

IMPROVED EMPLOYABILITY FOR UNEMPLOYED IMMIGRANT GRADUATES FROM FINNISH HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

Engaging Employers in Immigrant Integration

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Abstract

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Title of publication Finding Ways to Improve the Employability of International Graduates Educated in Finnish Higher Education Institutions		
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Abstract <p>The current and continuous decline of the working-age population due to Finland's ageing population has shed new light on the Immigrant graduate's unemployability. This topical issue is gradually becoming a big concern to various stakeholders in terms of both enticing international students to Finnish higher education and supporting Finnish labour market development and economic growth in Finland. There is very few current information available on the subsequent unemployment of graduates of immigrant background and the causes thereof. On this basis, the author has initiated a research plan in order to study the problem by investigating the experiences and difficulties international students pass through after graduating from Finnish higher institutions. The research aims to explore and analyses the problem from a solution-oriented perspective and to come up with suggestions and solutions that can be of use in creating job opportunities and employment for foreign graduates in Finland.</p> <p>This thesis shows the findings of the study on foreign graduate unemployability carried out in Finland between 2016-19. In the study, the mixed-methods design was used, which includes Qualitative research approach to collect data and its analysis. The interview was used as a tool for qualitative research to gather qualitative data from the stakeholders and other secondary data of employers' perceptions. Few Face to face interview and Skype interviews for employment officers were conducted for gathering qualitative data.</p> <p>Findings show that International graduates face severe challenges in getting suitable employment after graduation. The first challenge is Interpersonal competence and skills which the graduates can mitigate by improving their language skills, professional skills and interpersonal skills whereas the most difficult challenge is the attitude of the local employers towards foreign graduates which the graduates cannot influence. The study reveals that there is not enough support from university or employment office or government agencies in alleviating the challenges.</p> <p>The findings of the research will be useful for university authorities involved in the international marketing process, current and potential international students and graduates, policymakers and other experts working with the issues of international education and employment. The study offers different recommendations and guidance that can help the key players in finding solutions to the challenges.</p>		
Keywords International Student, Foreign unemployment, Integration, employment, challenges, social empowerment, Finnish job market, Higher education Institution, immigration, social capital		

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ABBREVIATIONS

CIMO -	Center for International Mobility
ETLA -	The Research Institute of the Finnish Economy
FHE -	Finnish Higher Education
HEI -	Higher education institutions
ICEF -	International Consultants for Education and Fairs
OECD -	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
UAS -	University of Applied Sciences
UNESCO -	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VATT -	Valtion Taloudellinen Tutkimuskeskus- Institute for Economic Research

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In Finland, the share of Finnish's working-age population who are retiring from the labour market is increasing, but the International student graduates or immigrant graduates' unemployment rate is equally growing, this situation seems paradoxical vis-a-vis workforce development of any economy. Given this demographical trend in Finland (Tanner 2011) argued that in 2025, the working-age population decline would undoubtedly follow if no compensating actions are thoroughly applied to remedy the situation. Tanner, however, suggested that the speed of this decline can only be contained by appealing to more skilled migrants and retaining foreign graduates from Finnish universities who may be of benefit to the shrinking working force, therefore reducing the disastrous impact of the future labour shortages.

Consequently, and recently, employers and stakeholders from different sectors are increasingly searching for ways to resolve this disparity to meet their labour needs. Statistics have revealed that the number of foreign students in Finnish higher institution grew in 2015, their number was 20,350. (CIMO 2016). In the previous review submitted by (Tanner 2011) on the Finnish labour market and immigrant integration, Tanner had cautioned over 500,000 Finnish people that form part of the post-World War II baby boomers would be retiring around 2016, and there will need to find those that will occupy the vacant seats to augment the labour market.

Regardless of this cautionary review from (Tanner 2011), a considerable number of international students are leaving Finland after graduation, to countries and locations that are immigrant-friendly and that are more prone to offering job opportunities to foreign graduates. The excuses given by most of the foreign graduates for leaving Finland has been their challenges of gaining employment after graduations, many of them have complained that surprisingly, some open positions for skilled workers exists, but they still find it difficult and challenging to secure those positions. Base on the different research papers: (Majakulma 2011), (Valtion Taloudellinen Tutkimuskeskus 2014), (Statistics Finland 2019), it is noted that the only advantage and hence the most considerable dissimilarity in terms of qualification and skills

between Finnish natives and immigrant graduates are that the immigrant workers have higher levels of education, excellent skill set like the local graduates but have limited Finnish language proficiency. Although this language challenge can be mitigated, research has proven that it does not solve the problem as perceived.

The clock is ticking; many economic analyses have suggested that the future of Finland's competitiveness lies heavily on how immigrants integrate into the workforce. So, the question is, what can be done to harness this increasing number of skilled foreign graduates into the Finnish labour market. The skill referred here is the international graduates who have completed their studies and have the intention to remain in Finland and contribute to the Finnish economy (Center for International Mobility 2011) but were not given such opportunity.

As will be noted in the literature, most of what we know about unemployment engagement in immigrant integration by the Finnish labour market is related to Finnish language training for less-educated immigrant. Most studies of this workplace training in the Finnish language often involve case studies of one industry and programs that have little or no impact or remotely related to the educational qualification of the graduates in view.

Although this integration plan exists, companies still find it challenging to hire immigrants after undergoing the integration plan unless for menial and unprofessional jobs. The study objectives are to evaluate the pressing issue from a solution-orientated outlook and offer recommendations to all the parties affected; including the International graduates, the Finnish employers, and the government agencies, as well as Finnish higher institutions.

In this thesis, however, the study will present the current employment condition of foreign graduates in Finland, their mobility trends after graduation, the difficulties and challenges they face in looking for a job after graduation. It will also highlight the employers' views on employing foreign graduates and their positive impacts. The study will also explore and analyse some of the factors that affect the employment of foreign graduates and evaluate if the qualifications they earned in the universities are proficient enough to fit the standard of the job specifications.

1.2 Research Problem

Finland up until 2015 has been a preferred education destination due to its free tuition and subsidized educational system. Many immigrants from different backgrounds had come to pursue their bachelors or higher degrees' in the hope of finding a suitable job after their studies. This hope dashed as many Immigrants face multiple obstacles to finding and keeping decent employment in the Finnish economy.

One of the critical challenges noted as an obstacle is the Finnish language proficiency. In light of this, the Finnish government has since introduced an integration plan that includes the mastery of the language to mitigate this barrier. The supposed integration services often do not adequately respond to the needs of these immigrants' graduates. The problems faced by immigrant graduates, therefore, becomes the challenges of mastering the Finnish language skill, the issues of company hesitant in hiring them even after the mastery of the language and the concerns of lack of cultural competency and knowledge of the unique needs of immigrant populations (Rosner et al. 2005).

This problem has aroused enormous interest among different stakeholders who are expressing concerns of the value or relevance of the international students after their graduation, especially now that the tuition fees are introduced for non-Eu/EEA students and considering the growing concern of Finland's ageing population.

No doubt, this problem has a high potential of causing an economic setback in the country if not addressed. Currently, with the increasing number of immigrants to different parts of Finland, the Finnish government initial strategy of attracting highly skilled immigrants from abroad is revised (Finnish Ministry of Education 2009). That is to say that, the government and other stakeholders are reviewing the international graduates' employability in terms of participating and contributing to the growth of the job market growth and economic development.

Though, there are few materials available for advancing this research work. The

work of (Majakulma 2011) and (Pekkola 2012) and a few others were among the few studies that addressed the topic. (Majakulma 2011) Studied the employment situation of foreign graduates from Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences from (2002–2006). In the study, it was discovered that the foreign graduates' employment rate was only 58%, for those that completed their degree program in English but 81.9% for the Finnish graduates.

Besides these findings mentioned above, there is still insufficient study of foreign graduates' unemployment from both the graduates and employers outlook (Cai 2012).

Considering this background, a research project has been initiated to address the issues by studying the events, findings, and experiences of international students after graduation from Higher Education Institutes from the standpoint of both the graduates and their employers. The study aims to highlight this problem and encourage employment and workplace skills development of the international student in Finland.

1.3 The Research Question and objective of the Study

The primary question of this study is to identify and examine the causes of unemployability of foreign graduates and find ways to improve the chances and opportunity for foreign graduates to gain employment after graduation.

The previous studies made on this topic has either concentrated more on surveying and interviewing foreign graduates from a few institutions or studying only the employers' perspective. However, the current study will use both quantitative and qualitative approach to address the issue, taking into considerations of both graduates opinions, employers views and the feelings of other stakeholders into account in line with the research objectives enumerated below:

Addressing the problems stated in the preceding section, the main goals of this thesis will be

- Identify what is known about employer engagement and employment opportunities for immigrant graduates?

- Highlight the conceptual and theoretical strands that can guide knowledge about employer engagement in immigrant graduates' integration and further employment?
- To learn what factors influence the employment of foreign graduates.
- Proffer suggestions on what the employers can do to foster immigrant graduates' employment.
- To elicit recommendations on ways Finnish Higher Educational Institutions can help to facilitate employability of foreign graduates in Finland.
- Propose what foreign graduates must do to prepare for the Finnish employment opportunity

1.4 Significant of the Research

This study is very significant in recent times due to the increasing number of a foreign graduate without matching or comparable job positions, and most importantly, the previous studies related to this study has always taken a theoretical approach of identifying the problems, but this study is the solution-based approach. From the analysis of prior studies, there is a research gap that this study will fill.

As the Finnish labour market continues to diminish, researchers are studying the phenomenon to find ways the international graduates can fill the dwindling labour force.

The study will also help in shaping the framework of policymakers, and the recommendations may result in developing a functional and training model for international students.

1.5 Research Approach

When conducting research, usually the study follows a research methodology or approach that is a strategy or plan and that contains all the steps of broad assumptions that will help to exemplify the study, Such approach may include the method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The study will highlight some of the research approaches employed for clarity and reference.

The first approach to discuss in this section is the exploratory research; This is because exploratory research method is usually employed at the early stage of any research to study the hypothetical or theoretical concept of the issue. Usually, when a researcher begins a study on any issue, he may have initial ideas, observations or opinions that he may want to study to comprehend more. Exploratory research, therefore, lay the foundation for future studies and attempt to associate the observation to available existing theories. Hence if no available theories are found, the observation can form novel hypotheses, which are usually unanticipated (Fluid Surveys University 2014).

Once the issues under study are understood and identified, the newly discovered theory will require more explanation, that is why descriptive research ensued after the exploratory research. This research method helps to explore further the understanding of the concept with more explanation on the case study. It tries to describe in more details the more unobstructed view of the subject matter while adding the missing parts and developing our knowledge. During the research, more information is gathered with fewer guesses to predict the future - the 'what' and 'how,' rather than the 'why.'

