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FUTURE WORK SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Learning to be an international intrapreneur

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Introduction

Even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the world was changing faster than ever before. Now that pace has further increased and the direction has become vastly unclear. This leads to massive uncertainty in many aspects of the lives of individual societies, economies and nature. The wicked problems such as the climate crisis and increasing social gaps, need to be addressed on both individual and collective levels. Thus, internationalisation of higher education becomes even more important than before. Higher education is in a key position to take ethical responsibility for future development of these issues and for contributing to enabling a good life for everyone. (Cook, 2019.)

Society will need new innovations, competencies and jobs to power economic and social recovery. New models for learning in collaboration with business life become essential. The role of higher education institutions (HEIs) as creators of new ideas, knowledge developers and educators of skilled professionals is crucial. This in turn places great emphasis on both professional and soft skills such as resilience, curiosity, problem solving- and communication skills, critical thinking, confidence and intrapreneurship. It also brings psychological wellbeing and a sense of belonging to the forefront of societal development, which we need for our citizens not only to cope with ambiguity and complexity, but to thrive in such circumstances.

For HEIs this means developing highly flexible and individual curricula that combine a theoretical knowledge base with practical application in real life environments. They should integrate a global outlook in domestic degree programmes and engage in interdisciplinary activities where different people and ways of thinking meet and co-create new solutions for common challenges.

In this paper we will reflect on some of the most crucial aims for internationalisation of higher education in a world where every work place can be

seen as international in one way or another and every worker as an intrapreneur. We will use examples from two different Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS): Arcada and Haaga-Helia, and our collaboration within the WORKPEDA project (<https://www.tyopedata.fi/eng>). The approach is rooted in a view of education where an intercultural environment, diversity and strong networks with other HEIs and different kinds of organisations in business life, are seen as prerequisites for good quality, thus recognising that learning takes place and must be supported also outside the traditional HEI environments.

Internationalisation in higher education – a strategic priority

The motives for internationalisation in higher education vary. The basic idea of internationalisation is often ideological aiming to increase the access and participation of underrepresented and diverse student groups in higher education. Another approach is the importance of student, teacher and researcher exchange as necessary for higher education excellence and student success. During the last decades, along with higher education financial cuts in funding, a market-oriented approach has gained ground. Furthermore, a widening access to higher education is viewed as a precondition for societal progress and economic development (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). The international degree students are driven by a wish for a good education, employability and a successful career.

Globalisation has brought completely new challenges for higher education. The labour market of today is international and the demands of higher education increasingly revolve around responding to societal demands for skilled professionals and competitiveness in a local, national or transnational context like the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The European educational reform's ambitious goals (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth) have changed over time, but the lasting focus is to strengthen Europe in relation to the rest of the world based on excellent and accessible higher education (Europe, 2020). At the same time universities all over the world are rethinking their role considering the United Nation's Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** being the major future global issue, as a part of their core mission. Higher education policies also in Finland include a clear expectation for universities to take responsibility for solving the major future societal and global problems (OKM, 2019).

Globalisation has resulted in an increasing demand for an understanding of multi- and intercultural contexts in the vast majority of jobs. Today, only a

small percentage of all higher education students are involved in mobility programmes (de Wit & Jones, 2018), even though all students need global competencies. Therefore, different strategies are crucial and complementary: internationalisation at home (IaH), abroad (IA) and at a distance (IaD), which, for example, at Arcada are stated in the roadmap for internationalisation (Arcada, 2020). In addition to diversity and its benefits for the development of new ideas and innovation, international interaction and networks are necessary for maintaining quality and success in research and staying in tune with current international scientific development.

An international curriculum design

On a general level, different strategies are needed to support internationalisation and the development of global competence. A curriculum design that enables the validation and inclusion of studies in a flexible and individual way from universities other than one's own is a basic requirement. Existing long-lasting collaborations and networks as well as common agreements are often a prerequisite for confidence and trust. Within the EHEA's common principles for curriculum and studies, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and a framework for qualification levels (EQF) have been developed to facilitate student mobility and validation of studies from other universities (EQF European Qualification Framework).

It is of the utmost importance that the design of a study plan supports and facilitates development of global literacy and intercultural competence for all students and staff. The structure of the curriculum, pedagogical interventions and the realisation of the studies should support the possibility of international mobility (IA). Studying in a foreign culture in the real environment seems to be one of the best ways to promote intercultural competence and language skills (de Wit & Jones, 2018), but mobility is available to only a small proportion of students. Therefore, internationalisation at home (IaH) must be supported. This places requirements on curriculum design and pedagogical interventions. The studies must include global understanding of the discipline or profession and the opportunity for versatile language studies. It is central to meet and study together with students and teachers from different cultural backgrounds within the framework of formal studies. Furthermore, opportunities for contacts in different environments outside the university and informal studies should also be included to broaden the experience base and understanding of diversity.

