



<http://dx.doi.org/10.16926/p.2023.32.07>

Yuliya ZAYACHUK

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5861-2761>

Academic visitor, University of Oxford, UK

Associate Professor, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine

e-mail: yuliya.zayachuk@education.ox.ac.uk; yuliya.zayachuk@lnu.edu.ua

Maria DZIAMKO

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8549-5994>

Master's student, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine

e-mail: mariia.burher@lnu.edu.ua

Student Academic Mobility and its Impact on Personal Development: The Experience of Finnish Universities

Abstract

The article presents an analysis of the main aspects of student academic mobility in Finnish universities and accents on its impact on the personal development of students. It is based on the theoretical analysis and systematization of literary sources, as well as empirical data of a survey of Finnish students who studies at the University of Turku and the University of Jyvaskyla. The article considers that Finland is a country of well-known achievements in education and its experience can be useful for the future of higher education in Ukraine in its current extremely difficult time. The article reveals that academic mobility of students as one of the most important among the program strategies of internationalization of higher education is an opportunity to bring new ideas, experiences and resources that can improve the quality of research and teaching, and promote innovation and cultural understanding for educational institutions, as well as to develop scientific potential, gain international experience and develop professionally for students, teachers, and researchers. It is shown that international academic mobility significantly increased over the past decade. The article discusses that Finnish universities have a developed network of partner institutions around the world, which provides students with opportunities to exchange experiences and gain new knowledge. The article presents the detailed results of an empirical study, namely a survey of Finnish students studied at the University of Turku and the University of Jyvaskyla, who have personal experience of participating in student academic mobility programs, which relate to countries where students carried out their academic mobility, advantages of stu-

dent academic mobility, the impact of academic mobility on the career of students, possibility of their independent research, and other aspects firsthand.

Keywords: student academic mobility, Finnish universities, higher education system in Finland, personal development, personal experience.

The rapid current growth of competition in higher education forces modern universities to analyze how to become leaders in the market of educational services. The higher education system faces numerous challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, rapid changes in the economy and technologies leave new requirements for the competences of specialists, which requires constant updating of training programs and methods. On the other hand, globalization and mobility of the working population create a need for international standards of education quality and interaction between universities with the whole world.

Finland is undoubtedly a country of well-known achievements in education where education is considered as a key to the nation's success. This means that its experience in the development of higher education can be useful for the future of higher education in Ukraine in its current extremely difficult time.

Among the researchers of modern academic mobility of students, one can highlight J. Kulonpalo (Kulonpalo, 2007) who studied the motivational and disincentive factors of international academic mobility in Finland and the latest general trends of student mobility, J. Kauko (Kauko, 2019) researches the most popular goals of mobility for Finnish students, K. Musselin (Musselin, 2004), a researcher of academic mobility in European countries, O. Kivinen and R. Rinne (Kivinen & Rinne, 1996), who study inequality in academic mobility in Finland. Also, among well-known researchers of academic mobility are J. Knight (Knight, 2004), U. Teichler (Teichler, 2003), T. Kim (Kim, 2007), and P. Blumenthal, C. Goodwin, A. Smith, Teichler (Blumenthal, Goodwin, Smith & Teichler, 1996).

The purpose of the article is the research and analysis of the main aspects of student academic mobility in Finnish universities as well as its impact on the personal development of students.

Our research is based on theoretical analysis and systematization of literary sources, as well as research results of a survey of Finnish students who studies at the University of Turku and the University of Jyväskylä to obtain empirical data.

Researchers J. Knight (Knight, 2004), U. Teichler (Teichler, 2003), T. Kim (Kim, 2007), P. Blumenthal, C. Goodwin, A. Smith, and U. Teichler (Blumenthal, Goodwin, Smith & Teichler, 1996) note that the programs of academic mobility of students is one of the important parts among the program strategies of internationalization of higher education at the institutional level.

Academic mobility is an opportunity for students, teachers, and researchers to develop scientific potential, gain international experience and develop professionally. For educational institutions, academic mobility can bring new ideas,

experiences and resources that can improve the quality of research and teaching, as well as promote innovation. In addition, it can promote cultural understanding, tolerance, and cooperation between nations.