Like descriptive research, causal research is quantifiable in nature as well as preplanned and structured in design. Wherefore, it is also considered conclusive research. The causal analysis explains the cause and effect connection between variables. This is contrasting to the observational style of descriptive study because it attempts to decipher whether a link is causal through experimentation. In the end, the causal analysis will have two objectives: 1) To identify the variables that produce cause and effects and 2) to define the nature of the relationship between the causal variables and the outcome to be predicted.

Explanatory research is the ability to link ideas together in order to identify the cause and effect of an event; it enables the researchers to understand what happened. Explanatory research looks at how things come together and interact. This research does not occur until there is enough understanding to begin to predict what will happen next with some accuracy.

The thesis will be based on a mixed-methods approach, which involves the research process of collecting, analysing and combining quantitative and qualitative data within a single study (Creswell 2003). The motivation for combining quantitative and qualitative data is to capture the full details as none of the types is sufficient enough to gather the full details of the matter. Fundamentally, this study will explore sequential explanatory approach, as explained above. (Terrell 2012)

In the study, we are going to get sample data from two groups; therefore, we used two qualitative surveys, one is for the current foreign student survey and the second survey will capture the responses from graduates and alumni of different universities in Finland. Then, in the study, different interview sessions with employers, institutions and other stakeholders will be used to elicit their opinions on the issues.

Most of the data captured will be based on the quantitative data, but the two methods will be combined during the interpretation phase of the study. The quantitative analysis will also be used to interpret the interviews in order to offer a comprehensive explanation, and reports to recompense for the constraints of the study. Finally, combining both quantitative and qualitative assessments improve the quality and outcome of the study.

1.6 Structure of the Research report

This thesis has eight chapters; in chapter one, the study set the background for the study and highlighted the problem and the significance of conducting the research. Section two and three are about the migration concepts and theories and international graduates and the labour markets that serve as the theoretical framework for the study. Chapter 4 explains the method used in the study to capture the data that was used in the research. Chapter 5 is data analysis and research findings; chapter 6 includes the recommended framework and solutions. Finally, followed by conclusion in section 7 including the recommendation of the further study

2 PREVIOUS STUDIES, CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS & THEORIES

2.1 Previous studies on the research topic

For the past two decades, foreign graduates and some stakeholders have raised concerns about the International graduates' unemployability, but these concerns had garnered little or no interest to the public. Until recently, when the Finnish government revealed interest in attracting more foreign skilled experts to help grow the Finnish economy and to support the dwindling ageing population in Finland. This thesis will address only the transition of foreign graduates to Finnish workspace and identify the roadblock that makes this transition difficult and attempts to proffer solutions.

Although few studies and number of related works have been done on the subject, including the work of (Ciulinaru 2010), (Kärki 2005), (Majakulma 2011); (Pulkkinen 2003), "on the struggles and opportunities: Perspectives on international student's settlement in Finland. Moreover, the studies of the relevance of international student mobility to work and employment and "Finnish employers' views on the advantages of studying and work placements abroad" by (Olivia 2017),(Garam 2009) and other studies by (Säpyskä 2007; Cai 2012 and Kujanpää 2008) that investigated the perspective on having International graduates from Finland and how they satisfy the needs of Finnish employers abroad? *Journal of Research in International Education*.

Last two decades ago, around June of 2003, the University of Helsinki Career services department published a survey of research conducted to know the status of the graduated international students to see if they were able to find a job. The survey result shows potentials and prospects for foreign graduates to find employment; however, it also indicates that there was inadequate information available about the Finnish working culture and essential skills required and even the techniques of hunting in the job market (Shumilova et al. 2011).

The survey draws attention to the unemployment situation of international graduates. Over 15% of respondents in that report noted that they could not secure

any job opportunity as against 90% of Finnish graduates within the same period.

The foreign graduates also noted that they perceived that a foreigner, it seems is a default obstacle, and over 40% feel discriminated against concerning securing job opportunity (Pulkkinen 2003).

In 2005, two years after the Helsinki university Career service report (Pulkkinen 2003), the student union from five Finnish higher institutions also researched to find out the way international student from those universities feel about studying, working and living in Finland (Kärki 2005). Even though reports were suggesting that the ageing population of Finland will provide enormous opportunities for foreign graduates to occupy the vacancy left in the labour market, the dream was far-fetched as the unemployment of the international graduates continues to decline. The default barrier has been poor language skills and the small market environment. However, the survey reveals more reasons why foreign graduates face challenges in being employed. The issue of discrimination, little or no right contact, lack of desired working experience, no knowledge of relevant job sites, resident permit restrictions and unsuitable field of study. In the survey, when asked if the plans, almost 40% of the students indicated that they would leave Finland immediately after they graduate to look for better opportunities, and 8% of student that wanted to remain also face the problem of resident permit restriction

(Söderqvist 2011) While focusing on the employer's perspective researched some of the factors that are capable of improving or hindering the employment of foreigners. According to the interview report, she found out that most Finnish companies have not adequately oriented their human resource on the importance of having foreign graduates. Most of the employers do not know the benefit and the importance of diversity to business development. Her report concluded that the majority of Finnish employers do not know how they can benefit from foreign graduates and hence do not bother to hire them.

Subsequent years later, (Säpyskä 2007) conducted an investigated project, "Taking Foreigners' Skills into Use in Pirkanmaa Area", the main focus of the study was the public sector will identify ways employers and foreign employees could find

themselves and therefore promote Pirkanmaa as a multicultural, open working, living and international environment. The reported outcome was positive; however, the employment was not successful as language posed a barrier in recruiting the international graduates. This was followed by constructive suggestions where international students were asked to learn the Finnish language and expand their social and professional networks. The foreign graduates were also advised to be more proactive in looking for jobs by calling the employers directly.

In 2010, (Vehaskari 2010) followed up to research the employment of international graduates from Finnish institutions. (Vehaskari 2010) In the report. It shows that the language barrier was not the only challenges foreign graduates face, but it also discovered other factors that inhibit the job opportunities of foreign employees. (Vehaskari 2010) The report suggested that the bureaucracy in getting a resident permit, no strong professional or social network, limited career opportunities. The study mentioned in his statement that the Finnish employers have some element of negative impression towards employing foreign graduates, and these attitudes may not change quickly.

In the same year, A VALOA project was launched (Ciulinaru 2010). The research conducted an interview survey to investigate the factors that affect the adaptation and integration of foreign students from different Finnish institution based in the Helsinki region. The report also found similar elements pointed out in the previous reports. The findings show that Finnish language proficiency is among the obstacle of an insufficient professional network. The report noted that there is a silent practice in the Finnish working environment; most employers prefer a candidate that is recommended or referred by an existing staff over a new employee. Therefore, the situation of international graduates with getting job opportunities is still bleak at this time.

In 2015, an M.Sc. thesis of Niko Ferms and survey of TEK further explored the situation of foreign graduates. The report suggests that international graduates are still struggling with finding a job. It was reported that less than one-third of international graduates were able to secure job opportunity after graduation and whereas over 65% of Finnish graduates are employed immediately after graduation.

Niko Ferm's thesis provided more information about foreign students from Alto University. His report claims that foreigners who graduated in the field of technology, architecture and commerce received some positive assessment. The report indicated that among the respondent that (n=67) that graduated between 2014-2016 that almost 67% of the foreign graduates were employed and only one in five students were unemployed and the obstacle of unemployment was a poor Finnish skill and lack of professional network

Similarly, in 2017, another thesis work (Mutuku 2017) explored the Skill-related underemployment of educated immigrants in Finland. The research examined the experience of six skill-related underemployed immigrants in Finland. (Mutuku 2017) Report finding shows that skill-related underemployment of foreign graduates is complicated. The result enumerated poor integration of government policies, hostile climates for foreigners, lack of standardised language skills and labour discrimination.

Further in the report (Mutuku 2017) also observes that this underemployment situation affects the foreign graduates negatively as they delve into loss of self-identity and poor mental and physical health. He, however, proffered some concrete solutions on how to eradicate this skill-related unemployment which include: the changing of immigration policies to provide ample time for looking for a job after studies to avoid the panic of crashing out after the one-year resident permit. Secondly, to recommend universities to provide adequate language level proficiency that will enable the foreign graduate to get to work, recommend internship and mentorship where universities play a role in linking the international students with the companies. International graduates are also advised to be proactive in their job search, and stringent laws avoiding implicit or tacit discrimination should be outlawed and ensure companies are punished if found flouting the rules.

Presently, the topic is gaining more traction as stakeholders are looking for solutions, the more recent project was the OSSI Project which was intended for promoting the employability of international graduates in Lahti regions, and the research will follow attempt to advance the discussion and offer practical solutions

to support previous reports.

1.2 Migration Concept

Throughout human history, migration or human migration has been part of humanity and occurred at a variety of scales: Intercontinental, intracontinental and interregional (Groeneveld 2017). In each of these variations, there is always one common denominator which involves the movement of people from one place to another. Starting with the movements of the first human groups (Homo Sapiens) from their origins somewhere in East Africa to their present locations and later the colonial settlement, Industrial Revolution, slave trade and the resurgence of the migrant and refugee crisis currently striking chords in different parts of the world (Groeneveld 2017). In all this movement, much debate has reemerged as what constitutes legal or illegal migration and what definition best describes the phenomenon and what economic impact it has in the society if any, especially as it relates to immigrants' graduates and skilled migrants in developed economies (Shaw 1975). Two essential terms refer to migration: Immigration (when the individuals are coming in from elsewhere) and Emigration (when the aliens are moving away from home country). Immigration is the situation that individual leave their home country to another place to resettle. In this situation, individuals are referred to as immigrants, whereas Emigration is the term used to individuals that left their home and move to a new place in the same region or country. They are referred to as emigrants (eschooltoday 2006).

According to (Hopkins 2014), Migration is defined as a geographic movement of people across a specified boundary to establish a new permanent or semi-permanent residence. The move is usually over long distances and from one country to another, even though short and internal migration also occurs. For the most part, Hopkins did not consider refugees as migrants in this context as they are deemed to be displaced people who have been forced to cross national boundaries and who cannot return home safely due to security, political or economic reasons beyond their control. In contrast, Hopkins instead identified migrants as people, who can either choose to move (voluntary migration) from one place within (Internal Migration) or outside (External Migration) of their political boundary in search of opportunities

for a relevant period (Kok 1999). As noted above, the internal migration can then occur only when there is a voluntary movement of a person to a new home within a state, country or continent and external migration occurs when there is a movement to a new home in a different state, country, or continent. However, Immigration, however, happens when there is a movement into a new country for a relevant period. These three conceptual terminologies elucidate migration in the context of Pieter (Kok 1999).

Conversely, some migration analysts have highlighted the numerous problems that come to light in the more in-depth conceptual analysis of the Pieter view. (Shaw 1975) have argued that migration cannot be restricted to only free movement, but he instead proposed that migration can be classified into two category, those who freely chose to travel and those forced to migrate, for example, the refugees who move due to external influences they cannot control, but caused by different forces.