As a complementary strategy to IaH, versatile opportunities for collaborati-

ve online learning are needed, such as webinars, projects and meetings, which include social contacts with students, teachers and researchers from different cultures and offer a wider repertoire of course offerings than the home university (IaD). The responsibility for the university is to ensure that the infrastructure, digital technology and tools enable IaD. In addition, digital skills and support processes are needed for both students and staff. Thus, students' opportunities for developing an individual competence profile and opportunities for employment and a successful career can be increased.

RDI for a sustainable future

Autonomous knowledge development has been part of the university's basic tasks over the years. Today's higher education policy objectives include international responsibility for developing knowledge with social benefits that increase competitiveness on several levels, locally, regionally and nationally (OKM, 2019). This responsibility, which involves an ethical responsibility for sustainability issues and making the world a better place to live in, only increases in a post-corona era with rising economic and health challenges.

In fact, responsibility and sustainability activities need to become natural, integrative and transparent, measurable future RDI-activities supported by competence education, innovative measures and curricula. Most higher education institutions, are aware of the 2030 Agenda, but have yet to systematically integrate its goals in their Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) strategies and implementations. One way of accomplishing transformation could be to measure impact and quality of RDI activities, also from the point of view of the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals).

Research activities are inherently international, knowledge development knows no geographical boundaries and research is currently being done in international arenas. The major societal problems (wicked/difficult/challenging problems) require joint efforts across university, disciplinary and national boundaries. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches are required to solve multifaceted problems in an increasingly uncertain world. For the students it means that innovation competence becomes central. There is a need for social innovations in all kinds of organisations: private, public and in the third sector. An intrapreneurial attitude and competence for problem solving and knowledge development in collaboration with others from the same or another discipline are crucial for students' future success in the labour market. Therefore, already during their studies, students must be offered the opportunity to solve problems in, preferably, international, real-life en-

vironments and be actively involved in research activities. In a future world it is not enough to be able to utilise research or start a company. Being able to develop social innovations or new technological tools, products or applications is important, not only for the individual but also for the whole society.

An intrapreneurial mindset

Innovation orientation in higher education and pedagogy corresponds to job requirements that have appeared due to a rise in globalisation, as well as rapid changes in technologies and the labour market. The understanding of how an intrapreneurial mindset can be developed among higher education students has increased, and the emphasis for entre- and intrapreneurship education and pedagogy has shifted from a model where the focus was on learning how to start your own business towards a broader view, where an intrapreneurial mindset is at the centre (Hoppe & al., 2016). The aim for the WORKPEDA project at Arcada was therefore to go beyond skills needed for running a business and focus on students' learning to develop an idea, product or service which creates economic, social or cultural benefit or value using service design thinking and project-based work. Several new pedagogical ideas were piloted: My Future Working Life course (15 ECTS), Arcada coaching clinic and the Demola collaboration (see www.demola.net) for supporting problem-solving and innovation on different international arenas. These new learning arenas strengthen cross-border and industry-wide collaboration within Arcada and enables new forms of cooperation for development and innovation in collaboration with various types of organisations and companies, also internationally.

Unemployment, recruitment difficulties, skills becoming outdated and people working without using their potential are examples of skill mismatch: situations where skill supply and skill demand diverge (Cedefop, 2018). Skill mismatch can occur in situations where there is a discrepancy between competencies at work and those achieved in HE. Generic skills can be obtained through a number of ways, e.g. by increased community and working life engagement, curricula with applied content, project work, entrepreneurial efforts, internships, or simply said, by applying work-based pedagogy. Many studies have shown that generic skills are as important as hard skills when recruiting, while at school and at work. Still, they are not recognised nor assessed systematically in HE.

The aim of Haaga-Helia's pilot was to find out if there is a mismatch between skills. We sent out a pilot survey to our partner companies' supervisors with the specific aim to find out if the generic skills of interns or recent

bachelor graduates in the fields of business and tourism are aligned with the needs of work. There were many reports revealing challenges regarding young employees' attitudes, short attention span, learning from mistakes etc., but much to our delight, supervisors also noted that many young graduates/interns have good digital and collaborative skills as well as analytical and knowledge application skills. In other words, many new graduates learn the operative systems fast and their digital skills and competencies are often better and more profound than those of their older colleagues. They are happy to counsel and help others in digital issues. The new graduates are also well versed in international actions/activities. Moreover, many graduates are competent both verbally and in making contact. Collaborative skills are often good. Most have good language skills, at least in English. However, better knowledge in Swedish was called for.

