lacks the soft skills needed in working with others and applying theory to real life situations. While some employers complain graduates lack soft skills i.e. emotional intelligence, resilience and problem-solving, studies fail to provide practical advice on how these employability skills could be taught given limited resources and other barriers in the education sector. Generating answers to this is important as many institutions are subject to budget cuts, and there are fears that quality of education will suffer if education providers start to focus on rising external funding to cover costs (Kovacevic and Pavlovic, 2016; Thomas et al., 2014). Moreover, because the external environment is changing rapidly, forecasting what skills are needed in future is speculation even if gathered from multiple studies. Aligning degree content with the demands of the workplace is difficult due to barriers such as bureaucracy, lack of resources and demanding quality assurance processes universities are subject to (Barnes, 2018; Charles, 2018). Furthermore, there can be internal barriers such as unwillingness to change, and it is also important to acknowledge the complexity of the topic and the time it takes for learning to take place (Barnet et al., 2001), suggesting higher education should be adaptable to change yet maintain a long-term focus and protect the standards of teaching.

The topic is current and relevant as globalisation and student employability are topics widely covered in the media recently, both in Finland and in the UK. Both countries are experiencing change and insecurity over the future in the social and political front, i.e. the UK with Brexit that may hinder the academic institutions' ability for global cooperation and make it more difficult to attract international faculty or fee-paying students, and Finland with the possibility of government funding becoming more linked to student employability levels and ongoing discussion on whether free universal education is still the reality of the future. While globalisation and student employability are widely researched already, the underlying aim of this thesis is to review why student careers and employment services are such a strategic focus in the UK, and if the Finnish higher education model could learn from it. While Finnish education is appraised thanks to performance on educational rankings such as PISA, there is ongoing discussion over reduced government spend on education, coinciding with a strategic focus to tackle youth unemployment levels and to provide a quicker transition from academia to working life (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b).

This thesis introduces existing studies on the abovementioned topics, complemented with current views from four university staff members working in student Careers and

Employment services in the UK. While this does not present a conclusive list of instructions on how to improve student employability or the Finnish tertiary education, it forms a starting point for further research and discussion on whether it would be beneficial to establish similar Careers and Employment departments that support student employability and skills development.

2 Literature Review

Firstly, key terms used throughout the thesis are defined to give background and to demonstrate how the topics are connected. Then, the effect of globalisation with challenges and opportunities linked to student employability are identified, followed by a brief overview of the UK and Finnish higher education systems.

2.1 Definitions of the key concepts

Globalisation, internationalisation and 'Americanisation' of education impact costs, demand for and access to higher education (Balan, 2017). Furthermore, providing definitions for employability and differences between soft and technical skills is essential as majority of examples discussed in results relate to these concepts.

2.1.1 Globalisation and internationalisation

As there is no common definition for globalisation, this thesis uses work by Potrafke (2015: 510): "Globalisation is a multifaceted concept including economic, social and political aspects that go beyond indicators such as trade openness and capital movements". It captures the ideology that globalisation is more than increased cross-border movement of people or capital often discussed in media. When considering its effect on student employability, also social and cultural aspects i.e. movement of labour, working in multicultural teams, 'Americanisation' and standardisation of education to allow for comparable degrees, as well as the technological aspect i.e. levels of technical development, distance learning and other innovations shaping the education field need to be considered. Many challenges and opportunities arising from globalisation link to these topics.

Internationalisation of higher education is "the process of integrating intercultural and international dimensions in teaching, research and administrative services in a

university.” (Knight, 2004, in Dima and Vasilache, 2016: 449). As summarized by Balan (2017), while globalisation is the forces pushing 21st century education towards greater international involvement, internationalisation describes the policies and practises dealing with this. Dima and Vasilache (2016) summarize drivers for internationalisation as financial e.g. diversification of income, improvement of international status and brand, giving students an opportunity to experience other cultures, or be a process driven internally by faculty i.e. creating opportunities for interdisciplinary research. They add that at European level internationalisation ties in with strategies dealing with economic, political, social and cultural aspects instead of being connected to education alone.

There can be great differences in the way higher education institutions are affected by globalisation. Jurse and Mulej (2011) observe that the strategy of the academic institution depends not only on the external environment and governmental policy but also on the resources and competencies of the institution. This means distinguishing between inward activities where focus is at school’s home location and in international exchange programmes and joint degrees, or attracting foreign professors as oppose to outward internationalisation where activities and academic processes are organized abroad or strategic alliances are created with foreign partners (Jurse and Mulej, 2011).

2.1.2 Americanisation of education

‘Americanisation’ of education i.e. the strong influence of Western educational models and practises, and English having become the main language of academic publications on various fields, is discussed by various authors. There are fears that globalisation of education will mean homogenisation of the education system, where the winners are prestigious Western institutions that can determine the direction and focus of future research and academic publications i.e. business case studies being irrelevant to other cultures as they mainly focus on Western countries or companies, and can set a benchmark on what is considered quality research or education worthy of accreditation and international recognition (Deem et al., 2008; Dyllick 2015; Ghemawat, 2008, Turner and Holton, 2015). Deem et al. (2008: 93) observe that international benchmarking and intense competition over rankings or university league tables have resulted in restructuring and influenced how European and Asian universities are governed, and therefore strengthened a “dependency culture” and “American-dominated hegemony” in Asia due to adaptation of curricula and processes from the West.

Furthermore, Dima and Vasilache (2016) view higher education as an international trade commodity, and Boyle et al. (2012) observe the value of a degree and the reputation of the provider may rely on replication of education. Due to student mobility and opening of education markets to external players, universities may feel pressured to replicate reputable Western education models. This suggests that globalisation can force local characteristics and traditions to give way to Anglo-Saxon processes if the institution wishes to compete in an interconnected world i.e. to attract international students and succeed on global rankings. Lastly, while integration of education systems has benefits such as comparability of degrees and thus easier movement of graduates to work abroad, not everyone benefits equally. As with globalisation criticism when it comes to distribution on wealth and widening gap between the rich and the poor, increasing Americanisation of education may mean smaller non-internationally accredited, non-English speaking academic institutions struggle to attract talented staff, pupils and funding, and be forced to replicate Western models instead of developing own ways of working that fit the local culture.

2.1.3 Student employability in the knowledge-society

Harvey (2003: 3) defines employability as “more than about developing attributes, techniques or experiences just to enable a student to get a job” and instead emphasises “developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner”. Shafie and Nayan (2010, in Williams, 2015) summarize skills related to employability as job readiness skills, a set of transferable skills required by the 21st century workplace. Moreover, part of student employability is the ability to articulate and apply both the transferable and degree-specific skills gained during studies (Improving Student Employability, 2017).

This 21st century workplace can be characterized as information-intensive and constantly changing, where especially developed countries are experiencing a transition from manufacturing-based to knowledge-based economies with strong reliance on scientific research and trained workers (EMBO, 2005). Moreover, report by Institute of Directors (2016: 4) identifies that expansion of Internet means “the labour market no longer rewards workers primarily for what they know, but for what they can do with that knowledge”, and Wilton (2011) recognizes that the external changes result in increased emphasis on personal responsibility for individual employability. As identified by Taylor (2004 in Balan 2017), higher education providers are often viewed

as key agents of change in knowledge-economy as they equip students with skills and qualifications.

Therefore, Drucker's (1993) work on emergence of the knowledge society where economic growth is based on quality and accessibility of information rather than on means of production, is still relevant. Competition over skilled knowledge workers and intellectual property is growing especially in Western countries, which creates challenges to the education sector, i.e. how to best prepare students for a rapidly changing workplace where adaptability, self-guidance and ability to learn more are essential (EBME, 2005; Institute of Directors, 2016). As an example, Barnett et al. (2001: 441) draw attention to the structural changes affecting universities i.e. emerging new technologies can make certain technical skills obsolete in a few years; "What was felt worthy of study today may be felt not to yield profitable skills and knowledge tomorrow". This means it is difficult for academic institutions to project what skills will be needed in future, and section 2.4. explains further why internal barriers make universities unable to adapt quickly to external changes.