In Europe and most of the developed world, the context and definition of immigration can vary. According to the European Migration Network, Migration is primarily hinged on a person who relocated and maintained a residence in the European territories for a stated period, not less than at least 12 months (European-Commision 2012). Up to this present time, a most well-developed economy with reliable social and the welfare system have applied this definition and have attracted a good number of immigrants to the State for so many reasons, and it has reached an all-time high in terms of absolute numbers in recent times.

Base on this European Migration Network definition, Finland, a relatively small but advance country with sound welfare system began to receive immigrants, and it was reported that in early 1980, the number of immigrants to Finland had surpassed the number of Finnish citizens that emigrated to other countries for the first time. At that period, the immigrants that arrived in Finland experienced hardship as it was when Finland went into recession. The dwindling economy then provoked much debate on the issue of migration. Majority of immigrant were unemployed, and the situation was terrible. (Paananen 2015). Afterwards, from early 2000, employment has only slowly increased, but most immigrant groups are still two or three times more likely to be out of work than the majority of the population.

At the end of 2004, it was reported that there were over 108,346 of immigrants of foreign origin that current with a permanent resident permit, about roughly 2% of the entire population and the number is expanding annually.

According to Statistics Finland, 34,905 people moved to Finland in 2016, up 21 per cent on the previous year and the number of immigrants exceeded 2013's record with nearly 3000 migrants (Statistics Finland 2015). In Finland, most of the immigrants settle in the most significant towns and cities where chances and the opportunities to get jobs are likely. The world's migrant population concentrated in relatively few developed countries.

As Europe's birth rate continues to fall, demography becomes an essential element when discussing migration. Considering a large number of people retiring every year and the fewer number of entrants to the labour market, the pension system and the welfare states are gradually coming under pressure and governments, and policymakers are raising concerns about the future and what can be done. Moreover, with the growing trends in globalisation, internalisation and free trade, there is an increase in desire by most countries and industries, who strive to maintain the competitiveness and relevance in their business. All these developing concerns have triggered a renewed interest in examining immigration and migration and ways to benefit from it.

In Finland, for instance, according to a report from (Statistics Finland 2015), Finland has already started to experience a shortage in skilled labour as the information from the statistic reveals as early as 2005 that people retiring are higher in number than people getting employed. From that time, Finland, amongst other European states, has developed an interest in getting skilled migrants to fill the gap of the shortages and meet the demand of the skilled labour needed to stay viable. In the early 2000s, The Finnish government initiated a Finnish migration policy aimed at attracting skilled migrants who will replace the purported shortages and the demand of the skilled labour (Novotny 2012).

What types of migrants are needed? Whom are the migrants targeted? Why do

people migrate? What are the effects? In the following section, we will explore the theories of why people migrate to understand better migrants and those they should be targeted to fill the gap of the shortages in the labour market.

2.2 International Student Migration (ISM)

The statistics of internationally mobile students are increasing, and destinations are diversifying in the early 21st century. The previous report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2005 shows that about 3 million students are studying outside their home country. In 2015, the number increased rapidly to five and a half million, which account for 7% annual growth (Reinold 2018). The data shows that among the migrant group (labour, family, refugees, student), the student migrants appear to be the fastest-growing group (OECD 2017). This group of migrants are referred to as “international student”. The European Migration Network (EMN) describe the international students as people that relocated to another country for study reasons. The length of stay further distinguished the international student. For those who move to pursue a degree program, they were classified as degree mobility students, and those who went for short term courses were referred to as credit mobility student (European-Commision 2012).

The trending questions among researchers over the years has been to understand the factors that propel students to travel abroad to get foreign education. One of the standing reasons offered were about future earnings. This is based on the human capital theory, where it is believed that a person may choose to migrate to acquire diploma or degree which they perceived will enhance the chances of improving the future earning when they return to their home country. This is a cost-benefit model. This model is simplified on the notion that most students from a developing nation believed they have an undue advantage over local students where foreign degrees are most often valued more than the local degrees. They think they will have more chances of getting a better job which is equivalent to getting better earning in the future. The second group of students are those who believed that they could benefit from the host country economy especially countries and government that take education as an invaluable asset to their country and often create a path to ensure

foreign graduates are retained after study (Riaño & Piguet 2016).

This theory of the cost-benefit model was challenged as been too simplistic as the reason for a student to move abroad for further studies. Some studies have suggested that in looking into the matter, there is a need to incorporate other factors like looking into the geographical: sociological situation and student exposure and financial ability.

In understanding the factors that drive the students to travel abroad, international students often face challenges and difficulties which are not usually documented.

Given that studying abroad can be very expensive, most often, students depend on the extra income they receive during the time they are studying as a means of support. The part-time job further exposes them to gathering experience that might be of benefit when they graduate. The international students equally benefit by developing a professional network and improving their language skills. Although it must be noted here that most country regulates and limit the working hours of the international students, such regulation makes it difficult and challenging to obtain a working permit or enough time to work. The student, therefore, resorts to working through illegal means or perhaps engage in menial jobs to survive and hence may end of not completing their studies or quiet often not performing well in their studies. For those who choose to finish, they may take a loan to pay for their tuition; this problem exposes the international student to loans and insurance problems. Further, down the road, the international students' challenges continue, especially when the students have graduated and still could not get access to a decent job corresponding with the skill acquired in higher education. The situation causes more losses to the student and the host country.

As in the case of these studies, the literature takes a cursory look at Finland and the issues surrounding global student mobility as it relates to career opportunities.

In recent years until late 2017, Finland has always been among the preferred education destination due to its free tuition and subsidised educational system. Many immigrants from different backgrounds had come to pursue their bachelors or higher degrees' in the hope of finding a suitable job after their studies. The number

of International students that moves Finland for further studies has been steadily increasing until when the tuition fees were introduced in 2017. The decline of the resident permit application has shown that there are a majority of students that move to Finland due to the tuition-free policy. Considering also that those who graduate from the universities are 60% unlikely to land into their dream job or job-related to their area of study. Many foreign graduates have left the country for better opportunities elsewhere. Those who remain are either engage in menial jobs or job not related to their field of study.

Finland in recent times has been looking for ways to ensure that all residents in the country get equal opportunity of a decent standard of living, equal educational opportunities and to avoid the emergence of permanent underclass citizens. They are, therefore reviewing the immigration policy and finding ways to understand the reasons foreign graduates are unable to secure a decent job. In attempt to understand the reason of cold reception and low unemployment of foreign graduates, we present the Contact Hypothesis of (Allport 1979), where he argued that it is healthy and human for people to be biased or feel cold when they see strangers and foreigners but as contact increases between the group, they will be to know each other and the bias and prejudice wanes. However, the Lange & Westin 1981 also argued that even though the increase in contact will bring less prejudice, he also argued that growth in number of foreigners and strangers would bring an increase in discrimination and prejudice especially when such growth is likely to result in competition in different field of like especially work and other social benefits. These theories help to shape the discussion as part of the plausible reasons why International student graduate may not fully integrate into the system. Although, another school of thought has proffered that lack of Finnish language skills and proficiency is another factor affecting the smooth integration of International graduates. Finland, in trying to moderate the contact hypothesis and conflict theories, has developed integration policies to ensure the international students benefit from the Finnish system and as well become beneficial to the state.

In Finland, integration policy is the social strategy developed to ensure that immigrants are engaged actively in Finland society. The Acts on the Integration of Immigrants (1999, 2006) contained the details of the Finnish immigration policy.

As part of the integration plan, any immigrant who has lived in Finland for less than three years is entitled to an integration plan whence if he/she registered as a job seeker or seek for income support; such a person will be enrolled to an integration plan if all these conditions are fulfilled. The enrollment is done in conjunction with both the local municipality authority and the local employment office, in that procedures and agreement are entered into to provide support to the immigrant and family in the acquiring language, and relevant skills necessary in survive in Finnish society. (Riaño & Piguet 2016).

Although this integration plan exists, companies still find it challenging to hire immigrants after undergoing the integration plan. This mismatch that exists between local companies and international graduates propels this study, as the research intends to study this issue and present the outcome which can be a guide that will provide a permanent solution for the immigrants' integration needs.

2.3 The concept of Integration

A lot of studies and literature have produced on the social integration of immigrant. This literatures and surveys are carried out in a bid to proffer an optimal solution for the policymakers on integration issues. Thus, outstanding quality empirical and theoretical documents have been continuously produced over the years. In part, this indicates the growing significance and need for a standard integration plan on the European political agenda.

The recent contribution and impact of migrants in urban unrest in many European countries and the wealth of deposition that shows unfortunate result in both employment, education, and health has increased the interest and desire of the policymakers to invest in research of this problem and have raised funding recently in this areas of research to commensurate with the urge and importance of the study.

Quite recently, a growing number of works of literature that addressed issues of integration and immigration, for instance, some texts study about Muslims in Europe, some materials explore the social capital, identity and its significance concerning transnational connections. There is available comparative study

conducted that explores the theoretical and empirical details among migrant groups. This theoretical works can be an essential resource for policymakers in planning and making decisions as it simplifies the objectives of policy development and further clarifies the procedures of achieving the objectives. In the past decades, many researchers have advanced different theories on integration from (O'Neill 2001), (Levy 2007), Koopmans and Statham 2000; Heckmann and Schnapper 2003; Penninx 2004), In their various literature, they have explored the objectives of integration and different processes and forms of integration from assimilation to multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism.

The term Integration is defined from the immigration context as a two-way process of the mutual understanding of co-existence and accommodation between the migrants and the natives of the hosting state. Integration implies that the hosting country is willing to enhance the best practices of protecting the fundamental human right of the migrant and promoting equal opportunities and remove any discriminatory tendencies (EMN, European Migration Network). Integration can be considered successful if the immigrants were able to integrate into the host country and society. In measuring integration success, researchers have considered the adaptation and active role and level of participation of immigrants in the host country, including in acquisition of skills, access to Job opportunity and access to information (Taina & Kotsjuba 2014). Others have focused the measurement to other areas of human endeavour such as access to educational opportunity, language competence, housing benefits, health benefit, and political participation. In applying this indicator, it might be difficult to measure individual immigrants, so information or studies are usually obtained as a group or within cities or countries.

Furthermore, In studying integration, refugee integration and other processes of integration are distinguished in the study (Kofman 2000). Integration, as it relates to this study, investigates how international students are integrated into the system, especially exploring their participation in the workplace and other social and political life of the native state. Integration is a continuous process, as students will always learn the ways of the natives either through local language mastery, culture and acclimatise to work-life after graduation. Base on European Migration Network

assessment, Finland was mentioned among the countries that promote equality and provides equal opportunity to immigrants and foreign students. When assessing or measuring foreign graduates' integration success, there are essential factors that must be considered. Perhaps employment is seen as the primary factor as it helps in enhancing the integration process. The barometers also look into other forms of engagements and opportunity. For example, if entrepreneurship is promoted, how the education opportunities and health care services are provided to the foreign graduates and family,

1.3 Understanding International Students' numbers in Finland

In the late 1980s, the Finnish authority has shown interest to attract international students to its shores, through the policy formulated by the ministry of education to increase the international students' mobility within Europe (Garam 2009) and to ensure that there is a Job opportunity to after graduation. This policy is driven as Finland want to promote diversity and contribute towards the knowledge economy of Finland. (CIMO 2012).

