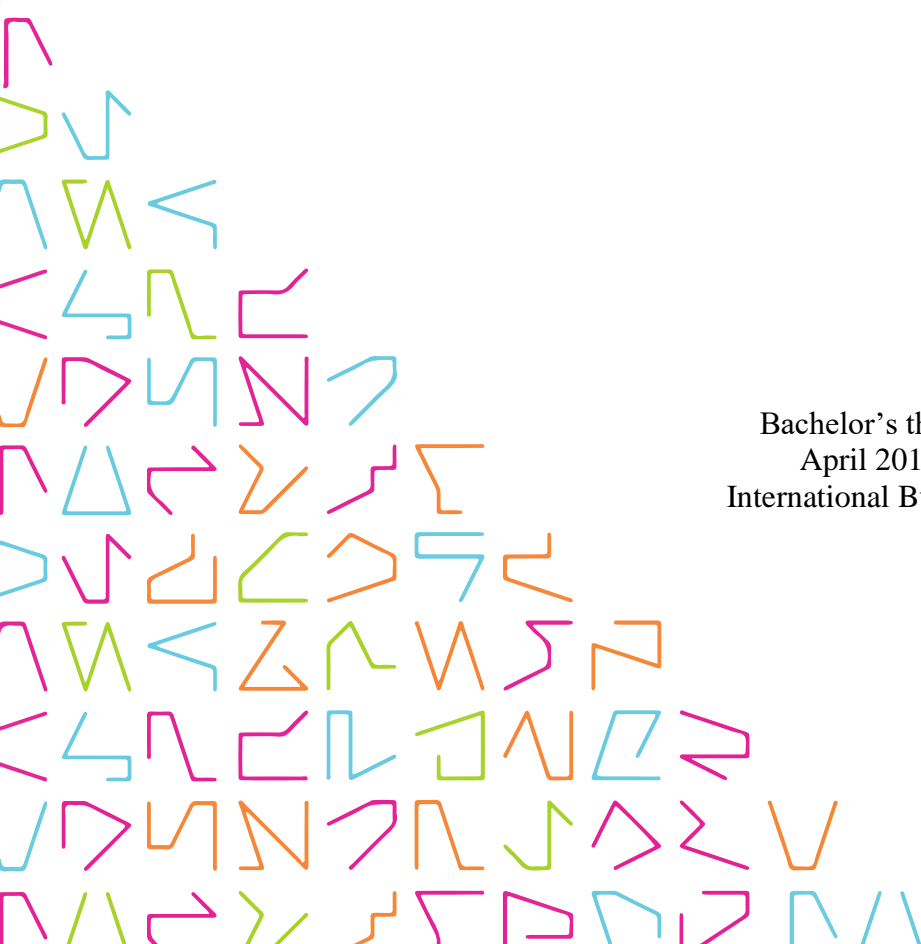


ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT OF INTERNATIONAL DEGREE STUDENTS IN TAMPERE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Alina Viitasalo

Bachelor's thesis
April 2018
International Business



ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Degree Programme in International Business

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Enhancing Employment of International Degree Students in Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor's thesis 57 pages, appendices 13 pages

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This bachelor's thesis was commissioned by Tampere University of Applied Sciences, and the need for it arose from the KILKAS project (Kilpailukykyä ja Kasvua Ulkomaalaisten Ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijoiden Työllistymisen Edistämiseksi/ Competitiveness and Growth in Promoting the Employment of Foreign UAS Students) in which TAMK took part during the years 2016-2018.

The purpose of this study was to find out how TAMK could better support its international degree students find employment. This was done by first finding out how the students perceived the support they were currently receiving and then mapping out what kind of support they hoped for.

The data was collected by conducting an online survey that was sent to 206 international degree students of three different degree programmes at TAMK: Media and Arts, Energy and Environmental Engineering, and International Business. The number of responses was 34. The data was analysed by placing it in different charts, making cross-tabulations and categorizing the open-ended responses.

The surveys main findings were that the international degree students expected a lot more personal support with the job finding process and that they were not satisfied with the amount of Finnish language courses offered at TAMK.

Utilizing mainly the results of the KILKAS project, it is suggested that TAMK improve its alumni network to help students build their networks and create a course where Finnish students could teach the international degree students about the Finnish labour market. It could also be recommendable that TAMK inform its international degree students about the importance of networks and highlight the significance of their own activity. Adding new Finnish language courses and possibly incorporating employability skills as a part of said courses is also recommended. The aforementioned solutions are relatively easy to execute and maintain, and do not burden any department or person specifically. The suggested actions can be useful in influencing different aspects of the international students' studies and therefore contributing to their employment over time.

Key words: international degree students, immigration, international employment

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	6
1.1	Thesis topic	6
1.2	Thesis background	6
1.3	Thesis structure	7
2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	8
2.1	Finnish companies and internationalization	8
2.2	Immigration in Finland	9
2.3	The employment situation in Finland	10
2.4	Labour force participation rate	12
2.5	Baby Boomers and economic dependency	12
2.6	International degree students in Finland	13
2.7	International degree students' employment in Finland.....	14
2.8	International skills and employer expectations.....	15
3	SURVEY	17
3.1	Background information	17
3.2	Survey results.....	20
3.2.1	Demographics	20
3.2.2	Study units.....	22
3.2.3	Practical training	24
3.2.4	Work-life projects	25
3.2.5	Counselling and career planning.....	26
3.2.6	Thesis	27
3.2.7	Alumni activities and networking	28
3.3	Survey results analysis	30
3.4	Survey validity and reliability.....	33
4	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TAMK.....	35
4.1	Networks	35
4.2	Alumni	36
4.3	Peer learning	37
4.4	Language skills	38
5	CONCLUSIONS	40
	REFERENCES.....	42
	APPENDICES	45
	Appendix 1. Survey.....	45
	Appendix 2. Living in Finland	48
	Appendix 3. Finnish learning possibilities	49

Appendix 4. Motivation to learn Finnish	50
Appendix 5. TAMK's role in finding training placement.....	51
Appendix 6. Own role in finding training placement.....	53
Appendix 7. Experience with work-life project	54
Appendix 8. Opinions on counselling	55
Appendix 9. Opinions on thesis writing process	56
Appendix 10. KILKAS model.....	57

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

TAMK Tampereen Ammattikorkeakoulu, in English Tampere University of Applied Sciences

UAS University of Applied Sciences

KILKAS Kilpailukykyä ja Kasvua Ulkomaalaisten Ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijoiden Työllistymisen Edistämiseksi / Competitiveness and Growth in Promoting the Employment of Foreign UAS Students

1 INTRODUCTION

In the first part of the thesis the chosen topic is explained and the research questions are presented to the reader. This is followed by a short introduction of the project from which the thesis got its inspiration from. The thesis structure is then briefly described.

1.1 Thesis topic

This thesis deals with the topic of international degree students' employment in Finland. International students have difficulties finding employment in Finland: less than half of the international degree students who graduated in the year 2011 were employed the following year (CIMO 2014). The aim of this thesis is to find out how Tampere University of Applied Sciences currently supports the employability of its international students, how the students perceive the support, and to find out and identify if there is something that could be done better in order to ensure better support and higher employment of international degree students at TAMK.

The main research question is: "How could TAMK better support the employment of its foreign degree students?" The supporting questions are: "What are the key problems with international degree students' employability in Finland?" and "How international students currently perceive TAMK's role in their employability process and what kind of support they hope for?".

1.2 Thesis background

This thesis is commissioned by Tampere University of Applied Sciences and the need for it arose from the KILKAS -project that TAMK is a part of. KILKAS stands for Kilpailukykyä ja Kasvua Ulkomaalaisten Ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijoiden Työllistymisen Edistämiseksi, in English: Competitiveness and Growth in Promoting the Employment of Foreign UAS Students. The KILKAS -project is a two-year collaborative effort of five Universities of Applied Sciences: South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Turku University of Applied Sciences, and Tampere University of Applied

Sciences. South-Eastern University of Applied Sciences acts as a coordinator for the project. The goal of the project is to create a working model that would support the employment of international degree students in Finland. KILKAS project comes to an end in the spring of 2018. (Kaari & Ollanketo 2018)

The representatives of the KILKAS-project at TAMK, Janne Hopeela and Marita Tuomala, provided the thesis writer with some materials from the project which at the time was ongoing. This research utilizes several aspects found and reported in the KILKAS project, but instead of utilizing the information on a general level, it is applied to suit the needs of the university of applied sciences in question, TAMK.

1.3 Thesis structure

This thesis begins with a description of the following topics: Finnish companies and their internationalization, the employment situation in Finland, as well as the situation regarding immigration and the international degree students in Finland. The employment of international degree students is then discussed on a general level. This is followed by an examination of employer expectations and what skills are expected of international students. Topics such as baby boomers, economic dependency and labour force participation rate are also discussed. The theoretical framework utilizes some expert books, web sources and several statistics to provide the reader with understanding of the topic.

The next chapter discusses the survey conducted for this research. The process of creating the survey and decisions related to the questions and the distribution of the survey are explained in detail. Survey results are then presented and analysed with the help of some cross tabulations. This is followed by an analysis of the validity and reliability of the survey.

In the following chapter recommendations are made on what practical matters TAMK could perform in order to better help its international students to find employment in Finland. The main research question is answered in this part. In the last chapter, the final conclusions are made.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter offers information on the Finnish employment situation, labour market and its distinctive attributes, such as baby boomers and economic dependency. These topics are covered in order to provide a clear understanding of the situation of immigrants, and more specifically of the international degree students in Finland and the difficulties they face when trying to find employment.

2.1 Finnish companies and internationalization

According to the Federation of Finnish Enterprises (2018), Pk-yrity sbarometri, 22% of small and medium sized enterprises in Finland have international business activities. In addition to the import of goods and services, international travels and imports necessary to exports are also considered, over 8% of Finnish jobs rely on international trade. Companies that trade solely goods compose 30% of the jobs and over 50% of the turnover in Finland. (Vuori 2017)

Not only do Finnish companies rely heavily on foreign markets, the number of foreign entities operating in Finland has also increased in recent years. As shown in Figure 1, the share of foreign affiliates in Finland's turnover was approximately 8% higher in the year 2016 than it was in the year 2004. The share of employees employed by foreign enterprises operating in Finland rose approximately 5% between the years 2004 and 2016. (Statistics Finland 2017)

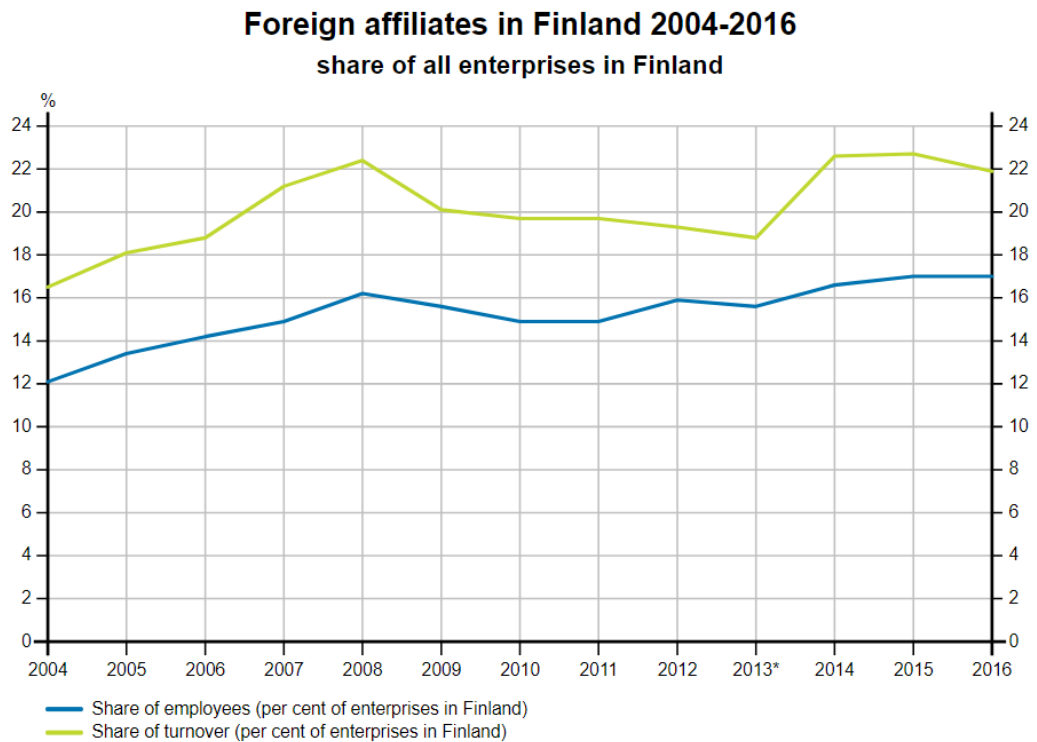


FIGURE 1. Foreign affiliates in Finland. (Statistics Finland 2017)

A survey conducted by ManpowerGroup (2017) showed that in 2016, out of 42 000 employers, 37% reported having difficulties finding employees to fill their vacancies. The main reasons were not having enough or any applicants, the lack of applicants' skills and the lack of work experience of the applicants.