2.1.4 Soft and technical skills

Discussion on employability in the knowledge-society ties in with debate on the balance between soft and technical skills, i.e. whether students should be trained to be knowledge or competency based to appear attractive to employers. Taylor-Stone (2008, in Williams 2015) defines knowledge-based skills as technical skills demonstrating practical knowledge, while competency-based skills comparable to soft skills link to critical thinking and problem-solving. Soft skills are interpersonal qualities and personal attributes related to the way humans interact with others, i.e. integrity, communication and social skills, teamwork and work ethic (Robles, 2012). Other examples are tolerance, maintaining professional standards, flexibility and ability to handle customers (Jungsun et al. in Williams 2015). Technical skills however are skills that can be quantified, relate to technical expertise, are specific to each job role, and are acquired through training and education (Litecky, Arnett and Prabhakar 2004, in Williams 2015). Practical examples include working with IT equipment, use of software and programming (Nilsson 2010 and Laker and Powell 2011, in Williams 2015).

Lastly, Williams (2015: 15) identifies that students and employers may not value the same skills. While her study focused on the employability skills of community college students in Jamaica, the remark that "employers are expecting new recruits to possess

soft skills prior to their employment“, was repeated during the primary research interviews also, as discussed in results. As explained by Williams (2015), soft and technical skills are on the opposite sides of the skills spectrum yet both are relevant for employment. This comment ties in with discussion on the needs of the 21st century workplace and role of academic institutions in supplying skilled graduates to the workforce; the changing nature of work means students need various skills to succeed.

2.1.5 Tertiary/higher education and its role in society

OECD's Education at Glance 2017 report defines tertiary education as the highest level of education, including theoretical programmes leading to high skill professions and advanced research, as well as vocational programmes. This definition therefore contains Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral level studies.

To acknowledge the major differences between the characteristics and requirements of different universities and degree fields, majority of the examples discussed in this thesis relate to business and management schools, also referred to as universities, because these institutions are likely to train students for knowledge-based roles. Klimorski (2008, in Jurse and Mulej 2011: 1442) defines the mission of business education as “producing business and management knowledge, providing capable graduates to the business world, and other academic services to the society.” This captures the concept that universities are suppliers of knowledge-workers, yet also have a wider role in the society. Already in 1998 during UNESCO World Conference of Higher Education, the Director of Division of Higher Education Mr Rodrigues Dias emphasised that the role of higher education is to “build a more equitable society” amidst an external environment experiencing radical social changes.

2.1.6 Stakeholders and quality education

Topic of quality is often brought up in connection to league tables, career surveys and university comparisons, and marketing departments of all academic institutions emphasise the high quality of services offered. As identified by Deem et al. (2008), if everyone offers high quality ‘world-class’ education then does not that word then lose its meaning. The concept of quality links to the perceived value of the service, and Improving Student Employability e-book (2017: 2) identify that while academics should not accept that education is “only worthwhile if it is of commercial value”, they need to be aware of the expectations stakeholders hold. This leads to acknowledgement that in

addition to students and employers, there are also other stakeholders to be aware of as these groups view globalisation, education reforms and other changes differently.

As identified by Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2003, in Schindler et al. 2015), there are four stakeholder groups with different perspectives on quality of higher education: funding bodies and taxpayers are providers of the service, students are users, employers are users of output and employees of the sector category covers academics and administrators. Moreover, Thomas et al. (2014: 510) identify a supply-chain type of an arrangement where the skills students have add value to businesses, so there exists a “relationship between business as consumers of skilled graduates and business schools as suppliers of this resource”. This ties in with Williams’ (2015) views on employability and whether students and employers, i.e. different stakeholder groups value same skills. Furthermore, Schindler et al. (2015: 4) explain that students “associate quality with the institution they attend, the program in which they enrol, and the course they complete”, while quality in the employers’ perspective is “in terms of the final product, which can be demonstrated through a qualified employee pool” (Harvey and Knight, 1996, In Schindler et al. 2015).

Lastly, as observed by Harvey (2005), Bobby (2014) and Ewell (2010) in Schindler et al. (2015: 4), quality is not static but instead a dynamic phenomenon of pursuing excellence, which must be considered in “the context of the larger educational, economic, political, and social landscape.” Moreover, Schindler et al. (2015) refer to work by Amaral & Rosa (2010) and Ewell (2010), when they note how reduced public trust in higher education has changed the focus of institutions from trying to achieve prestige to instead also needing to produce concrete evidence of student learning to customers and funding bodies. As shown in results, this has resulted in distinctive ways to demonstrate quality externally in the UK.

2.1.7 The Bologna Process and Lisbon Treaty

When discussing standardisation of education or educational reforms on a supranational level, it is clear the Bologna Process and Lisbon strategy have greatly influenced the European setting. They aim to respond to globalisation and increase innovation and knowledge production by harmonising and aligning higher education structures to create the European higher education area (EHEA) with free flow of ideas, knowledge and people (Jurse and Mulej, 2011). This alignment would stimulate knowledge-transfer, comparable degrees would enhance cross-border mobility and

with a more collaborative relationship between higher education and industry, this would then drive competitiveness, employment levels and economic growth (Maerki 2008 in Jurse and Mulej 2011). Berndtson (1991, in Jacobi et al. 2009) add that employability of graduates and principle of lifelong learning are among the key targets of the Bologna process. Additionally, Dima and Vasilache (2016) recognize this harmonisation can support internationalisation of educational activities.

Deem et al. (2008: 87) observe that already in 2006 European Commission outlined that among the main goals of this European-level education reform was to provide “the right mix of skills and competencies for the labour market” and make EHEA more “visible and attractive to the world”. This notion of attractiveness relates to discussion over Americanisation and replication of education models, where an area reforms its processes to better compete globally. Nagel (2006, in Jakobi et al. 2009) explains the Bologna process has changed governance structures and led to a “hybrid structure of education policy-making between the nation states and European Union”. However, Berndtson (1991, in Jacobi et al. 2009) and Veiga and Maral (2006) acknowledge that implementation is difficult because it involves restructuring and unifying higher education on European, national and local levels. The top-down policy implementation may not succeed due to reduced government spend on education and the significant autonomy universities possess in their national systems. Combined with challenges from globalisation and increased competition over resources, Jurse and Mulej (2011) observe this could instead result in increased competition between universities.

2.2 Overview of globalisation and its effect on higher education

Globalisation is said to turn the world into an integrated economy, where the more international trade takes place the more wealth is created and distributed, and thus the overall standard of living is increased (Adam Smith Institute, 2017). Moreover, increased interdependence with free movement of people and goods in the EU are seen ways to resolve conflict and increase tolerance as people are exposed to different cultures and ways of working. Despite these positive aspects, particularly in last few years attitudes towards globalisation have appeared to get negative tones due to increased protectionist policies especially in the free-market Western economies. In addition to President Trump’s notorious “America first” approach, the UK is dealing with the aftermath of the Brexit vote with the “take back control” slogan calling for tougher limits on immigration and independence from European Union (Easton, 2016), and the rise of nationalism and right-wing movement is evident in many other European

countries also (BBC, 2016). As reported by BBC (2016), many of these political developments are due to the migrant crisis of 2015, fears about globalisation and dilution of national identity. However, Wadsworth et al. (2016) observe that while many people in the UK are concerned immigration will increase competition over jobs and thus reduce pay and opportunities for the UK-born, empirical evidence shows that adverse experiences relate to the economic crash instead of migration.