By 2015, the ministry of education of Finland had already put a strategy in place that proposed and recommended the recruitment of 20,000 foreign students, but surprisingly towards the end of 2014, more than 20,000 international students had already come to Finland to study; which exceeded the estimate and budgetary allocation appropriated for funding the foreign graduate education (Hudd 2018). During that period, Finland has also been considering introducing a tuition fee in the universities to transfer some financial responsibilities to them. In 2017, the Government imposed a minimum tuition fee of 1500 euro for non-EU students (Kahanec et al., 2013).

Earlier before the introduction of the tuition fees, in 2016, over 89% of international degree students hugely favoured Finland as a study destination. From the statistics provided by the Immigration office website, the countries from where most foreign students come to Finland are Russia (2,959), Vietnam (2,516), China (1,788), Nepal (1,166) and India (779) respectively. Most of the international students prefer to study English -taught programs and mainly pursue their studies in Engineering, communication, technology, logistics and business studies.

Top ten nationalities of international degree students in 2016	
To Finland	Total
Russia	2959
Vietnam	2516
China	1788
Nepal	1166
India	779
Pakistan	712
Estonia	695
Iran	624
Germany	621
Nigeria	570

10 top countries of foreign degree students in Finland

2.4 The economic impact of the International Student of Higher Education in Finland

The past two decades have recorded a substantial increase in international students in Finland. In 2013, according to (CIMO 2014) report, there are nearly 20,000 foreign degree students that have passed through Finnish higher education institutions, which is more than three times in the year 2000.

The rapid increase in number is primarily attributed to the national efforts that were undertaken by the FHE in International education and as well in the prevalent global student mobility. In recent years, FHEI has put in effort in recruiting foreign students and improving school curriculum and services in the English language. (CIMO 2014) noted that the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture had urged higher education institutions to recruit students from abroad to enrich the Finnish higher education community and bring knowledge capital to Finland.

The rapid growth and rising number of international students make a study of the impact of international education very important. The effect of recruitment of international students on higher education, skills of students and to the broader society is complicated. There are fewer studies available in Finland that study the economic impact of international education. Most OECD countries, including

Finland has raised issues of concern on the commercial aspect of higher education due to a budgetary constraint which has dwindled the university funding and support from the state. Even as the government is encouraging the higher institution to promote Finnish education and to implement internationalisation strategies to attract international students, they are equally considering what other ways to fund the degree programs and cover the recurring costs. Finnish policymakers had recently faced with the difficulties to ascertain if their investment and funding the degree program is worthwhile and whether they will pay off in the long run?

To this effect, a hot debate ensued in the past years about how to fund the degree program, which resulted in the Policy and decision-makers finally imposing on an average a tuition fee of EUR 10,000 on every non-EU student annually, which was completely free of charge until 2016. About one and a half years down the line, the tuition fee has hurt the internalisation of higher education in Finland. The number of international students coming to study has reduced significantly (Kansa 2018).

A survey carried out by a national daily newspaper early October last year said that by the end of September 2017, 4,355 non-EU students had filed for a residence permit, which was 25% lower than in the same period in 2016.

According to the study conducted by Helsingin Sanomat, it was reported that the Finnish Immigration Service had denied about nine per cent of residence permit applications. In most cases, the justification for the refusal has been the doubt about the students meeting the living costs. In recent days, a student must have at least 6,720 euros every year in his or her possession upon entering Finland (Xinhua 2017). Although the University authorities tried to compensate the non-EU students through granting scholarship, it was insufficient and not for all. Most of these issues are the challenges of international students, and they have an impact on society.

The Government Institute for Economic Research VATT and CIMO produced a preliminary report about the economic impact of international students. The study looks into the possibilities of studying this topic in more depth in Finland. From the report, CIMO and VATT agree that there is a substantial positive economic impact that is created by international students in Finland. (Valtion Taloudellinen Tutkimuskeskus 2014). The report also noted that the age of the foreign graduates and

the success of her offspring's in a labour market will determine the net effect on the Finnish economy and if foreign graduates are employed at their prime that it will yield a positive outcome on the economy. (Valtion Taloudellinen Tutkimuskeskus 2014). The report, however, suggested that a short-term economic benefit is realisable if, in the next 20 years period to come, more recruitment of international students from outside of EU/EEA region is planned.

(Reinold 2018) Literature also supported the analysis of the report, and According to the report, he noted that international students could contribute to the economy of the host country in both long and short term. He stated that in the short term that international students can contribute additional revenues through their tuition fees and living expenses in the host country. Such additional revenues can rise to be in billions of euros. Moreover, in the long term, retaining international students can add to the pool of highly skilled resources that can be tapped and help build up the contemporary knowledge-based economy. (Reinold 2018).

(VATT 2014) Moreover, (CIMO 2014) report also noted that international student's net benefit to the economy could be seen at the prime of their career, especially within the age of 20yrs to 40 years. Each estimated to generate about 200,000-euro net to the economy. They confirm that young adult immigrants who come at the prime of the career, which include the international students have a tremendous positive impact to the economy of the host country as they are among the most productive group. In the next section, we will analyse the retention of international graduates in Finland to understand the losses or benefit that possibly exist in the Finnish economy.

2.4.1 Cheap Labour:

Cheap labour often literally refers to someone who works hard for a little pay in sometime lousy condition. One in every five international students has reported having this kind of experience. Migrants and many international students in a bid to survive often engage themselves on a menial and unskilled job for a basic wage. They contribute immensely to the economy of the country. Sadly, due to the effect of a push factor, some skilled migrants still leave their skilled job and migrate to a developed economy where they will subscribe to cheap labour to survive thereby causing more brain drain in their home country. The disadvantage of this cheap labour is that it affects the home country of the migrants and equally subject the

migrants to a substandard of living while enriching the host country in the end.

2.4.2 Skilled Labour:

The term skilled labour often refers to labour that requires a highly trained, educated or experienced workers who have specialised training or skill and can complete more advanced and sophisticated mental and physical tasks on the job. Some of the international students and migrants are highly trained and multitalented and can add value to the host country by contributing their skills to the development and production of goods and services. The departure of the migrants or international students from their country to destination countries harms the local economy of the country of origin. The exit and emigration of such highly trained and skilled workers often what is called “brain drain”. This problem is most prevalent in the developing countries where Engineers, doctors, nurses and other skilled highly qualified workers move out for further studies or search of a greener pasture. On the optimistic note, however, it has been established through a different study that migrants remit any monies back to their home country to support their family. That is a massive flow of foreign exchange or funds that the local government and families can use for developmental and economic growth. This, however, can substitute for the brain drain that affects the economy of the home country.

However, in the case the migrants leave for a short term (seasonal migration) to acquire knowledge and skills, they often bring home new ideas, skills and knowledge that they have gained from their travel. Many businesses, farm practices, and commercial ventures have started by people who got ideas and knowledge during the times they spent in migration.

2.5 International graduate retention in Finland

The retention of international students in Finland has been recording high in the past years. According to information obtained from the Statistics Finland data, almost 67% of international students stayed back in Finland after graduating in 2011 (CIMO 2012). 6% of these graduates remained to further their education, whereas 18% continued in the country for other unspecified reasons. Moreover, 31% of the foreign graduates were reported to have left the country after completing their studies.

Considering reports from a different state, Finland is among the country with higher retention rates in the western states. Although, with the relatively higher number of graduates that stayed back, it is still challenging to obtain information about how many of these graduates were able to gain successful employment from their areas of study.

However, the statistics only revealed the retention percentage one year after graduation and is silent about the subsequent years and so could not be an absolute yardstick for getting the retention rate. Although, it appears from the survey that graduates tend to remain after studies, but if their stay does not translate to integrating into the society and subsequently, into the Finnish job market, it will hamper the economic benefit Finland would get and hence effort need to be made to ensure there is an overall impact of international student after graduation.

3 THE INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES AND THE LABOUR MARKET IN FINLAND

The current climate of the Finnish labour market for foreigners is reported to be improving in the recent report. According to a report from the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and employment, 22,800 foreigners are currently unemployed job seekers in 2018, which has reduced by almost 3,400 from the previous year. The statistics did not, however, specify the number of unemployed international graduates, but other surveys that have considered the unemployed graduates mentioned that it is only 14% of international graduates are currently unemployed job seekers (Statistics Finland 2019).

Meanwhile, according to (EXPAT 2018), the current analysis of the Finnish market has shown positive signs in all respect as against the previous year. The report also showed that unemployment has decreased in the 2018 report, including the number of people in long-term and disguised unemployment. Although the information provided by EXPAT can vary as different sources offer a report on unemployment and the figures are not always the same. According to the report from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and employment, 229,400 is reported to be unemployed jobseekers as of November 2018, 41,900 less than a year earlier. They accounted for 8.7% of the labour force, which is 1.6% less than a year before (EXPAT 2018). This economic outlook may not be stable in the long run, considering that report from Finnish employers suggests that

hiring prospects in the future is uncertain.

Moreover, the staffing levels are predicted to rise in 7 out of 10 industry sectors, and the most robust labour market will be in the Manufacturing industry.

Overall, the report noted that the employment climate would be challenging for anyone seeking for a job. Additionally, to have a chance that the foreign job-seekers should be prepared to address the issues of Finnish language skills as it is one of the most critical problems for foreigners and as well acquire a vocational training or university degree as statutory qualifications requirements exist in many fields and positions.

3.1 Shrinking workforce

In Finland, the share of Finnish's working-age population who are retiring from the labour market is increasing, but the International student graduates or immigrant graduates' unemployment rate is equally growing, this situation seems paradoxical vis-a-vis workforce development of any economy. Given this demographical trend in Finland (Taner 2011) argued that in 2025, the working-age residents would inevitably drop as long as there are no measures in place to compensate for the decline of the working population. Tanner, however, suggested that the speed of this decline can only be contained by inviting trained and skilled migrants to recompense for potential shortages.

In the previous review submitted by (Taner 2011) on Finland's labour market and immigrant integration, Taner had warned that over 500,000 Finnish people that form part of the post-World War II baby boomers would be retiring around 2016, The retirement will cause a shortages that will need replacement for the vacant places that it will create in the labour market.

If no action is taking, the declining workforce can develop a significant economic setback, (CIMO 2014) report has shown a steady decline in wealth creation and the reduction of the workforce has also tremendously reduced the income taxes.

