

Jobs on offer, but are there suitable applicants?

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The availability of manpower has been a topical question for some time now, both nationwide and in Lapland. The situation seems to have emerged quite suddenly – it was not too long ago that the problem was not the availability of labour but rather the high unemployment figures.

Based on the query conducted by the Lapland Chamber of Commerce, labour availability issues were already topical last year, and now we are talking about a labour shortage on a scale that is restricting growth in the mining, manufacturing and tourism industries. This is also a problem for the national economy. Lack of sufficient and suitable labour prevents us from benefitting from the upswing in the economy as much as possible. We cannot content ourselves with thinking that the next recession will take care of the labour shortage.

Rapidly changing labour needs, and how to respond to or anticipate them, present a challenge to educational organisations. Cuts to the education budget have not improved the situation either. Traditionally, the educational path from the identified need for skilled labour to the new employee entering the labour market takes several years at best. Working life and working life requirements are changing at such a rapid pace now that, even with good planning and identification of future needs, there is no guarantee that education will match the demand of working life.

What to do?

There is a lot that can be done. Chambers of Commerce have published educational theses listing different ways to ensure that there will be skilled personnel available for businesses. These include a flexible education system that enables lifelong learning and quick response to changes. In addition to the flexible education system, Finland must also actively attract high-level expertise and professionals from abroad. In Lapland, the population continues to

decline, so we too will need work-related immigration in future to ensure the growth of our businesses.

Local knowledge is worth its weight in gold when planning and implementing education. In Lapland, the role of the University of Applied Sciences is very important in educating new employees. Representatives of regional institutes are best aware of the needs in their respective regions and can therefore respond to the demands of business life. Consequently, the discretionary authority of the areas should be increased along with preparedness to react by, for example, quickly adjusting educational programmes. Systematic foresight research into the future needs of different sectors done in Lapland also provides valuable information based on which education can be focused.

The Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) recently published a report called “Paras Suomi? 31 ehdotusta Suomen vetovoiman lisäämiseksi” that lists 31 suggestions to improve the attraction of Finland. One suggestion was to implement a conversion training course costing each trainee €7,500, which would last 100 days and provide basic skills for a new profession. Regardless of what we might think of this suggestion, we definitely should test and try out new innovative operating models. Now is the best possible time for new ideas and innovations.