2.2 Immigration in Finland

At the end of 2016, out of those living in Finland, 354 000 or 6.4% had some other language than Finnish, Swedish or any of the Saami languages as their native tongue (Statistics Finland 2017). The focus of this thesis is on the Pirkanmaa region where 4,5% of the inhabitants were foreign-language speakers. Since some immigrants have gotten the Finnish nationality, the share of different languages has been chosen to measure the number of immigrants instead of different nationalities. Out of all the foreign language speakers in Finland, 6,5% live in the Pirkanmaa region. At the end of year 2016, 7.1% of those living in Tampere spoke some other language than Finnish as their native language. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland)

In January of 2018 the Finnish Ministry of the Interior published its Migration Policy Programme that aims to advance employment-based immigration in Finland. The publication states that “Finland needs migrants to address the labour shortage in different sectors, to improve the weakening of the dependency ratio caused by ageing of the population, and to attract more international talent and entrepreneurs to Finland.” The purpose of the programme is to help create solutions for attracting more labour migration and improving integration. It also aims to, on a larger scale, improve the internationalization of the economy and the dependency ratio. (Ministry of the Interior 2018)

2.3 The employment situation in Finland

According to Statistic Finland (2018), the unemployment rate in Finland was 8.4% in December 2017. In December of 2016 the rate was 7.9%. Figure 2 shows the change in unemployment rate in the last 10 years. According to the latest figures, the unemployment rate is currently decreasing slightly.



FIGURE 2. Unemployment rate and trend of unemployment rate 2007/12–2017/12, persons aged 15–74 (Statistics Finland 2017)

The ManpowerGroup’s Employment Outlook Survey (2018) shows that Finnish companies have extremely strong intentions to hire new employees in the second quarter of 2018. According to the survey, 22% of the employers expected an increase in recruitment, 6% expected a decrease and 72% predicted that there would not be any

change in the recruitment levels. The survey data was then adapted to concede with seasonal variation. This results in a Net Employment Outlook of 10%. The figure was 8% for the last quarter of 2017, and 4% in the three earlier quarters of 2017. This shows an increase in the employers staffing expectations. Three fields with the best employment expectations were finance, insurance, real-estate and business services, manufacturing, and construction. Large- and medium-sized companies are the ones with highest employing expectations, former expecting a 22% increase and the latter expecting a 23% increase in the Employment Outlook figures. (ManpowerGroup 2018)

The employment rate of people of foreign background is less than of those with Finnish background, as shown in Figure 3. The depicted rates are based on research conducted by the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare and Statistics Finland in the year 2014. The noticeable difference in employment rates of women with Finnish background compared to women of foreign background is explained mainly by the fact that higher percentage of the latter start having children early on and remain at home caring for them. (Statistics Finland 2015)

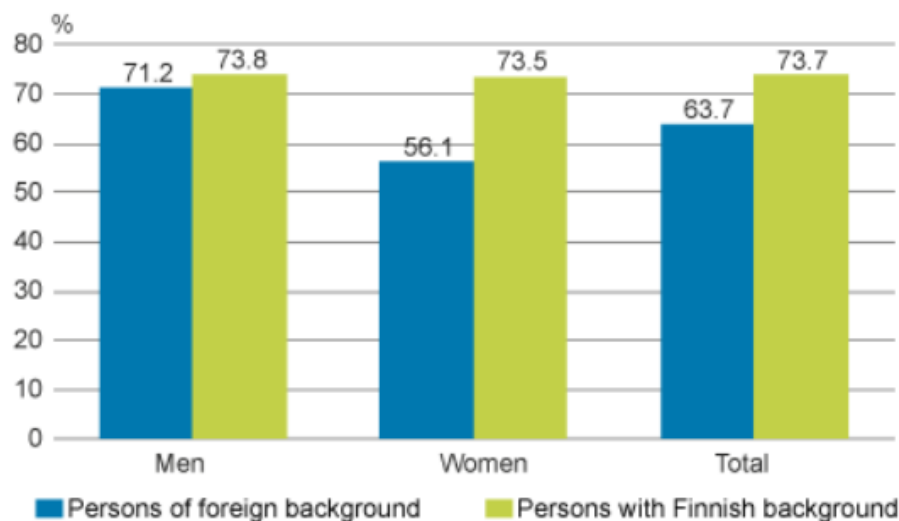


FIGURE 3. Employment rate (%) by gender and background, population aged 20 to 64 in Finland 2014. (Statistics Finland)

The employment rate is higher the longer the person of foreign background has lived in Finland. For example, employment rate of those who have lived in Finland less than 5 years is only 56%, whereas for those having lived in Finland more than 10 years the percentage is 69, relatively close to the employment rate of people with Finnish background. The time spent in Finland especially had an influence on the employment of

women: women who had lived in Finland less than five years had an employment rate of 40% yet after 10 or more years the rate was 67%.

2.4 Labour force participation rate

When examining the demographic changes in a labour market, examining two different rates is beneficial: the employment rate and the labour force participation rate (LFPR). LFPR is used to indicate how much of the working-age population is employed or looking for employment. LFPR can be calculated for any age group. Between the years 1989 and 2015, the LPFR of people from 55 to 64 years has risen drastically. The LPFR of those from 65 to 74 years has been subject to some increase as well. The labour force participation rate of young adults, aged 25 to 34 years old, has decreased since the early 2000s. In 2016, the Bank of Finland predicted that during the following five years, the structure of the Finnish population would decrease the labour force participation rate slightly, yet the employment rate could still be on the rise. The number of people who are working could still decrease, since the employment rate is calculated of those aged 15 to 64 years. (Obstbaum 2016)

2.5 Baby Boomers and economic dependency

A distinct attribute of the Finnish labour market is the influence of the baby boomers. Karisto (2008) explains how the birth rate in Finland reached its peak in August 1945, approximately 10 months after the war against the Soviet Union had ended. The birth rate had not been as high before, nor has it been as high since. This resulted in the largest age group in Finland. Karisto also mentions how Finland differs from other post-war countries with the fact that its missing the generation of 'new baby boomers'. This means the birth rate did not see a corresponding increase in the years following the large generation. This causes difficulties in the labour markets, since the number of people retiring exceeds the number of those entering the workforce. The declining birth rate results in the economic dependency ratio rising. (Karisto 2008)

According to Statistics Finland (2018), the economic dependency ratio was 142 in 2016. Economic dependency ratio compares how many of those aged 18 to 64 are employed

and how many of them are not in the workforce. The latter group does not only include those who are unemployed and looking for a job, but also the ‘inactive population’. For example, persons aged 0-14 years, students, pensioners are a part of the inactive population. In 2016, 2 276 000 people were employed and 3 228 000 people were a part of the inactive population. The ratio is calculated by comparing how many people are a part of the inactive part of population compared to 100 of those employed. The economic dependency ratio is not only influenced by the aging of the population and therefore the increase of pensioners, but also the economic and employment situation of the year in question. Figure 4 shows the development of the economic dependency ratio in Finland from year 1990 to year 2016. The economic dependency ratio was at its lowest in the year 1993, during the recession. (Statistics Finland 2018)

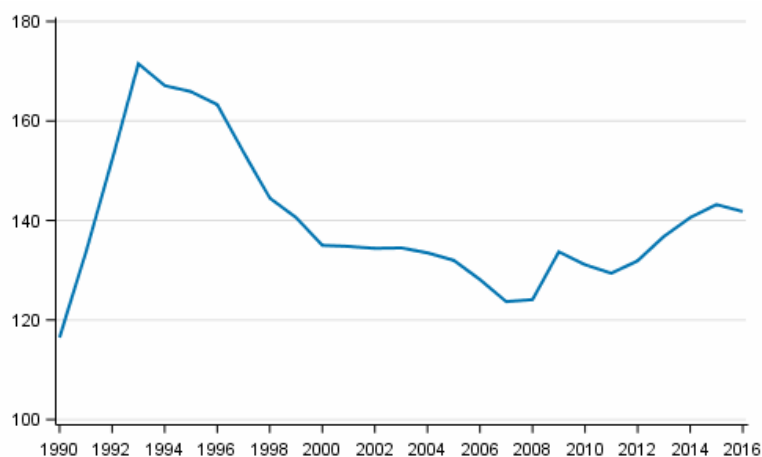


FIGURE 4. Economic dependency ratio in 1990 to 2016. (Statistics Finland 2018)

2.6 International degree students in Finland

The number of international degree students in Finnish higher education institutes has grown during the 2000s. According to the Vipunen database (2018) the number of international students in all Finnish universities of applied sciences in the year 2001 was 2780, whereas in the year 2016 the number was 9991. Thus, the number of international students has increased significantly. In 2016 the most international degree students come to Finland from: Russia, Vietnam, China, Nepal and India (Finnish National Agency for Education). Continents with most mobility were therefore Europe and Asia. None of the aforementioned countries are among the most popular destinations of Finnish students studying abroad. When comparing to the year 2005, the number of students from Asia

has increased in both traditional universities and in UAS's. In 2015, 76% of international degree students were from outside EU/EEA countries. For UAS students the figure was 80% and in traditional universities 73%. In the spring of 2015, there were approximately 11 000 foreign applicants for Finnish higher education institutes. In 2017, tuition fees were applied throughout Finland for those students coming from outside EU/EEA countries. In the spring of 2017, there were approximately 6 500 applicants from countries outside the EU or the EEA. 1 600 applicants were from inside the EU or EEA countries, making the combined number of foreign applicants 8 100, significantly less than in the year 2015. (Syrjänen 2017)

When the international degree students are categorized by their chosen field of study in both traditional universities and universities of applied sciences, two fields stood out: Technology, communication and transport as well as social sciences, business and administration. Combined these two fields held approximately 60% of all international degree students studying in Finland in the year 2015. In 2015, 46% of foreign degree students were studying for a Bachelor's degree in a university of applied sciences. (CIMO 2016)

2.7 International degree students' employment in Finland

According to CIMO (2014) the type of the higher education institute where the international student graduates from has some influence over their future employment. Those graduating from a university of applied sciences are employed more often than those graduating with a master's degree from traditional universities. Traditional universities in Finland rarely offer fully English taught programmes in the Bachelor level. The duration of a Bachelor's Degree in a UAS is sometimes twice as long as the duration of a master's degree from a university, therefore the students have more time to integrate into the society. Universities of applied sciences also require practical training as a part of the degree. Different nationalities and different fields of study have an impact on the employment numbers as well. (CIMO 2014)

According to the Finnish National Agency for Education (2015), out of those who completed a Bachelor's degree in a university of applied sciences in 2014, 43.1% were employed in Finland in the year 2015. Out of the 1353 graduates, 26.8% were not in

Finland the year following their graduation. In the year 2012, out of those who graduated in 2011, 45.5% were employed in Finland (CIMO 2014), thus the employment rate has fallen from the year 2011 to the year 2014. Out of those who graduated in 2009, one third had left Finland five years later in 2014 (CIMO 2016).

