

The value of international mobility to teacher education students

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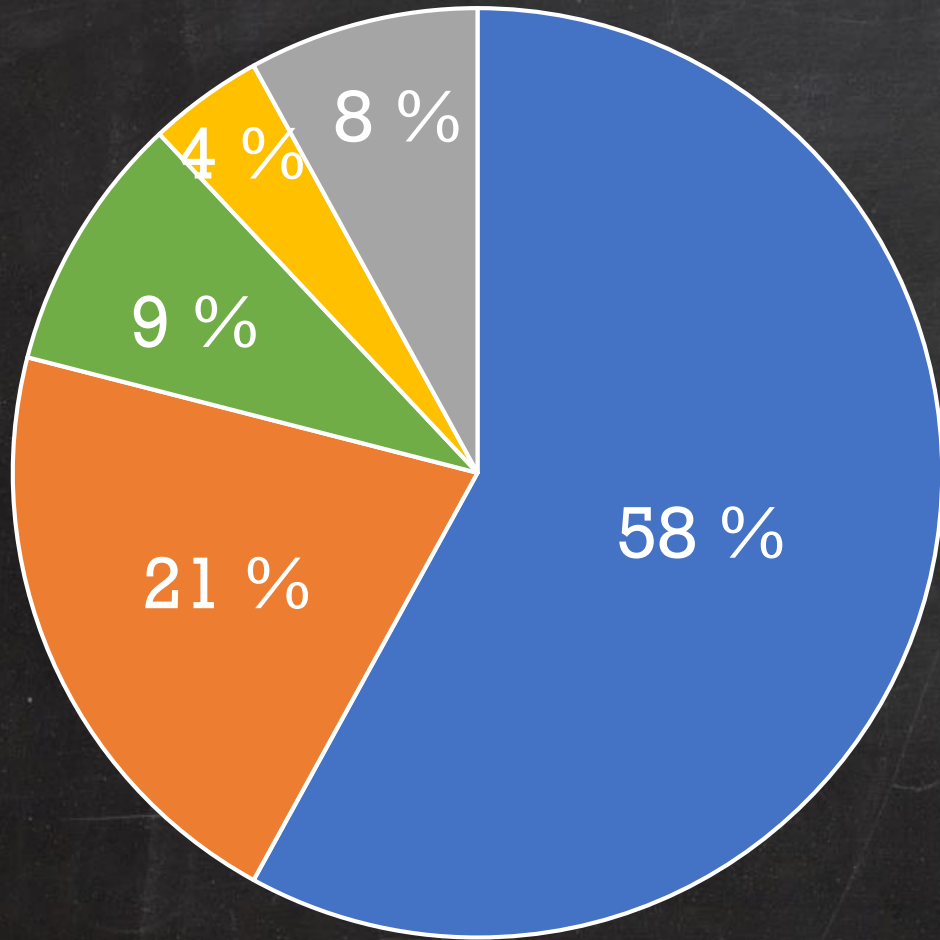
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Finnish TE students going abroad



- Finland has a lower proportion who have studied abroad¹
 - 23% vs. 26% EU average
 - - 9% in 2018 = c. 1000 fewer students
- In Finland, TE students go abroad much less than average²
 - 2.6% per year vs. 4.9% overall
 - 2018: Business & Law (3373); Engineering (1420); Teacher Ed (331)
- Very few students go to lower-income countries³
 - 2/3 of students go to another European country
 - <5% of students went to Africa/Latin America/Caribbean

Funding



Erasmus +

University (Bilateral agreements)

Free mover

Nordplus

Other

Who goes abroad & why ?



- Encouragement from others a significant factor
- Demographics - not especially significant¹
 - Mild bias towards older, female, university, science/business
- Those with more flexible mindset more predisposed¹
- No dominant reason for choosing not to go abroad ²
 - Financial concerns not that significant

Benefits of going abroad



91% think it is fairly/very important to have an experience abroad¹



Language skills
Discovering other cultures
Job/career prospects



Students who stay in Finland



Do not much regret going abroad!



