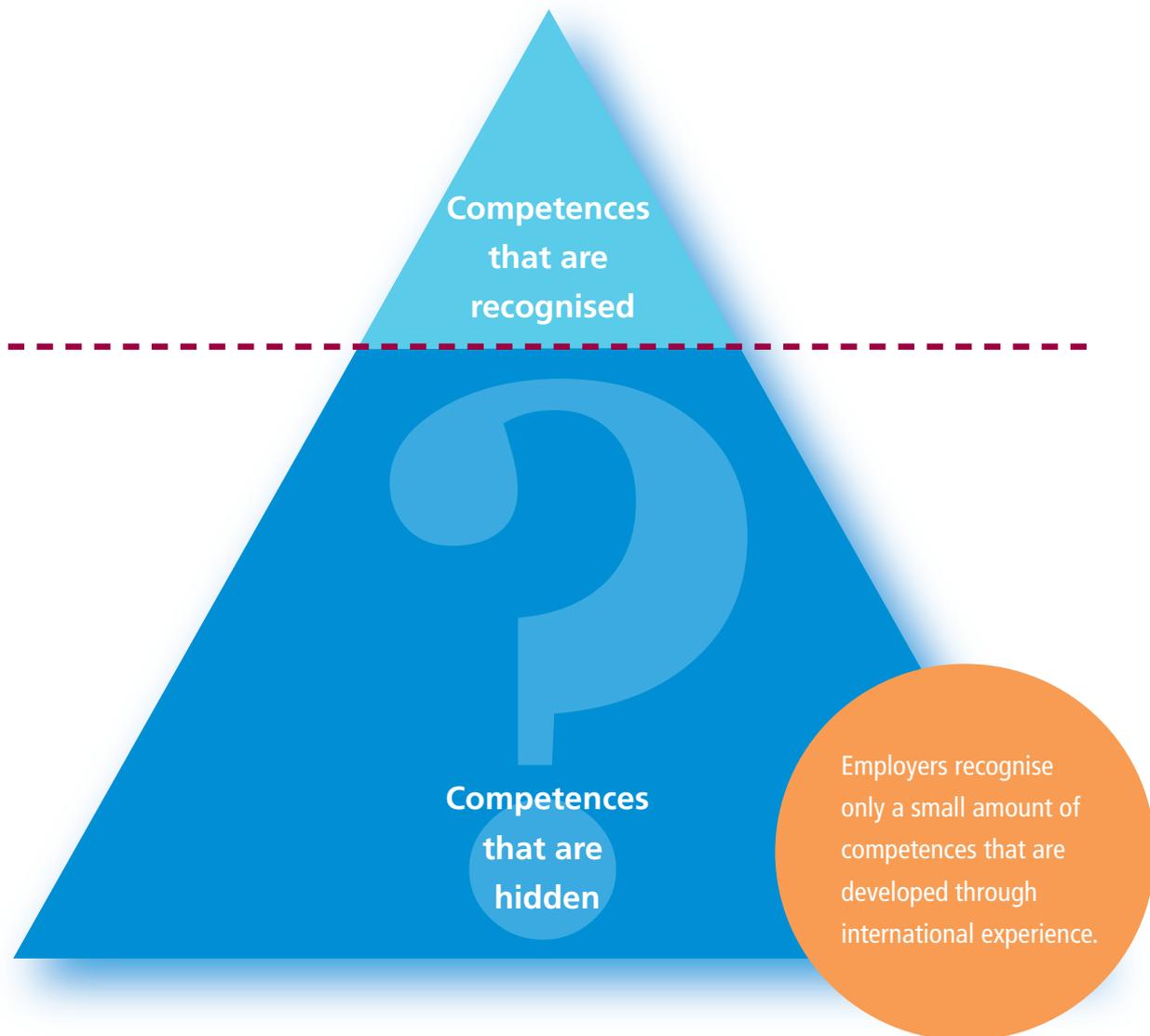


Hidden Competences



Hidden Competences

Vast amounts of skills and competences developed through international experiences go unrecognised.

About the research

 International skills and competences, developed through international experiences during study or practical training, are an asset on the labour market. Or so we assume. But do we know this?

In 2012–13, the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) and the think tank Demos Helsinki examined how employers rated the skills and knowledge acquired through international experiences in their recruitment. We also wanted to gain a better understanding of employers' views and expectations on international experiences.

The report from this project – *Piilotettu osaaminen (Hidden Competences)*, available in Finnish – confirmed the findings from an earlier CIMO report (2005) that employers do not necessarily value learning mobility experiences. Our new research further studies international experiences in relation to working life, and it suggests new ways of defining the learning outcomes of international mobility and co-operation.

This Fakta – Facts and Figures publication summarises the key findings of the research project in English. It was edited from the research report by Juha Leppänen at Demos Helsinki and by Miika Saarinen, Mikko Nupponen and Maija Airas at CIMO.

What we examined

- Employers' views and expectations on international experiences: how do employers value international skills and competences in recruitment? What are the skills and competences associated with international experiences? How are international experiences defined? And what are the qualities driving working life today and in future?

How we did it

- Demos Helsinki and CIMO organised an expert workshop in May 2012, which helped to identify the gatekeepers and determine the frame of reference for international expertise. Two gatekeeper workshops (with over 130 participants) in October 2012 enabled us to survey the influences of megatrends on working life and on changing needs for knowledge.

Experts were interviewed throughout autumn 2012. The views, experiences and observations voiced in these interviews were used as background material for this research.

Also a survey of students and employers was conducted in October–November 2012, which resulted in 283 responses from employers and 1,770 responses from students. The data regarding employers was collected by contacting Finnish employers directly, while the student data came from an online survey. The survey was forwarded through CIMO contacts to educational institutions, who forwarded the survey via their email lists. The respondents were secondary-level students in vocational education and training, apprentices and higher education students.

The research and analysis was further made possible by comprehensive questionnaire reports, and was based on previous research by CIMO, Demos Helsinki and other sources.

Who were involved?

- A large number of individuals from education, start-up businesses and cultural fields as well as representatives from large Finnish companies.



Learning mobility gets mixed response in the labour market

When we asked Finnish employers at the beginning of our research project how they rated international experiences in recruitment, only just over half of international businesses said they regarded international experiences as important. Among those employers who did not operate internationally, the figure was only just over 10%. The percentages were surprisingly even lower than in CIMO's 2005 survey.

How can this be? Should not the percentage be higher and should not the trend be completely the other way round in our globalising world? More specifically, are not the international study and work experiences of students relevant to employers? Are we not funding the right kind of activities through the European education schemes?