Figures from 2012 show that out of those who graduated in 2011, the highest percentage (68%) of employed graduates were from the social services and from the health and sports field of education. The second highest percentage (50%) of employed graduates was of those in the field of tourism, catering and domestic services. Natural sciences held the third place with 48.6%. 41.5% of those who graduated with a degree in social sciences and business and administration were employed. (CIMO 2014)

2.8 International skills and employer expectations

A publication by CIMO and Demos Helsinki (2013) discusses international skills and how they are perceived amongst Finnish employers. International skills are first defined as skills regarding mobility and language, but also for example interaction with different groups. The publication then points out how difficult it is to define internationality in a modern society: in the 1990s internationality might have meant exchange studies abroad or the knowledge of a foreign language, but today the concept is perceived to wider and more difficult to understand. The survey that was conducted in 2012 as a part of the study, collected information on how students and employers perceived internationality and international skills. The results showed that international skills were not among the most important qualities in applicants - only 36.5% of employers considered international skills when making recruitment decisions. 22.3% of employers told that international skills were irrelevant for the recruitment decision. Naturally, those employers that had international projects or collaborations, valued international skills higher. A difference in perspectives arose from the study as well: students perceive the importance of international skills very differently than employers. 61.2% of students estimated said skills would help them find a job. The results varied by education level: those studying in higher education institutes thought international skills were more relevant for their employment than those studying in vocational schools.

An article by Lantta, E. (2017) explains what kinds of expectations employers have for both Finnish and international students when they enter the workforce. It discusses the results of a European Social Fund -project at Lahti University of Applied Sciences that surveyed employers about their recruitment criteria. In the project employers were asked what their expectations were when employing graduates. The project found that the qualities expected from graduates were: versatility, multidisciplinary, entrepreneur-like state of mind, language skills and programming skills. There was an expectation that the higher education graduates would create a new kind of working life. Among the topics in the survey one was the recruitment of an intern. The results showed that when recruiting an intern, employers felt the most important matter was the content of the intern's studies. Other important factors were previous work experience (even if not from the right line of work), success in studies and language skills. When choosing who to interview for a job, the importance of the applicant's own activeness and a good CV were emphasized. Other positive matters were said to be for example video CV's, social media presence, interest and knowledge about the field, attitude, leisure activities, motivation and the study phase. From the survey a wish arose: the employers hoped that higher education institutes would contact them and offer interns suitable for their specific needs.

According to Lantta, in the interview situation itself motivation, personality and good communication skills were appreciated. When asked if they would recruit an international student as a trainee, 75% of the employers answered that they would. The requirements for international students were the same as those for Finnish students; suitable personality, good English language skills, motivation, programming skills, communication skills and suitability for the job. When asked whether they could hire an international student after graduation, 66% of the employers answered that they could or there was a possibility that they could. The same qualities were also required in an actual recruitment situation as in the process of choosing an intern. A previous internship at the company in question was also mentioned as a benefit. International projects were mentioned to be good employment opportunities for international students. (Lantta 2017)

3 SURVEY

This chapter discusses how the research data was collected and why the specific method was chosen. The process of creating the survey, choosing the topics and selecting the question types is explained in full. All the collected survey data is presented and discussed and presented in charts. After this, cross tabulations are made to help further analyse the survey answer data. In the end of this chapter the validity and reliability of the survey are reviewed as well.

3.1 Background information

A few methods of data collection were considered for the research, but an online survey (Appendix 1) was chosen due to the extent of the topics to be asked about, and the fact that the international degree students were spread amongst three different degree programmes and two different campuses. Online surveys are time efficient, they enable quick and easy presentation of the collected data, and they are low on cost. Bruce, Phillips & Phillips (2013) discuss how the medium of the questionnaire should be chosen to enable an easy response process for the respondents. In the case of this study, the online survey was not only a sensible choice for the thesis writer, but also easily accessible for the degree students who might have very different schedules. Especially the third and fourth year degree students might not even spend their time on campus very often, since they might for example have practical training, be in the process of writing their thesis, or even have part- or full-time jobs. Therefore, a questionnaire they could fill whenever they had free time, was deemed suitable.

As mentioned, the survey was conducted as a browser based online questionnaire. More specifically, the free online survey tool, Google Forms was chosen. The survey tool does not limit the amount of questions, and adjusts the basic functions of the survey (such as 'next page' button) to the user's browser language. Although the survey questions were given in English, some survey tools use the language of the creator for the respondents as well. Using Google Forms ensured that the survey options were understandable for the respondents.

The survey was sent out to the second, third and fourth year international degree students of the following degree programmes at TAMK: International Business, Energy and Environmental Engineering, and Media and Arts. First year students were left out of the sample since they do not have experience on a several topics discussed in the survey, including practical training and thesis writing. The e-mail addresses of the international students were obtained by the study counsellor at TAMK, Janne Hopeela. The survey invitation was sent out by e-mail to 206 international degree students on December 7th, 2017. This resulted in 27 answers. A second invitation was sent out a couple of weeks later, on December 18th, to encourage more students to fill out the survey. The final number of responses was 34, making the response rate 16.5%. The response rate was hoped to be higher, but the low level of enthusiasm was not a complete surprise. One factor here could be that the survey was sent out quite close to the Christmas holiday, and therefore the students might already have been on vacation and not reading their school e-mail, nor be willing to spend time with matters relating to their studies.

The survey invitation e-mail explained the KILKAS-project briefly, informed the receivers that the data was collected for a thesis and that amongst the respondents, two movie tickets would be raffled. The e-mail receivers were also informed the estimated time it would take to fill out the survey, so that they would not be taken aback by the several pages in the survey.

The survey questions were divided into the following sections: Background information, study units, practical training, work-life projects, counselling and career planning, thesis, and alumni activities and networking. The topics and their order were decided on based on the model created during the KILKAS-project (Appendix 10). The aforementioned topics are all seen to have some sort of influence in the employment process of the international degree students. For example, at least in the International Business degree programme, the thesis writing process is often closely linked with the practical training placement (Tuomala 2018). The practical training placement in turn not only gives the students much required job experience in their own field, but sometimes the students end up being employed by the companies as well.

When planning the survey questions, the aim of the research was kept closely in mind: to find out how the international students perceive the current situation at TAMK and how they would improve for example counselling and what kind of support they hope and

expect. To achieve these two goals, measuring the current state of things was done mainly with close-ended questions with ready-given options. All said questions were set as mandatory in the survey tool, meaning the respondent could not proceed to the next page without answering them.

As mentioned, the data that was collected with the survey had different uses and therefore different characteristics. As a result, two different types of research methods were used: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research aims at being as comprehensive as possible and considering the complexity of issues (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2003, 152). Quantitative research however deals with numbers, and the survey questions provide numerical options for the respondent to choose from (SurveyMethods 2017). Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are often difficult to completely separate from each other and are often used to complement each other (Hirsjärvi et al. 2003, 125). Both methods were indeed used in the survey in question, to ensure a versatile depiction of the current state of things but also of the students' hopes.

A frequently utilized question type was the Likert scale. It is a rating system that enabled finding out the respondent's attitudes and opinions, usually by presenting a statement and asking how strongly the respondents agree or disagree with said statement. Likert scale most commonly utilizes three, five or seven-point scales. Three-point scales sometimes suffer from the lack of enough variation with options. With seven-point scale respondents tend to sometimes avoid choosing the most extreme options which might skew the results. Therefore, a five-point scale was chosen for the survey in question. Sometimes an even number of answer options is given, for example four or five, and the respondents are then somewhat forced to choose an option that represent either one end or the other of the statement. This method was not considered to bring value in the case of this research. (Jamieson 2013)

Open ended questions were utilized when asking the students about their hopes and development ideas. Open-ended questions were purposefully used sparsely to enable quick and efficient analysis of the survey data, since the analysis of such qualitative data can in some cases be difficult and tedious (SurveyMethods 2017). Optional, open-ended questions were however used to ask the respondents to specify their answers in several different parts. This was to ensure that the respondents were not too restricted in the survey, and since the topic of this thesis is complex and different students have different

experiences, a space for expressing their thoughts was seen as worth the effort of analysing the qualitative data.

3.2 Survey results

The survey tool utilized to conduct this questionnaire, Google Forms, offers results automatically in charts suitable for the question type. These charts were utilized in the explanation of several survey questions and their results. However, since the survey tool allowed the data to be downloaded from the page, some question data was manually entered into Microsoft Excel by the thesis author, and charts were created there. Not all the questions in the survey are discussed with a chart, but all questions are explained in the next parts of the thesis.

All the figures in part 3.3 were made by the author by cross-tabulation of the survey data. In said part some survey data is divided by for example the degree programme of the respondents, and the found differences are discussed. The answers to open-ended questions were handled in Microsoft Excel as well, and the most frequently mentioned topics were brought up in the text. All the open-ended answers can be found in appendices 2-9.

3.2.1 Demographics

When respondents are not asked to give their name in the survey, their responses are more likely to be truthful and unbiased (Phillips et al. 2013). Therefore, the international degree students were not asked to give any information that could be used to identify them. Their country of origin was asked, but due to the rarity of some nationalities amongst the international students, it was the only close-ended question where an answer was not mandatory. As mentioned, the respondents were given the option to take part in the lottery at the end which meant giving their e-mail address. The e-mail addresses were separated from the results, and were only ever handled by the thesis writer.

Out of the 34 respondents in the survey, 50% were students of the International Business degree programme. 35.5% of the respondents studied in the Energy and Environmental Engineering degree programme, and 14.7% in the Media and Arts degree programme. Top 3 countries of origin were Vietnam (29.4%), Russia (14.7%) and Nepal (8.8%).

In the next question respondents were asked the starting year of their studies. Exactly half of the respondents had started their studies in the year 2016 and were second year students at the time of the survey (Figure 5). Second year students were the second highest group to answer the survey, and third year students the third highest group. Although the survey was not intentionally sent out to first year students, 2,95% of the respondents chose year 2017 as their starting year. The year 2017 was included in the options to ensure that if somehow first year students ended up filling the survey, it could be spotted. However, it is also possible that the selection is made by a transfer student, since their official starting year at TAMK is the year they transferred, not the year they started their studies at the previous university of applied sciences. Option 2013 was also chosen by 2,95%.

Please select the starting year of your studies

34 responses

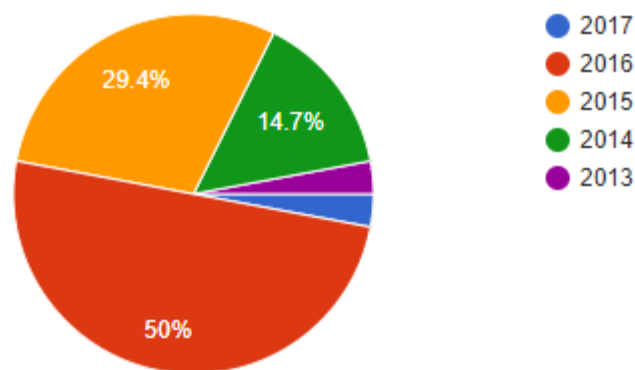


FIGURE 5. Starting year of studies

The respondents were then asked how many years they had lived in Finland. 58.8% of the respondents had lived in Finland for one or two years at the time of filling out the survey. 26,5% had lived in Finland for three to four years at the time of the survey and 8,8% for five to six years. The two least chosen options were ‘nine to ten years’ and ‘more than ten years’, both of which were selected by 2,95% of the respondents.

52.9% of the respondents answered that they intend to live in Finland after graduation whereas 8.8% already knew that they do not intend to live in Finland. The rest of the respondents gave the answer ‘maybe’. The respondents were given the option to specify their answers, and 61.8% did give some explanation. All the respondents who explained their ‘maybe’ answer, told that it depended on whether or not they would find employment.

3.2.2 Study units

The “Study units” section started with the following question: “How well do your studies support your future employment in Finland?” A scale of 1 to 5 was given as an option, 1 being “not at all” and 5 being “very well”. Figure 6 shows how responses were divided.