Authors such as Aggarwal (2008), Daft and Benson (2016), Prior (2013) and Potrafke (2015) give further insight into why views on globalisation have changed since the 2007-2008 financial crisis. These relate to job displacement and negative social effects in developed countries i.e. loss of manual jobs to cheaper labour countries, increased unemployment among the youth, growing inequality and the widening gap between the top 1% of earners and the rest of the population, political shift towards the right-wing, as well as media and political polarisation. Moreover, Bremmer (2014) identifies a shift into guarded globalisation where rise of state capitalism and protectionism obstruct free trade, while Turner and Holton (2015) emphasise negative externalities and threat to national sovereignty when decision-making transfers to supranational EU-level. These developments affect education and student employability at least indirectly as they shape the environment in which universities operate.

The effect of globalisation on higher education varies depending on the context and characteristics of the institution and the country. Deem et al. (2008) and Thomas et al. (2014) observe that globalisation has opened local education markets to for-profit education providers, and competition over students and faculty can arise from beyond national borders. Moreover, political changes can change priorities and thus affect government funding and lead to budget cuts, which may cause increasing pressure to introduce or increase tuition fees to help cover operational costs. Cantwell and Kauppinen (2014) observe universities are also subject to expectations to commercialise results of scientific research to contribute more in the knowledge-driven economy. In longer term, Thomas et al. (2014) suggest reduced funding, increased competition and rapidly changing needs of the external environment may lead to fragmentation of education outside universities, and introduction of shorter programmes or flexible degree certificates.

Moreover, legal changes can affect visas and thus the inflow of international faculty and students, and technological development can result in changing working styles i.e.

video conferencing and distance learning over face-to-face teaching creating social challenges. As observed by Taylor (2004, in Balan 2017) and Thomas et al. (2013), distance learning has the potential to democratise education and allow universal access yet includes risks related to resources such as ICT support, and it may be challenging to establish a sense of belonging to the student community for those studying from distance. Balan (2017) adds that overcoming isolation created by online learning is essential if the institution wishes to attract students who cannot attend classes in person. Moreover, increased student mobility and exposure to foreign competitors may lead to calls for local education reforms to improve competitiveness and performance in global university league tables. This need for demonstrating achievements and quality externally can strengthen the position of reputable and established Anglo-Saxon universities.

In addition to challenges, various authors see opportunities arising from globalisation and resulting interconnectedness. Aggarwal (2008), Ghemawat (2008), Mills (2009) and Pfefferman (2016) emphasise technology and international cooperation e.g. possibilities with distance learning solutions, knowledge-sharing leading to better quality education locally or international collaboration leading to development of case studies that consider global issues beyond market entry to foreign markets. Additionally, technological development and provision of online courses such as 'Massive Open Online Courses' (Moocs) instead of teacher-led lectures can provide flexibility, reduce fixed costs arising from learning facilities and allow for innovative ways to develop teaching (Institute of Directors, 2016). Moreover, Senichev (2013), Kuratko et al. (2014) and Sharma and Jha (2016) see opportunities with international cooperation and communication leading to innovation, better understanding of cultural differences and tolerance when working in multicultural teams. Furthermore, Balan (2017), Guruz (2011), Levent (2016) and Scott (2015) discuss the benefits of international mobility - for example, Erasmus programmes enable students to study abroad, to gain experience and be exposed to new ideas, and standardisation of assessment and evaluation reduce barriers when applying for further education or employment abroad.

Overall, the observation that globalisation creates various challenges and opportunities to education providers inevitably affects student employability. Jacobi et al. (2009) identify that academic disciplines are developed in the context of the higher education structures and are thus affected by educational ideologies, resources and laws.

Moreover, Kovacevic and Pavlovic (2016) identify how globalisation with international cooperation have had a positive effect on higher education i.e. standardisation of practises has made ECTS a standard unit of study credits in Europe. This can positively affect student employability and help tackle youth unemployment as people are more mobile when their degrees are internationally recognized. Moreover, technological innovations for communication tools such as video conferencing can make education more accessible to those unable to attend traditional universities due to time, cost or distance. Lastly, while there are challenges linked to international mobility, competition and university comparisons, publishing career survey results such as Destination of Leaders from Higher Education (DLHE), being transparent about local and international accreditations, creating both inward and outward internationalisation strategies, and showcasing performance via league tables can help universities access a much larger pool of students, faculty and external funding than previously possible.

2.3 Barriers to change

As universities are affected by the external environment and globalisation, and there are calls that education providers should tailor their degree offerings to match demands of the employers and other stakeholders, it is crucial to consider the barriers to change. These can relate to internal factors such as slow response and reluctance to change, as well to those strongly influenced by external factors such as government budget.

Jurse and Mulej (2011: 1451) observe that public universities are traditionally “rigid university decision structures and mechanisms” prescribed by national legislation, and this rigidity is “mirrored in slower responsiveness to changes in market trends.” Moreover, Berndtson (1991, in Jacobi et al. 2009: 198) add that despite harmonisation initiatives such as the Bologna process, changing existing disciplines is difficult as they fulfil key academic functions, are “strengthened by quality assurance mechanisms” and “have evolved into bureaucratic institutions competing against each other”. Universities being subject to rigorous quality assurance processes and benchmarking mean changing curricula can take time, and slow responsiveness to change can also be seen in the time it takes to change the teaching process itself. As an example, Mulej and Cizelj (2009, in Jurse and Mulej 2011: 1450) criticize the classical way of teaching i.e. holding lectures to large groups of students instead of a more personal approach, and suggest that examinations based on “repeating the factual knowledge should be replaced with student curiosity, creativeness, critical attitude, enthusiasm, and

responsibility for contributing to society.” Barnett et al. (2001) and Institute of Directors (2016) observe the underlying rules where learning is traditionally based on acquisition and reproduction of given information over creative application, and emphasise that learning takes time to develop. Therefore, seek for increased efficiency and cost-savings in the educational sector, leading to reduced contact hours, reliance on technology and increase of online materials for example, can indeed harm the learning process. This may lead to reduced employability if students fail to obtain necessary soft skills such as communication, negotiation skills and critical thinking during their studies.

Furthermore, authors such as Berndtson (1991, in Jacobs et al. 2009) and Kovacevic and Pavlovic (2016) acknowledge the barriers funding can create to education. They warn of the ethical implications caused if teaching and research grow apart when universities start to direct research from the common good i.e. benefitting the wider society into specific commercial application and securing intellectual property to attract external funding. Oehmke (2005, in EMBO 2005) adds that this courting of private industries could “threaten the intellectual independence of universities in the long term”. Moreover, need for efficiency and cost-saving in the educational sector can be detrimental in long term as knowledge production and innovation from higher education contribute to job creation, employment levels and thus economic growth of the area.

Lastly, in addition to inability to adapt quickly to external changes due to bureaucracy or demanding quality assurance processes, there are internal behavioural barriers such as motivational issues, internal politics and “conservative response to change as an institutional aspect of academic behaviour, in which stability and the free flow of thinking are more preferred than immediate action under pressure” (Lorange 2008: 129 in Jurse and Mulej, 2011: 1451). When discussing the behaviour of academics, Barnett et al. (2001) identify that for most institutional loyalty is secondary to disciplinary loyalty, which suggests possible resistance for changes driven top-down by the institution. There can also be misalignment between the local and global standards for quality, and resistance and unwillingness from the local governing bodies to adjust to international processes like accreditations. In Finland for example, internationally-accredited Hanken university was subject to local re-audit after failing to obtain an accreditation on its quality system from a national quality assurance agency FINHEEC (Salskov-Iversen et al. 2014).

2.3 Higher education and student employability in the UK

United Kingdom's higher education system has a strong international reputation, and is characterised by tuition fees, high levels of diversity, strong quality assurance systems and a range of strategies for internationalisation as the environment is highly competitive (European Parliament, 2015). Instead of the dual institutional model like in many other countries, higher education in the UK is divided between universities and tertiary institutions without a right to award qualifications (European Parliament, 2015).