3.2 The employment situation of international graduates

According to the Finnish Alien Act Section 78 Subsection 3(4), the Finnish authority allows international students the opportunity to work while studying. The Finnish

(B) Category resident permit, which is denoted in the Alien Act, authorises alien students to work full-time mainly during holidays or part-time during studies as long as the employment is relevant to the Degree traineeship (Ibrahim 2015). This permit, however, does not remove the understanding that the primary purpose of the International student is the study as estimated study progress is a pre-requisite of extending such permit. However, upon graduation from the university, the Finnish authority view the international graduates as potential labour and have revised the Alien Act (HE 219/2014) as amended in 2005 to give international graduates the opportunity to look for employment after graduation by extending a one year (Search for job resident permit), This amendment also applies for graduates who might seek entrepreneurship.

However, notwithstanding their potential as a skilled labourer and their academic competence, the international graduates find it hard to get a relevant job that matches their educational qualification. This issue has been attributed to poor Finnish language skills, which, have negatively affected the quality of professional life and the standard of living for international graduates. Although, in our study, we have seen different research result from a different organisation, which counter this notion and have painted the picture that international graduates relatively enjoy successful employment after graduation in comparison with another western economy.

According to the VALOA survey conducted between 2009 & 2010 by Finland Universities and small businesses, they revealed that over 70% of the foreign graduates were hired in 2010 to a skilled job. However, it was noted that 61% of those that were not employed are furthering their studies, whereas 11% were doing their internship. This study is contrary to an undeniable reality we witness every day in Finland among the graduate we interviewed (Shumilova et al., 2011).

Contrary to the information and result obtained from the VALOA survey, a stack gap and difference recorded by another study (CIMO 2014) where international students employability is a record low as such emphasis has been mounting from the Finnish government to fashion out a strategy for improving the international graduates' chances of employability through sustainable integration plans that take

language among other factors more seriously which in return will facilitate the international graduate's employment opportunities (Shumilova et al. 2011).

3.3 Competencies, Skills, and factors relevant to employment

The growing access to digital technologies and the knowledge economy has set the motion for global competition for skilled labour (Piotrowski 2015). The higher institutions and government organisations are rapidly responding to this new development by creating policies and strategies to internationalise their higher education to fit this new phenomenon (Garam 2009). In developing the plan, the critical factor considered by most developed economies is to train and retain skilled foreign graduates, to improve the human capital of respective nations. Moreover, there is an effort made to ensure that international graduates are equipped with relevant skills that are necessary to improve the chances of securing employment in labour markets (Majakulma 2011).

As in the case of Finland, to leverage on this knowledge economy trend most higher education institution must ensure that in building the strategy, that effort is made to ensure that international students are not only prepared academically; without as well adjusting to be proficient in the language and gathering relevant social and technological skills that prepares them for the labour market (Majakulma 2011).

The past studies, surveys, and literature have all suggested several competencies are required to be integrated and gainfully employed in the Finnish labour market. Essential competencies that were mentioned include strong network, acquisition of professional knowledge, mastery of Finnish language skill with a level of cultural competencies and work-related experiences (Forsander 2003).

3.4 Knowledge and Professional development during studies

To be successfully employed in today's world of work, employers are increasingly demanding for graduates to acquire a solid skill set with a high standard of both theoretical and technical know-how gained during higher educational studies. Active professional development will enable the job seeker to develop knowledge and skills; they need to address challenges in their working environment. Therefore, excellent skills in communication, critical thinking, digital literacy, teamwork, self-management, work experience in the field of study, intercultural competencies, leadership skills, computer skills, and ability to quickly develop new knowledge. Professional ethics and emotional judgment are essential pre-requisites for any graduate (Shumilova et al. 2011). This knowledge expert is vital for employability, especially for international graduates who may have a disadvantage already over their native counterpart (Mizell 2010). A highly qualified graduate with both academic qualification and skill set has a higher chance of gaining employment (Majakulma 2011). This issue highlights the critical need for universities to deliver a program of personal skills development to ensure graduates can navigate the increasingly uncertain world of work and move with greater ease between industry sectors (Monash Business 2018).

However, besides the mentioned skills, the VALOA survey indicated that three critical factors could enhance the foreign graduate's chances of getting the job which include the understanding of the Finnish language, related work experience and personal attitude (Shumilova et al. 2011).

4 RESEARCH METHODS AND DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY DATA

4.1 Research Methodology

This section describes elaborately the research methods employed in this research, together with the primary data gathered for the study. Due to the type of research, the analysis used research techniques that will be relevant to the investigation. The research methods utilised are critically analysed and addressed.

The principal purpose of this study is to explore how to improve employability for unemployed immigrant graduates from Finnish higher institutions. Considering that Research approach is principally a plan and procedure that involves steps of wide-ranging assumptions to a precise method of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Chetty 2016). The nature of the research problem will, therefore, determine the approach can be used in addressing the study. The research approach is mainly divided into two categories: the method of data collection and the plan of data analysis or reasoning. Regarding Figure 1 below, we can see that the data collection can be done using a qualitative or quantitative approach, whereas the Data Analysis can assume either deductive approach, inductive approach or sometimes a hybrid approach which involves two combined (Chetty 2016).

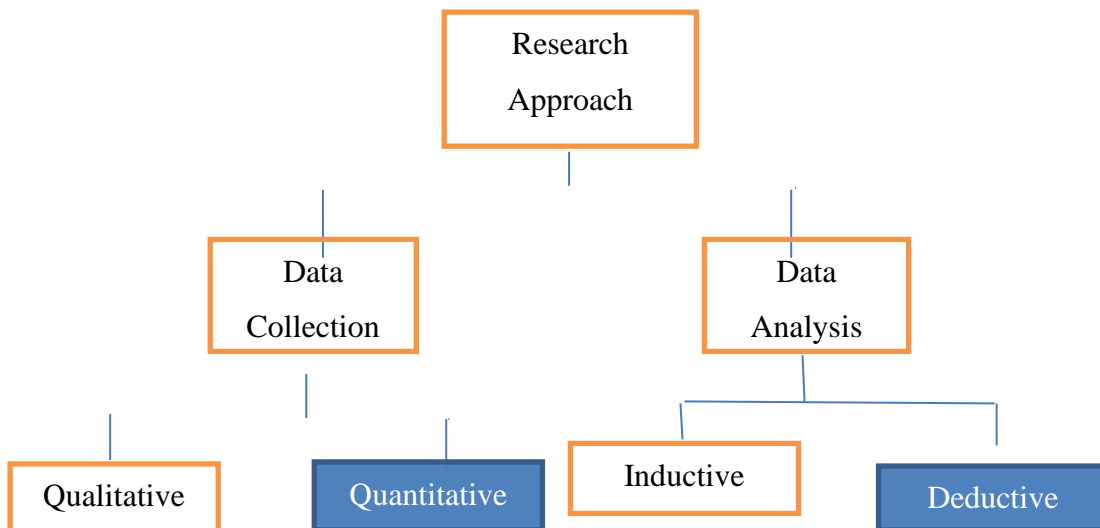


Figure 1: Components of Research Approach

4.1.1 Quantitative Approach

In this thesis, the researcher will use a quantitative approach in the data collection and utilise the deductive method in the analysis because Quantitative data need statistical analysis to test hypotheses. The study employs the deductive approach as it enables the research to reason from generic to specific matters. Also, deduction from general perspectives leads the researcher to develop a theoretical framework (hypothesis) and test it, thereby concluding with a particular conclusion.

4.1.2 Qualitative Approach

The research will also apply the use of a qualitative approach in some data collections using in-depth interviews from some stakeholders. This approach suits exploratory research as it is usually employed to examine a problem profoundly. The qualitative approach explores the perception of people, the way they think, act and behave, and how the experience is being translated to the real-world construct. A qualitative method will be beneficial to this research as it helps to understand people's motivation, the reason for taking action in an in-depth way.

The thesis report will, therefore, be based on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, thus utilising a mixed approach of the study. While the quantitative approach will help us to develop the framework for this study, the qualitative research will enable the researcher to connect with the people and ask deep questions and listen to people to bring the desired solution.

4.2 Research Goals

The principal objectives of this study are to explore how to improve employability for unemployed immigrant graduates from Finnish higher institutions. Secondly, the study will examine the barriers faced by immigrant graduates living in Finland to take up a career after graduation. Finally, the research will explore different results to address the issue of lack of integration of international students in the labour market and proffer suggestions on what the employers can do to foster immigrant graduates' employment? To achieve this goal, different stakeholders will

Be consulted, which include both the foreign Bachelor & Master Students, international graduate, the Finnish companies, the government and university institutions. Due to time constraints and brevity purposes, the result of the interviews and surveys are attached to the appendix for further reference.

4.3 Sampling Method

When conducting an empirical study, for example, using a questionnaire survey, it would be unrealistic to study the whole population. Instead, a selected few from the larger group are usually considered as a representation of the entire group. This method is referring to as a sampling technique. The technique allows researchers to infer information about a population based on results from a subset of the people, without having to investigate every individual. The primary condition for a sample is that it should be a subset of the representation of the community as well being heterogeneous (Barratt 2009). There are different types of sampling methods; most of them are group into two categories, namely:

- i. Probability Sampling Methods: (Simple random sampling, Systematic sampling, Stratified sampling, Clustered sampling) (Earl 2012)
- ii. Non-Probability Sampling Methods: (Convenience sampling, Quota sampling, Judgement (or Purposive) Sampling, Snowball sampling)

The most popular method in the probability sampling method is simple random sampling and systematic sampling. In this study, these two techniques will be used to conduct the surveys. The Simple random sample is used for the Immigrant graduate, and the systematic random sampling is used for the undergraduate Survey questionnaire

4.4 Data Acquisition method

4.4.1 Quantitative Survey 1: Foreign graduate Survey

In this survey, we collected data based on prepared questionnaires, which are available both online and in a printed form. The respondents have the options of Responding to the survey via the online weblink or either in written form, recorded

or verbally through face-to-face interaction between the researcher and respondent. All respondents that meet the study criteria are foreign graduates that have either graduated from any university of applied sciences or other universities in Finland between June 1, 2010 and May 31, 2018, were asked to participate. Questionnaires are often formulated by standardisation and usually have standardised answers that make it simple to compile data. The researcher, however, determines the question types, sequence, and pattern of questions in gathering information from respondents. The survey offers a general overview of international graduates' employability and skills. It includes both the Finnish higher education, namely universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS). Finland has currently 16 universities and 25 UASs. The evaluation of the survey is focused on the responses of 41 international graduates from networks and Social media platform like (LinkedIn Facebook & other Alumni network sites) and 30 undergraduates and degree students from two universities and two UASs

4.4.2 Quantitative Survey 2: Foreign Undergraduate Survey

Although the research is based on foreign graduates, the author believes that undergraduate students' opinion is crucial to this research as internship availability helps to build a network that will possibly enhance the employability after graduation. The survey was, therefore aimed at collecting data from existing International students studying a bachelor's and master's level at Lahti UAS. Students who just started their studies or did not take courses leading to a degree were excluded. Our investigation, dealing with the study of human subjects, has been approved by each participating institution's administrator.

