Abstract

Being able to interact effectively and efficiently in the networked professional environments appears to be a crucial skill for junior job seekers. Graduates possessing these skills can markedly increase their possibilities of being hired.

A sample analysis on recruitment advertisements revealed that interaction skills are of paramount importance in the information and communications technology (ICT) industry. In view of the scarcity of terminological definitions, the authors of this article sought to make a cross-cultural comparison on the scope and definition of interactional skills required in the sector at hand. The data were gathered by means of open-ended questionnaires and interviews in which first year ICT students from Austria and Finland defined their understanding of work-life interaction skills. The wide variety of responses was clustered by subsuming particulars into general categories (see Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, pp. 279–286). In parallel, recruitment staff was interviewed to shed light on their perceptions of the necessity and definition of interaction skills for future ICT employees.

Preliminary findings suggested that there are many similarities in the Finnish and Austrian definitions for work-life interaction skills. Both student groups appeared to be highly aware of the necessity of T-shaped graduates, placing a heavy emphasis on generic skills. However, while Finnish ICT students connected interaction skills strongly with communication, listening, and social skills, Austrian students adhered to more societal values, such as reliability, punctuality, and dedication to interaction skills per se.

Interestingly, and although pointed out by a number of recruitment advertisements and employers, neither student group identified intercultural competence as being a central skill set of work-life interaction skills. However, in view of the interconnectivity of the ICT field, which is increasingly performing on a global stage, it is important for future employees to understand the various demands of interacting in an intercultural setting.

1 University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland
2 University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, Hagenberg, Austria