Student and graduate employability are widely researched in the UK, with sources such as Institute of Directors (2016) and Improving Student Employability e-book (2017) discussing forces affecting employability and skills development. Office for National Statistics (2017) reports that graduate employment level in the UK was 82% in July to September 2017, however unemployment rates are higher for those having graduated within last five years. There is an incentive for universities to ensure students are attractive to employers because employability rates measured via career surveys such as DLHE and new Graduate Outcomes survey introduced in 2018 can affect school league tables, accreditations and the institution's overall reputation and attractiveness for new students, and thus have indirect financial implications. Therefore, most universities have dedicated Careers and Employment personnel to guide and support students and alumni who wish to take part in employability activities, and the degrees and supporting services are subject to rigorous quality assurance processes (Barnes, 2018; Charles, 2018).

Students are generally seen as the main stakeholders demanding quality education including careers support, and expect their substantial financial investment on acquiring a degree to result in employment. Coughlan (2018) reports that the average student debt at graduation in England is currently at £50 000, however there are large differences within the UK as Scottish students are not subject to tuition fees (OECD, 2017). Additionally, it is in the best interest of the government to ensure graduates move quickly from academia to employment and thus start to contribute to the society financially. For those having started an undergraduate course after September 2012, student loans are set to be forgiven in 30 years after graduation if the person does not earn over £25 000 a year (Student Finance England, 2018).

Research by Wolf et al. identified that based on the current trend, majority of students in England will not repay their debts in full, meaning the “contribution of student loans to net government debt is forecast to rise from around 4 per cent of GDP today [2016] to over 11 per cent in 2040.” (Wolf et al. 2016: 6). Therefore, in addition to ensuring generic employability of students, there is a need to ensure graduates are attractive to employers and can earn a wage that allows for loan repayments. Moreover, Wolf et al. (2016: 7) observe that UK’s education policy is based on the argument that “economic growth is higher the larger the number of people holding university degrees”, a relationship that justifies university expansions even if labour market data suggest that for many, degrees do not result in earnings well above the non-graduate average. Similar results are found in reports by OECD (2017) and Wilton (2011). Despite high tuition fees, education creates costs to the society and the taxpayer, and the UK spends 6.6% of its GDP, the highest proportion among OECD countries, on primary to tertiary education (OECD, 2017). However, while the total spend on education is higher, at tertiary level only 28% of funding comes from public sources while 48% is from household expenditure i.e. student loans, which are quite different to the OECD averages (70% and 22%) (OECD, 2017).

Lastly, while there are calls to reduce fees to make university more accessible and reduce the financial burden on the individual, Wolf et al. (2016) acknowledge that institutions are unwilling to change the high fee structure even if they could, as a below-average fees would signal less quality education being provided. This would negatively affect the reputation of the institution. A way to reduce the education-related financial burden could be to introduce short courses or two-year degrees (Coughlan, 2018), yet Wolf et al. (2016) note that there is currently no financial incentive for this for publicly-funded institutions.

2.4 Higher education and student employability in Finland

Finnish higher education system is quite different to that of the UK in terms of degree and fee structure and administration, and it is based on a dual institutional model with separate research universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS) (European Parliament, 2015). Education is almost fully funded from public sources and is free for local and EU students, resulting in a larger share of adults having attained tertiary education than in other OECD countries (OECD, 2017). As observed by Bastos (2017), Finland has little performance variation or educational gap between schools, suggesting it is possibly not as suited for league table comparisons that are common in

the UK. Furthermore, Bastos (2017) and Uusiautti and Määttä (2013) add that the Finnish educational model is characterised by remarkable autonomy of teachers and decentralization of decision-making power to local authorities. This allows for implementation and evaluation of educational policy at local level meaning despite a national curriculum, teachers can shape it to their needs (Sahlberg, 2015).

However, already in 2000 Rinne acknowledged the influence globalisation has had on the Finnish education system, and described the educational policy as neo-liberal with policies moving towards deregulation, decentralisation and diversification like in many Western countries. This decentralization can lead to fragmentation of initiatives, i.e. career development projects being driven by motivated individuals and not central organizations, and diversification may mean a move from general education into universities specializing in specific fields. A current challenge with the Finnish higher education system is the age of graduates, as they tend to be older than in other EU countries due to competitive university admission procedures and relatively long degree completion times (European Parliament, 2015). This means there is increasing pressure to ensure graduates are employable and can find jobs straight after graduation, so that they will start to contribute to the society.

Moreover, international accreditations have not been common historically, as evaluations on education providers are carried out by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) and higher education institutions (Schwarz and Westerheijden, 2007), yet in recent years a more strategic focus on ensuring institutions obtain accreditations and shape research to improve presence on global league tables has emerged. Currently, at rank 90, the University of Helsinki is the only Finnish university within the top 100 of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2018. In comparison, the UK has 12 universities in top 100 with three of them in the top 10 (Times Higher Education, 2018).

Many universities do not have as much emphasis on employing dedicated Careers and Employment personnel as in the UK possibly due to lack of resources such as funding and staff, and there may be lack of demand as institutions are subject to different stakeholder expectations. Employability skills i.e. communication and CV writing are generally taught as part of modules instead of by career advisors or external visitors, and student careers services take form of publishing internships and job advertisement in the university intranet rather than having a separate department responsible for

careers and employability support. Moreover, the graduate job market is different as there are fewer graduate schemes organised by employers, and assessment centres and psychometric testing are not as common as in the UK. There are some centrally organised careers fairs and networking events, and differences between education providers and the way they provide student career support, but overall employability to some extent at least is viewed as the responsibility of the individual. This is surprising considering the dual education model where the original purpose of UAS was to provide practical, employability-relevant degrees. Advanced career guidance and support would therefore be expected to be integrated into the UAS operations.

This lack of focus on careers services may change in near future, as per a report submitted to the Ministry of Education and Culture in March 2017, the funding for higher education providers in Finland may change towards a model where funding depends on graduate employment. This means increasing the relevance of education to promote higher employment levels for graduates, and the funding of the institutions becoming tied to career monitoring surveys measuring areas such as satisfaction among graduates (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a). This approach resembles the current UK model, and in this regard, the comments from the Careers and Employment staff discussed in results may act as a starting point for when Finnish universities plan how they start to address this increased employability focus.

Lastly, while this thesis is not detailed, extensive or in-depth enough to answer whether emphasis on student employability and career support received during studies would result in significantly higher employment rates, any strategy to decrease youth unemployment rates in Finland would be valuable. While the unemployment figures have improved from August 2017, in February 2018 Statistic Finland reported that “the unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24, that is, the proportion of the unemployed among the labour force, stood at 21.1 per cent”.

3 Methods

This thesis is mostly theory and academic literature based review on the way higher education and student careers services in the UK support employability, and whether it is possible to identify examples that could benefit the Finnish education system. The secondary research is complemented with primary research used to express views from Careers and Employment personnel dealing with the topic of employability and

skills development on daily basis. This design was chosen to achieve a comparison of ideas and theories from various sources, while ensuring originality of the topic i.e. being more than a generic review on existing studies. The aim was to view globalisation, internationalisation and employability in large scale rather than focusing on certain academic institutions or degrees only. The final deliverable is a set of findings which can provide a starting point for further research, especially as the financing of higher education in Finland may become connected to career surveys and student employability levels in near future.

3.1 Approach taken

Approach taken with secondary research was structured yet exploratory to start with i.e. using key words such as “opportunities from globalisation”, “student employability” to find 50 relevant peer-reviewed academic journals, textbooks and news articles from reputable online sources to get a general overview. Most academic journals are therefore from 2008-2017. Afterwards, a more defined approach was taken to ensure the final deliverable would be focused on a well-defined issue within the large concepts of globalisation and higher education.

The topic and preliminary hypothesis changed during the secondary research process, however before the exploratory interviews the working title was set to focus on the UK experience while aiming to identify ways Finnish higher education system could benefit from those examples. This approach was selected due to the author having studied in both countries, and currently working in the UK, meaning it was possible to complete exploratory interviews in person.

