

# HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY AND SOCIAL POSITIONING IN THE LABOUR MARKET (2018 – 2022)

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## Purpose of Research

This study will explore higher education graduates' employability as a relational and socially mediated process. It will take into account the supply and demand of graduates, and positional competition inherent in graduate labour market. These main objectives are:

- 1: To provide an in-depth investigation of **HE graduates' social positioning in the labour market** by examining the level of a degree (Bachelor's/Master's), institutional setting (research university/university of applied sciences), disciplinary fields, and the location of the institution (Eastern/Western Finland) and their contributions to the relative value of graduate employability.
- 2: To formulate a contextualized, cross-sectional and longitudinal account of how **the positionality of education and employability** delineates employment prospects and graduates' labour market trajectories.
- 3: To provide an elaborated analysis of how **gender, social class and age** contribute to and intersect with graduate employability.

Acknowledgements: The project is funded by Academy of Finland.

## The research consortium team



## Sub-study 1: Analysis of the relative value of education and social selectiveness in graduate employability

Educational positionality entails that individual's relative position in the labour market queue, which is affected by education and other background characteristics, becomes a more important indicator of employability than her/his absolute educational credentials. However, only a few empirical studies have striven to study this topic and develop methods that capture such positionality and its role in mediating social inequalities in large scale samples. Education as a positional good is highly contextual and therefore, we need research that focuses on the particularities of one national system of higher education at a definite time period.

The study uses survey and register-based data-set and quantitative methods.

## Sub-study 2. Contextualized and longitudinal analysis of HE graduates' employability and career trajectories

We know little about the longitudinal processes of employability and the tensions and conflicts that graduates encounter on this path. How do graduates navigate in the competitive labour market? How do they interpret, negotiate and manage employability and labour market trajectories including transitions and mobility? How positionality influences graduates' self-perceptions of employability and their labour market trajectories? What kinds of work identities and related abilities are constructed and negotiated? How do graduates interpret and negotiate social differences (e.g. age, gender, social class) in relation to employability? The study draws on qualitative follow-up interviews and narrative-discursive methods.

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