Students who go abroad

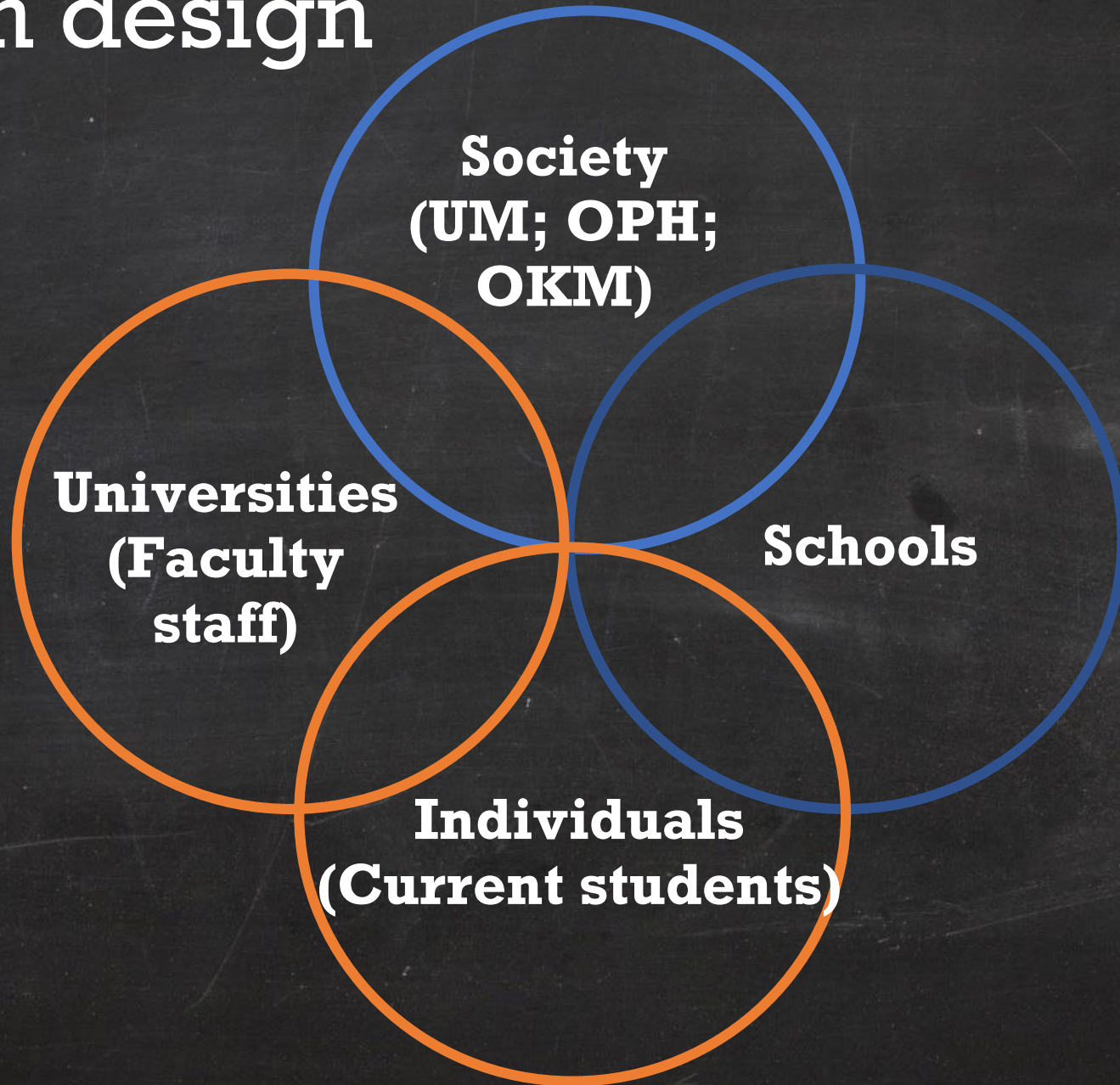


Support & reflection before & after exchange significantly improves long-term impacts²