How well do your studies support your future employment in Finland?

34 responses

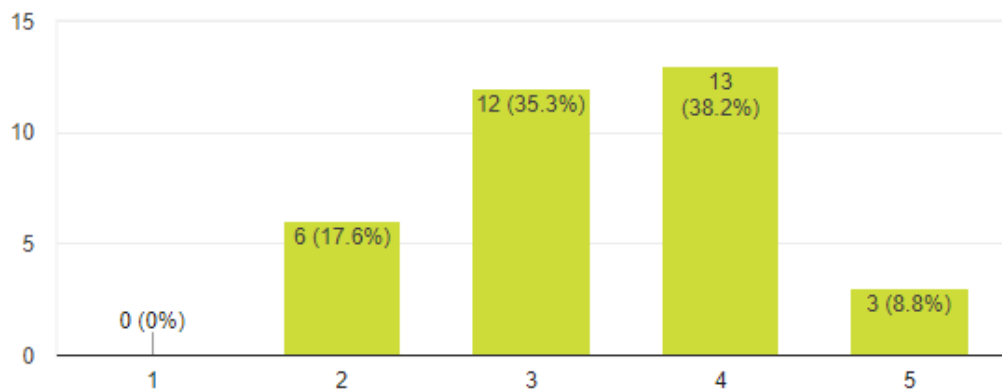


FIGURE 6. How studies support future employment

No respondents gave the answer “1 - Not at all”, whereas majority of the respondents chose option four, the second highest rating. This seems to indicate that at least the general content of the studies is considered beneficial for when entering the working life. The option that got the second most selections was number three, the most neutral option. The amount of these indecisive answers could be due to the fact that half of the respondents were second year students, who might not have put their skills to the test in actual working

life yet. Only 8,8% of the respondents saw that their studies support their future employment very well.

A question concerning the studying of Finnish language was also presented here. The respondents were asked with a simple yes/no question if they thought there are enough possibilities for learning Finnish at TAMK. Here, 61.8% of the respondents answered 'no'. This is a noticeable majority. When asked to explain their selection, most of the respondents told that the Finnish language courses taught at TAMK are not on a high enough level and do not prepare the students for Finnish working life.

In the next question, the respondents were asked how motivated they were to learn Finnish on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being 'not at all motivated' and 5 'very motivated'. Figure 7 shows the percentages of each answer choice. 50% of the respondents chose either option four or five, whereas only 20,6% chose options one or two. Option 3 was selected by 29,4% of the respondents.

How motivated are you to learn Finnish?

34 responses

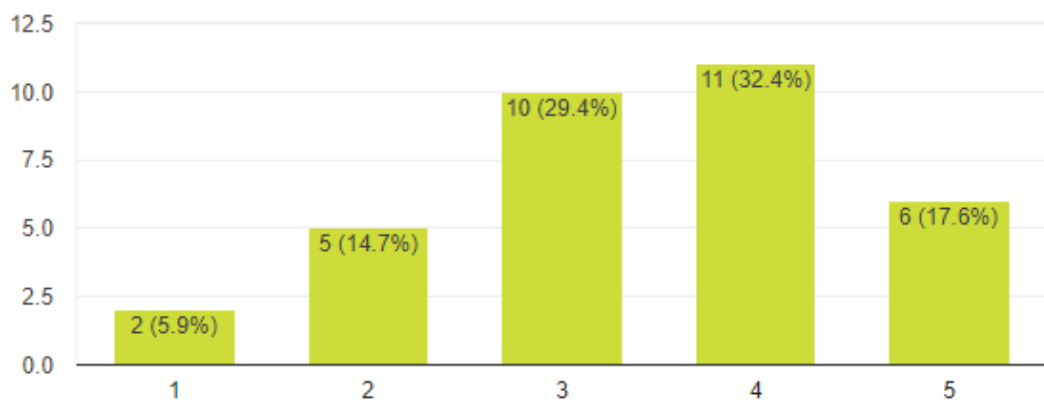


FIGURE 7. Motivation to learn Finnish

When comparing these figures with those having to do with language learning possibilities at TAMK, it is clear that a great number of respondents were motivated to learn Finnish, yet a majority of them felt there were not enough possibilities for learning the language at TAMK. The respondents were given a choice to explain their response to the question and for example the following explanations were given: having to learn it by themselves, not planning on staying in Finland after graduation and the language being

difficult to learn. High motivation was justified by these matters: wanting to qualify for more jobs, being able to communicate with friends better, and to better integrate into the society.

3.2.3 Practical training

In this section of the survey, the students were asked about their experience concerning practical training. The section started with a simple Likert scale question: “How easy is it to find practical training placement?” The answer options were given on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being ‘very difficult’ and 5 being ‘very easy’. As Figure 8 depicts, almost half of the respondents chose option number 3, which could arguably be because 50% of them were second year students and had therefore not necessarily applied for an internship yet. Options one and two were chosen by 23.5% and options four and five were both chosen by 2,9% of the respondents. Therefore, very few of the respondents considered the process of finding practical training placement to be easy.

How easy is it to find a practical training placement in Finland?

34 responses

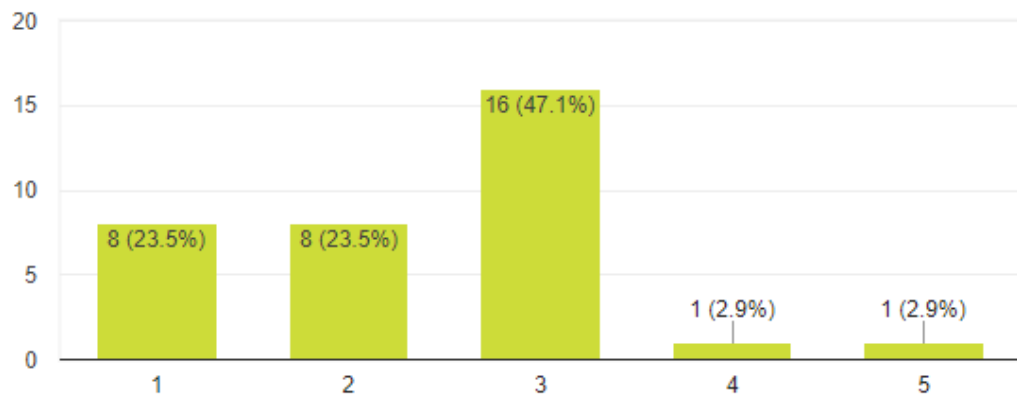


FIGURE 8. Easiness of finding a practical training placement

The students were also asked to continue the following sentence “TAMK could help me find a practical training placement by...” A few topics occurred frequently in the answers. The students hoped for: A place where job openings could be browsed easily and more information on companies that have hired foreigners in the past, and that do not require Finnish working proficiency. Interestingly enough, at least the International Business degree programme does maintain a list of companies where its students have been in practical training, and it is available for all in the school’s intranet. It also surfaced that

TAMK's own job advertisements are only in Finnish, even though maybe there would be a possibility for TAMK to hire international students as well as Finnish ones. More co-operation with companies was mentioned several times, one suggestion was to organize an event where students could meet representatives of companies looking to hire an intern. Such an event was arranged in the early 2017 as a part of the KILKAS -project. The recruitment fair, called Uratori, was specifically for those companies who had previously had international students as interns. Both International Business and Energy and Environmental Engineering degree programmes took part in the event. One student also suggested that TAMK pay a salary for those students who cannot find a paid internship. TAMK does indeed pay a grant for those international students not applicable for the KELA student benefit to help them manage during their practical training.

The respondents were then asked to continue another sentence as well: "I could improve my chances of finding a placement by...". The most frequent answer here was "learning Finnish" as well as improving language skills in general. Being more active with studies, voluntary work and the whole job searching process were also offered as solutions. One respondent suggested that living in the Helsinki region would improve their chances of finding practical training placement. Some respondents called for support from TAMK in this matter as well, suggesting the school could recommend companies suitable for applying for internships. It is clear the international degree students expect a lot of support from the school when looking for a practical training placement, and they expect TAMK to be proactive towards companies as well. This is most likely influenced by the fact that the international students might not be very familiar with the field of Finnish businesses.

3.2.4 Work-life projects

This part of the survey asked the international students about their experiences with work life projects during their studies. The term "work life project" was explained to them as follows: "...work-life projects mean projects that are done with real companies and/or clients." The students were asked how frequently they have taken part in work-life projects, the answer options were presented on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'not at all frequently' and 5 being 'very frequently'. In the results, 44.1% of the respondents chose option 3. Based on the amount of unsure answers, the term "work-life project" might have been foreign to the respondents, even though it was explained in the survey. Options 1, 2

and 4 were all chosen by 14.7% of the respondents, and option 5 was chosen by 11,8% of them.

The optional follow-up question here enquired how the students' experiences had been when taking part in said projects. This was an open-ended question. Most told their experience had been good, and one respondent especially recommended Demola projects. Some students reported negative experiences with work-life projects in general: the project had been poorly organized, the student had felt their input was not really needed, it had been difficult to find an interesting project that was not in Finnish, and not being considered as a potential employee by the company involved were among the reported issues.

The students were asked whether or not there would have been a possibility for a summer job in the company with whom the work-life project was done. Only 14.7% answered 'yes', 41.2% said 'no' and the rest answered 'maybe'.

3.2.5 Counselling and career planning

This part of the survey dealt with topics having to do with counselling and career planning, and in the first question the respondents were asked to choose which topics they had received sufficient information on during their studies (Figure 9). The options that they were given were the following: Finding a job in Finland, how to start a company, Study options after completing bachelor's degree, how to recognise my key competences and skills, and I have not received sufficient information on any of these topics. The respondents could choose an unlimited amount of options. The options got relatively even amount of selections, one of those being the option 'I have not received sufficient information on any of these topics'. The least chosen option here was 'how to start a company'. The options with most selections (38,2%) was 'how to recognize my key competences and skills'.

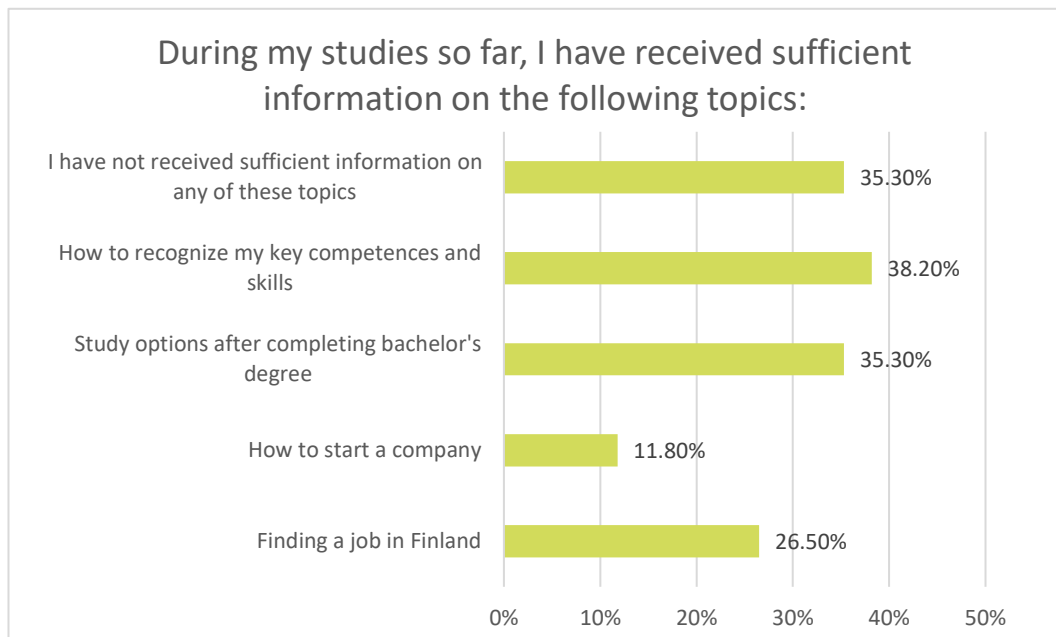


FIGURE 9. Information received during studies

The students were then given the option to answer the following open-ended question: “How would you improve the counselling at TAMK (study counselling, career counselling or other, please specify)?” The reoccurring theme in the answers (Appendix 8) was that the students hoped for the counselling to be more frequent as well as more extensive. For example, the following suggestions were given: there should be less students per one counsellor, in order to gain concrete examples there should be opportunities to learn from the alumni about their work, and international students should be helped to find employment after graduation.