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES BUILD KEY COMPETENCES

Although the initial observations of this research seemed to indicate that the regard for international experiences was low and even in decline, a more encouraging picture began to emerge when we analysed the research material in more detail. Overall, employers regarded international experience as a good thing: 90% had a positive view of it. When we asked employers what kind of competences they valued when recruiting new employees and then asked what kind of competences they thought people acquired through international experiences, there were many similarities in the answers. Many of the key competences employers sought from

new staff members were the same as those they linked with international experiences.

The obvious conclusion was that international mobility produces the kind of competences that the employers are seeking, but they are not able to link these competences and people's international experiences at recruitment. The competences acquired through study or work periods abroad are hidden: we are not able to express or recognise them. This was for us a fundamental finding, which called for more in-depth analyses, even more so as learning mobility has become a major paradigm of European co-operation within education, training and youth.

EUROPE BELIEVES IN LEARNING MOBILITY

International co-operation is commonly accepted as an important means of improving the quality and outcomes of education and training. International mobility, in particular, has been regarded as

International mobility produces exactly the kind of competences that the employers are seeking, but they are not able to link these competences and people's international experiences at recruitment.

an effective way of helping young people develop personally while also improving their employability. This is all the more crucial in a changing world buffeted by megatrends such as changing demographics, resource scarcity, technological change and globalisation. This is also an objective written in a number of strategy papers, from the Europe 2020 Strategy to the European Commission's flagship initiative 'Youth on the Move'. It is also one of the key actions in the new Erasmus+.

In Finland, international co-operation for higher education and other educational institutions has increased dramatically over the past decades. Whereas in 1992–93 only 633 Finnish students went abroad through the Erasmus exchange programme and 154 students came to Finland, the corresponding figures in 2012–13 were 5,496 outgoing Erasmus students and at least 7,000 incoming ones (these numbers also include work placements). In total every fourth university student and every seventh student in universities of applied sciences in Finland has an opportunity to go abroad today. These figures reflect the rapid development of international co-operation in general.

The trend has been similar in other countries and in other education sectors and within youth work.



We should better define the learning outcomes of international mobility in order to make them visible.

For example, the volume of international study periods of Finnish students in vocational education and training (VET) has increased by about 45% over the last six years. In 2013, a total of 6,332 VET students, i.e. every eight student, had a chance to go abroad on a work placement/study period, mainly to other European countries.

RETURNS OF LEARNING MOBILITY

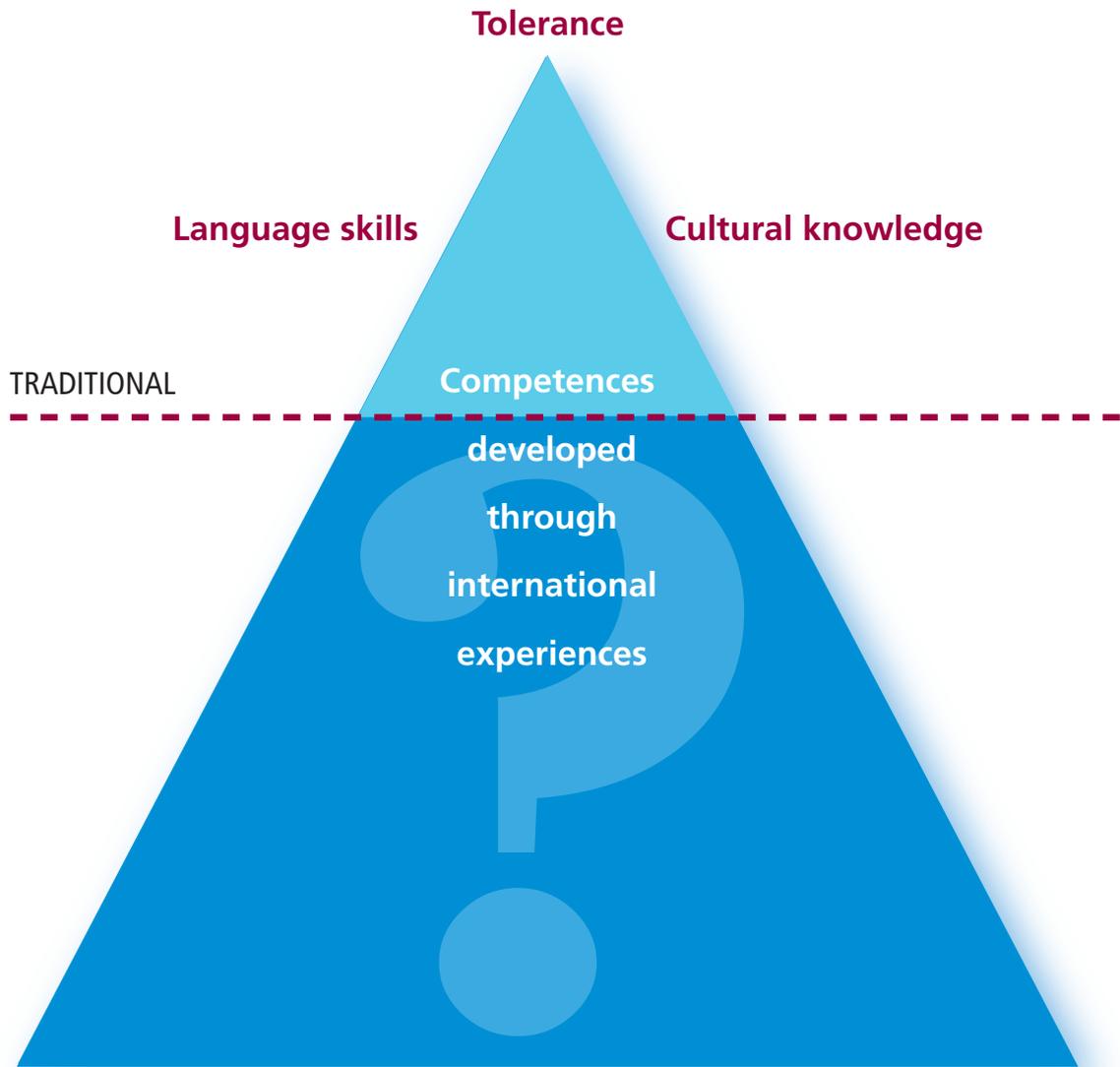
The investments in international mobility over the past 20 years would not have been made, unless they had been regarded as beneficial. In fact, many studies confirm that learning mobility improves students' language skills and intercultural competences. It's widely recognised that it also makes students more tolerant and broad-minded.

The findings of our research raise new questions about the benefits of learning mobility. How can we make employers better understand the learning outcomes of international mobility? How can we make students and others more aware of the skills acquired during their international experience? This is a challenge to all of us who believe that international experiences are useful and valuable.

We should better define the learning outcomes of international mobility in order to make them more visible. The attributes traditionally linked to international mobility (language skills, intercultural competences, tolerance and broad-mindedness) do not describe the outcomes adequately enough. In addition to these traditional attributes, we want to add three new skill areas to highlight the hidden aspects of international competences: productivity, resilience and curiosity.