Academic mobility is an important element of modern higher education, which contributes to the development of intellectual and cultural ties between universities and scientific institutions of different countries. It is a process through which students, teachers and researchers can gain scientific and educational experience outside their home country. Academic mobility is also important for the development of science and education because it enables people of different cultures to learn from each other, exchange ideas and promote international cooperation.

Academic mobility provides students and researchers with an excellent opportunity to gain work experience in international projects and research groups. It allows people to work on cutting-edge research, develop new ideas and create an international research network (Oliinyk, O. Poznanska, & S. Chrost, 2021, pp. 67–81).

International mobility of students and scientists has become a topic which was widely discussed after the Second World War. At that time, it was hoped that increased international activity would help overcome hatred and mistrust between countries and promote mutual understanding and readiness for cooperation. The strong emphasis placed on this topic is visible, for example, in the activities of the Council of Europe during the 1950s. However, academic mobility reached its peak in the 1990s, and student mobility increased significantly during this period (Teichler, 2015, pp. 6–37).

The activation of international mobility was facilitated by the creation of the Erasmus program in 1987 in honor of the outstanding humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam. In 2004, the Erasmus Mundus program (mundus – world, universal) was launched, designed for citizens of countries that were not part of the EU. European Union develops Erasmus program to intensify international cooperation and increase the mobility of participants of the educational space. More details about Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth, and sport in Europe can be found in our article (Zayachuk, 2021).

International academic mobility significantly increased over the past decade. According to the Institute of International Education, the mobility of scholars increased worldwide from 89,634 in 2005 to 124,861 in 2015. The numbers of international students are even more impressive, increasing from 565,039 in 2005 to 974,926 accordingly (Institute of International Education, 2016).

Finland, which is famous for its advanced education system, offers many English-language programs, an innovative approach to teaching and active involvement of students in research work, has also various academic mobility programs for students, teachers, and researchers. One of the most popular is, without any doubt, the Erasmus+ program, which provides opportunities for student

and staff exchanges between institutions in participating countries. In this program, students get new experiences, deepen their knowledge, and develop intercultural perception.

Finland also has national academic mobility programs aimed at improving the quality of education and research. For example, the SIMO program (Center for Mobility) provides grants for student exchanges, as well as finances cooperation projects of foreign and Finnish institutions.

The success factors of the academic mobility system in Finland are not only financial support and access to resources, but also a general favorable atmosphere for international students and researchers. Cultural diversity, high quality of life and education, as well as a positive attitude towards foreigners make Finland an attractive destination for academic studies. Besides, Finnish universities are particularly conscientious about the criteria for selecting students. Academic performance, motivation and high adaptability are among the most important criteria for selecting mobility participants.

In addition, Finnish universities have a developed network of partner institutions around the world, which provides students with opportunities to exchange experiences and gain new knowledge. The student mobility support system includes not only academic, but also social and cultural support, which makes studying in Finland the most desirable for many students from all over the world.

Academic mobility has a significant impact on the educational system and cultural exchange. The results of such research can be useful for university administrations planning to develop academic mobility programs, as well as for government bodies that shape policies in the field of education and youth.

To study the experience of student academic mobility in Finnish universities first-hand, to understand the trends and preferences of the student community taking part in it, we developed a survey for students studying in Finnish universities. We involved 29 respondents in the survey which was conducted on the Google Forms platform. The category of students who were selected for the survey study at the University of Turku and the University of Jyväskylä.

The results showed that 66% of the surveyed students were participants in academic mobility, and 34% were not. Students who were participants of academic mobility indicated the programs and countries in which studied on an exchange. As we can see from Figure 1, 50% of students participated in academic mobility via Erasmus+ program, 28% under the Erasmus program, another 11% – via ISEP and Bilateral exchange.

From Figure 2, we can see that the surveyed students visited the following countries in the context of their academic mobility programs: the United States of America, Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain, Japan, Thailand, Norway, South Korea, Belgium, Scotland.