3.2.6 Thesis

The respondents were asked about their opinion on the importance of the thesis writing process for their future employment. As shown in Figure 10, the responses were relatively scattered here. The answer was asked on scale from 1 ‘not at all important’ to 5 ‘very important’.

In your opinion, how important is the thesis writing process for your future employment?

34 responses

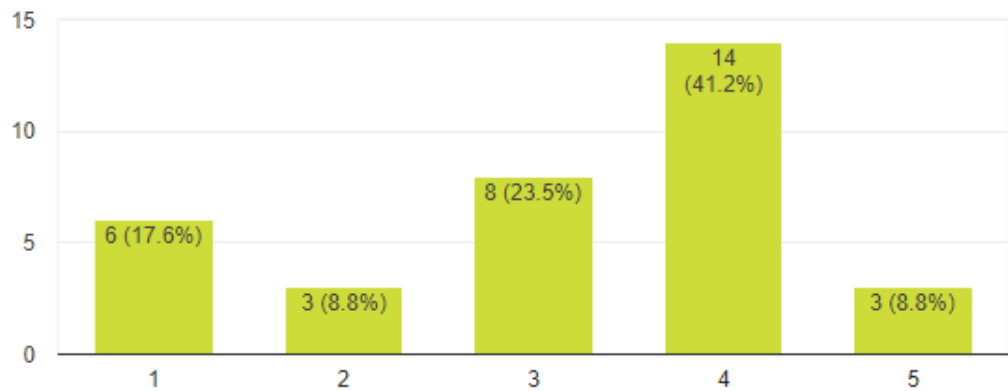


FIGURE 10. Importance of thesis writing process for future employment

If options 4 and 5 are calculated together, 50% of the respondents consider the thesis writing process to be important or very important for their future employment, yet when selections for options one and two are calculated together, 26.4% of respondents felt the thesis writing process was not important for their employment.

The students were then asked with an open-ended question, how would they improve the thesis writing process. Not all of the respondents had experience with the thesis writing yet, but those who did gave the following remarks: the preparatory course should not be online but a traditional course, the approach should be allowed to be more theoretical, and students should be allowed to start the thesis writing earlier in their studies. One Media and Arts student felt the thesis is not relevant for media career paths, and described the thesis as a formality only meant to ensure the students can follow orders.

3.2.7 Alumni activities and networking

Next part of the survey aimed at finding out how familiar the international degree students are with TAMK alumni activities. Response options were from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'not at all familiar' and 5 being 'very familiar'. As Figure 11 shows, the alumni activities are rather unknown among the students. Almost half of the respondents answered they were not at all familiar with TAMK alumni activities. None of the respondents chose option 'very familiar' TAMK alumni network is indeed a rather new collaboration, for example

International Business degree programme arranged its first alumni meeting only in the year 2017, and Energy and Environmental Engineering degree programme the year before that. (Tuomala 2018). This explains why the students are not familiar with the activities.

How familiar are you with TAMK alumni activities?

34 responses

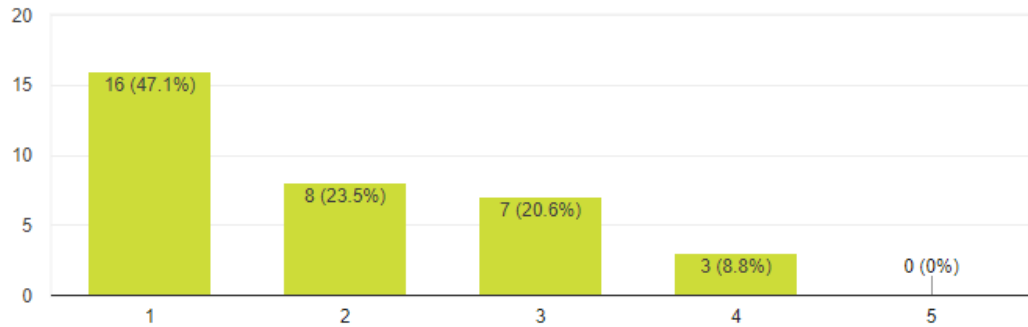


FIGURE 11. Familiarity with alumni activities

The follow-up question asked if the student felt that taking part in alumni activities would help them find work in Finland. As Figure 12 shows, 67.7% of the respondents answered ‘maybe’ or ‘yes’. 32.3% gave either ‘no’ or ‘I do not know’ answers. This could be considered surprising since the previous question had shown how few of the degree students were at least somewhat familiar with TAMK alumni activities. This implies the students perceive the general concept of an alumni network positively, and that in their view, such network could in theory help them with their employment.

Do you think taking part in alumni activities could help you find work in Finland?

34 responses

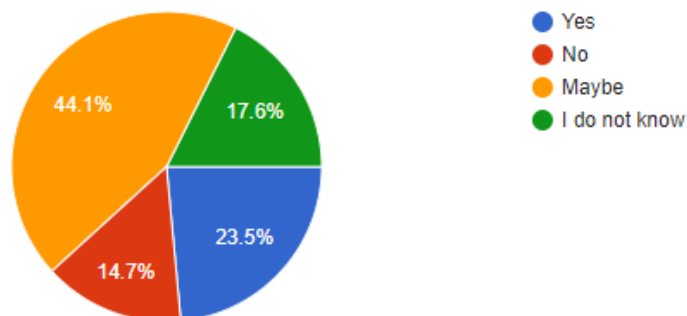


FIGURE 12. Alumni activities influence on employment

The respondents were then asked to choose all the ways of networking they had taken part in. Several selections could be made and the ready-given options were the following: classroom projects, employment fairs, company visits, networking in social media, being mentored, and other. Figure 13 shows the percentages of each option. Quite surprisingly, even classroom projects were only selected by approximately two thirds of the respondents. An explanation might be that the students do not consider normal classroom environment as a way of networking, and therefore did not choose it even though all students have quite likely taken part in some kind of a group project during their studies. A field for specifying the ‘other’ option was given, and for example the following answers were given: through classmates, conferences, asking teacher to be included in student work possibilities. One respondent told they had taken part in none of the readily given networking options.

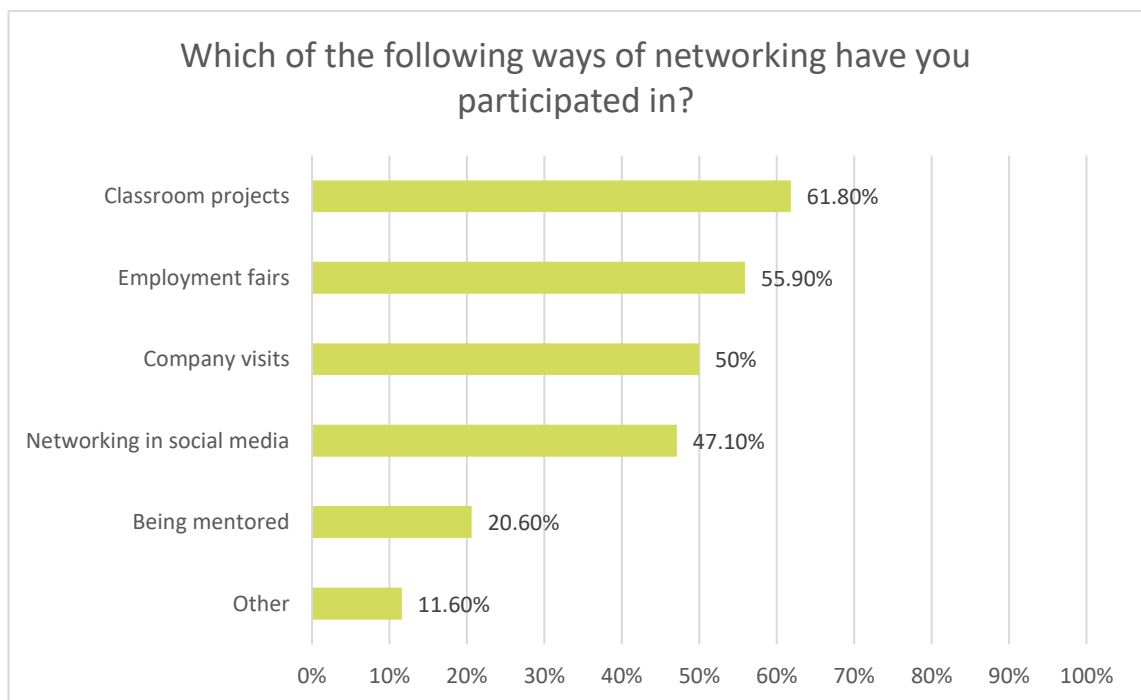


FIGURE 13. Different ways of networking

3.3 Survey results analysis

The reoccurring theme that rose from the survey answers was that international degree students expect a lot of support from TAMK in several different areas. This expectation seemed to occur the most prominently with the topic of practical training: the students

repeatedly mentioned hoping for more help from the school, some even repeated their wish for more support from TAMK when asked about their own actions and participation in the internship-finding process. Since the practical training placement is seemingly difficult to find, it is understandable that the students require support with the matter.

As Annika Forsander, head of Immigrant Affairs to the City of Helsinki mentions in an interview for the Helsinki Times (Gairn 2010), the importance of networks is sometimes underrepresented in the discussion of employment of foreigners. She tells how approximately 60% of jobs in Finland are not advertised, but the employees are found through social networks. Therefore, even fluent Finnish language skills might not be enough for foreigners to find employment but the employment process might come to a halt due to the lack of connections. It might be that the lack of these networks is also what makes students turn towards TAMK's assistance when looking for practical training placement positions.

Table 1 compares years lived in Finland with the responses to the questions "How easy is it to find practical training placement in Finland?", where option 1 was 'very hard' and 5 was 'very easy'. Even though the most prominent selection was option three, it is possible the high number is due to the newcomers not having applied for practical training yet. Second highest selection for those who had lived in Finland for only one to two years was option 1, 'very hard'.

TABLE 1. "How many years have you lived in Finland" compared to "How easy is it to find practical training placement in Finland"

	Option	Responses
1-2 years	3	8
	2	5
	1	7
3-4 years	5	1
	4	1
	3	4
	2	1
	1	1
5-6 years	3	3
9-10 years	2	1
More than 10 years	3	1

When the students were asked how well they thought their studies support their future employment, there were differences amongst the different degree programmes. None of the respondents answered with option 1 'not at all', and none of Energy and Environmental Engineering students answered 5 'very well' (Figure 14). Although the

Media and Arts students were a small group, over half of them chose the most positive or the second most positive option. What stands out is the amount of International Business students who seemed to be unsure of the matter and chose the middle option. This could be explained by them being only second year students and not being sure what is demanded of them in the working life.