Curiosity, in particular, caught people's attention and has been discussed in the Finnish media since the publication of the research results. This quality seems to encapsulate something essential about competences required in the future labour market.





A new set of skills and competences is needed

The Finnish mobile phone giant Nokia provides an excellent case study of how global changes affect companies and of the impact of megatrends on business. Nokia started as a strictly national company producing a variety of products from wood items to consumer rubber. During the 1990s, Nokia emerged as a key player in consumer electronics, specifically in mobile phones. It developed new products for its customers through an understanding of the potential of technological development. The globalisation of markets around the turn of the millennium provided Nokia with a platform for solidifying its position as a global market leader.

THE FORTUNES OF NOKIA

Among the multiple reasons for Nokia's success during the late 20th and early 21st century, two deserve to be highlighted. First, significant investments in education by the state during the 1960s and onwards provided Nokia with a society full of talented employees. Second, Nokia understood the key megatrend of its time: how globalised societies work and how to build logistics systems to provide sufficient supply for the rising demand in mobile phones.

The tale of Nokia's mobile phone dominance ended in the recent sale of its mobile phone production to Microsoft. The impact of globalisation on Nokia illustrates globalisation's potential as a driver for growth, as well as its potential for disruption and even destruction. While there are many reasons for the decline of Nokia after 2008, the inability to

keep up with changing business drivers is among the most significant. Instead of only technological wizardry, users started to demand usability and consumer-focused design.

THE WORLD IS INTERDEPENDENT

The story of Nokia is a typical case study of how companies come face-to-face with changing societies and megatrends. These megatrends affect not only our lives, but also the environment in which companies and employers hope to succeed.

No job in the future will be independent of the impact of global megatrends. The investments made in education by Western societies helped create prosperity during the early 21st century. However, in our study we found that vast amounts of skills

No job in the future will be independent of the impact of global megatrends.

Employers must develop a better understanding of the new skills and competences needed in workplaces.



Four megatrends that change the way we live and work

1. CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS mean that the people living on our planet are increasingly older, more urban and more educated. During the 20th century the estimated lifespan increased by 30 years, mostly due to improved health care. In the 21st century, this megatrend continues to affect countries around the world. By 2050, one fifth of us will be over 60 years old, and 70% will live in cities. In the future, people will continue to be better educated and, at least in developed countries, have more free time. This means that working life and various industries as a whole require a better understanding of their customers' more diverse and unique needs. Companies and the public sector need to provide creative, new solutions in the shape of new products and services.

2. RESOURCE SCARCITY is something we need to learn to live with in the coming decades. Less oil, aluminium, phosphate and other necessary resources to sustain our standard of living have mostly been already extracted or the cost of future extraction is exceedingly high. As the demand for these resources continues to grow, we step into an age where alternative approaches to both production and transportation are needed. This means that consideration for the consumption of energy and natural resources will become an integral part of everyday working life across all fields and industries and for all workers, not just for experts.

3. TECHNOLOGICAL PLANETARISM is best illustrated by the fact that in 2012, the users of Facebook would together have been able to form the third largest nation in the world, with over 800 million inhabitants. As information technology innovations connect the globe more intensively than ever, all of us are more likely to share the same designs and solutions. Construction materials, pharmaceuticals, banking solutions and mobility all look very similar in New York and Tunis. Globally, employees need to be more adept at understanding common standards and ways of collaboration often learned through personal interest rather than through company hierarchies.

4. FOR A LONG TIME, the term 'globalisation' was shorthand for decreasing production costs by transferring factories to developing countries. Now, we're slowly starting to realise that the global economy works both ways. The financial crisis of 2008 and the following euro crises, along with the re-industrialisation of the United States, are signs of a more complex and networked economic system in which those who are able to understand how new markets are formed instead of solely competing in old ones, are the ones who succeed. Diverse skills, adaptation and curiosity help workers understand how the global arena functions.

and competences currently go unrecognised in working life. This is a major problem for individual companies as well as for the economy as a whole.

A new set of skills and competences is required if we are to succeed in the global megatrend era. Examples include companies working in fields where logistics costs form a key component of the business, or those who must develop understand-

ings of changing demographics to reach diversifying groups of potential customers.

Employers must develop a better understanding of the new skills and competences needed in workplaces. They must also come to understand the key role international experiences play in developing those skills and competences. In the megatrend era, every job is international.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES SHOULD BE RE-EVALUATED

Traditionally, the competences primarily associated with international experience were language skills and cultural understanding. These are specialised skills that some jobs require more than others.

Today, language skills or intercultural abilities are for many employers an everyday part of working life. As the competences traditionally thought to be

developed through international experiences have become commonplace, a new set of skills and competences has emerged and, alongside them, a fresh way of understanding international experience.

For companies and public employers in interconnected economic structures, this new set of extended competences can carry greater weight than traditional international skills. However, these competences are harder to label or identify than traditional international skills.



INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES HAVE BECOME COMMONPLACE

In the 1990s, international experiences were easily labelled according to structure (education, employment, trade relations and relations between countries), but the situation is different in 2014. Today, an international outlook is part of everyday life. It includes being active on the Internet, watching football or downhill skiing, sharing pictures and videos and stories, or talking with peers online about various topics, and leisure entertainment. The global media provides outlets for people to live, read and experience events across the globe from the comfort of their home. Experiences, not location, shape our identities. For a large part of the day, we are international in some way or another – we just do not notice that we are, because we are still used to the old model of viewing international experiences through structures.

In 2014, the world functions, more than ever before, through peers, communities and networks. For instance, the services provided by Kickstarter permit the financing of startups and projects around the world through peer groups. Another example is a website called Etsy that focuses on



International experience is relevant to all lines of work and all industries.

handmade or vintage items and has managed to attract over 30 million registered users. Some companies try to identify these peer groups, because they are a means of finding new markets and developing new products. A large part of the world's population is still on the outskirts of this development, but it is moving closer faster than ever. Cheap mobile Internet connections have made it possible for large groups to start making the transition to this new global peer domain.



For a large part of the day, we are international in some way or another.

If we wish to live in a functioning, prosperous society and world, we must harness capabilities developed through all kinds of international experiences. The first step is for young people, students, employees and employers to understand that identifying and exploiting these valuable capabilities is strongly linked to an understanding of the new nature of international co-operation. The second step is to understand that international experience is relevant to all lines of work and all industries, and that valuable activities that can develop one's international competences can take place beyond traditional social structures, such as the school system.

The most global job on the planet

Agriculture in the 21st century is more globalised than ever. Consider the case of wheat farmer Kari Kokkonen from Nurmijärvi.