4.4.3 Telephone Interviews

For the interviews, we used the snowballing sampling method in selecting respondent and then in data collections we used a telephone interview to collect data from the respondent in decision-making capacity by asking them questions on the phone. This method enabled us to contact one or two company managers or some school officials, and after gathering data from them, further interviews can be scheduled if needed. There were telephone interviews conducted between 26

November 2016 and 16th December 2018. These interviews were unstructured, and such informal discussions are applied in circumstances where the subject matter is vast and not explicitly defined (Roy Horn 2009). The unstructured method does not abide by any pattern of structured questions during the interview; instead, the respondent engages in a free exchange of views and interviewer listens and observes. (Malik 2016)

The first interviewee was Head of the Business programme in one University of Applied science and second with an official in KELA Social insurance institution, and he wants his name withheld. The third interview was a parliamentarian from a famous Political Party Hon. Leader Kale Jokinen.

The survey is centered on the responses of both the foreign bachelor and master students and international graduates from universities and UASs and the interviews of both the government, employers and other relevant stakeholders collected. In the subsequent analysis, the composition of the respondents will be shown, and the data will be contrasted with other statistics on similar issues.

4.5 Description of Survey data

In the following section, the structure of the respondents will be given, and the data will be compared with other statistics on similar issues. From the total of 200 online questionnaires sent to graduates identified from networks and Social media platform like (LinkedIn, Facebook & other Alumni network sites) using the Webropol survey tool. There are 41 total respondents from international graduates.

Another 200 online questionnaires were distributed to different universities in the Helsinki areas using the Webropol survey tool. There are 30 total respondents.

Both questionnaires were based on mixed questions types, including multiple questions and open-ended questions, and it was online for six months to generate adequate responses from international students and graduates. The data gathered from the respondents is presented below; items are grouped according to similarity:

4.5.1 Institution and degree

From the total respondents that responded to the survey, 42.4% of the graduates that responded came from universities whereas 37.6% are graduates from the University of Applied Science. The result in table 2 is slightly different from the data obtained from (CIMO 2018) where it states that international students from, FHEI is about 20,000, where (9,815) are studying at universities, and the other half (10,185) are in UASs.

Table 1 Distribution of respondents by the higher education institution

Institution	Number	%
University of Helsinki	17	23.9
Helsinki University of Applied Science	18	25.3
Lahti University of Applied Science	23	32.3
University of Tampere	13	18.3
Total	71	100

4.5.2 Field of Study

In figure 2 below, the distribution of respondent by the field of study is shown. We asked the respondents to *choose their field of study* to understand the type of studies which enable us to study if there is a particular field of study that gets more opportunity for employment. Among the returned survey we received, only 67 respondents answered the question, whereas four respondents did not provide an answer to this question. Base on their responses, the field of business administration gathered more popularity, with 28% of the respondents, followed by 21% of the field of computer science and Engineering. The demand for the following areas of study corresponds with the number of degree program offered in English by the corresponding universities.

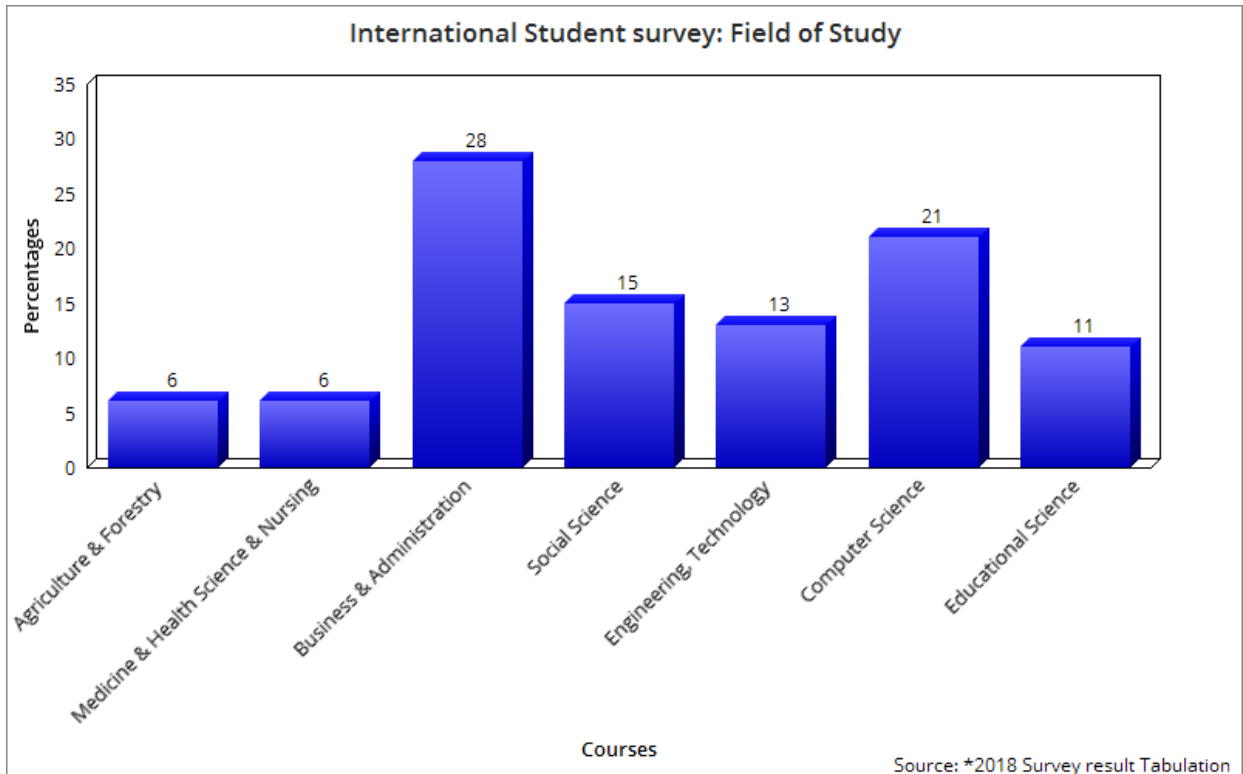


Figure 2: International Student Survey: Field of Study

4.5.3 Degree program completed in Finland between 2013 to 2018.

To identify *what kind of degree program completed by the respondents in order to comprehend how qualified and competent they are to join the workforce*. The survey result shows that a total of 70 respondents participated in responding to this question. As shown in Figure 2: International Student Survey: Field of Study. Below, the survey shows that 42% of the respondents have completed their bachelor's degree in Finland whereas 40% of the respondents have completed their master's degree and only about 17% respondents have finished their Doctorate in Finland,

Which degree program have you achieved in Finland between 2013 to 2018?		
Level	No of Respondents	Result in Percent
Bachelor	30	42.86
Master	28	40.00
Doctorate	12	17.14
Total	70	

Table 2 Degree program completed between 2013 to 2018

4.5.4 The primary language of Instruction

The language of instruction in all sectors seen in figure 2 was mainly English language. In universities, 10% of the respondents have completed their graduate degree programme in the Finnish language. Interestingly, about 6% of the respondents replied that they studied their curriculum in the Swedish language, and whereas 84% of the respondents reported that the medium of teaching was with the English language. It appears that most international student population lean towards studying their programme in English.

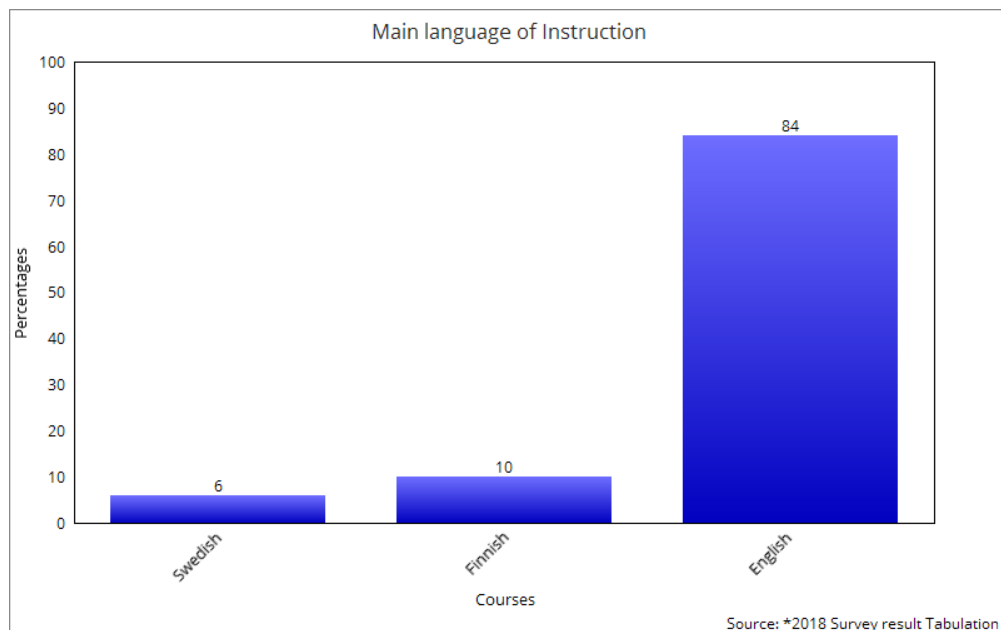


Figure 3 Main Language of Instruction

4.5.5 Motivation to study in Finland

We asked the respondent *what their important motivation to study in Finland was?* This question primarily is proposed to analyse the reasons for coming to Finland. As discussed in the literature review above, we are mostly concerned in the “pull” factor to understand what attracts the potential foreign students to Finland. Based on our study, the study tells in figure 4 below that 37.7% of the respondent had come to Finland due to the free tuition education.