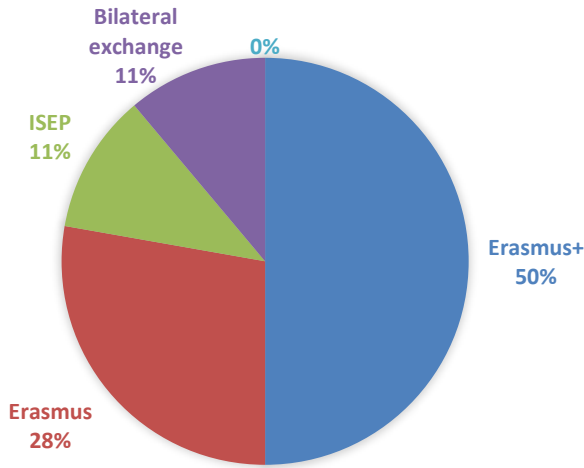


Figure 1
Academic mobility programs

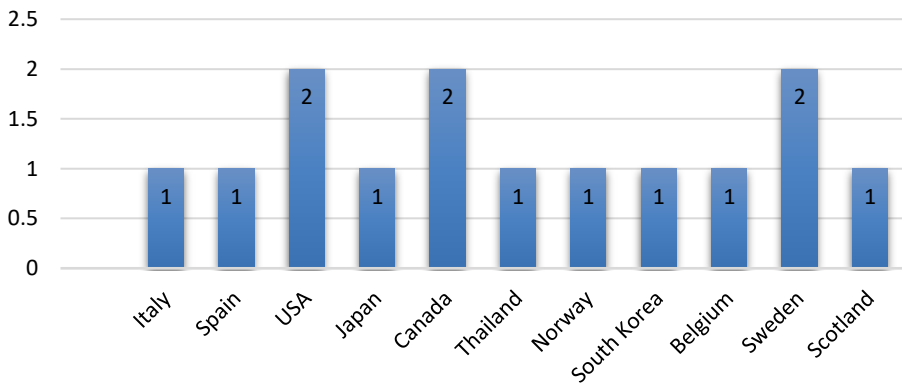


Figure 2
Countries where students carried out their academic mobility

The surveyed respondents noted that they learned about academic mobility programmes after applying for help to the international office of their university (54%), with the help of specialized Internet resources (15%) and social networks (19%), another 4% – from an information event on student mobility organized by the department and the International Office, as well as from scientific consultants (Figure 3).

To the question “What are the main criteria you guided by when choosing a university and an educational program?” students indicated that they paid the most attention to the country where the educational institution is located, programs and specializations in accordance with the interests and recommenda-

tions of other students, and only two of the surveyed students paid their attention to the academic reputation of the host university (Figure 4).