'You won't find a more international profession than farming', Kokkonen says. Food prices have been high all over the world this year, so the Finnish farmers are not alone in this. 'The change has been staggering. A lot has happened over the last twenty years', says the 61-year-old farmer. Before membership in the EU, the price of grain was determined through government negotiations, and farmers could sell grain for that set price at any time.

Then came the membership in the EU, which removed the option of regulating prices within a single country. The real change, however, came around 2005 when big institutional investors started to see the appeal of the commodities exchange. This appeared to be a more stable market than investments in portfolio companies, where stock trading fluctuated against apparently imaginary values. Because of the new speculation in commodities, the international and large-scale game also brought about large variations in food prices.

'The prices seesawed. In 2008, the price of grain was 80 euros per ton, now it's over 200 euros. Occasionally, it will suddenly fall to 140 euros. That's a significant fluctuation in prices.

The changes are due not only to investor activities, but also relate to the success or failure of harvests in various parts of the world. Thus, more and more farmers opt for futures trading, where the growing grains are sold or purchased in advance at a set price. Depending on the timing, the farmer or the buyer can make or break profits.

'This way, even a small-scale farmer can protect the returns from just a few hectares.'

The same scenario applies to fertilisers: the economy has an impact on the price of phosphorus.

'The price of fertiliser correlates directly with global oil prices. It was not that many years ago when the price of an oil barrel was 60 euros, now it's over 100. Purchasing at the right time has a significant impact, particularly for large farms.'

Kokkonen uses the Internet to follow the prices of oil and wheat, as well as the news. For instance, he might read about the coming harvest in Australia. His computer is on every day. Even the computer he uses was purchased off the Internet, at a cheaper price from Sweden.





Towards a deeper understanding of international competences

3

In 2014, globalisation and international activities are more ubiquitous than ever. If companies cannot recognise the value of these competences in their recruitment processes, harness them in their working culture or link them to their corporate development strategies, they miss out on crucial opportunities.

What is it about international experience that makes it interesting to employers, and what are the meanings associated with it? Through which types of activities can we identify these employees today? Such questions were posed in our expert workshops. It became clear that the traditional understanding of skills that are developed through international experiences must be supplemented by an extensive set of new competences.

There is a clear discrepancy between views held by employers and students on the value of international competences in recruitment.



HOW IS INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE VALUED?

In CIMO's previous, 2005 study, international experience was not considered of major importance to the recruitment process. And it still is not today. The data showed that only 36.5% of employers gave weight to skills and competences developed through international experience. The economic sector also had little impact on this result. This is a surprising finding, especially when considering the findings of the first chapter on the impact of globalisation on Finnish working life.

Still, the research results also suggest that the skills and competences related to the international experiences do hold some level of importance to employers, as only 22.3% of employers were entirely uninterested in them.

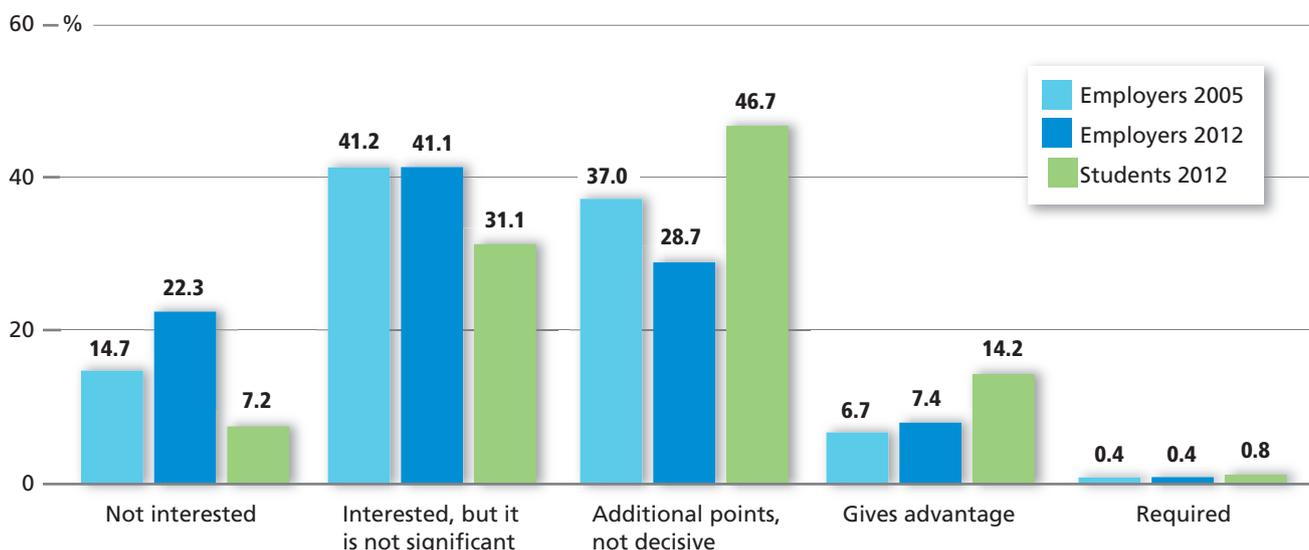
It is important to note that more than half of the students (61.2%) saw international skills and competences to be a personal asset in their working

lives. Students overestimate the degree to which employers value international know-how. In other words, at least a portion of students may hold misconceptions about what actually matters in the recruitment market. There is a clear discrepancy between views held by employers and students on the value of international competences in recruitment.

The educational background of student respondents had a clear impact on the extent to which they considered international expertise to benefit their future employment. The more educated the respondent, the more benefit was seen to be derived from skills and competences developed through international activities.

It is hardly surprising that those employers who are involved in international activities consider international experience to be a more significant recruitment criterion than those whose activities are limited to Finland or even to local towns or cities. In the group of internationally active employers,

How international expertise matters in recruitment, %



half consider international experience an important recruitment criterion. The employers who place the most significance on skills and competences developed through international experience are those who have international projects or who co-operate directly with companies abroad.