The research aimed to answer three main questions:

- 1) How are globalisation and internationalisation defined, and have there been recent changes or are their effect on higher education likely to change in near future?
- 2) Regards to abovementioned themes and student employability, what are the likely challenges education providers are subject to, both now and in near future, in the UK, Finland and globally?

- 3) Having considered the challenges and influence of the external environment, what opportunities exist that help either in overcoming these challenges or in creating future growth that support student employability? Growth could be defined in terms of quality of teaching and improvements in curricula, partnerships and international cooperation, use of technology and other factors i.e. employer perception of the employability of students.

As shown in the literature review, the challenges and opportunities created by globalisation and internationalisation, and especially student employability in the UK, are widely researched already. However, there is not such a large pool of research to draw from when wanting to identify best practises from the current UK model and to apply them to the Finnish context.

The primary research took the form of interviewing four university Careers and Employability personnel in the UK either over email, Skype or face-to-face. They provide a current view on the issue and benefit from the experience and knowledge of people dealing with employability on daily basis. The interview questions are shown on Appendix 1, and they were constructed following Zikmund et. al. (2012) approach where a combination of open questions with ones requiring specific responses was desirable to allow identifying similarities with themes covered during secondary research. Out of the 20 interview invites sent to various university Careers departments, 4 replies were gathered during March 2018. The exploratory interviews lasted from 45 minutes to two hours, and none of the interviews fully followed the same structure but were instead shaped to suit the interviewees preferences. This allowed discovering areas that had not been considered during secondary research, e.g. discussing the psychology behind employability with Mr Charles.

While these exploratory interviews only represent the views of four individuals willing to take part in the thesis process, similarities found between them and secondary research especially regards to which employability skills students are lacking, indicate they add value to the discussion. A way to continue from this study could be to expand the primary research by conducting structured interviews with a larger number of UK careers personnel, to survey graduates or employers, as well as contacting Finnish universities to arrange focus group interviews with career advisors or lecturers teaching

employability skills during modules to gather their thoughts on how student careers services could be organized in Finland.

3.2 Critical review

Naturally, there are societal, political and cultural differences between Finland and the UK, and the higher education systems and individual institutions are different in the way education, degrees or qualifications are implemented and quality assured, financed and advertised for example. Examples introduced in this thesis represent only a narrow sample of experiences and each of the academic institutions experiences the effect of globalisation in their unique way. As identified by Barnett et al. (2001) there are also large differences between degree disciplines, i.e. business and nursing would experience globalisation differently, and similarly research universities would have different experiences or skills teaching emphasis than universities of applied sciences.

Articles and studies used in the literature review are from peer-reviewed academic journals and government publications. The findings are largely general observations derived from combining various existing academic studies, some of which were originally created to critically review a certain degree field, give opinion on a strategic issue or only on a specific country. For example, the threats and opportunities created by globalisation are researched and discussed extensively by various authors, yet the findings can be quite contradictory. These are caused by different viewpoints and country contexts, and there are also differences in the way data is collected and interpreted, lack of transparency, which globalisation indices i.e. KOF Globalisation or Maastricht Globalisation index are used in the original research etc. (Harrison, 2015; Mills, 2009 and Potrafke 2015). By not expressing the original purpose and the context of the source document each time something is referenced, there is a chance that the interpretation differs from its original purpose. Moreover, while many examples used related specifically to business schools, the sources include studies specific to other departments and other countries beyond just the UK or Finland.

This approach gives a varied view on globalisation and other key topics as all referenced studies viewed the phenomena from their own perspectives, but means the findings are generic and not directly applicable to the entire Finnish higher education system. Regardless, the findings give a starting point when discussing student employability in Finland where centrally organized and quality assured Careers and Employability departments are not as common as in the UK.

4 Results

As discussed in the literature review, various challenges and opportunities arise from globalisation, resulting interconnectedness, movement of people and new cultural influences. These will inevitably affect higher education and student employability over time. Results below are divided into sections starting from a summary of challenges and the opportunities created by globalisation with focus on the UK and Finland, followed by discussion on skills and employability. Findings from secondary research are complemented with examples derived from the exploratory interviews.

4.1 Challenges created by globalisation, and their effect on employability

As identified by Jurse and Mulej (2011), opening of local higher education markets increases competition and changing priorities in public sector funding cause insecurity also in the education sector. Increased competition leading to growing importance on global university rankings and league tables may become areas that universities will be forced to focus on, as they affect the market recognition and reputation of institutions (Jurse and Mulej, 2011). While exploratory interviews identified criticism among academics towards the importance of league tables in the UK, in some studies rankings are justified by being “a tool to make the business education market more transparent, in terms of true quality of offered academic services”, even though this contributes to increased differentiation (Jurse and Mulej 2011: 1450). Differentiation could mean academic institutions begin to specialize in specific degrees or research topics to achieve higher rankings, and therefore to attract applicants and external funding, rather than offering a selection of degrees and doing research that benefits the society without commercial value. Reinchert (2009, in Jurse and Mulej 2011) adds to the discussion by identifying that this differentiation may lead to ‘massification’ of education where the emphasis is on “graduates’ employability, based on students’ professional competencies” and thus the “classical academic nature of education may be lost.” This ties in with Barnett et al.’s (2001) observation that value of education is increasingly being measured by the outputs and market worth of the students i.e. their employability that can be measured and quantified.

Other challenges include cultural standardisation and Americanisation (Deem et al. 2008; Turner and Holton, 2015). While Americanisation is often connected to the way consumer tastes are uniting, as shown in the literature review we can observe

Americanisation of education, i.e. the use of similar grading criteria (which can also be an opportunity), use of case studies analysing Western companies instead of a more diversified approach, and the general influence famous US business schools have on education provided in other countries. Furthermore, authors such as Aggarwal (2008), Balan (2017), Deem et al. (2008) and Ghemawat (2008) acknowledge the predominance of Western academic model and how English has become the main language of education and publications, at least in fields such as international business, which strengthens the competitiveness of established Western, English-speaking education providers. Similarly, Altbach (2007, in Balan, 2017) views higher education as a transnational industry mostly benefitting the rich countries and thus reinforcing international inequalities and asymmetrical cultural transformation, as it is characterised by uni-directional student flows from the poor countries into the rich. This relates to findings gathered from primary research. Jennings (2018) for example observed the strong influence the American universities have had on the UK, and the league tables and accreditation processes especially.

While globalisation and the resulting increased international mobility of labour, exchange programmes and cooperation with foreign institutions have exposed more people to diversity and different cultures, some are said to lack cultural awareness and sensitivity, a discussion based on cultural theories by Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) and somewhat also the GLOBE project discussed in Daft and Benson (2016). These theories suffer from simplification and generalisation, yet they help explain some of the conflict arising from cultural differences. Being aware of this is essential as students are likely to work in multicultural teams during university, and in future. Careers personnel observed that disagreements in team work arise especially because of different perceptions regarding time, quality of work and role division, all of which are discussed in Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory.

In the UK, a somewhat negative atmosphere against immigration as explained by BBC and Wadsworth et al. (2016), changes in government policy and limitations on free movement of labour after Brexit can all affect the possibilities for education providers to benefit from the positive aspects of globalisation and international cooperation. Jones (2018) observed that Brexit is causing a lot of uncertainty, and current policies and procedures are making it more difficult to meet the employers' needs. Similarly, Jennings (2018) expressed concerns that Brexit and visa changes, and a recent government levy that makes it more expensive to hire non-EU staff, will make it more

difficult for UK universities to attract talented faculty from abroad. The annual migrant skills charge of £1000 for hiring non-EU staff came into effect in 2017, and it may rise in future (Wright, 2017). All these can affect the quality of education, and lead to a decrease in the inflow of fee-paying students over time. This connects to discussion on 'brain gain' and strength of the English-speaking education. Even though there are fears that Brexit may reduce the number of fee-paying students arriving in the UK, the careers personnel did not think the change would be instantaneous because of the strong reputation of UK universities.