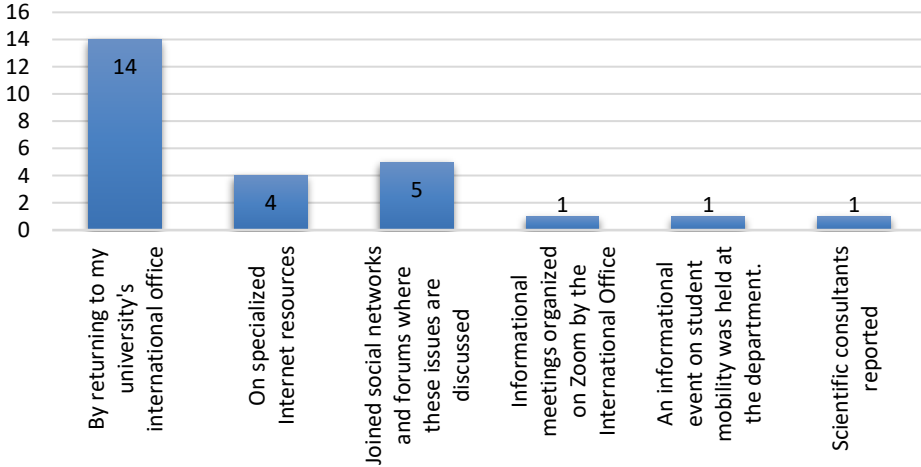


Figure 3
Sources from which students learned about academic mobility programs

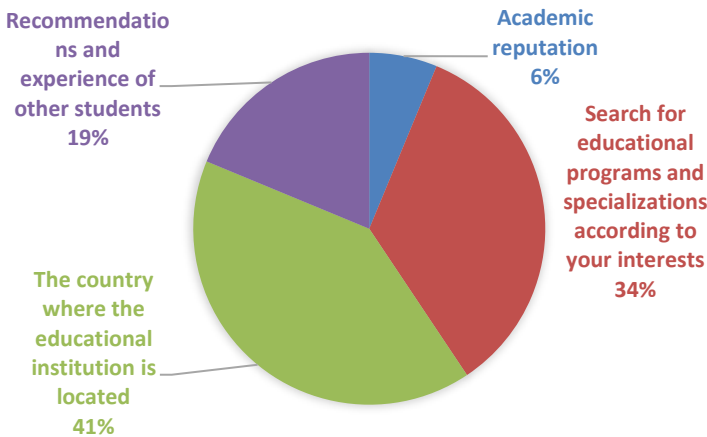


Figure 4
Criteria by which students chose the universities

While preparing for the academic mobility, students may face different types of limitations. The surveyed Finnish universities students note that during the preparation for participation in student academic mobility programs, they encountered financial (14%), insurance and visa restrictions (5%), requirements for academic success (33%) as well as the problem of a foreign language at a sufficient level (10%). No restrictions were encountered by 38% of surveyed students (Figure 5).

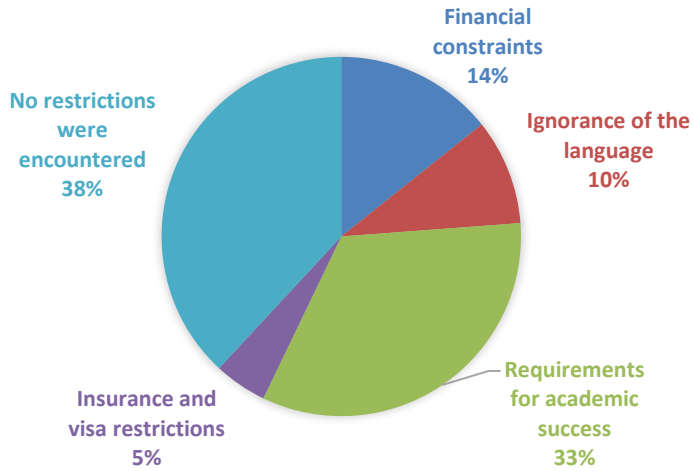


Figure 5

Limitations faced by students during preparation for academic mobility in Finland

100% of surveyed students indicate that during their academic mobility they were provided with academic counseling services, advice on living in another country and support for adaptation to a new environment.

To the question “What advantages, do you think, academic mobility has for a student?” we received the following answers from surveyed students: an opportunity to gain new experience and knowledge (35%), expanding cultural understanding and international communication (37%), increasing competitiveness in the job market (28%) (Figure 6).

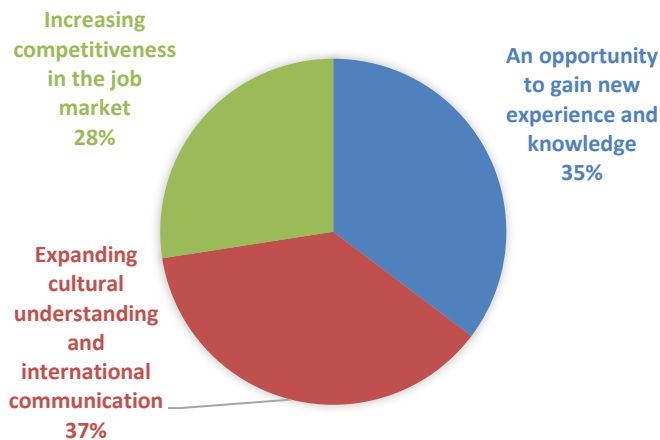


Figure 6

Advantages of student academic mobility

It is important to add here that the survey participants emphasized on the impact of academic mobility on their academic career and noted that academic mobility helped them acquire new skills and knowledge (37%), get opportunities for further education and research (11%), establish connections with other students and researchers (30%), and increased academic competitiveness (22%) (Figure 7).