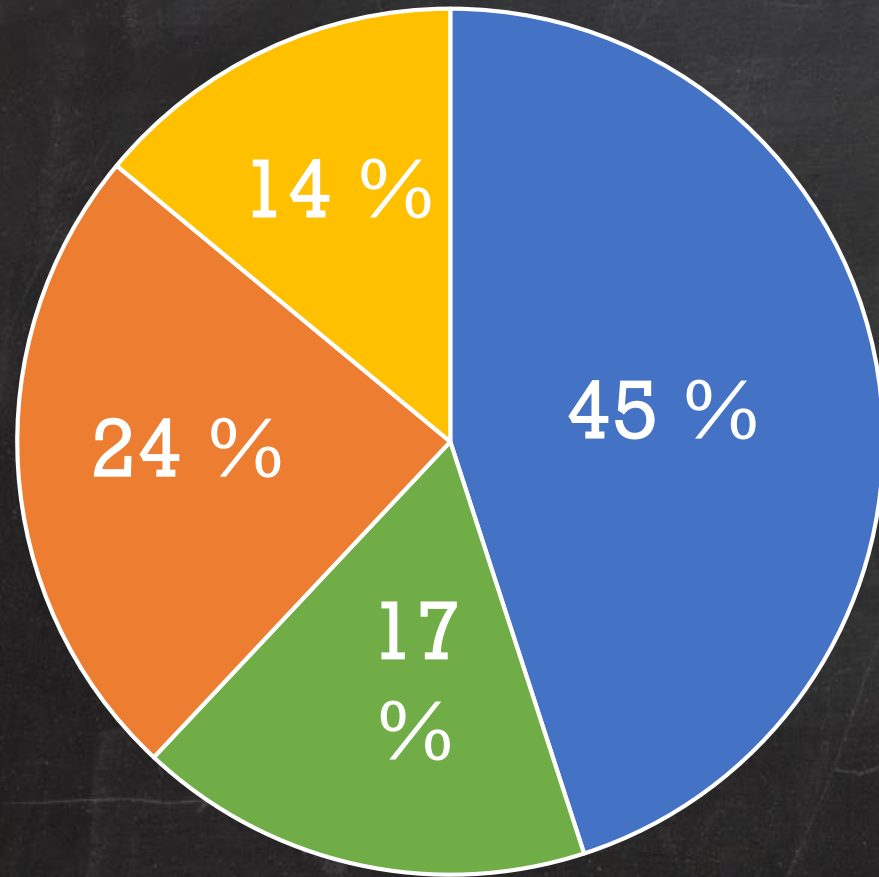
¹ EC Eurobarometer (2018)

² Blum & Bourn (2019); CIMO (2015); Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus (2011)

Research design



Student categorisation (N=695)



A. Has already been abroad

B. Planning to go

C. Considered but did not go

D. Never considered

Research design - data



TE Students:

- 695 questionnaires
- 12 interviews

International mobility coordinators

- 9 questionnaires
- 8 interviews



Key findings

Perceived barrier: course timetable



- Missing studies / delaying graduation is *perceived* to be a huge issue

The Curriculum is often planned in a way that there is no logical space for international mobility

Their course schedules during the semesters are so strict, they cannot simply fit in an entire semester abroad

There should be a mobility window or similar embedded in the studies.

Perceived barrier: Students *must* specialise



- Students prefer to gain 2 or 3 minors in Finland
 - 'Long' minors increasingly common
 - Desire is to gain specialisation to “stand out from the crowd”
- Perception that schools (still) look for specialisms when recruiting

There is pressure to get double or triple qualifications in Finland.

Even if the degree structure allows lots of electives, in practice they want to do a specialism in a single subject

Faculty staff not always supportive



- Many IMCs suggested that Faculty of Education colleagues did not view study/training abroad positively.

It would be most appreciated if the Faculties of Teacher Education would also understand the value of internationalisation in a wider perspective. They seem to be the last ones not being quite that open to the idea.

I think they still live in the belief that they are educating students for the national labour market, with no use of international experiences nor contacts.

Support is key



- Considerable support is on offer, BUT ...
 - Lots of informational support
 - Relatively little support with practicalities.
- ... Departmental structures can make it harder to distribute information
- ... Availability of support needs to be publicised in first year

Course suitability & recognition



- Finding suitable English-language courses is a challenge
- Academic suitability / quality / recognition of courses an issue

We don't have the resources to properly check out the quality of potential partner universities.