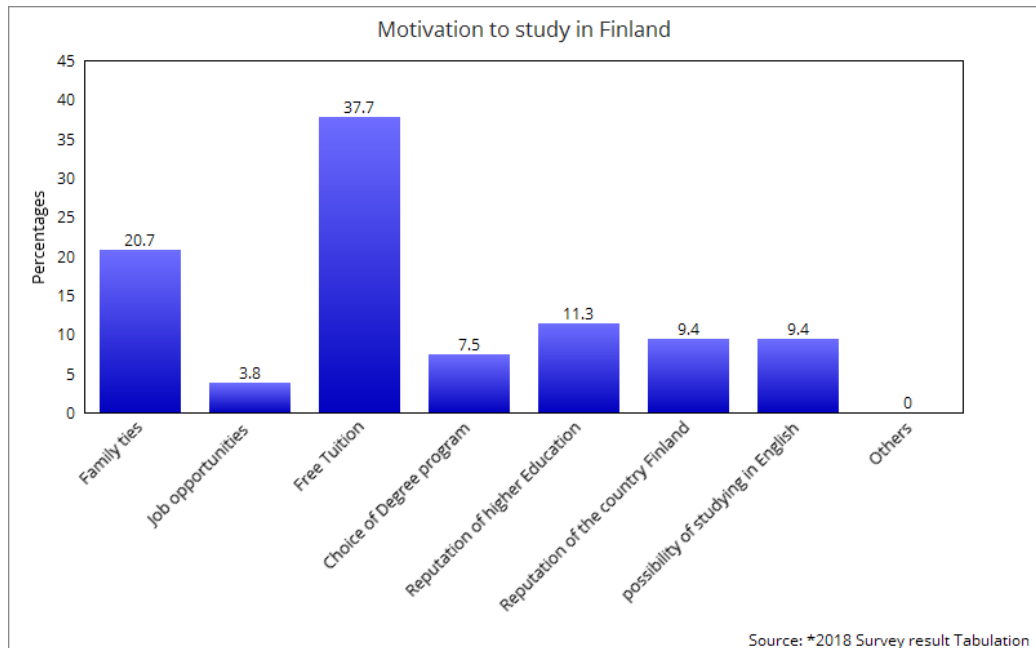


Figure 4: International Student Survey Motivation to study in Finland

Whereas 11.3% of the respondents said, it was due to the reputation of the higher education institution in Finland. 20% of the respondent considered family ties as their motivation. Another 9.4% of respondents said it was due to the possibility to study in the English language. 7.5% of respondents said it was the choice of degree program available that motivated them to consider in Finland. None specified any other reasons.

The tuition-free programs garnered much interest in the past, quite recently the universities have introduced the tuition-based program and the percentage of the international students' applicants reduced significantly in the subsequent years. Although a good number of students have reported that the reputation of Finnish universities and quality of education was a motivating factor, our survey did not find them at the top reasons for coming to Finland.

5 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section explains the analysis of data followed by a discussion of the research findings. The result and the findings of the study are based on the research questions. The data gathered from the survey are examined to identify, describe and explore the relationship between international graduates who completed their studies in Finland, but were unable to get employment offers in order to encourage employment and workplace skills and we also explore the situation of the existing final year degree students who are currently studying in Finnish universities. This group of the respondent is included to understand the root cause of the problems in order to provide sustainable solutions that will help stakeholders to take a second look from the solution-oriented perspective. Interviews were also conducted to get the perspectives of the employers and other relevant stakeholders like the university and the policymakers.

5.1 Graduate Survey report

The study used different networks and social media platforms available to identify graduates from Finland universities. Data were taken from self-administered questionnaires, done by 41 graduates (n=41), with a 44% response rate.

When the survey sheet was returned, we received 51 questionnaires; but it was only 41 questionnaires meet the requirement needed for the study. The result represented 42% of the average population. Although neither the reasons for refusing to participate nor the characteristics of the non-respondents are known, the naturally low response to surveys may have been attributed to the majority of graduates have either left the country, or those that are around may not be interested in sharing their stories. Of the remaining ten questionnaires deemed unusable, the eight respondents did not complete the survey in that two or more subsections of the reviews were omitted. Two respondents reported that they had continued to further their education to PhD levels, and thus, they did not meet up with the specified inclusion criteria for this study. The study analyses the questionnaires with the descriptive statistical analysis to identify frequencies and percentages. Not all respondents attempted all the questions in the survey; therefore, rates reported corresponding to the total

number of graduates answering the individual issues.

The questionnaire for the research comprised of four sections and data generated will be presented as follows:

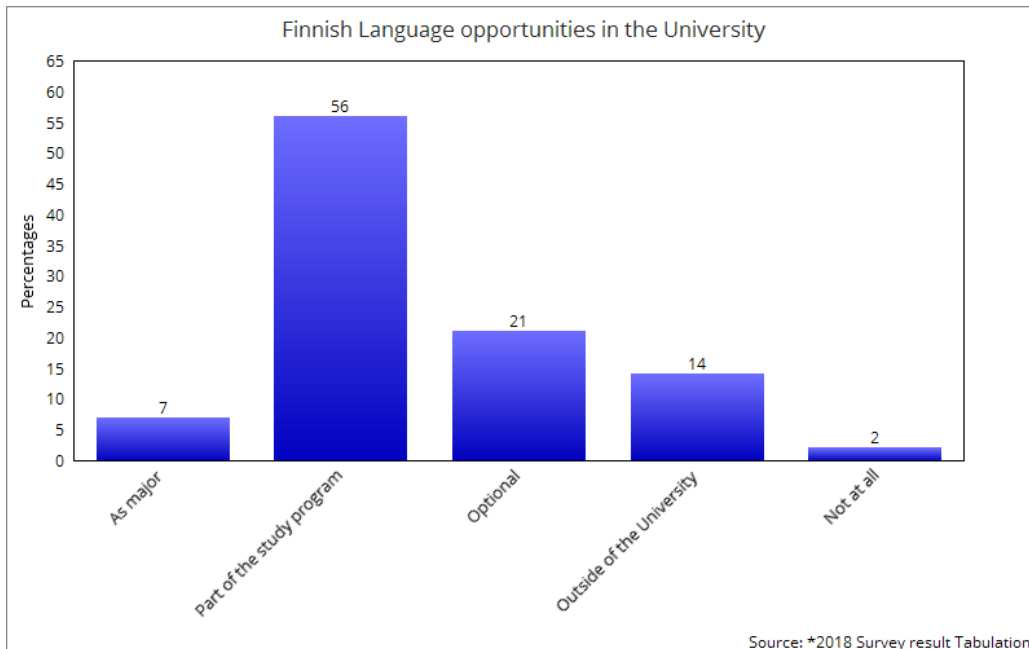
- The first section includes gathering information about respondents' motivations for coming to Finland. We considered for those who came before tuition fee was introduced if it was because the free tuition or the English degree programme or the reputation of the universities, job availability or family reunion is the reason for coming to Finland in the first place. This set of questionnaires applied to international graduates and degree students
- In the second section, for those who have come to study, we evaluate the Job practice and internship opportunities available to them to examine if there are opportunities for exposing their talents and skills to the Finnish job market and knowing if the knowledge of Finnish language helps them to secure such opportunities.
- In the third section data, we evaluate how many graduate immigrants were able to get Job after graduating from the high institution and perceived reasons for getting employed or refused employment.
- In the fourth section, we will examine the data obtained from the analysis of the company and school management about their attitude towards graduate immigrants and reasons for the high rate of unemployment and draw an association between the three variables discussed.

From the data obtained from the respondents, the research identified that the different factors that affect the employability of foreign graduates include inadequate Finnish language skills, little or no work experience, lack of secure professional networks, inability to get internship or traineeship opportunity in Finland, lack of cultural awareness and persistence, negative employers' attitude and lack of labour market job demand.

Finnish language opportunities available in the university

Considering that most authors have argued that there is little exposure to the Finnish

language to international students in the university. The survey reveals that the majority of graduates did receive Finnish language instruction from outside the university. Figure 5 below shows that only 7% of the respondents did study the Finnish language as a major. 56% of the respondents opined that they considered the Finnish language as a compulsory course in their program. 21% studied the Finnish language as a compulsory course in their program. 21% studied the Finnish language as an optional course in the university



Finnish Language opportunities at the University

Figure 5:

Career aspiration in Finland after graduation

As can be seen in Figure 6, 63% of the respondents said that they would like to start a career in Finland after graduating. 21% of respondents, however, indicated that they would not start a career in Finland and 16% are undecided about the issue

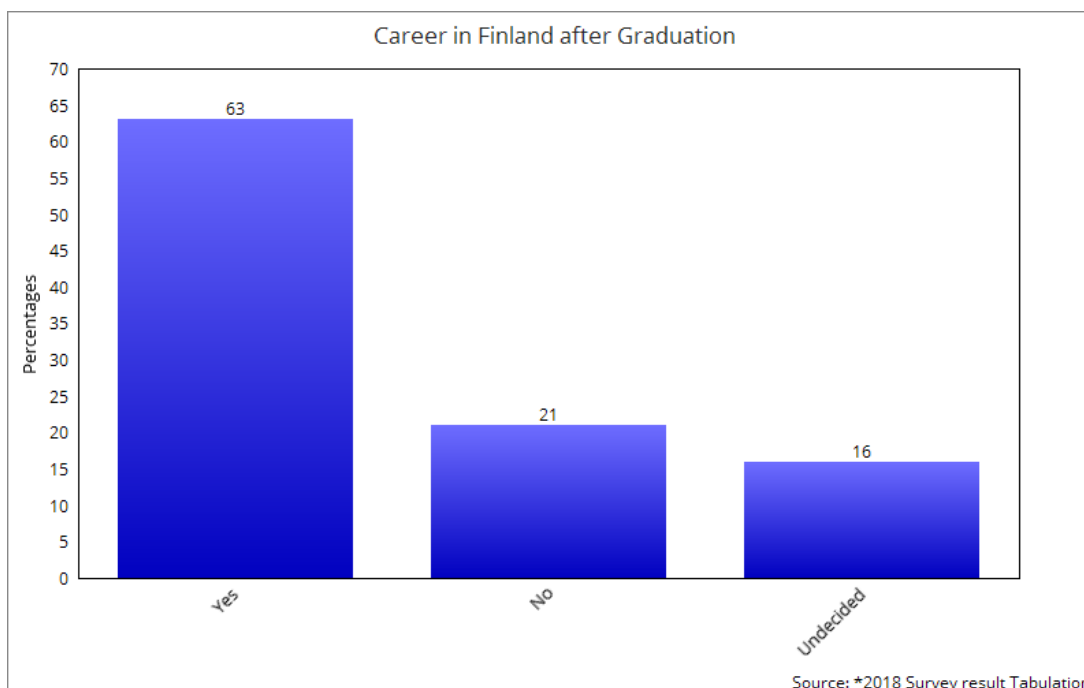


Figure 6 Survey: Start a Career

Factors that influence the decision to move outside of Finland

In this survey question, we wanted to understand what exactly are the elements that made the international students graduates decide moving outside of the country after their graduation. A gaping 49% of the respondents said that it was due to difficult job market access and penetration in their field of study that made them decides to leave the country after graduation. Correspondently, 14% had also noted that it was due to lack of job opportunities in their field of study whereas similar 14% had indicated that it was due to lack of networks or any social connections in the country.

The biggest obstacle to getting a job in Finland	
Lack of Finnish/Swedish language skills	18%
Lack of career guidance at higher education institutions	12
Lack of access to job search information	12
Lack of the right contacts/access to professional networks	12
Lack of opportunities to gain relevant work experience (e.g. through internships)	14
Lack of career advancement opportunities	8
Small labour market	2
Ethnic/cultural/religious discrimination	18
Residence permit restrictions	4
Other, please specify	0

Table 3 Factors that make Finland unattractive

Employment Status

To understand the critical reason behind this study, we wanted to see how many international students were able to secure and retain their job by asking for their employment status. Bear in mind that due to the issue of survival, a large number of international graduates who have indicated that they are currently working may be working on a menial job not necessarily related to their field of study. Table 5 Employment Status below shows that 32% of the respondents are currently employed, whereby 23% of respondent indicated that they are not presently employed. 14% of respondents are currently undertaking further studies, and 14% had started their own business.