Simultaneously, there are ongoing discussions on whether the fees for UK students should be reduced (Coughlan, 2018; Savage, 2018). Reduction in international student numbers and local fees could potentially cause significant problems with future university funding, as education is an important income stream for UK (Department of Education, 2017; OECD, 2017). When including the cost of tuition, living costs of the non-UK residents and the transnational education (TNE) activity repatriated to the UK, Department of Education report shows that their total value reached £18.76bn in 2014, an increase of 18% from 2010. Of that, 92% came from education-related services, while TNE accounted for 8% (Department of Education, 2017: 7). Moreover, in 2015-2016, international knowledge exchange and university-business collaboration on research and development created an income stream of over £3.5 billion to English higher institutions (HEFSE, 2017). There are fears that these income-generating projects could be affected by challenges arising from globalisation, such as general insecurity and resource limitations.

During the interview, Barnes (2018) pointed out that increased competition is already evident and among the biggest challenges. While local demographics such as low birth rate will shrink the future student pool, globalisation has opened access to bigger education markets and thus increased the potential student pool, yet there is a growing need to specialize and to obtain accreditations to attract talented students and staff. Barnes (2018) and Charles (2018) emphasised the importance of building and maintaining good reputation, and important quality mechanism that universities and their career services need to consider are the Teaching Excellence Framework, ISO standards and possibly AGCAS (Associate of Graduate Advisory Services) membership and Matrix accreditation. Even for reputable institutions with English as the tuition language, reduced funding combined with operating in a highly competitive environment with both local and international competitors, and availability of online

education, may lead to specialization and changes in university strategy. Barnes (2018) observed universities are service providers strongly influenced by governing bodies and other stakeholders, and therefore almost like private companies in all but name. However, while the institutions need to respond to market changes, they have the responsibility to represent certain quality and standards, and to protect education and learning (Barnes, 2018).

External changes will eventually affect student skills development and employability; however, it is difficult to estimate the resulting effect on student Careers and Employment services. For some institutions, this may mean reduced services as budgets are cut yet some may decide to improve the service to create added value to students. There is likely to be a need to ensure employability levels remain high as they affect the institutions' competitiveness and attractiveness. Regardless, while the education sector is subject to increased efficiency-demands, their role as providers of flexible and skilled knowledge-workers is likely to remain important. Thompson (2004 in Wilton 2011: 2) acknowledges that "investment in human capital and lifelong learning is the foundation for success in global economy", and as globalisation and technology continue to re-shape the labour market worldwide, people need a broad knowledge-base and a transferable skillset (OECD 2017). Moreover, "high quality education, innovation and knowledge have been recognized as key competitive resources crucial for the future prosperity of a nation and global society" (Rising above the Gathering Storm, 2007, in Jurse and Mulej, 2011: 1447). These findings suggest education and educational institutions continue to play an important role in the society also in future, however the way they operate and teach may change due to external influence.

4.2 Opportunities created by globalisation, and their effect on employability

There are various opportunities linked to technology and internationalisation i.e. internationalisation of the curriculum and knowledge-sharing with foreign partners, international mobility and student exchange programmes, and digital learning (European Parliament, 2016). Also, as observed by Kettunen et al. (2013), there are opportunities with integrating technology and social media in career services. Despite observing that some career service practitioners fear that social media might replace human interaction, others view it as a useful way to communicate and facilitate the growth of peer support (Kettunen et al., 2013).

Mangematin and Baden-Fuller (2008 in Jurse and Mulej 2011: 1444) add that “knowledge and higher education have become attractive and lucrative export products in an emerging global contest among countries and institutions”, and as observed by Raghuram (2013, in Maury 2017), international student mobility is a fast-growing phenomenon globally, where foreign students are among the fastest growing migrant groups in many OECD countries. In Finland for example, the number of international students reached 20 000 by 2014 meaning the numbers more than tripled in a ten-year period (CIMO, 2016 in Maury 2017: 225), indicating there exists an opportunity for further growth especially thanks to lack of tuition fees for EU students and the high perceived quality of the Finnish education system. OECD’s 2017 Education at Glance report adds that for every national student Finland sends abroad, 2.5 international students are welcomed in, demonstrating ‘brain gain’ among tertiary students. This brain gain could improve innovativeness and knowledge-sharing in the economy, and thus contribute to job creation and economic growth. Additionally, the UK has a very high net inflow of students; per each student going abroad the country gains 16 international students (OECD, 2017).

As shown as an example of outward internationalisation strategies (Jurse and Mulej, 2011), establishing branch universities abroad and further international cooperation can help increase the pool of applicants, provide new income streams and promote knowledge-sharing. Moreover, establishing shorter degrees and distance studies are likely to be cheaper and thus be an option when restricted by resources, yet as shown in literature review these have challenges related to them i.e. how to ensure students become part of the student community and will shorter degrees give sufficient time for learning and development to take place. While Barnes (2018) acknowledged opportunities arising from technology and online learning, he also stressed that studying from distance means the student loses on the social side of education. This view was also observed in literature review by Balan (2017) and Thomas et al. (2013). University is a growing up experience, where learning happens when being in a community of scholars. Therefore, Barnes stressed that while online studying may increase and it is a suitable way to study for mature and busy people, it takes a certain type of person to commit to it. Therefore, younger students are likely to still choose the traditional university experience.

In Finland opportunities linked to technology are of key interest. Already in 2011, the Learning and Competence 2020 strategy by the Finnish National Board of Education

(FNBE) outlined a key focus in accelerating implementation of digital infrastructure, electronic learning materials and digital learning environments to improve education and online presence. Moreover, there is government-led emphasis on lifelong learning, educational partnerships and student welfare. This means a growing focus on guidance counselling, and “personal further study and career paths will be established as permanent features of upper secondary education” (FNBE, 2011: 9), a level before universities. Combined with possible changes in funding to consider employability and use of career surveys (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017), this indicates there will be growing need for career services also in higher education which is the level by which most have chosen their area of specialisation. That could mean guidance counselling is directed at lower levels of education, while higher education establishes similar initiatives as what UK careers services are organising to their students to improve employability skills development. The changing nature of work is likely to mean that student career paths will change and various transferable skills will be needed. For example, a 2016 study by LinkedIn suggest that during the first decade out of college, recent graduates will change jobs four times in average (CNN, 2016).

A current example of skills shortages caused by inflexible immigration policies and slow responsiveness from the education sector is seen in Finland, where rapidly growing technology start-ups and the gaming industry struggle to find talented staff needed to grow the business (Forsell, 2016). This has led to the introduction of a start-up visa, short-term vocational courses that teach specific IT skills such as programming, and changes in immigration policy and residence permits to make the country more attractive to international knowledge-workers (Forsell, 2016; Ministry of the Interior, 2018). In the university context of Finland and the UK, a way to possibly overcome issues with bureaucracy and demanding quality assurance processes that make academic institutions and traditional degrees slow to react and adapt to changes, would be the introduction of work-placed learning already common in lower level vocational schools, online courses or workshops led by business representatives, and apprenticeships i.e. degree apprenticeships like in the UK, where universities and employers work in close cooperation. While these would possibly not lead to a traditional academic degree, and thus may not be a priority from the academics’ point of view, innovative strategies like that could help reduce overall youth unemployment. This in turn, would be what the EU level initiatives are already trying to achieve (European Commission, 2012).

4.3 Employability skills, skills shortages and how to improve the situation

Changing nature of work is identified as a key challenge to business schools, as it means the skills taught to students need to reflect the rapidly changing needs of the workplace. Chartered Management Institute's 21st Century Leaders report found that to boost employability, 70% of employers believe leadership and enterprise modules should be included in all degree subjects (CMI, 2014). Additionally, Barnes (2018) observes that there should be focus on soft skills as they are skills for life anyway, but if a degree has a technical element then it is essential to ensure subjects keep up with the industry development to ensure the degrees remain relevant.