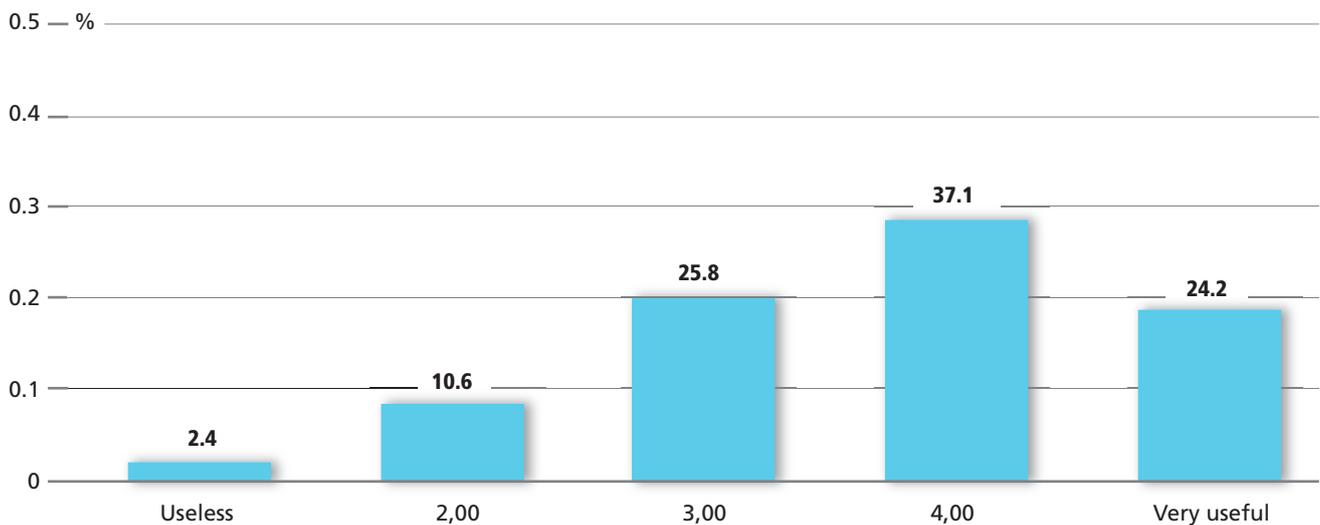
WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT RECRUITMENT CRITERIA FOR EMPLOYERS?

The recruitment criteria that employers consider to be highly important are reliability, the ability to access and handle information, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, communication skills and co-operative skills are among the most important criteria in a recruitment situation for employers.

As expected, employers who value international experience also place greater relative value on language skills, willingness to travel for work, and experiences with studying or working abroad. This result is in line with the data from workshops and open-ended questions in the survey.

Among the internationally active employers, half consider international experience an important recruitment criterion.

How students estimate the usefulness of international expertise in future working life, %





Employers who value international experience also value networking ability, creativity and openness to new experiences.

More interestingly, these employers also highly value networking ability, creativity and openness to new experiences. As many as 80% of the employers who consider international experience a highly important recruitment criterion also value creativity. In comparison, of the employers that do not rate international experience as an important criterion in recruitment, only 45% rate creativity as important.

WHAT ARE THE CAPABILITIES DEVELOPED THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE?

We explored competences developed through international experiences further by asking employers and students to name the attributes that they associate them with. They were asked to rate the attributes on a generic level only, not through a specific job description. The results show that the traditional view of international skills is still valid, including experience of working or studying abroad, willingness to travel and language skills.

An interesting and new observation is that people also link many other attributes to international experience. We found that placing value on international experience in the recruitment process is associated with appreciation of some surprising recruitment attributes, such as creativity, networking ability and general interest in new things.

How international activities correlate with significance of international expertise in recruitment, %



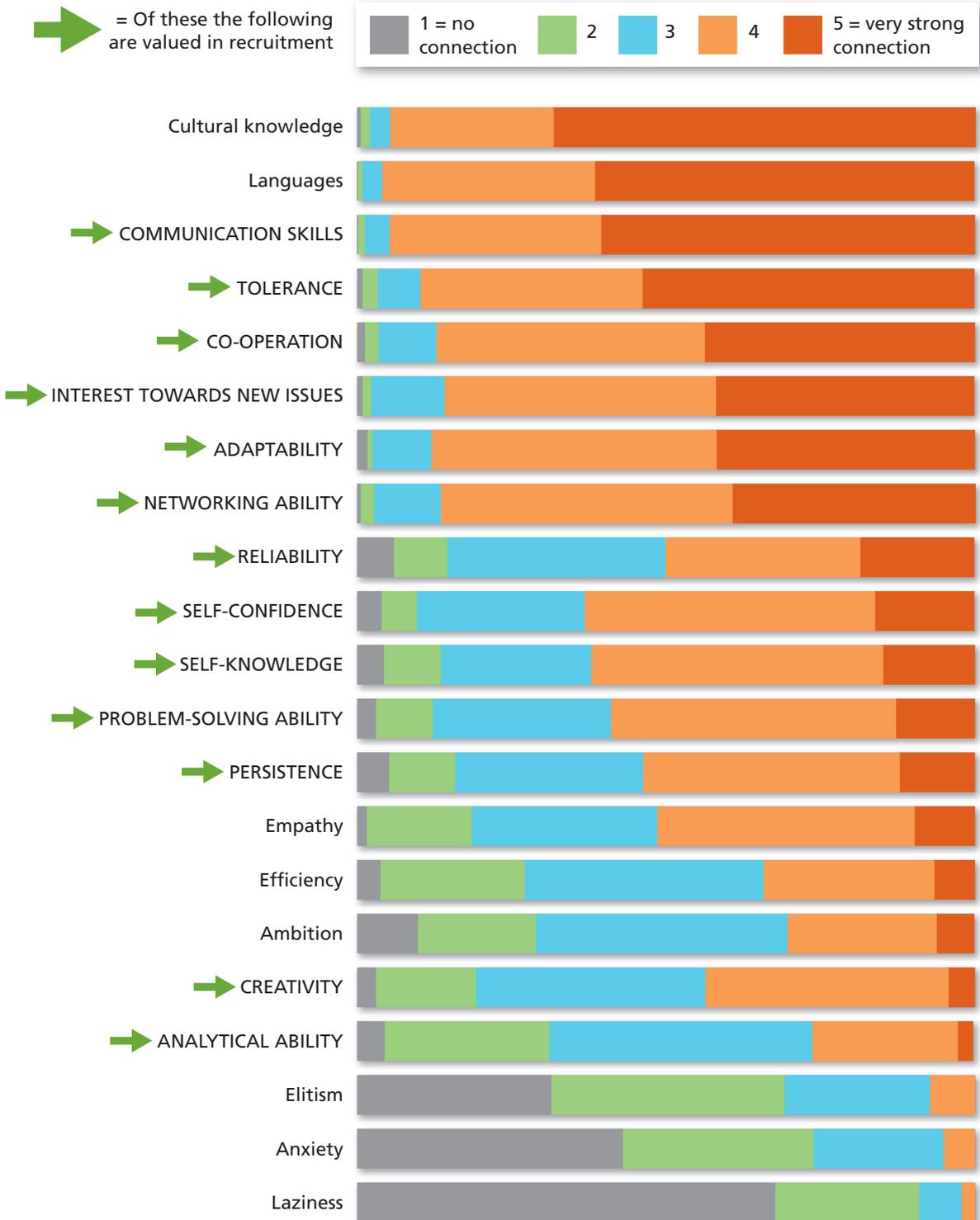
Traditional understanding of international experience

- Language skills
- Wide networks within one's field
- Understanding of international business
- Ability to work with multiple people
- Having lived or studied abroad

Extended understanding of international experience

- Ability to think outside one's sphere of experience
- Broad networks also in different fields
- New abilities and skills during free time
- Works with diverse groups of people regardless of language or location
- Follows global media

Employers and international competences: which attributes are linked?