We only want to build partnerships with the best universities around the world

Lower-income countries

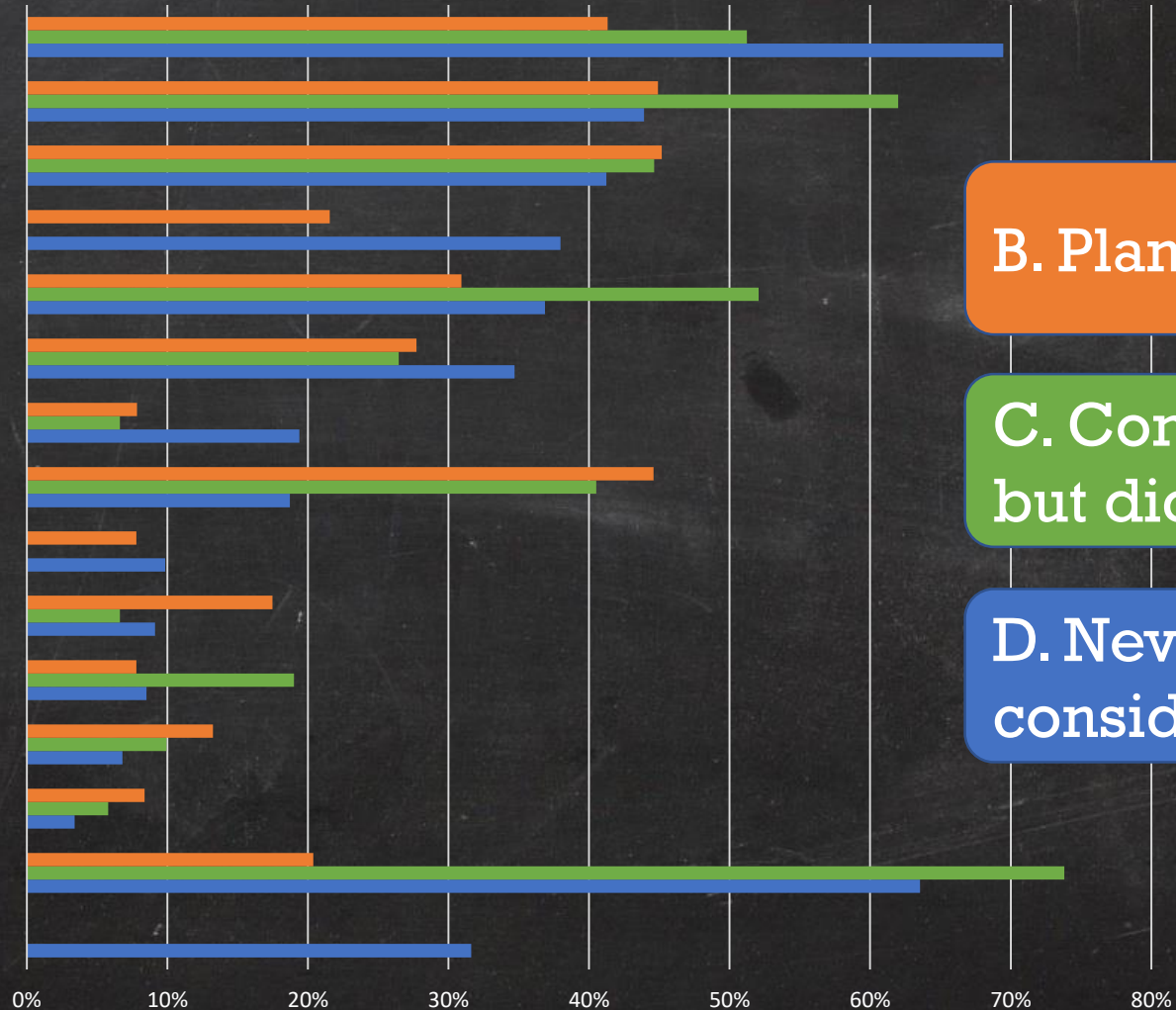


- **Bilateral agreements are rare**
 - Only 5 universities have agreements with LI countries
 - Only 9 / 70 countries represented
 - Funding only an issue where bilateral agreement **not** in place
- **Limited cooperation with 3rd party partners**
 - HEI-ICI; ERASMUS+ Global; Nordic Centre in India; some NGOs
- **Main barriers =>**
 - lack of knowledge
 - quality of teaching
 - security & disruptions to studies