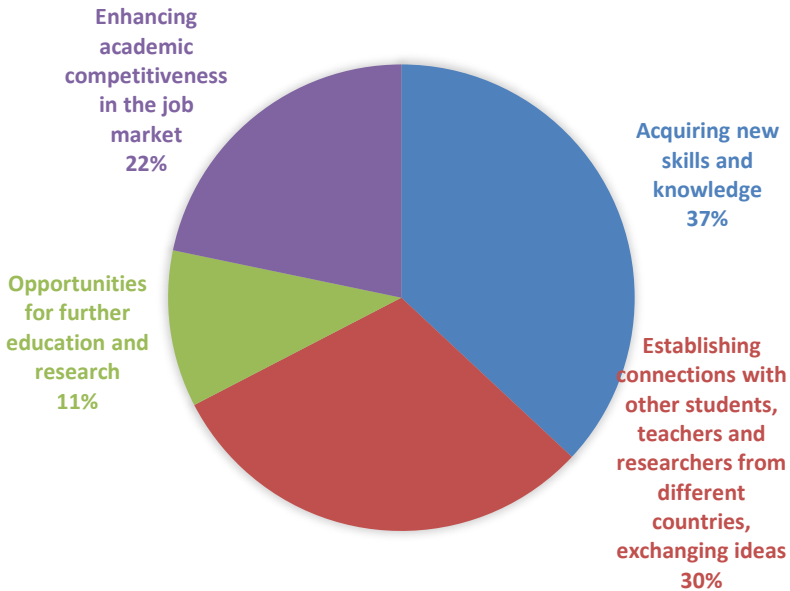


Figure 7

The impact of academic mobility on the academic career of students

Employment situations and the career stage also play an important role in shaping international mobility patterns and its outcomes (Hoffman, 2007, pp. 317-331). So, another aspect of our study was to find out how academic mobility affected the professional career of the participants.

After analyzing the survey, we found out that 15 interviewees noted that mobility allowed them to gain new knowledge, skills, and experience, 14 interviewees were able to develop intercultural competence, another 13 participants of academic mobility programs noted that their mobility added a significant point to their CV, and only 9 respondents established connections for potential employment abroad (Figure 8).

Academic mobility participants noted that only 17% participated in international projects and research groups, and 83% did not do it (Figure 9).