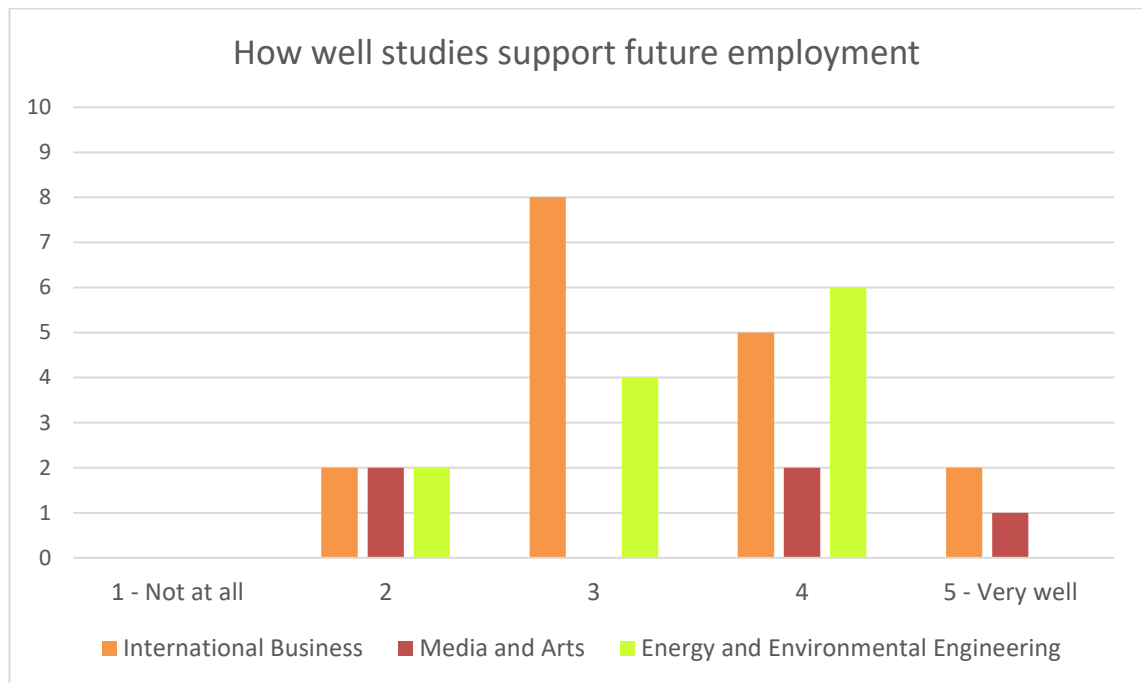


FIGURE 14. How well studies support future employment by degree programme

The importance of the thesis writing process varied noticeably by field of study, as shown in Figure 15. 75% of Energy and Environmental Engineering students chose options four or five. Although there were only a few Media and Arts students, 80% of them chose either options one or two. This implies that Energy and Environmental Engineering students consider the thesis writing process much more important for their employment than the students of Media and Arts. International Business students' answers were focused on options three and four, implying the thesis writing process is considered somewhat important, yet the high amount of selections on the middle option could be interpreted as uncertainty over the matter. There were over twice as many respondents from Energy and Environmental Engineering, yet when asked about the importance of the thesis writing process for employment, Media and Arts students chose option 'one' three times as often. This implies that the importance of the thesis writing process is deemed very low by the media students.

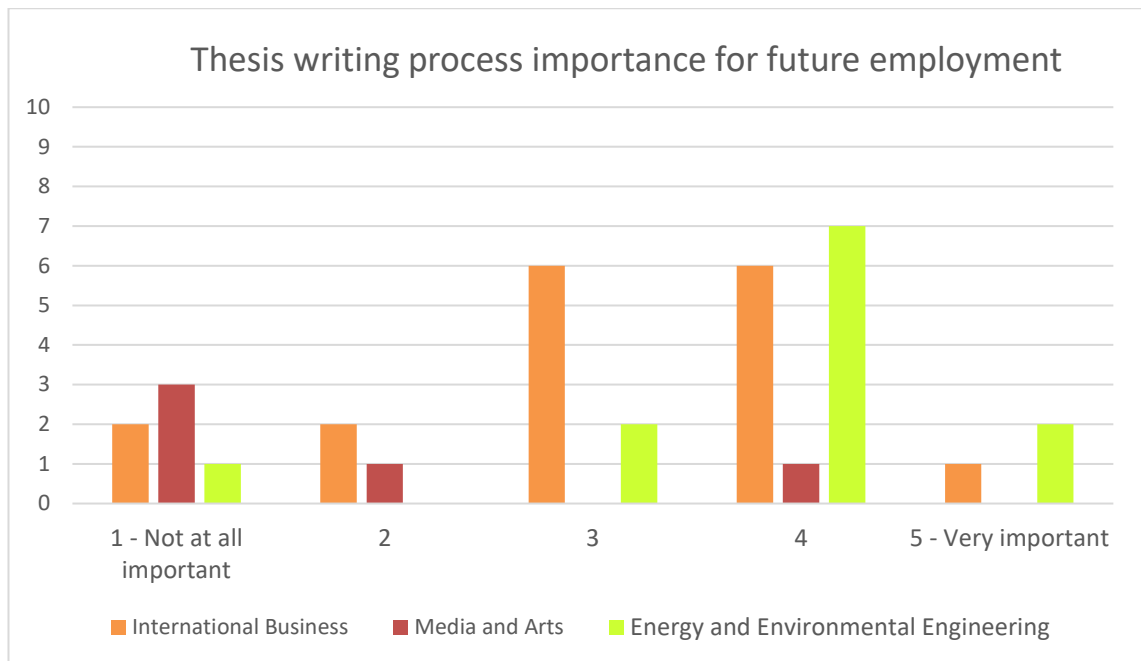


FIGURE 15. Thesis writing process importance by degree programme

Indeed, in the open-ended question that followed, two media students specified that they had not yet begun the process of writing their thesis which might mean some uncertainty with the portrayal and analysis of the answers.

3.4 Survey validity and reliability

Hirsjärvi et al. (2003, 182) discuss the weaknesses questionnaires pose as a data collection method. An example of such weakness is that there is no way of knowing how seriously the respondent took their responses and if they were honest with their answers. Other problems include a possible low response rate, not knowing how familiar the respondents are with the topics in question, as well as not knowing how successful the given answer options were for the respondent and whether there were misunderstandings. At least one of these issues came up in the open-ended responses: some of the respondents were not far enough in their studies to have a clear understanding on for example the thesis writing process.

The choice to utilize a five-point Likert scale was discussed in section 3.1. In hindsight, the decision can be seen as a successful one. Forcing the respondents to choose either 'for' or 'against' option by using an even number of answer options would have distorted the results since, as mentioned, at the time of filling out the survey some respondents

lacked sufficient information to answer some of the question with their actual own experiences. All questions did offer an uneven number of answer choices, and an assumption could be made that those who had no experience on the matter, chose an option that depicted neither one or the other end of the scale. To comply with this assumption, throughout the research, the middle option on a five-point scale is assumed to be an unsure choice. However, the respondents might also have given an answer based on their preconceptions which is not ideal for the purpose of this thesis.

Other difficulties arose with the analysis of the survey results. Since the different degree programmes had such uneven amounts of respondents, the cross comparing tables might be considered problematic. Respondents were divided as follows: International Business 17 responses, Energy and Environmental Engineering 12 responses and Media and Arts 5 responses. Especially the low representation of Media and Arts students might mean that the applicability of the results to the whole of their degree programme is not recommended. However, some very clear differences (chapter 3.3) among the degree programmes did arise even with such uneven number of participants.

It is difficult to assess whether or not the respondents had difficulties with understanding the questions or if they were not very dedicated to the answering process which would have influenced the validity of their answers. However, the responses to the open-ended questions were very comprehensive and gave the impression the students had indeed focused on filling out the survey and had clear opinions and ideas which seems to indicate that the students were committed when answering the questions and therefore the results depict their actual opinions quite well. The choice to offer the respondents a possibility to specify their answers seemed to be correct, since those explanations were used several times to analyse the numerical data collected earlier. Had the questions only been presented with ready-made options and no space for specifying, the conclusions could have been different and not depict reality as well. If the validity of this research were to be questioned, it would most likely not be because of the survey and the collected data not being trustworthy or realistic enough, but due to the unfortunately small sample size causing the results to be difficult to apply to the whole degree programmes.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TAMK

In this chapter suggestions are made for TAMK based on the results of this research. The suggestions are mainly practical matters and actions that have been deemed beneficial for the employment of foreign students in this research. Said actions could prove useful if included in the studies of international degree students. The suggested actions are intended to be easy to put into effect and to not take a great deal of resources. This is based on the assumption that the degree programmes do not have unlimited resources to spend on students counselling, and at the time of this research there was no available information regarding addition of allocated resources. However, the importance of student counselling is not in any way belittled in this research, on the contrary. It is considered to be a critical part in guiding the international students, and in the conducted survey, several students indeed wished for more counselling (Appendix 8). Since the amount of student counselling depends, as mentioned, on the resources allocated by TAMK, the solutions offered in this research are meant to complement the existing system. The following suggestions are made based on the topics that were brought up by the majority of the international students in the survey and which are viewed by the researcher to be relatively easy to implement and sustain, yet still bring concrete results.

4.1 Networks

It could be beneficial for TAMK counsellors to inform the international students, possibly already in the beginning of their studies, of ways they can prepare for the future, be it finding a practical training placement or employment at the end of their studies. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the lack of networks is a significant disadvantage for foreigners looking for employment. If the students started to take measures already during their first year of studies to create those connections, they might have an easier time afterwards. Said measures could be some of the networking ways mentioned in the survey (Appendix 1), for example taking active part in different work life projects even outside their compulsory courses or even volunteering in different organizations. The working model created in the KILKAS -project (Appendix 10) also takes this point of view into consideration, and puts emphasis on the importance of networks already in the early stages of studies. According to Tuomala (2018), the model is to be printed on flyers and

handed out to new students in the future, therefore action will be taken to promote the importance of networks.

Since the resources allocated for counselling are limited, the students should be realistic and not expect TAMK to send all of them an e-mail about a job perfectly suited for them personally. It might be useful to inform the students already in the early stages of their studies that they do indeed need to take quite a lot of responsibility for their own employment. As mentioned in part 3.2.3, the students hoped that TAMK would recommend them companies for practical training based on where the previous students have interned at. Students from all three degree programmes gave this suggestion. As noted previously, the degree programme in International Business does have a list of such companies available in TAMK Intranet. It might be that the students have not heard about it, or that they have forgot such list exists. The list does not however contain information of whether or not the students were native Finnish speakers or if they used for example English as their working language. Perhaps this additional information would help international students get concrete suggestions of companies willing to hire foreigners. Such list would be a good addition for the other two other degree programmes as well, albeit the creation and upkeep of such list requires time and connection with the companies.

4.2 Alumni

One possible solution for the lack of resources in student counselling would be to steer some of this responsibility towards the alumni network. In the survey (Appendix 1) several students told they will stay in Finland after graduation if they find suitable employment. The collaboration between alumni and students does not only help the international students find said employment better, but the networks created through alumni activities are very beneficial for the university of applied sciences as well (Hopeela, Le Grand, & Tuomala 2018). Bringing the willing students and alumni together would ensure those students eager to start creating their network could take part in voluntary activities. This would of course require enthusiasm from the alumni side as well. In an alumni survey (TAMK 2016) conducted for the International Business degree alumni, only one alumnus showed interest in mentoring a student. However, if the mentoring would be successful, enthusiasm might increase among others as well. The

ideal situation would be that those who received help from a mentor during their studies, would find employment in Finland and be willing to act as a mentor themselves later on. Another desirable outcome would of course be that the alumni would be keen on hiring the newly graduated international students or take them on as interns. As mentioned in part 3.2.7, degree programme in International Business had its first alumni meeting in the year 2017, and degree programme in Energy and Environmental Engineering had one in the year 2016 (Tuomala 2018). The direction is therefore right, but continuous efforts are required to maintain a strong network. Creation of such a network would be recommendable for the Media and Arts degree programme as well.

To attract the alumni to be more involved, the network has to of course offer them something as well. As the alumni survey conducted for International Business alumni shows, the benefits of a strong alumni network are not perhaps clear for the graduates. These benefits include meeting other alumni in events, opportunities to take part in seminars and other events as well as receiving information on learning possibilities (Hopeela et al. 2018).

4.3 Peer learning

An additional solution for building the students' networks could be to have the Finnish and international degree students interact more. In this sense interaction does not only mean casual social situations, although they might help as well, but a more structured way of exchanging information and learning from another. South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences ran such a test programme as a part of the KILKAS -project and called it the Job Mentor -programme. In this experimental study module, the idea was that the Finnish students would have a chance to build their skills in for example communications and human resources, and the international students would gain information about the Finnish labor market and increase their readiness to find employment in Finland. The module included for example finding out about international employees, meeting with the group, keeping a learning diary, and presenting introduction materials. Tasks were different for the Finnish and international students. The trial programme received positive feedback from both the international and the Finnish students, whom both felt they had learned something new. Challenges with the study module had mainly been with the practical matters; language skills and presenting skills.