Linking international competences and employer expectations – giving rise to a new understanding

4

Based on our survey, students associate abilities developed through international activities with very similar attributes to employers. This was most evident in the answers to the open-ended questions of the survey. For example, a group of students perceived it ‘as an ability to think outside the box; to perceive things outside one’s own living environment and own country’. To this group of students, international expertise could mean networking abilities and creativity as well as the ability to adapt and a willingness to work with people from different backgrounds. In this context, it’s a very broad concept and has to do with cognitive approaches, attitudes and views on life.

Half of the Finnish employers we surveyed associated international experience strongly or very strongly with the following attributes: interest in new things, empathy, persistence, self-knowledge, self-confidence and reliability.

More interestingly, Finnish employers also rated most of these attributes among the most important recruitment criteria overall. What does this mean? International experience can be a potent indicator in helping to identify qualities that employers appreciate.

In other words, even if the employers do not value international expertise as such, it is still bundled together with many other skills and qualities that employers place great value on.

This crucial connection is not yet understood in Finnish working life. If international experience

International experience can be a potent indicator in helping to identify qualities that employers appreciate.



were perceived through a wider frame than is presently the case, a significantly larger number of employers would also consider it a much more important recruitment criterion.

Employers and international competences: extended edition

   = very strong

	Productivity	Curiosity	Resilience
Efficiency	0.77	0.03	0.08
Analytical ability	0.67	0.08	0.20
Problem-solving ability	0.58	0.31	0.22
Reliability	0.57	0.13	0.32
Creativity	0.35	0.31	0.28
Tolerance	0.15	0.66	0.09
Interest towards new issues	0.20	0.60	0.45
Cultural knowledge	-0.07	0.53	0.06
Co-operation	0.47	0.52	0.22
Adaptability	0.32	0.51	0.38
Networking ability	0.14	0.47	0.17
Communication skills	0.33	0.45	0.24
Languages	0.05	0.40	0.02
Self-awareness	0.30	0.20	0.84
Persistence	0.53	0.20	0.54
Self-confidence	0.37	0.24	0.43
Empathy	0.23	0.31	0.34
Anxiety	-0.07	-0.11	0.05
Elitism	0.28	-0.02	-0.11
Ambition	0.34	0.11	0.12
Laziness	-0.16	-0.17	0.03

EXTENDED UNDERSTANDING THROUGH PRODUCTIVITY, RESILIENCE AND CURIOSITY

The new understanding of international competences was further analysed by using factor analysis. The aim was to find independent and identifiable ways of understanding international competences. This was achieved by forming groups of correlating attributes based on how employers link them to international competences. Three factors were identified: productivity, resilience and curiosity. These three factors form the basis of the extended understanding of international competences.

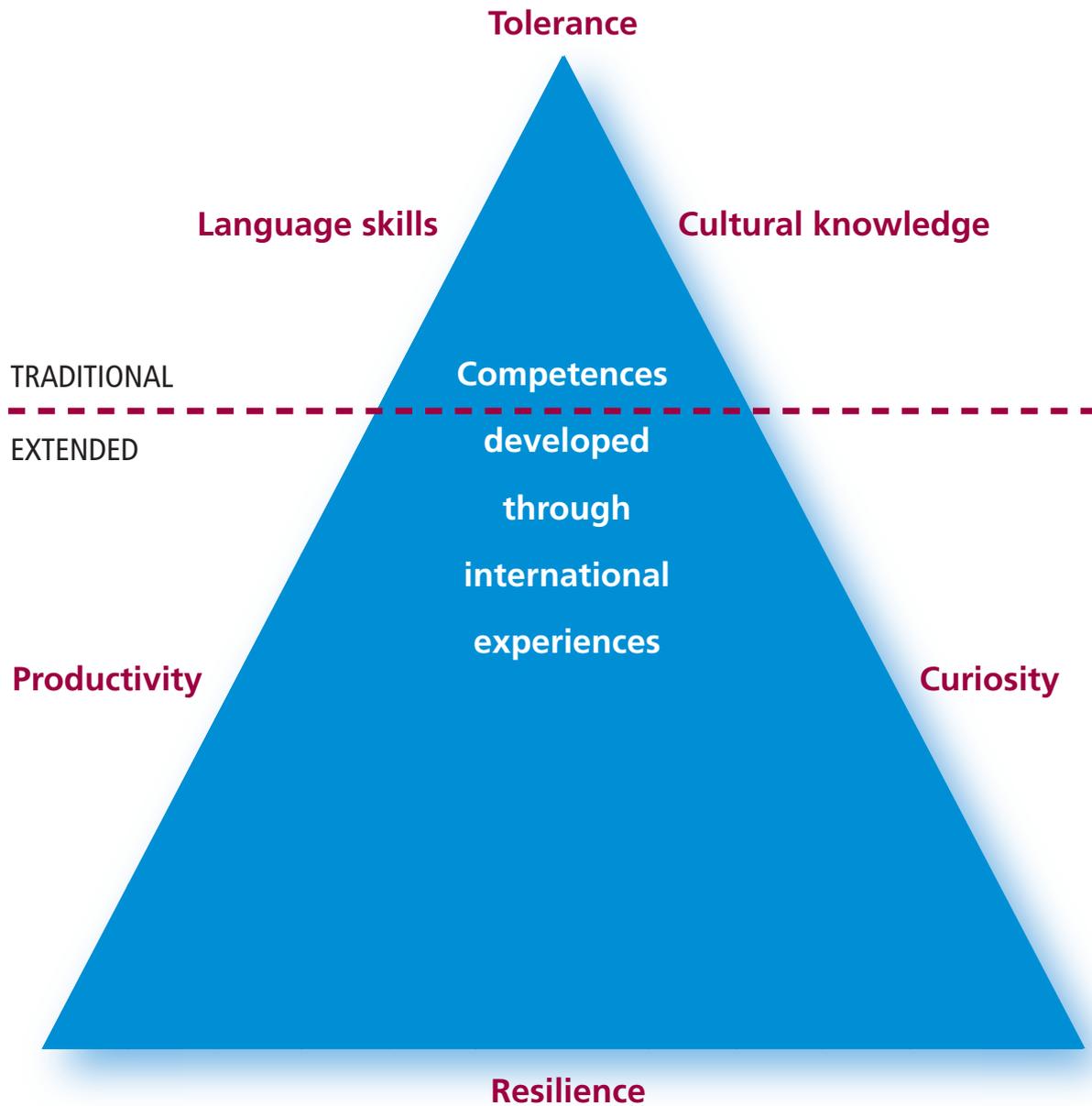
Productivity is a constant buzzword in the economies and working lives today. When we were able to recognise the notion of international skills and competences – understood as efficiency, analytical ability, problem-solving ability and credibility – by combining these attributes with our previous knowledge through workshops and interviews, we identified this factor as productivity. Obvious value is attached to it in working life, and the connection to international experience seems apparent. When coming across new cultures and situations, students or employees have to develop and exercise their ability to efficiently come up with solutions.