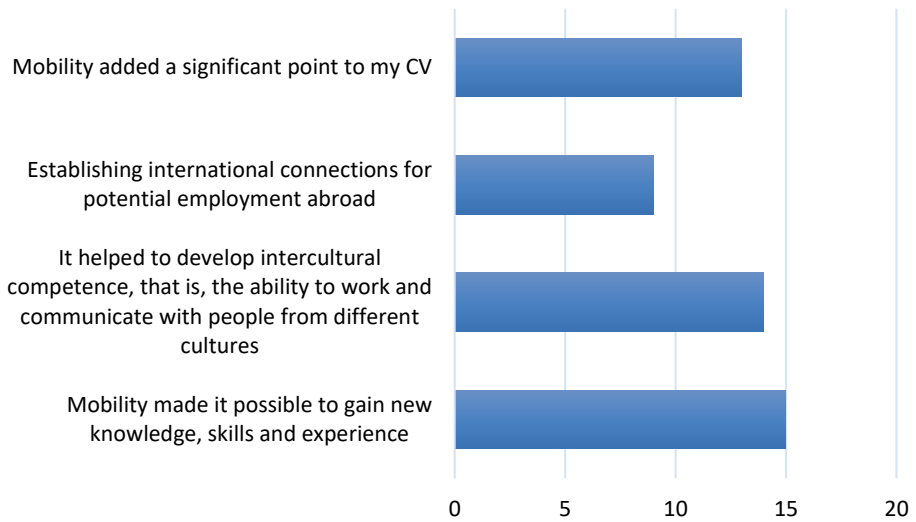


Figure 8

The impact of academic mobility on the professional career of students

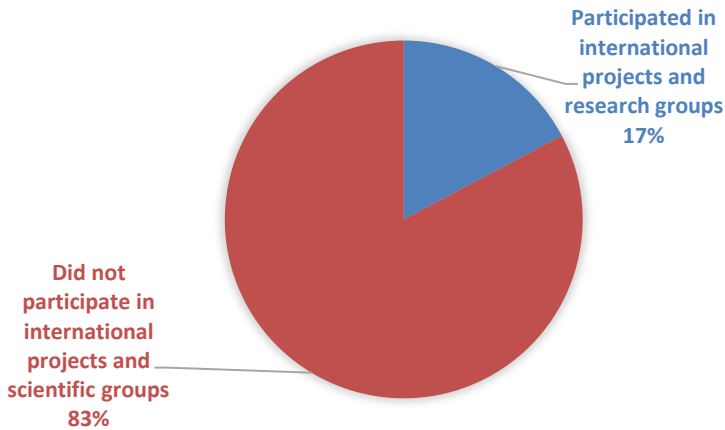


Figure 9

Participation in international projects and scientific groups

Regarding the question of whether the participants had an opportunity for independent research or a project, we received a positive indicator from only 21% of the respondents (Figure 10).

One of the main problems that students may face during academic mobility is adapting to a new education system and changing teaching methods. Only 3 out of 19 surveyed respondents indicated that they encountered this problem, which indicates the high adaptability of Finnish students.

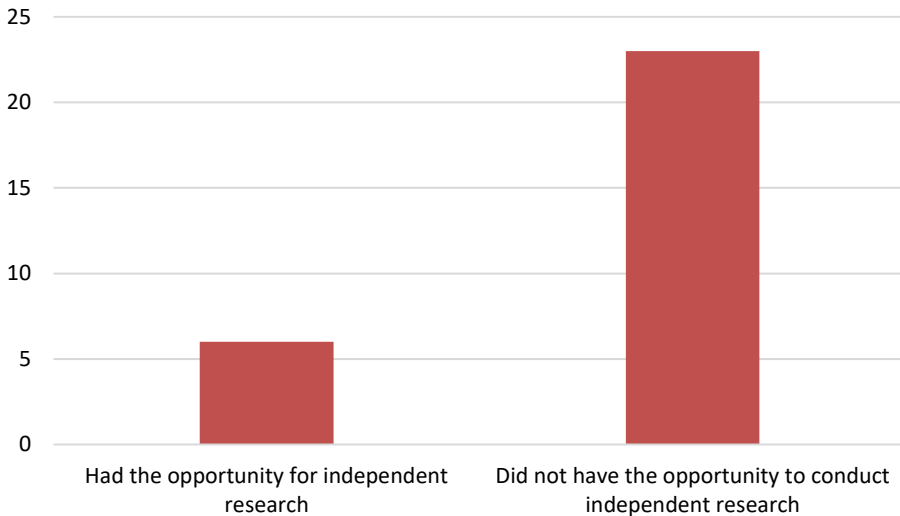


Figure 10
Possibility of independent research

During academic mobility, students can choose to study various subjects or modules not available at their home institution, which can help them get a more complete education and prepare them for their future professional activities. Respondents note that during academic mobility, they had the opportunity to choose subjects from another field (53%) and additional subjects in their specialty (47%), which indicates the autonomy and freedom of will of the student in shaping his individual educational trajectory. The freedom to choose courses and disciplines allows students to adapt their studies to their interests, career goals and personal development.

An important advantage of academic mobility is also the possibility of improving your future career. 48% of surveyed Finnish students note that the exchange program in which they participated can provide additional specialization, which can make the student desirable on the labor market, as it shows his readiness for new challenges and a broad outlook (Figure 11).