Barriers for students



Missing / being away from family/friends etc.
 Missing studies /delaying graduation
 Not enough money
 Stressful
 Quality / suitability of courses abroad
 Language / communication
 No benefit for me
 Lack of guidance/support
 Discouraged by friends/family
 Safety/security
 Discouraged by university staff
 Will harm career
 Health/disability
 Other
 Not interested / Don't like going abroad



B. Planning to go

C. Considered but did not go

D. Never considered

Main benefits of going abroad



- Experience difference
- Gain intercultural perspective/ skills
- Build connections
- Develop personal skills

It is also their task to educate global citizens, so they should have understanding of that concept to be able to work globally together for the better world.

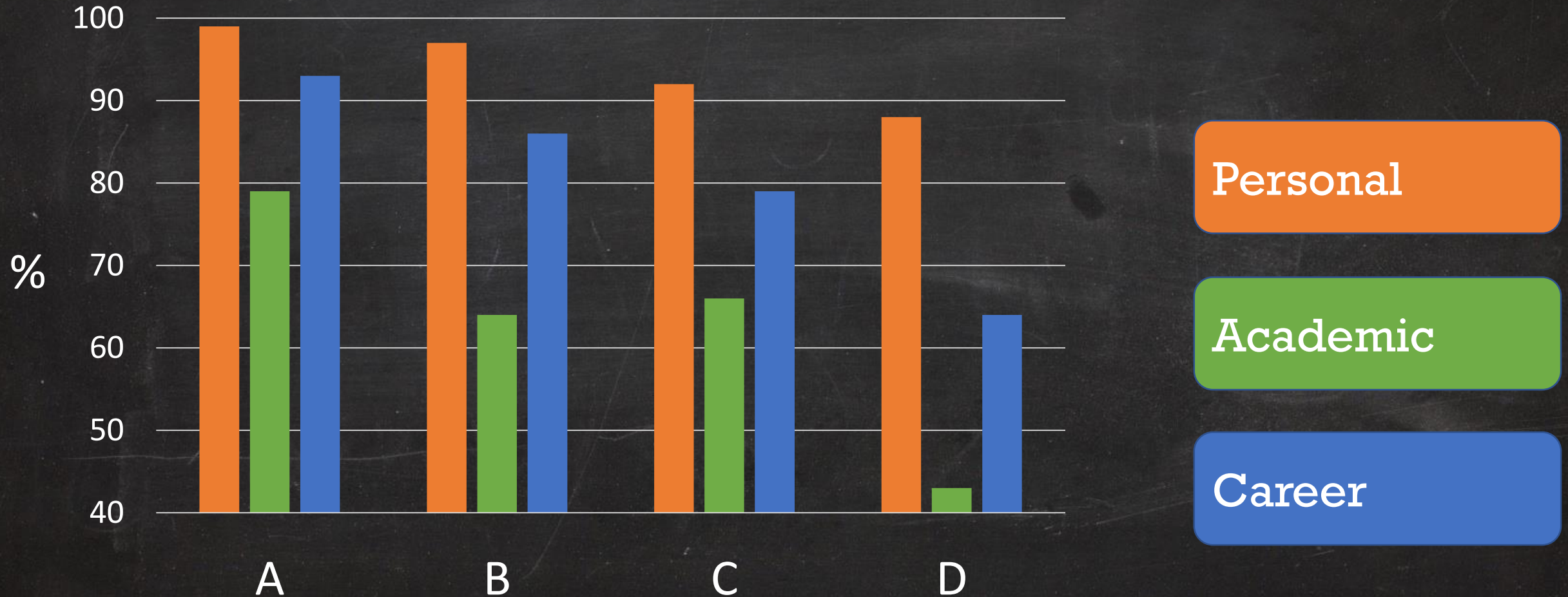
There are, of course, several reasons, e.g. need to widen one's horizon & mindset, need to experience the feeling of "otherness" & not belonging, possibility to grow as a human being

