

Knowledge, know-how and the changing working life

Working life is in a state of global flux. Employment and career trajectories are inevitably being affected by robotisation, digitalisation, employees' changing knowledge and skill sets, etc. Traditional education and degree structures are no longer optimally suited to the changing conditions, but new and more flexible ways of learning and adopting new ideas are needed that cut across all stages of life. Research under this theme needs to respond to the challenges faced by educational institutions. Furthermore, it should provide concrete solutions for identifying and advancing the development of skills that will be needed in the future workplace so that skills and competencies match job requirements. The aim is to find ways in which the best existing research can be put to use in developing education, learning environments and skills as well as in anticipating the need for new skills and future occupations.

Under this theme the aim will be to integrate research on skills and employment and at once to identify the institutional challenges raised by the changing workplace. These challenges include the regulation of work and the labour market, which will affect people's opportunities to participate in employment. A further aim is to generate knowledge about the potential uses of new technologies and digitalisation in education and in the workplace as well as about the role of internationalisation in education and in the labour market.

The changing population age structure in Finland underlines the need to explore the best ways in which to promote people's participation in employment at all stages of their life. We need to know how learning in the workplace can be promoted as part of young people's education and training to update the skills people need in working life. It is also paramount that people with partial work ability are integrated into employment, for exclusion from working life causes substantial human and financial losses. In order to compete in the future, Finland will need immigrants to augment its labour force and to bring in fresh knowledge capital. In response to the permanent changes in the labour market, it will also be necessary to assess the need for institutional reform, for instance in labour market regulation and immigration policy.

Traditional wage labour will increasingly give way to more independent, self-directed and entrepreneurial employment. In the future, work will be less bound to time and place than before, and therefore work and leisure will be interwoven in increasingly diverse ways. In a global and digitalised world, people will have 24/7 access to services. Answers are needed to the question of how work and the labour force can adapt and make the best of these changes. Furthermore, research under this theme can help to shed light on the role of Finnish growth companies in the development of new skills and competencies and identify the most critical success factors for these companies.

The maintenance and development of high-quality education involves significant challenges. New methods of knowledge production and taking good advantage of the opportunities offered by technologies are crucially important if Finland is to succeed in going digital in the public sector and in business and industry. Today, and especially in the future, ever greater value will be placed not only on the value of education and skills, but also on metaskills such as enterprise, self-management and interaction skills, management of the big picture, creativity and critical thinking. Data acquisition, analysis and application skills are also of great value in the digital environment. Learning does not end upon graduation, but updating one's skills and competencies and learning is a lifelong process that continues beyond formal education and employment. The identification of skills and competencies presents another challenge for the future. People are increasingly acquiring the diverse job skills they need from various sources, without completing formal qualifications. This poses challenges for educational and learning institutions and their development.

Research under this theme should be able to respond to these challenges and present concrete ways in which the skills required in the future workplace can be identified and the assimilation of these skills can be promoted.