Comprehensive analysis of the soft skills lacking from curricula are seen from work by CIPD (2010), Harvey (2003), Institute of Directors (2016) and Improving Student Employability e-book (2017). Additionally, Thomas et al. (2013) criticize the over-emphasis on business and analytic skills with inadequate focus on leadership, problem-framing or integrative thinking in business schools. Another example of essential soft skills is from Leavy (2011), who explains that emotional intelligence is essential for having a thoughtful conversation with someone whose views are different or even threatening to your own; a situation likely to be experienced in working life.

During the interviews, it emerged there are specific skills that the Careers services personnel observed as being particularly important to employability, yet generally poorly adapted by students. Example skills Careers and Employment personnel listed as students lacking, when considering the feedback from employers, were business and commercial awareness i.e. knowledge of the employer and industry, business acumen and etiquette i.e. issues with clothing and excessive use of mobile devices, and negotiation skills. Also, it was pointed out that some lack confidence, resilience and cultural awareness, while tending to often overestimate their ability for working effectively in teams. Moreover, while students are generally good at time management and spoken communication such as presentations and interviews, because of an informal communication style many need support in writing a CV or applications. Additionally, Jennings (2018) observed that language skills i.e. speaking a second language fluently and use of Excel are areas where some students struggle. Lack of language skills may be an area of concern, as despite the dominance of English in many areas, employers on global level often value language skills and cultural awareness.

To overcome this, careers personnel have invited companies to hold mock assessment centres and psychometric testing at university premises to give students practise for when they apply for graduate jobs, and to encourage them to network with local employers. Additionally, Charles (2018) and Barnes (2018) emphasised the need to have employability training built into courses, to give students a possibility to take part in placements and work-based learning, and to make it more transparent in general on what skills modules are teaching. The rationale was that students would be able to discuss them during future interviews, and feel more confident in what their degrees have taught them. Pegg et al. (2012 in *Improving Student Employability e-book*, 2017) also see better transparency and communication as a way forward i.e. ensuring students understand the link between course elements, skills development and employability, and are thus able to express these in job applications. While placement years or assessment centres are not as common in Finland, career events such as mock interviews, better cooperation with industry representative and further transparency over employability skills teaching could enhance students' confidence and improve their performance, as well as helping them improve social skills when networking with employers.

Barnes (2018), Harvey (2003), Jennings (2018), Schindler et al. (2016), Thomas et al. (2014) and Williams (2015) identify the disparity between stakeholder perceptions regarding the type of skills needed in employment. While students assume acquiring technical skills are prerequisite for finding employment, employers generally seek to recruit people with well-rounded and balanced skillsets, and the ability to deal with change and develop their role in the organisation. As identified by *Improving Student Employability e-book* (2017) and the careers personnel, many companies have reduced their internal training, and expect new hires to have skills in organisation-specific processes already at graduation. Furthermore, Barnes (2018) observes how employers see themselves as the beneficiaries of the education service i.e. getting skilled graduates, but they should also lower their expectations and understand that universities exist to teach generic transferable skills such as communication, critical thinking and adaptability, and it is the role of the employer to train the employee to use specialized software or tools. This view is repeated by Jennings (2018) and Jones (2018), who acknowledge that employers can train their workforce on technical skills, yet teaching soft skills such as communication and negotiation skills are something learnt over time and should thus be emphasised during education. This notion of time

links to work by Barnett et. al (2001) introduced in literature review. Additionally, report by Institute of Directors (2016: 5) identifies that technological development and use of online learning will make students “central in regulating their learning and determining the development of their own skills”, meaning education needs to ensure students learn self-guidance and the ability to learn for themselves.

Moreover, study by EMBO (2005) adds that emergence of the knowledge-economy has created a dilemma to universities; in addition to providing a growing number of graduates to satisfy the needs of the workplace, they are also the prime generators of knowledge in the society. This could mean further specialization between teaching, and focus on research. Already in 2001 Barnett et al. observed that incorporating skills needed in the world of work into curricula has caused the focus on skills teaching to shift to performativity i.e. focus is on the outputs and use-value of skills in relation to the wider world rather than pursuing knowledge for its own sake. This stresses the observation that value of education is increasingly being measured by the market worth of students where employability is captured and quantified via career surveys that can affect league table rankings and accreditations. Furthermore, this ties in with the general discussion on whether academic institutions should even try meet employers' demands and supply skilled knowledge workers to fill the growing number of 'high-skill' jobs in the economy, but rather isn't their role to fulfil their responsibility to the society and the individual (Keep and Mayhew 1999 in Wilton, 2011; Klimorski 2008 and Mulej and Cizelj 2009, in Jurse and Mulej, 2011).

Lastly, the careers personnel observed that student absence and engagement are among the main challenges universities are facing. While students expect their expensive degrees to make them attractive to employers, they do not tend to take part in extra-curricular activities until the final year when it possibly is too late to develop employability skills. Charles (2018) observes that while students are customers as such due to the fees they pay and thus expect to gain specific skills ensuring employment, they should realize employability requires more than attending classes. Suggested ways to overcome issues with absence are cooperation with module leaders and merging employability activities with course content i.e. making it more transparent on what skills students are meant to obtain during course work and how, reducing the number of open workshop events and instead having one-to-one appointments, developing marketing activities to ensure new students are aware of services offered by careers and employment services, and use of social media and technology to

become more easily approachable and increase interaction. Another interesting point was raised by Charles (2018) who discussed the possibility of integrating psychology into employability training i.e. having careers consultants as well as advisors available, so that instead of Careers and Employment services being a place to get information and leaflets from, it would become a place where students could openly discuss their motivation and personality traits that are likely to affect their career paths and confidence later. Charles explained that the better understanding you have of yourself and what drives and motivates you, the better change you have of making the right decisions that allow you to achieve your goals.

4.4 What can Finland learn from the UK's Careers and Employment services

Jennings (2017) observed that mounting student debts and high fees are making students in the UK demanding regarding their university experience and employment prospects. This could be one of the reasons why the Careers and Employment services are such a strategic focus in the UK; they are a cost-effective way for universities to provide value to students that have only few contact lectures as part of their degrees. As explained by Jones (2018), the aim of career services is to empower students with employability skills, and in addition to helping with recruitment, to equip students with general skills such as personal branding. Charles (2018) adds that universities try to be the link that allow a smooth transition from studies into real life by developing employability skills, while teaching the importance of networking and looking for unadvertised vacancies.

Beneficial services offered by the career services include careers guidance and application help, training in psychometric testing, career fairs, general advisory services and some universities also have in-house placing services which is an internal recruitment agency focused on connecting students to local jobs and volunteering opportunities, and maintaining relationships with local employers. This close relationship with employers allows career services to get insight into what skills and other requirements are arising in the external environment, and to then feed that information into lecturers and module leaders. This improved focus on graduate employability would be beneficial in Finland, as in 2016, estimated recent graduate employment levels for the 20-34 age group having left tertiary level education within last three years were 80.4% in Finland which is slightly below the EU average of 80.8% and clearly below the 87.9% levels of the UK (Eurostat, 2017). Among the key projects of Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland is accelerating the transition from

studies to working life and cooperation between businesses and higher education to bring innovations to the market (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b).

Jennings (2018) adds that as the society changes, it is likely that employability will matter even more in future and therefore there is growing need for student careers support. As observed by Barnes (2018) and Charles (2018), UK's student employment services are not a centrally governed structure led by the government but instead organized by universities as students expect access to and added value from that service, so you need these services to be credible and competitive. Moreover, universities have an incentive to ensure graduates find employment or further study soon after graduation, as that increases performance in career surveys, provides good material for marketing and improves the university's league table rankings. This suggest a need to also consider the quality of services offered and to employ talented staff. However, the built-in financial incentive may to some extent be reduced as DLHE is replaced with centrally run Graduate Outcomes survey that looks at the graduate's situation 15 months after graduation instead of the former six that was often too short of a period to realistically reflect graduate's situation (HESA, 2017; Jennings, 2018, Jones, 2018).