=> All within the context of a more multicultural Finland / world

Students: benefits of going abroad



% Agreeing that studying / training abroad can help you in this area





Recommendations

Mobility semester



- 1 semester with no compulsory courses
 - Likely to be 3rd of 4th year
- Promoted in the 1st year of the course
 - Campaign against student 'disinformation' - trip will not delay graduation
 - Going abroad is possible, beneficial and encouraged
- Both exchange and training available
 - Thematic practice abroad possible

International education minor



- Full internationalisation / intercultural education minor
 - 25-30 ECTS credits
- Promote as another specialism
- Focus on competences

Student ambassadors



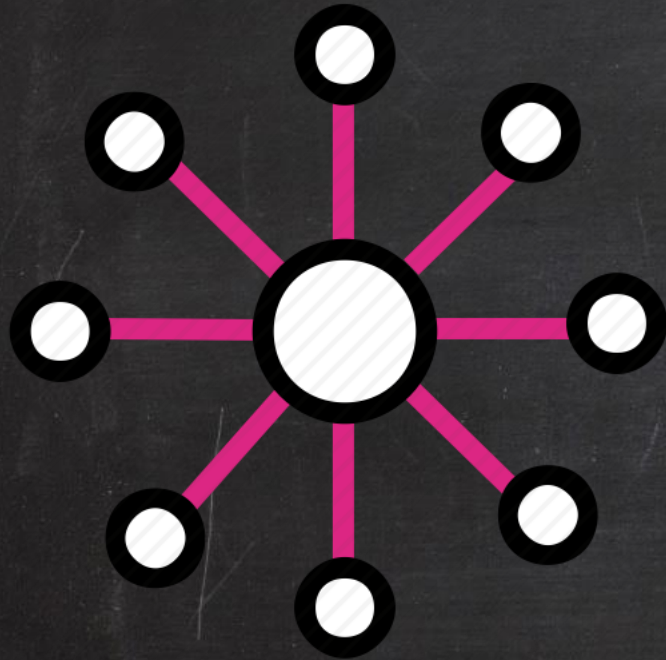
- **Systematic use of students who have been abroad as ambassadors**
 - Face-to-face
 - Focus on those already employed
 - Compulsory part of course in first year
 - Peer-to-peer = more transparent
- **Liaise with student unions**
 - e.g. SOOL
- **Liaise with alumni**

Promote personal benefits



- Supports visits to LI countries
- Evidence suggests personal development leads to academic & career development too

National approach to partnerships



- Coordinate partner university approvals for Faculties of Education nationwide.
 - Especially for LI countries
 - Share existing links / partnerships
 - Central team for contact & approval of suitable universities
 - Use alumni / stakeholder contacts

Shorter-term trips



- Target funding for TE students
- Consider focus on summer schools and internships / training more than exchange
- Consider group travel
 - Helps with student support
 - Lessens security concerns

Vocational TE students



- Access to additional funding to compensate for lack of access to e.g. ERASMUS+
- Promotion of shorter trips



Questions ?

Vocational TE students



- Different demographic profile
 - Typically have more experience & family commitments
- More focussed on professional rather than personal development
- Funding a major concern

“For them it is a deal-breaker. They are losing salary if they go.”

“because they are not degree students as such, they fall out of the normal programmes and funding ...”

Shorter trips



- Viewed positively by nearly all. Especially effective/attractive for:
 - Personal reasons
 - Timetable concerns
 - Rent/property concerns
- Needs more financial support
- ! Support pre & post
 - eg build 5cr course around the trip

“Shorter visits can provide good experiences and value for money if they are planned well. They are better than nothing i.e. not going abroad at all.”

Further research



- Impact of inbound students/visitors
- Value that employers (esp. schools) place on internationally-acquired knowledge, skills, values, attitudes & experience