Accordingly, 74% of respondents indicate that there is a possibility of employment after academic mobility in other countries (Figure 12).

Among the disadvantages of academic mobility, students noted the following: the problem of time allocation; long distance from family; lagging the release schedule.

According to the results of the survey, 65% would like to participate in academic mobility again, 25% are not sure and 10% are not ready to do this (Figure 13).

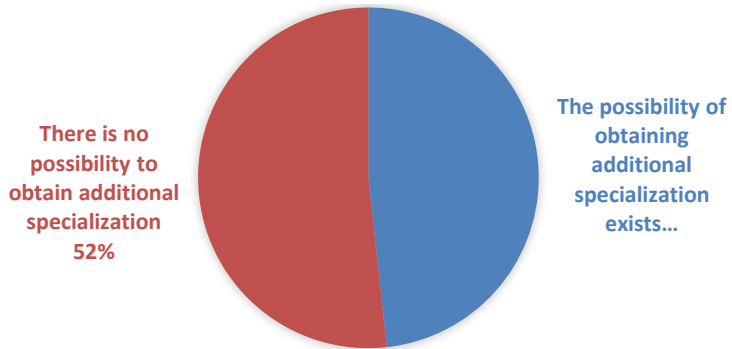


Figure 11

The opportunity for students to obtain additional specialization in the field of education abroad because of an internship.

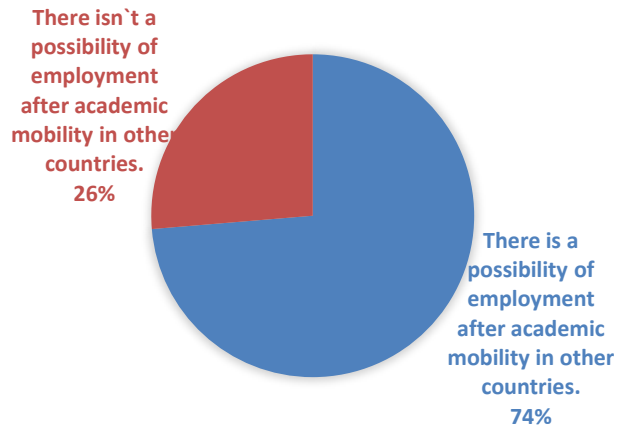


Figure 12

Possibility of employment after academic mobility in other countries

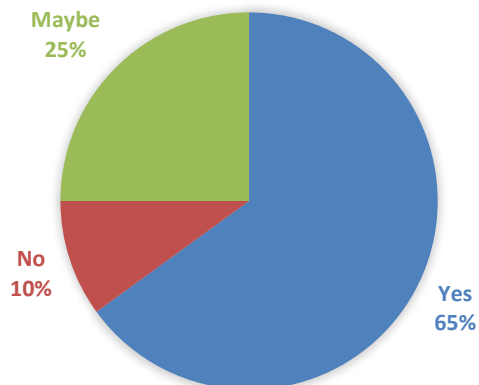


Figure 13

Students' desire to participate in academic mobility again

Conclusions

Academic mobility is an opportunity for students, teachers, and researchers to develop their scientific potential, gain international experience and develop professionally. The article presented different aspects of this phenomenon. It highlighted the importance of mobility for students studying at Finnish universities and its impact on their education and future careers. The article also drew attention to exchange programs and cooperation between universities, which contribute to enriching students' educational experience. The research showed that academic mobility in Finland has considerable potential for developing students' personalities and deepening their knowledge in various fields.

The conducted survey of Finnish students who studies at the University of Turku and the University of Jyvaskyla gives us reason to emphasize that academic mobility has given them the opportunity to gain new experiences and knowledge, broaden their cultural understanding, and practice a foreign language. Furthermore, in terms of the aspect of how academic mobility affected the participants' professional careers, the survey results give us reason to point out, that mobility made it possible to gain new skills, experience, and intercultural competence. As a result, this was positively reflected in their CVs and thus, academic mobility programs make a student more desirable on the labour market, as it shows that he/she is ready for new challenges and has a broad perspective.