Especially learning about the job history of the Finnish students was felt to be especially interesting. In the feedback some students mentioned they thought the group meetings should take place during the lessons and that they should be planned carefully. (Järvinen, Ollanketo & Siitonen 2018)

If such a study module was arranged at TAMK, it would be recommendable to have enough structure within the course. A module that is based on group meetings and the students' own input and enthusiasm can easily fall behind on the priority list when students have other, more traditional obligations with their studies. Therefore, it would be important to have the students write for example learning diaries or even blog posts about their meetings to somehow document and ensure there are indeed enough actual meetings and that all the relevant topics are discussed. Even if the study module did not have for example weekly lessons, it would be beneficial to have for example a couple of check-up meetings during the course, to make sure all groups are committed and that the course goals are being achieved in an appropriate pace.

TAMK already arranges a course called "Each One Teach One" which is a relatively casual version of the aforementioned setting, and it is meant for language learning. However, the course could very well be accompanied by another one, with different objectives and a more structured approach. A course called Career Path is also arranged as a part of the KILKAS -project, and it includes the students taking part in a recruitment fair, attending visitor lectures etc., and the peer learning could for example be incorporated as a part of said course (Tuomala 2018).

4.4 Language skills

As mentioned, a clear majority of the international students stated that they did not think there were enough possibilities for learning Finnish at TAMK. Most of those who specified their answer (Appendix 3), hoped for more courses and more intensive learning. Some had already taken courses outside of TAMK. It also came up that some felt the courses did not prepare the students well enough for the working life. A surprising issue that came up in the answers is that while international students of International Business and Energy and Environmental Engineering are both offered three Finnish language courses, students of Media and Arts are only offered one.

The intensity of language learning was also highlighted by Kivivuori and Sandberg (2018). They explain how repetition, practice, and using different context and situations are required when learning a new language. An experimental course was arranged in Turku University of Applied Sciences as a part of the KILKAS project. The well-received course was called Business Finnish Communication (BFC) and it taught international students not only the Finnish language but also work culture and employability skills. In the course some lectures were dedicated for speaking, some for writing. Different games were also used as tools for learning the language, as well as reality-mimicking situations such as agreeing on a meeting time, discussing one's own opinions and staging an in-class job interview situation with a CV and a job application. The factors contributing to the success of the course were the small group size and the familiarity it caused among the group, the high level of customization made to ensure the course answered to the needs of the participants, the great deal of motivation portrayed by the students, as well as the large amount of feedback the students received from the teacher. (Kivivuori & Sandberg 2018)

If TAMK were to add new Finnish courses, one option could be to recreate the aforementioned BFC course. The course does seem to be a lot of work for the teacher and if not easily applicable as such, TAMK could at least utilize some sort of an adaptation of it to answer the need of more language learning. Some challenges with such course are eminent. For example, there are a lot of international students at TAMK, and depending on how interested they would be to attend such a course, it could be difficult to maintain a very small group size even though it was seen as a success factor for the original course. Different degree programmes would of course need to have their own implementation of the course since the needed vocabulary differs greatly depending on the area of education. However, similar starting points could still be utilized, and the versatile situations recreated in the classroom. The creation of a study module where the language is learned with diverse methods would not only increase the students' language skills and therefore indirectly very likely increase their possibility of finding employment, but it would offer a great platform for those students who are motivated enough to get concrete tips regarding employment in Finland.

5 CONCLUSIONS

It became clear in the early parts of this thesis that in the coming years, the Finnish economy would indeed need foreign workforce to fulfill the gap caused by the low birth rate. It is of course also desirable that the international students that have been educated here, would not take their knowledge outside Finland but stay here to utilize it as a part of the active workforce. As discussed in section 3.2.1., every respondent who was unsure of staying in Finland after graduation told it was dependent on whether they would find employment. Some other reasons were given to support the answer, but employment as a determining factor came up in every single answer.

As established earlier, the key issues with the employment of foreigners in Finland are the lack of language and networks of the applicants. When Finnish employers are asked if they would hire a foreigner, they seem to have a generally very positive approach and appreciation of international skills often associated with foreign workforce. However, in practice international students still struggle to even find a placement for practical training, not to mention a job after their graduation. Nevertheless, the aim of this research was not to find a solution for the employment issues through the employers' behavior but help TAMK in turn help its international students better adapt to the Finnish labour market.

Additional objectives were to find out what are the key issues with employment of foreigners in Finland, as well as how the international students perceive for example the current guidance offered at TAMK, and what kind of support they hoped for. The survey conducted showed that the international students at TAMK struggle with the exact same issues as other foreign job seekers in Finland – not knowing the language well enough and lacking the networks as well as the knowledge about Finnish companies. These issues are known nationwide, and for example KILKAS project has tried finding solutions for them.

TAMK could utilize cost-efficient, low threshold solutions that help international degree students become more familiar with the Finnish working life, learn the language better and start building their network already in the early stages of their studies, all the while not straining the one-on-one counselling system too much. Utilization of networks in general, the alumni networks, peer learning and new kinds of language learning are all recommendable actions for TAMK to utilize when supporting those international students

who are motivated to stay in Finland after their studies and hope to find employment here. Motivation and commitment are required from TAMK's side, but most of all from the international students, since no matter what solutions and for example courses are offered, they are only viable if the students take active part in them. The issue of employment of foreign students is hardly simple, and neither is the solution. According to the findings in this thesis, there is no specific change that would immediately make the international students have all the required knowledge and excel in the job seeking process. Still, there are several, smaller changes, that if put into action would very likely start to help with the employment of foreign students. In general, more flexibility, variation and innovative solutions are required to ensure the necessary information reaches the students, but also to make sure that the students receive guidance in a way that supports their individual needs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey

Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

This questionnaire is a part of a bachelor's thesis that aims to find out how Universities of Applied Sciences could better help foreign students find employment in Finland. This survey is a part of the KILKAS project in which TAMK is taking part during years 2016 – 2018.

KILKAS



Vipuvoimaa
EU:lta
2014–2020

NEXT

Page 1 of 9

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Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

*Required

Introductory questions

Please choose your degree programme *

- International Business
- Media and Arts
- Energy and Environmental Engineering

Please select the starting year of your studies *

- 2017
- 2016
- 2015
- 2014
- 2013

Please select your country of origin from the list *

Choose ▼

How many years have you lived in Finland? *

Choose ▼

Do you intend on living in Finland after graduation? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Please specify your answer to the previous question

Your answer

BACK

NEXT

Page 2 of 9

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Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

*Required

Practical training

How easy is it to find a practical training placement in Finland? *

1 2 3 4 5

Very hard Very easy

TAMK could help me find a practical training placement by...
(Please continue sentence below) *

Your answer

I could improve my chances of finding a placement by... (please continue sentence below) *

Your answer

BACK

NEXT

Page 4 of 9

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Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

*Required

Study Units

How well do your studies support your future employment in Finland? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all Very well

Are there enough possibilities for learning Finnish at TAMK? *

- Yes
- No

Please, explain your choice for the previous question:

Your answer

How motivated are you to learn Finnish? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all motivated Very motivated

Please, explain your choice to the previous question:

Your answer

BACK

NEXT

Page 3 of 9

Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

*Required

Work-life projects

Please note, work-life projects mean projects that are done with real companies and/or clients.

How frequently have you taken part in work-life projects? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all frequently Very frequently

How was your experience when taking part in a work-life project?

Your answer

Would there have been a possibility for a summer job in the company with whom the project was done? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Have there been enough work-life projects in the courses? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

BACK

NEXT

Page 5 of 9

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Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

*Required

Counselling and career planning

During my studies so far, I have received sufficient information on the following topics: *

Please choose the topics you have received sufficient information on

- Finding a job in Finland
- How to start a company in Finland
- Study options after completing the bachelor's degree
- How to recognize my key competences and skills
- I have not received sufficient information on any of the aforementioned topics

How would you improve the counselling at TAMK (study counselling, career counselling or other, please specify)?

Your answer

BACK

NEXT

Page 6 of 9

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Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

*Required

Alumni Activities and Networking

Alumni are former students of TAMK.

How familiar are you with TAMK alumni activities? *

Not at all familiar 1 2 3 4 5 Very familiar

Do you think taking part in alumni activities could help you find work in Finland? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- I do not know

Which of the following ways of networking have you participated in?

- Company visits
- Classroom projects with real companies/clients
- Being mentored
- Networking through social media
- Employment fairs
- Other: _____

BACK

NEXT

Page 8 of 9

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Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

*Required

Thesis

In your opinion, how important is the thesis writing process for your future employment? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all important Very important

What would you improve in the thesis writing process?

Your answer

BACK

NEXT

Page 7 of 9

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Questionnaire for foreign students at TAMK

*Required

Lottery

One respondent will win two movie tickets. Taking part in the lottery is optional. Collected e-mail addresses will not be connected to the questionnaire responses. The e-mail addresses are used only for the movie ticket lottery and informing the winner. Even if you will not take part in the lottery, please submit this page so that your answers are saved.

Would you like to take part in the lottery of two movie tickets? *

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes to the question above, please write your e-mail address below:

Your answer

BACK

SUBMIT

Page 9 of 9

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Appendix 2. Living in Finland

Explanations to question "Would you live in Finland after graduation?"

"Nice social welfare, free country and promote equality "

"Simply because of high standard of living"

"I like finland very much so I m thinking of settling here with secure career"

"i havenot planned much yet. If i could find a job without being an expert on finnish language, then may be i will think about living. If not then, its useless to use your time and energy in the place where people only require their native language to be spoken"

"if i get a job"

"I think it's hard to find job here. But i'll try"

"I want to experience the engineering working environment in finland so I expect I can find a job in my major and continute living in Finland "

"Depends if I will get a job"

"I really need to find a job in Finland, since the fact that I decided to study in this country because my boyfriend (Finnish citizen) lives here".

"If I do find a good job and I can apply my fresh knowledge and talent in Finland. I don't see a reason why I wouldn't want to live here. :)"

"I live in permanet base"

"it depends on the probability of me getting an employment"

"Yes, I would like to continue living in Finland. "

"Finland is a good country to live in on a long-term basis, as it is very secure, job security is high and it's rich. However, I am not good at dealing with the weather and that is my primary reason for not wanting to live here when I am done."

"i want to live in Finland"

"If i get a job in Finland i will stay"

"if i can land a decent job"

"Yes, I'm here due to marriage. "

"It depends on employment prospects"

"Depends if I manage to find a job or not. "

"Yes. "

Appendix 3. Finnish learning possibilities

Explanations to question “Are there enough possibilities for learning Finnish at TAMK?”

”i took course from outside”

”There is not a lot of finnish course offer in free time. It's stuff with normal cirriculum at school which not so beneficial since school work have been a lot to handle, especially in the first year”

”Since the courses offered for Environmental Engineering students in TAMK are only at basic level. If you want to learn to speak Finnish fluently enough, you need to take extra courses outside in language center and self-study a lot.”

”May be organzing extra classes of finish”

”Do I need to explain it at all? ”

”but still my level is "moi"”

”We only have 3 basic courses which are not enough Finnish for future”

”I feel only study Finnish in class is not enough to emprove the finnish skill as a language”

”There should be various groups for, some people know Finnish better than others. ”

”Courses offered at TAMK are till up to Finnish 3. This will let us to reach to A2 level, maybe B1 if we are too lucky”

”Not advance courses and support”

”The finnish courses were not enough practical for working or event real speaking experience”

”Finnish classes are extremely basic and slow paced. Furthermore there isn't the possibility to study further than about level A1 at TAMK.”

”The courses lack structure, therefore, they do not support learning the language. ”

”Very limited, low quality teaching”

”I took coursed from TUT and UTA. ”

”We asked for more Finnish language classes, though nobody changed anything. The level of Finnish we got at the university was very low. With such knowledge you can hardly make even 1 normal setnence.”