The second factor, resilience, was the theme of the Davos World Economic Forum in 2013. Resilient employees are able to adapt, know their limits and strengths, are confident, and are persistent. The attributes that we grouped under resilience are also ones that are traditionally associated with a good employee. This is expected to be even more so in the future, when the working environment changes ever more rapidly and stable careers are increasingly rare. Resilience guarantees that employees are able to recover and push forward regardless. International experiences often require reflection, persistence and adaptive abilities. These help us learn more about ourselves and become more resilient individuals.

Curiosity, the third factor, has always been with us. For centuries curiosity was seen, at least by people in power, as something that should not necessarily be encouraged. Based on factor analysis, we identified such attributes as tolerance, interest towards new issues, intercultural knowledge, co-operation and networking ability as elements of curiosity. Curiosity also forms the basis for many attributes linked with international experiences: the urge to learn, search and experience. But in today's world, curiosity is born not only through international study periods, but also by being active in peer groups, enthusiast forums, hobbies and virtual gaming communities. In a world that is filled with information and possibilities for exchange, curiosity is essential in providing an arena for harnessing knowledge.

The extended approach to international skills and competences still include the traditional language skills, communication skills, intercultural knowledge and tolerance, but productivity, resilience and curiosity augment the traditional view and complete our picture of how international skills and competences fit into today's working life.

Together, these three factors help us understand what today's employers perceive as the value of international experience. They also form a concrete and coherent narrative for the necessity of international skills and competences in modern working life. They renew our perspective on international experiences and on the skills and competences gained through them.



Curiosity is a defining virtue for future working life

The results of our research suggest that employers view international experience in three additional skills areas or traits: curiosity, productivity and resilience. To us, the most interesting of these traits is curiosity – a fuel of motivation independent of the field of study or education level of an individual. While productivity and resilience have been discussed in the work-life context, curiosity has not. An employee's curiosity is beneficial to all organisations.

Employees with a distinctive curiosity have not been sought any more avidly than those with international expertise. We believe that curiosity will continue to raise its status as a societal strength during this decade, and that it will also have an impact on the job market. The world needs people who make future business successful, and curiosity helps identify what drives the future. And we have evidence that curiosity is also linked to international experiences.

Curiosity embraces tolerance, interest towards new issues, intercultural knowledge, co-operation and networking ability.

Three reasons why curiosity is the definitive virtue of the current decade:

- 1. CURIOSITY HELPS US TO BENEFIT FROM NEW INFLUENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES.** In Finland, there are numerous stories about notable individuals in the 19th century who headed to other European countries to research the wide range of European cultures, or perhaps to develop profound thoughts and acquire invaluable skills.
- 2. CURIOSITY IS A DYNAMIC AND REGENERATIVE PRE-REQUISITE FOR SOCIETY.** Because it is not restricted to any particular field of study, curiosity also provides an answer to the question of which type of expertise is required in societies that need structural changes. We do not need more skills – we need more curiosity.
- 3. CURIOSITY IS MOTIVATIONAL.** A curious person is interested in new things and is capable of directing his or her attention to new issues. The relationship between the ability to redirect attention and the trait of curiosity has begun to be highlighted in a new motivational study. How the value of curiosity is measured in business varies. Not all companies have to deal with the changes brought about by megatrends, but it's the tendency of megatrends to influence all activities that makes them so challenging. No company can operate without taking them into consideration.

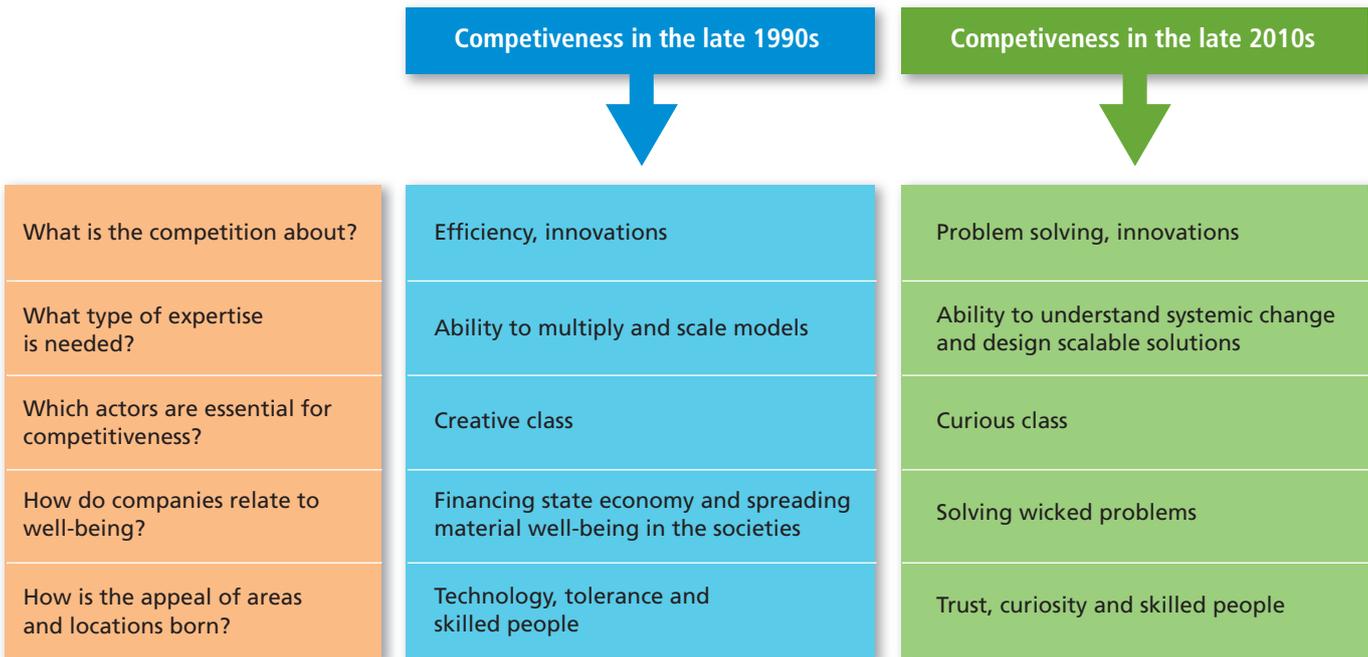
Even more traditional companies should understand the range of impacts that issues such as resource scarcity and population movements may have on their businesses. For instance, understanding the rise of transport costs may help retailers build a more cost-effective selection of products. Similarly, knowledge about wheat demand in European mills may encourage Finnish farmers to search new markets and distribution channels. In this case, the story of the farmer Kari Kokkonen is a good example. A small-scale farmer succeeds better when he follows the global situation and acts accordingly. Understanding global changes can translate directly into higher hourly wages.