Bridging the gap between higher education and employability

Traditionally, learning environments have been educational institutions with a focus on formal teaching and learning towards a degree. Now times have changed and we need to bridge the gap between educational institutions and work and society. The latter need to become actively involved in teaching and learning, albeit more informally through e.g. learning on the job, coaching and mentoring. They will also increasingly shape the content and formats of education that are suited to their needs and new actors will appear that provide shorter and more tailored content than traditional educational institutions. This increase in competition in the field will naturally prompt e.g. HEIs to renew their view on teaching and learning as well as on the formats of education and services they offer. This increase in flexibility and agility is welcomed by many in historically very traditional institutions. Finnish universities of applied sciences will now have the opportunity to truly be at the forefront of this transformation, as they are particularly well positioned to address the gap between formal higher education and the practical needs of business life and society.

Global competences in a post-corona world

Never before has such a large part of humanity been simultaneously affected by one single factor as in this time of Covid-19. Perhaps most apparent is

the amount of uncertainty that prevails, despite research-, organisational- and leadership efforts that are abundant as each country tries to mitigate the negative effects. Another visible issue is the lack of coordination and cooperation among the nations in addressing Covid-19. When faced with common distress, countries did not come together and unite. Furthermore, the pandemic will affect positioning of ourselves in the world, what kind of responsibility we feel for others and the sense of global citizenship that was slowly emerging prior to Covid-19 with far-reaching effects also on higher education and emigration for education and jobs. Globalisation cannot be postponed but has to adapt to the new context.

“Global competence is the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development.” (OECD, 2018)

These competences are often referred to as e.g. soft skills, employability skills, transversal skills or 21st century skills. In addition to digital skills, global competences have for years been listed by employers as the most sought-after skills in hiring processes and thus highly increase the employability of individuals who can demonstrate them. The competences are e.g. problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence, cognitive flexibility, responsibility, communication skills, team work, adaptability, self-awareness, empathy and innovation. (The Future of Jobs, 2016; Employers & Gen Y, 2017.)

When new students at Arcada University of Applied Sciences have been asked which competences they would like to acquire in addition to the competences strictly related to their chosen profession or discipline, they have listed, for example, self-confidence, open-mindedness, networking, communication, social skills, language skills, entrepreneurship and team working skills (Arcada 2018, 2019). Similarly, alumni who have graduated from Arcada have, five years into their careers, recommended that current students develop e.g. the following: creativity, critical thinking, learning skills, team working, taking initiative, intra- and entrepreneurship, leadership, social skills, collaboration skills, independency, language skills, interdisciplinary skills, organisational and networking skills, resilience and stress management. (Career Monitoring Survey Arcada 2018, 2019).

In the skills mismatch pilot survey conducted at Haaga-Helia through a web-inquiry (Webropol), we asked the supervisors in the fields of business and tourism their views on future competencies and the following ones were men-

tioned: empathy, humility, learning from mistakes, attitude, resilience, continuous learning, acknowledging one's own weaknesses, understanding how one's own actions affect the whole, and last but not least, putting yourself in the shoes of others.

Diversity enhances learning opportunities

Research shows that the above-mentioned future global skills are developed through encountering different forms of “otherness” (Jones 2014) and hence internationalisation plays a crucial role in providing learning opportunities for individuals globally. This means that internationalisation can no longer be only about mobility but must be seen as a collection of alternatives such as IaH, IA and IaD, bringing internationalisation to all citizens – not only to the mobile ones. Diversity has many forms and can be found not only among nationality and culture, but also among age, gender and ability. All kinds of diversity provide “otherness” and many of them can be found locally. By combining internationalisation with locally available diversity, we find an abundance and richness of opportunities to develop the global competences we need to thrive in our societies both nationally and internationally. These opportunities can be found in the formal and informal learning environments provided by educational institutions, work places and societies.

How do we know if we have developed these competences and how do we tell others? The term ‘unpacking’ (Ripmeester, 2016) has been used to describe how self-reflection and labelling of competences can highlight what we have learned and help us convey these competences to e.g. employers. It is about looking back at what we have been through and learned along the way, by describing the otherness we have encountered, the struggles we have endured and how we have overcome. It is a form of storytelling that picks out what is unique in each individual life and career. It is the global competences that make us stand out in a crowd where everyone has the same degree. As the economic effects of Covid-19 heavily increases the global competition for employment, these global competences are indeed significant employability skills.