”As a foreign student, learning Finnish is mandatory. During the first year, the level of Finnish teaching was low. However, witht the change of teachers, it has improved considerably. ”

”i want to learn more because i think it isn't enough to communicate with Finnish with 2 lecture per week. I used to think if i quit 1year to study Finnish so i can have more chance to work and stay here”

”it is difficult to study Finnish at Tamk”

”I already spoke basic Finnish upon starting, and I would need an intermediate level course, but haven't been able to find anything appropriate. ”

”There is only a basic course offered for our degree programme. For students of other degrees maybe there are more.”

”There is one introductory course. ”

”There are. ”

Appendix 4. Motivation to learn Finnish

Explanations to question "How motivated are you to learn Finnish?"

"my bf is finnish"

"The only reason I'm needed to study finnish is to find job in finland"

"I am in Finland"

"too complicated"

"First, it's compulsory. Now, it's interesting"

"I do want to communicate with my finnish friends. It is awkward to be among a group of finnish people and they have to translate every funny things they say into english for you"

"Quiet hard for me to study the language"

"It is difficult and school basically forces us to do it. And the grade depends a lot on the exam."

"For me it is really interesting to learn finnish, as I know is a tool that will help me to integrate better to the Finnish society"

"It is a very tough language and I believe the courses in TAMK do help but if I am slow in understanding or learning the language I would be left behind and no one would care about it! "

"Despite a few rare exceptions, finding a job in Finland highly relies on having some extent of Finnish language skills. "

"I am motivated to study Finnish. I believe in learning methods with certain structure and learning by doing. Finnish courses I have attended lack both."

"The fact I need to learn by myself is not very motivating "

"I like studying Finnish. "

"I had to learn it myself"

"As I do not plan to live here after completing my studies and I plan 10 months away from Finland during practical training and exchange, my motivation is low as I logically speaking do not feel the need to go further with it. "

"i want to communicate with local people, get a job and reduce culture shock"

"The grammar structure is very hard to remember and to learn"

"I've barely needed it in the last 5 years, but I feel it is the kind of thing that can set you apart from other job applicants in Finland. It's a sign of commitment and respect to the country you live in."

"I was extremely motivated when I first arrived. I have less time to devote to studying it now and I don't have the immediate need to better the language since I reached a level where I can understand what's going on and communicate basic needs. In my surroundings everyone knows how to speak English and so my ability to speak Finnish (or not) doesn't add much value to the communication process. I feel like there is a very big gap between being able to understand a lot of things and being able to speak and be understood, and that requires a lot of practice. There are a few apps you can use to study Finnish online but not so many good quality so you have to put extra effort in than compared to other languages Would like to, but Finnish is a very difficult language and I have no one to help me learn."

"I've been in Finland for 12 years, what do you think? "

Appendix 5. TAMK's role in finding training placement

Continuation of the following sentence: "TAMK could help me find practical training placement by..."

"i dont know"

"Introduce the companies for me, give details of available companies for practical training"

"Job fair, more information about company working in environmental aspect, there is no information about the number of company working in this field in Finland. Showing the list of company so student can contact with them if needed"

"not really"

"tamk can give idea and where to apply "

"Email"

"By providing practical training placement in the projects that runs inside TAMK. Foreign students donot even receive all proper details about the inside project in TAMK"

"suggesting some their working places"

"I don't know"

"Showing training placement in categories. E.g by country, by working language

Sending email about job opportunities for international student"

"Next year. "

"Trying to find companies who are willing to take foreigners. "

"Unfortunately TAMK is not doing much to help foreign students to find practical training placement in Finland"

"They already have helped me by sending offers from all over Europe and in Finland too. Having partnerships witj companies that accept international students"

"Recommendations of placement but most of them which I received from Tamk were meant for Finnish student only :("

"suggest a list of employers, tailor the courses so we are provided with the most useful knowledge and ready for finding jobs"

"cooperating with local companies"

"Providing information on what are the companies, which HIRE people, who do not speak Finnish. And the companies, where people WORK in English. Also TAMK can hire international persons, since TAMK's job ads are ONLY for Finns."

"having website or something similar"

"offering connections to students"

"nothing. I had found a place myself alone"

"information"

"Organising more events where companies are hiring trainees"

"I have heard from other people that finding an internship in Finland is hard, but my impression is that that it is much easier than they make it seem. First of all, there are several initiatives where you can get in touch with companies, like the even on the 28th of November this year. Furthermore, if you own a LinkedIn profile, getting in touch with Finnish companies will be a lot easier. Last of all, during the year, we engage with business' as to do tasks for them. This is a great way to show your skills and Finnish is not always a mandatory language if you just know where to look."

"introducing me companies or organizations where suitable with my future career"

"Suggest what is the best for me maybe"

"more info of companies"

"Maintaining a constant relationship with local employers who regularly hire interns for small jobs, and making the list of openings available to browse. Currently only a few specific opportunities are mass emailed out, once in a while."

”having info sessions to talk about the different companies. ”

”Providing a list of entities known to take foreign student for training on a regular basis. suggesting a place where I could apply for a job”

”Paying a reasonable salary to TAMK students doing their practical training if they do not receive a salary from their practical training place. ”

Appendix 6. Own role in finding training placement

Continuation of the following sentence: "I could improve my chances of finding a placement by..."

"learning finnish"

"Havr a recommendation of the school"

"Finnish is simply compulsory, otherwise it's while difficult"

"improving my Finish skills"

"I should be active hardworking and deter"

"Good grades and finnish skills"

"Applying to companies that desnot require finnish language or to companies that are placed abroad (not in Finland) "

"learning finnish

"learning more Finnish

"Improving working capacity, demonstrating competence"

"Have more job fair for me to attend"

"my skills"

"Learning Finnish"

"The only option I have is to start throwing my CV to all of the companies that belong to the fields I'm studying about. It is extremely challenging, first for the language barrier. Secondly, the amazing difficulty set by the companies that are requiring some previous experience. "

"Searching all the possible places and only if there were more opportunities for English speakers in Tampere to be specific"

"Learning finnis"

"Better Finnish learning options for example intensive courses"

"study, go to meetings"

"living in Helsinki"

"By applying to the right places, where international people are appreciated and welcomed."

"getting to see opportunities"

"studying Finnish and creating connection"

"Doing practical assignments from another department. IB didn't give me enough knowledge to get internship related to business sphere. "

"calling and asking. "

"Learning German, Russian or Swedish"

"Learning Finnish, engaging in voluntary events, having a professional profile on LinkedIn and being active and engaging in fields that interest me. "

"having more introduction about companies by Tamk sharing information about companies or inviting company's representative introduce or recruit . Im now unsure about my future career in here when hearing some seniors who graduated in Finland in International business field only have a contract with cleaning company or waiter in restaurant. "

"Tamk's suggestion"

"getting more experience and better language skill"

"Attending more functions such as IGDA meetings, and being more outgoing. This is difficult for us introverts. "

"asking my tutors for recommendations, looking online (I haven't started looking for practical placements yet) "

"Send as many requests and applications as I can. "

"having connections"

"not having to eat or pay any bills. "

Appendix 7. Experience with work-life project

Open ended responses to question “How was your experience when taking part in a work-life project?”

”not good”

”I think teamwork is very important”

”Haven’t have a chance to participate in any project like this, maybe in future

”I do not understand the question.”

”It was good experience”

”I try my best to take part in all sort of work life projects. however, interesting projects are mostly conducted in Finnish so its not possible to take part in them.”

”I once participated in business development in y-kampus. The experience did give my quality knowledge, but the collaboration was a bit...unprofessional. I did not think the working process reflect the working environment in real life situation”

”Depends”

”Difficult to seen as potential employee with a fair salary”

”Opportunities only came in volunteer activities”

”they don’t really need our help or we aren’t capable of helping them”

”In hindsight, it was good experience. However it was clearly lacking organisation.”

”Good”

”Good”

”Demola project is especially recommended”

”Good”

”I volunteerd for the EARLI event and was able to get great experience and also was able to have an oppertunity for networking.”

”In my countries and some school-projects at Tamk”

”I feel normal”

”I worked in a much more physically and mentally demanding career before this change in career, so my opinion may be skewed. Media work life is frankly easy and relaxed, and it hasnt been at all difficult. However, I feel employers or companies sponsoring these projects needs to take student teams more seriously in terms of communication... they get less optimal results and attribute it to student work, when in fact the results are impacted by their treating students as less worth the time spent communicating their needs and feedback.”

”They were good experiences, but only one-off things, since we worked directly for the clients and not for a media company.”

”I didn’t have one.”

”Group projects are painful no matter the setting and circumstance.”

Appendix 8. Opinions on counselling

Open ended responses to question “How would you improve the counselling at TAMK (study counselling, career counselling or other, please specify)?”

“Maybe once a month or once in a few month have a meeting to discuss, give information about this kind of topic since noone have give any presentation about this before. “

“Should put much more efforts into helping international students getting a job after graduation.”

“By being polite and finding good solutions for the problems “

“Open more conference or a small meeting for student of each programme to participate and giving all proper information to all the student. “

“It is good but I would really be amazed if TAMK actually helped us find an actual Job after graduation”

“Too many studenta foe one consellour. There should be more people that could help with information”

“The courses taken throughout the degree were extremely broad, therefore it could be good at some point to have the students reflect on the skill sets they have developed. As far as career counselling, maybe some kind of alumni day could be useful, that way the students could have a clear idea of what kinds of jobs people with their own degree may get in the future (in addition to the actual networking aspect of the event).”

“All above mentioned. I find Finnish counselling "interesting", which is described as no questions - no counselling.”

“More professionals “

“email list for rekry about employment.”

“First of all that teachers answer e-mails on time! That is the most iportant!

Secondly, hire a foreigner to those jobs, as only foreigner can understand our problems, unfortunately. I had lots of issues, when teachers didn't answer me on time and then I had to worry whether I have enough papers to get my new residence permit for example. Finnish people don't consider such things due to the fact that they neever dealt with it.”

“Personally I do not need a lot of information in this exact case, but I know many others have felt a stronge rneed for more information.

I believe a solution could be to implement mandatory info sessions regarding this as many students choose not to engage and voluntary courses and activities.”

“i would like to know more about career path in Finland. I think the biggest barrier finding job in here is language. Most of recruitment information are in Finnish and require Finnish skill. “

“They should specify more about finding a job after graduation and assist during the study”

“It was simply never offered, and I'm 2-3 months away from graduation. I have the life experience to know what I should be doing, but many likely don't.”

“Have some Q and A sessions with people representing our field of studies /work about the career opportunities.”

“Actually provide information about any of these things.”

Appendix 9. Opinions on thesis writing process

Open ended responses to question “What would you improve in the thesis writing process?”

“i havent finish yet”

“Haven't went through it yet so let see”

“I have not started yet so I do not know.”

“Writing skills”

”Invest more time”

”Maybe an early topic decision and initiative would be helpful”

”I want to go into a real work life project or real internship in different companies to gather experience and based on those collected treasure I can finalize my thesis as good as possible. ”

”I haven't written one yet”

”Allow students to start it earlier in their studies. ”

”Supervision. ”

”By making it more open, for example allowing students to take a stronger research approach instead of practical ”

”A face to face course instead of the online one!!! ”

”According to my research and knowledge from graduates the thesis does in many cases not provide oppertunities for a job. It seems that not only does it have to be absolutely outstanding to matter but also very specific at times to actually count.

Furthermore, businesses are still more interested in your work experience and skills you know how to apply and have applied rather than assignments, even if they aim for a different approach. ”

”I haven't had any ideas yet. ”

”I don't know yet ”

”It's not the process itself that is unimportant, in fact TAMK is known to be fairly loose about its standards for acceptance. The idea of a thesis itself is nothing but a formality, irrelevant to most media career paths. We do it to prove we can follow directions well. ”

”I haven't started my thesis yet, I am only in the second year! ”

”I have not started it yet, so I cannot tell. ”

Appendix 10. KILKAS model