Curious individuals have a better chance of identifying the impacts megatrends have on their work or organisations. They do not necessarily recognise all the megatrends, but they are interested in what happens globally and how these global events can have wide-ranging effects. This interest and curiosity is a central part of a new competitiveness. In order for global changes to be understood and global solutions to be born, we need interested and curious individuals.

Curious individuals are interested in what happens globally and how these global events can have wide-ranging effects.

FROM CREATIVE CLASS TO THE ERA OF CURIOSITY

Richard Florida’s best-known book *The Rise of the Creative Class* described a pool of experts focused on particular urban areas who produced, in relative terms, more innovation, creativity and well-being than their professional counterparts in other types of cities. According to Florida’s theory, when you bring together a diverse pool of talent, high levels of technological knowledge and the trait of tolerance,



the result is an unrivalled competitive advantage for generating creativity.

Initially, the creative class theory was very successful, but then started to taper off. Its failure was brought about by an elitist and overly utilitarian approach. The creative class theory highlighted the concept of an exclusive elite class that generated a competitive advantage. It is a category that includes only a select few. Joining the creative class is difficult. Nowadays, more individuals have become interested in understanding where they can use their creativity and what problems they can solve creatively.

MAKE WAY FOR CURIOSITY

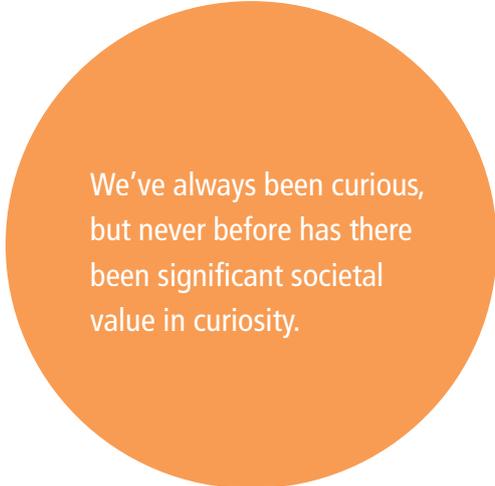
Ten years after the emergence of the creative class, we have to ask: where to next? The analysis of the creative class was a manifestation of the significant economic growth that took place in the western world during the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Such growth appears impossible in 2014. We need a group who will carry companies and employers through drastic global changes. We need curiosity towards the world's major themes and enthusiastic individuals willing to make the relevant tasks their individual goals.

It appears that we are now witnessing a shift from the creative class to an era of curiosity. Curious people want their work, in one way or another, to be connected to a larger picture of society and progress. Curiosity involves a combination of the desire of knowledge workers to be close to creative and inspiring problem-solving environments and the will to do work that has a meaningful impact and final results. For the curious, interesting stories are those about the world's resource economy, China's economic and political rise, the Arab Spring, and the collapse of the financial markets. Curious people want to work with facing global challenges, not simply survive as a nation or as individuals in

a global competition. In other words, the curious employees prioritise success in the global problem-solving competition.

We've always been curious, but never before has there been significant societal value in curiosity. In the era of control, curiosity was dangerous, but today it's a necessity. Curiosity about megatrends can be utilised in more or less any contemporary profession, from that of the agricultural worker to the computer programmer. It provides tools and abilities to connect global megatrends to one's profession. This is essential to success in the 21st century.

The huge potential of curiosity is waiting to be fulfilled. Skills and competences can be better developed and utilised by empowering inherent curiosity. No one has identified curious employees before. What we do know is that international experience appears to correlate with interest in the world. No one has told the curious that they are relevant for the competitiveness and well-being of tomorrow, yet they are professionals who have the ability to understand the systemic change that will affect entire fields of business. This group of employees is positioned to create success stories that gain leverage from megatrends. International experience is one way we know of to identify them.



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The way forward

We can summarise the results of ‘Hidden Competences’, the research project of CIMO and Demos Helsinki, as follows: skills and knowledge that result from international experiences are the kind of competences that the labour market needs to be able to face future challenges successfully. But often in recruitment we seem to be incapable of recognising these competences; they are hidden. For this reason, even ‘international’ employers are not necessarily able to give credit to competences acquired through international experiences in their recruitment processes. And those employers who do not operate internationally in a traditional sense do not see the benefit of these competences.

We must make the competences resulting from international experiences visible. We need to recognise the learning outcomes of international mobility and describe them better. We should talk about broader learning outcomes that will cover other competences than the traditional language skills, intercultural competences or tolerance. This wider concept will also encompass productivity, resilience and curiosity.

What next?

Along with this research, we invite everybody working with learning mobility to help make these international competences visible. At CIMO, we have identified at least the following areas of development:

1. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND AUTHORITIES

need to engage in a more thorough dialogue with employers in order to make the hidden competences visible and understood.

2. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES PROMOTING LEARNING MOBILITY

need to discuss learning outcomes, their definitions and descriptions so that we can present competences acquired through international experiences in a way that speaks to employers and so that we can improve their relevance in the labour market.

3. STUDENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE need tools and guidance to help them recognise their hidden competences and make them visible.

We also believe that it would be helpful to look for solutions to these challenges in European co-operation.

Further information about the results of the study is available at: www.cimo.fi/hiddencompetencies

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO provides specialist services to support international interaction in education, work and culture, and among the youth. Working under the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, CIMO administers and implements various exchange, practical training and scholarship programmes. CIMO is the national agency for the European Union Erasmus+ programme and the contact point for the programmes Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens.

Among CIMO's key functions is also to gather, process and distribute information to serve its many different customers. The CIMO study, analysis and evaluation team produces data and information to help to plan and enhance international co-operation. CIMO compiles statistics on international student mobility and conducts surveys on the internationalisation of education, youth, culture and working life, and on current issues of international collaboration.

FAKTAA – Facts and Figures is a series of publications on the key findings of CIMO's studies and research projects. The publications are available both in print and as pdf documents at www.cimo.fi.

Demos Helsinki is the leading independent think tank in Finland. Demos Helsinki does high-end research projects and futures studies, creates strategies and conducts future-oriented experimental development work with companies, cities, governments and communities. Demos Helsinki was founded by a group of citizens interested in the future of our societies. The work by Demos Helsinki can be accessed at www.demoshelsinki.fi/in-english.

Towards
a global-minded Finland.

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