Competences do not automatically develop over time but require facilitated efforts and conscious engagement by the learner. Thus, simply having access to internationalisation and diversity, formal and informal learning environments do not provide us with competences. Interaction and action in real and diverse environments through international exchange and internships in international organisations offer good opportunities for competence development. Higher education has to take responsibility for enabling individual

competence development for the students and support others in theirs, so that we all can benefit from not only individual but also collective learning. However, the responsibility does not only lie within the learners. It also lies within the communities and actors who provide these learning environments. It becomes a systemic process where all the parts of the system affect each other and therefore must be aligned towards a common goal. Students and staff need to see themselves not only as individuals but as parts of this system. This might be a form of citizenship or sense of belonging that motivates development as human beings and as a system in order to overcome the challenges we face in daily lives and on a larger scale.

Wellbeing at the core of future education and work

Research has already showed that wellbeing among today's students and youth is lower than that of their predecessors (Brzycki, 2016). Teachers are suddenly facing unfamiliar situations where their students inform them of not being able to study because of depression or other mental health problems. The amount of stress-related anxiety disorders is increasing rapidly and the Covid-19 pandemic seems to have made matters worse (UN News, 2020). Educational institutions and employers alike now have to branch out and not only teach and employ but also support students and employees in new ways. The emergence of terms such as student and employee experience and satisfaction already began years ago but are increasingly coming into focus as an integral part of student and staff retention in terms of productivity and wellbeing (The rise of the Social Enterprise 2018, pp. 67–68). HEIs can no longer only offer education and research but have to make student support services a strategic priority. Only then can they be sustainable and resilient. The same is true for companies and their staff support services such as mental health care, onboarding and inclusion. Students and employees are no longer only seeking a degree or employment but a good life for themselves and their families.

Resilience is probably the most commonly used word in spring 2020 when talking about competences sought after by employers (The Social Enterprise at Work: Paradox as a path forward 2020, pp. 75–76). The current situation has highlighted change and uncertainty beyond our imagination and we now need to be resilient to get through it. But how does one develop resilience? It has been said that the opposite of resilience is fragility. In that case, we need to first let ourselves be fragile in order to learn from it and grow into resilient individuals and systems. Letting your guard down and being fragile is al-

most unheard of in certain cultures and unusual in others, at least outwardly and visibly. Now is the time to make use of that fragility which so far has been viewed as something negative and even shameful, and use it to grow stronger and more resilient.

Resilience is heavily connected to wellbeing since it is about recovering from hardship and coming out of the situation stronger and more confident than before. Confidence is another soft skill or global competence that is crucial for innovation and development, as are curiosity, open-mindedness and enthusiasm. However, all of these require a certain level of wellbeing, which is a prerequisite for being confident, curious, open-minded or enthusiastic. In order to prepare our graduates for not only work but also a good life in the future, HEIs have to make sure that the opportunities to learn global competences are available both during the pursuit of a degree and throughout their lives.

Continuous learning – an international perspective

One learns throughout life. Much of the learning takes place outside formal education. Learning is not only cognitive but also social. It brings wellbeing, inclusion, innovation and joy. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) is the only UN unit fully dedicated to lifelong learning. UIL's vision of education includes inclusion and equality as central elements in the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030.

In 1972, UNESCO Director-General Edgar Faure, in 'Learning to Be', strongly emphasised the humanistic and existential view of learning. According to Faure, learning is a process of personal development in which each person strives at developing as an individual. In 1996, CEO Jacques Delors broadened his vision of learning in the publication 'The Treasure Within' to include learning as an opportunity to realise one's own inner creative potential, and to learn how to function and live together in society. In other words, people need to become aware not only of themselves but also of their environment.

Continuous learning, on the other hand, also known as constant learning, is the concept of steadily expanding one's knowledge and competencies to gain new skills and expertise demanded by the world of work. Continuous learning is imperative as work is changing and new skills are constantly required, thus it is important not least of all from the perspective of employability. For businesses, continuous learning is about encouraging employees to learn by providing them with the tools, incentives, motivation and methods that facilitate learning. Upskilling and reskilling have become the new global common chal-

lenge and norm to help adjust and keep track with constant transformation and changes.

Conclusions

Inclusive internationalisation must address access and equity to integrate internationalisation at home as essential for all students. It must also recognise and value diversity and alternative perspectives to study programmes from international students in various ways involving the whole HEI and its partnerships. Furthermore, bridging local and global perspectives as well as taking responsibility for the wicked problems in both research and education is crucial for the future of HE. Universities play a key role in educating people for transformation toward a sustainable future and creating new knowledge about the wicked problems.

In this era of climate crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, we are pressed for time to achieve vast changes together globally. This puts enormous pressure on developing the competences required to work together across borders and disciplines, to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity and to stay positive and healthy in order to push through these challenging times. For now, let us conclude that globally, the student cohort entering or currently undertaking higher education has been through more disruption than any other before them. They are united by these circumstances and thus make up a new generation of hopefully more resilient, compassionate and agile citizens of a global society.

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