References

- Blumenthal, P., Goodwin, C., Smith, A., and Teichler, U., Eds. (1996). *Academic mobility in a changing world: regional and global trends*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Hoffman, D. (2007). The Career Potential of Migrant Scholars: A Multiple Case Study of Long-Term Academic Mobility in Finnish Universities. *Higher Education in Europe*, 32(4), 317–331.
- Institute of International Education*. (2016). URL: <http://www.iie.org/open-doors>.
- Kauko, J. (2019). *Overview of higher education (Finland)*. Bloomsbury: Education and Childhood Studies.
- Kim, T. (2017). Academic mobility, transnational identity capital, and stratification under conditions of academic capitalism. *Higher Education*, 73, 981–997.
- Kivinen, O., & Rinne, R. (1996). Higher education, mobility and inequality: the Finnish case. *European Journal of Education*, 31(3), 289–310.

- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 5–31; <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303260832>.
- Kulonpalo, J. (2007). *Academic Finns Abroad-Challenges of International Mobility and the Research Career*. Publications of the Academy of Finland, 7.07.
- Musselin, K. (2004). Towards a European academic labour market? Some lessons drawn from empirical studies on academic mobility. *Higher Education*, 48(1), 55–78.
- Oliinyk, M., Poznanska, O., & Chrost, S. (2021). *Academic Mobility: Problems and Consequences*. In: M. Ollinyk, O. Clipa, M. Stawiak-Ososińska (ed.), *Trends and prospects of the education system and educators' professional training development* (pp. 67–81); <https://doi.org/10.18662/978-1-910129-28-9.ch005>.
- Teichler, U. (2015). Academic mobility and migration: What we know and what we do not know. *European review*, 23(S1), 6–37.
- Teichler, U. (2003). Mutual Recognition and Credit Transfer in Europe: Experiences and Problems. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 7(4), 312–341.
- Zayachuk, Yu. (2021). Internationalization as a component of the national strategy for improvement of higher education space in Ukraine, *Education: Modern Discourses*, 4, 153–162.

Mobilność akademicka studenta i jej wpływ na rozwój osobisty: doświadczenie uniwersytetów fińskich

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia analizę głównych aspektów akademickiej mobilności studenckiej w fińskich uniwersytetach i podkreśla jej wpływ na rozwój personalny studentów. Oparto go na badaniach teoretycznych i systematyzacji źródeł drukowanych oraz na danych empirycznych z badań przeprowadzonych wśród studentów Uniwersytetu w Turku i Uniwersytetu w Jyväskylä. Stwierdzono w nim, iż Finlandia jest państwem o szeroko znanych osiągnięciach oświatowych i jej doświadczenia mogą być użyteczne w przyszłości w szkolnictwie wyższym w Ukrainie, w ekstremalnie trudnych obecnie warunkach. Artykuł ukazuje mobilność akademicką studentów jako jedną z najważniejszych strategii internacjonalizacji oświaty wyższej, przynoszącą nowe idee, doświadczenia i źródła, które mogą podnieść jakość badań i nauczania, promującą innowacje i zrozumienie kulturowe instytucji edukacyjnych, a także rozwijającą potencjał naukowy poprzez pozyskanie doświadczeń międzynarodowych i profesjonalnych doświadczeń studenta nauczycieli i naukowców. Wykazano w nim, iż międzynarodowa mobilność akademicka wzrosła w czasie ostatniej dekady. Uniwersytety w Finlandii mają rozwiniętą sieć uczelni partnerskich na całym świecie, dostarczając studentom możliwość wymiany doświadczeń i pozyskania nowej wiedzy. Artykuł prezentuje szczegółowe wyniki badań empirycznych przeprowadzonych wśród studentów fińskich uniwersytetów, mających własne doświadczenia uczestnictwa w programach międzynarodowej wymiany studenckiej z krajami, w których studenci mają możliwość czerpania korzyści z wymiany akademickiej i rozwoju swojej kariery studenckiej, prowadzenia badań i innych działań.

Słowa kluczowe: mobilność akademicka studenta, uniwersytety fińskie, rozwój personalny.