Barriers for establishing similar Careers and Employment services in Finland are likely to link to financial and human resources, and culture and internal resistance. The cost of establishing and maintaining a Careers department is possibly among the key financial barriers; as shown in the OECD report most of the university funding in Finland comes from the government while local and EU students are not subject to tuition fees (OECD, 2017). In the UK, however, there are no limitations to the fees charged from non-EU students or on how many students can be recruited, meaning international students represent an important income stream for universities (European Parliament, 2015). With limited budgets, it may be difficult to justify the spend on a new department especially when posting job advertisement and basic-level support could be given using university intranet. Additionally, as career guidance, in-house advisory and recruitment services are not a service available at all higher education institutions already, local students may not be demanding or expecting it.

Lastly, while integrating employability skills into teaching, further cooperation with employers and industry leaders, and arranging career events are recommended, Barnes (2018) and Charles (2018) observe limitations such as overcrowding of the

timetable, limitations of the job market i.e. not enough local employers to provide internships, financial resources as well as resistance by students. There is a challenge to motivate 1st year students to consider employability early in their degree and to take part in volunteer work and career supporting activities, instead of waiting until graduation to start building their practical experience. While these experiences are from the UK context, it is likely that similar barriers would be present in Finland.

5 Conclusion

As identified in the critical review, there are many differences between the countries and the higher education systems of Finland and the UK. While the examples presented in this thesis create a starting point for further discussion and research, they represent only a narrow sample of experiences. Each of the academic institutions and degree fields experience the effect of globalisation in their unique way, and there are university-specific limitations with resources for example that determine the strategy and actions the institution can take. Moreover, as discussed by Clegg at al. and Hardt and Negri (in Balan 2017), while global factors need to be considered, local changes in educational policies may be responses to purely national or institutional factors such as changes in government. This means education providers need to consider and adapt to various global changes, while not disregarding the local context.

As seen throughout the thesis, challenges globalisation can create to universities link to financing i.e. political atmosphere affecting government funding, and to human resources like difficulties in attracting students and faculty caused by immigration restrictions combined with strong national and international competition. Simultaneously, there is pressure to increasingly demonstrate outputs externally i.e. student employability levels, to focus on maintaining and improving reputation, to consider internationalisation strategies, to compete in global university rankings and to standardise education which may draw resources from actual teaching. This may lead to Western education models being replicated in other countries, and give an advantage for institutions with English as the tuition language. Moreover, technological development and increased connectivity may result in changing needs for resources and social challenges such as increased work in multicultural teams leading to initial cultural misunderstandings, or difficulties in incorporating distance students into the student community. Lastly, bureaucracy, demanding quality assurance processes and internal barriers affect the way organisations can adapt to changes in the external

environment i.e. resistance to change and slow responsiveness as an academic characteristic.

Graduate unemployment and reduced public trust in higher education have meant universities are increasingly needing to prove their role and importance, and to produce concrete evidence of student learning to stakeholders and funding bodies (Amaral & Rosa, 2010 and Ewell 2010 in Schindler et al., 2015). This has resulted in distinctive ways to demonstrate quality externally in the UK i.e. promoting membership in the Russell Group or other university associations, emphasising performance in university league tables or the Destination of Leaders from Higher Education (DLHE) surveys, and other branding and marketing efforts that promote academic research or accreditations that attract new students, faculty and financing. Additionally, student careers services are a strategic focus that mean many universities are providing not only advisory services and support, but also practical workshops, recruitment services and employability skills teaching. Barnes (2018) stressed that as universities cannot control globalisation, they need to keep up with and become proactive in engaging with the international job market and to ensure and establish good relationships with local companies to increase student employability. This suggests a growing need for careers services.

Furthermore, there appears to be a contradiction between the lack of soft skills and increased pressure of digitalisation and efficiency; the need to cut costs and replace contact lectures with distance-learning and online solutions, and the fact that soft skills teaching is connected to physical presence and working together i.e. team work, empathy and leadership skills cannot be taught or learned effectively without human interaction. As underlined in previous studies, learning takes time and is a complex phenomenon, and there needs to be a balance between soft and technical skills teaching to ensure students are equipped for future. Rapid technological advancement may mean skills taught today are obsolete in a few years e.g. the programming language most common today may be replaced by a better alternative, which further strengthens the ideology that education should promote lifelong learning skills over training students to be experts on a specific niche that may not be relevant in future.

Therefore, opportunities for tertiary education sector are connected to technological development i.e. video conferencing with foreign partners and developing online learning tools that take into consideration the need for human interaction, and

international cooperation and knowledge-sharing via for example student exchanges that can lead to better cultural awareness. There are also various skills teaching opportunities i.e. via workshops and case studies focusing on topics beyond the Western sphere, industrial placements and internships to improve business and commercial awareness, and overall better cooperation with academia and industry that keep degree content relevant to working life. These address the growing need to equip students with transferable skills, a balance between soft and technical skills, and the ability for lifelong learning. Better cooperation with academia and industry is also among the goals of the Bologna process and Lisbon strategy, which could result in economic benefits. However, despite cooperation and external influences, education still needs to sustain its autonomy. As expressed by Barnes (2018), higher education has the responsibility to represent certain quality and standards, and to protect education and learning.

As shown by Eurostat (2017), recent graduate employment levels in Finland were lower than in the UK in 2016. As there is a possibility that government funding to higher education providers will become more connected to career survey results and the quality of graduate employment (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a), Finnish higher education could benefit from UK examples in terms of the way student careers services are organised. Despite barriers such as financial resources discussed in results, establishing careers services may be beneficial as they support skills development, interview preparation and practical CV workshops may ensure a better performance on the job application process, and career guidance can enhance self-belief and confidence once the person understands their motivation and the career path they want to follow. All these can improve student employability and make the transition from academia to work easier, and thus contribute to reducing youth unemployment. Moreover, if career services become the link between academia and industry, there are opportunities there for further cooperation, work-based learning etc. By maintaining close relationships with employers, careers departments could inform internal decision-makers on what the skills development needs of the external environment are, and these could then be incorporated into teaching or extra-curricular courses.

To conclude, rapid external changes and the changing nature of work mean it may be best to train fewer micro specialists, but more adaptable generalists with transferable skills useful for a variety of roles. Adaptability and ability for lifelong learning, along with

emotional intelligence, communication and problem-solving skills are among the key skills identified as being important now and likely in the future too.

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Exploratory Interview Questions

This set of example questions was sent as part of the interview invites. However, the exploratory interviews followed this structure only loosely.

1. How do globalisation and internationalisation affect your organisation?
 - 1.1. Are there any clear threats or opportunities that arise from those topics regarding technological development, movement of people (presence of international students), etc.?
 - 1.2. Is it easy or realistic to expect education providers to adapt their ways of working and curricula to the rapidly changing external demands i.e. try match requirement from the employers especially, or should they even try?
2. Who are the main stakeholders and what is the main driver behind providing quality student careers services – do students expect high quality support, is it driven by the university strategy, by potential employers or something else?
3. What do you think are the key skills students generally lack when they make the transition from academia to working life?
 - 3.1. What is currently being done to improve that, or what are the limitations that stop students acquiring the necessary skills during their degrees?
 - 3.2. What do you think the focus should be in future, on technical skill or softs skills development, and why?
4. What are the main benefits your careers services provide to your students? I.e. is the focus more on technical or practical skills i.e. how to write a CV or to prepare for psychometric aptitude tests, or on softs skills development i.e. social skills, or something else?
5. Are your careers services independently organized, or are they strongly monitored by similar quality assurance systems as what exists for degrees?

- 5.1. I.e. do or should the quality of careers services or student employment levels soon after graduation affect university accreditations, or even funding, in the UK?
 - 5.2. Do you find compulsory surveys such as the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey (DLHE) beneficial, or how do you think the student employability could be measured?
6. Lastly, is there something else that you feel should be considered when discussing student employability in the UK?