What is your employment status?	
Employed	32%
Unemployed	23%
Entrepreneur/Self-employed	14%
Doing internship	10%
Undertaking further studies	14%
Part time & Studies	7%
Other specify	0

Table 4 Employment Status

Career expectation after graduation

Remarkably, a considerable number of respondents have indicated that they are not working in a career that meets their career expectation. This response confirms the feelings of many that most international graduates hardly get the job of their equivalent level of study. Although 35% of the respondent had replied that their career goals are met, whereas the remaining 7% said their career goal is somewhat met with their current job.

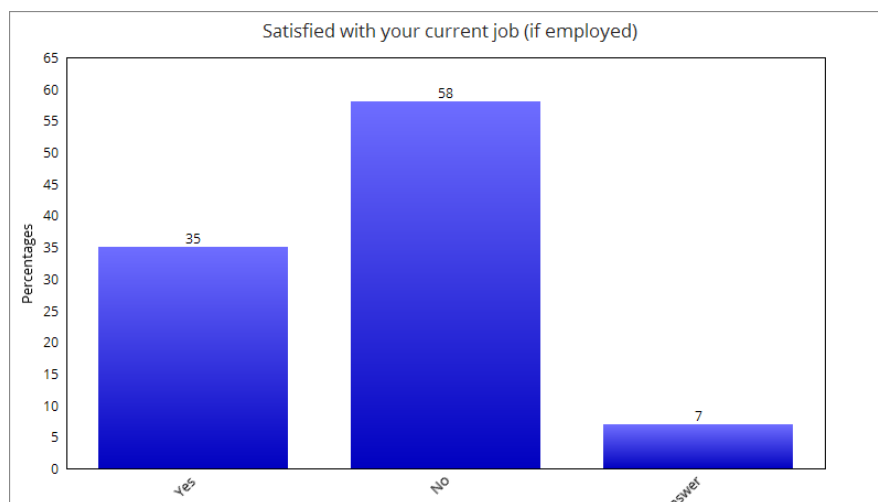


Figure 7 Career Expectations

Factors that help in gaining employment in Finland

Most of the international graduates have maintained that if you have no friends or strong network that it is seemingly difficult to increase employment. When we tested this assertion in this survey, we found out as the Figure 8 portrays that a gaping 42% of the respondents got employed through Network of friends and colleagues who made personal references for them. 35% also got a personalised recommendation from the family and friends, and a minimal number received assistance from the university or other sources.

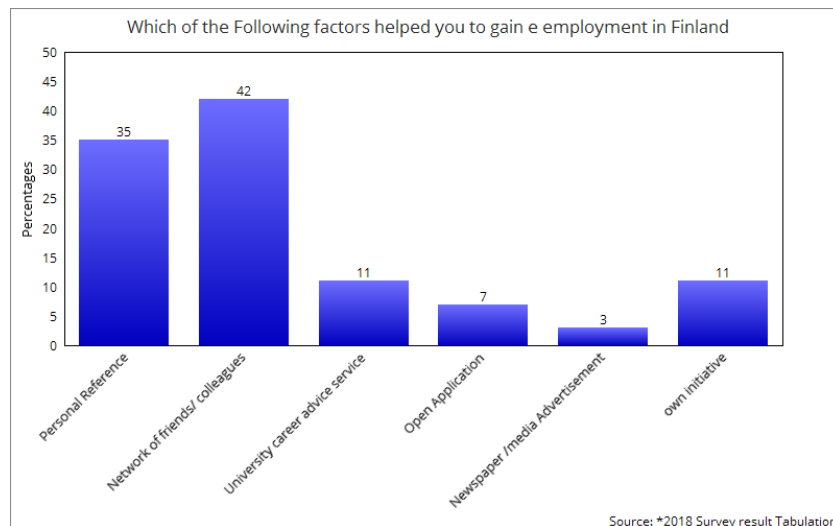


Figure 9 factors that help in gaining employment in Finland

Is the Finnish Job Market appealing to International graduates?

Considering that most foreign graduates have mentioned that the Finnish job market is not somewhat acceptable which might be the known reflection of ethnic discrimination existing in the recruitment process as have indicated by the respondents in the survey. As can be seen in Figure 9, A gaping 56% of the respondent noted that they did not agree that the Finnish labour market is welcoming to international graduates. About 28% of the respondents strongly disagree, and just about 10% agree that the Finnish job market is friendly to foreigners. This response may be due to insufficient language skills of the foreigners

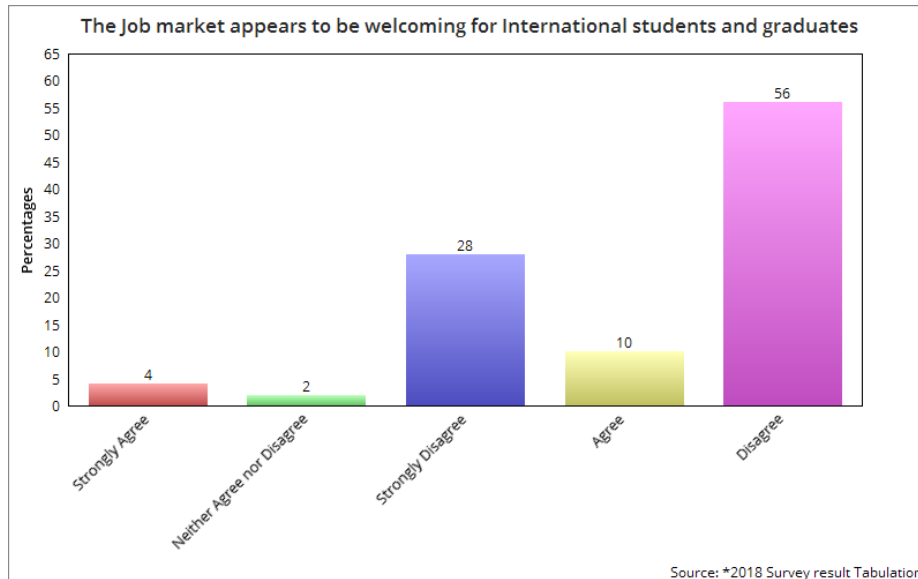


Figure 10 Is the Finnish Job market appealing to International Students

Are you satisfied with the available Finnish language in your study program?

Having collected the data about the availability of the Finnish language, we also wanted to know if the respondent who studied the language were satisfied. The survey question was *how pleased you were in general with the availability of Finnish language courses in Finland universities*. The survey shows that 34% of the respondents were dissatisfied, 29 % were satisfied and only 13% of the

respondents said they were delighted and 16% said they were miserable

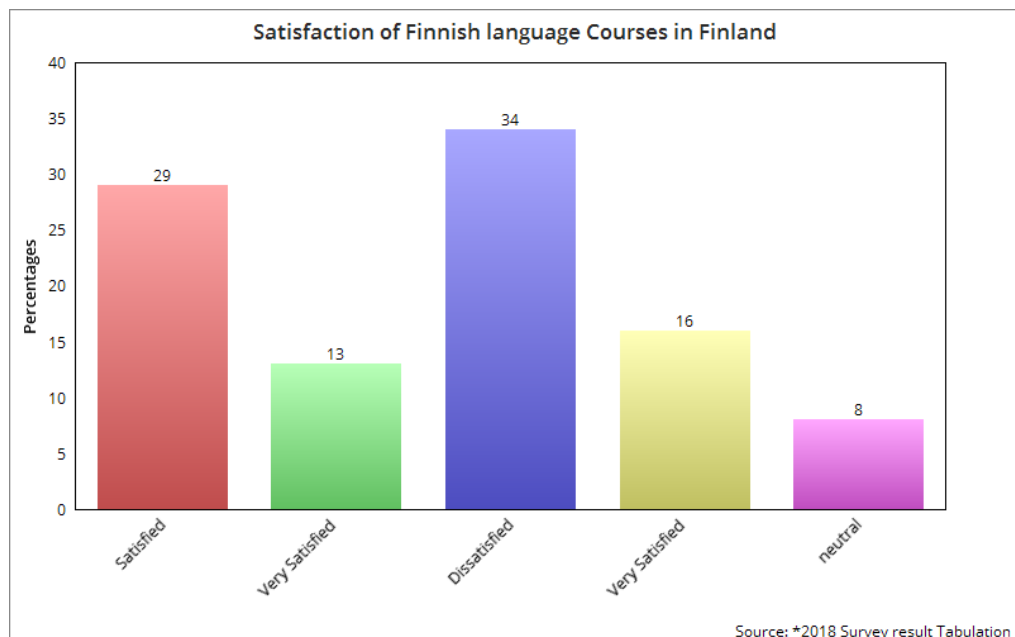


Figure 11 How confident with the Finnish Availability in your school

Finnish language skill evaluation

We evaluated the level of Finnish language competence of the respondents in the questionnaire. We asked *how you would assess your skill in the Finnish language?* The survey shows from Table 5. that almost 49% of the respondents have reached an intermediate level in the Finnish language. 24% of the respondents have an essential skill in the Finnish language; 20 % of the respondents have attained an advanced degree in Finnish language; only 7% have no Finnish skills.

How would you evaluate Finnish language skills	
Basic	24%
Intermediate	49%
Advanced	20
None	7%

Table 5 Finnish Language skill Evaluation

Biggest obstacles to getting a job in Finland

To address the issue of the challenges of getting a job by international graduates. We posed a question about *what you think are the biggest obstacles to getting a job in Finland for international graduates?*

The biggest obstacle to getting a job in Finland	
Lack of Finnish/Swedish language skills	18%
Lack of career guidance at higher education institutions	12
Lack of access to job search information	12
Lack of the right contacts/access to professional networks	12
Lack of opportunities to gain relevant work experience (e.g. through internships)	14
Lack of career advancement opportunities	8
Small labour market	2
Ethnic/cultural/religious discrimination	18
Residence permit restrictions	4
Other, please specify	0

Table 6 Obstacles to getting a job in Finland

The survey shows that 18% of the respondent noted that the lack of Finnish/Swedish language skills is the principal obstacle to getting a job in Finland. The other challenges and obstacles, as indicated by the respondents, are as follows: 12% said it is Lack of career guidance at higher education institutions. Also, another 12% said it was due to a lack of access to job search information and the absence of the right contacts/access to professional networks. 14% said it is a lack of opportunities to gain relevant work experience (e.g., through internships). 8% of the

respondent confirmed that it is a lack of career advancement opportunities. 2% said it might due to the small labour market

It is surprising to note also that 18% of respondents cited that it may be due to ethnic/cultural/religious discrimination. 4% said the obstacle might be due to residence permit restrictions

A shortcoming of the FHE about helping foreign graduates to secure a job opportunity

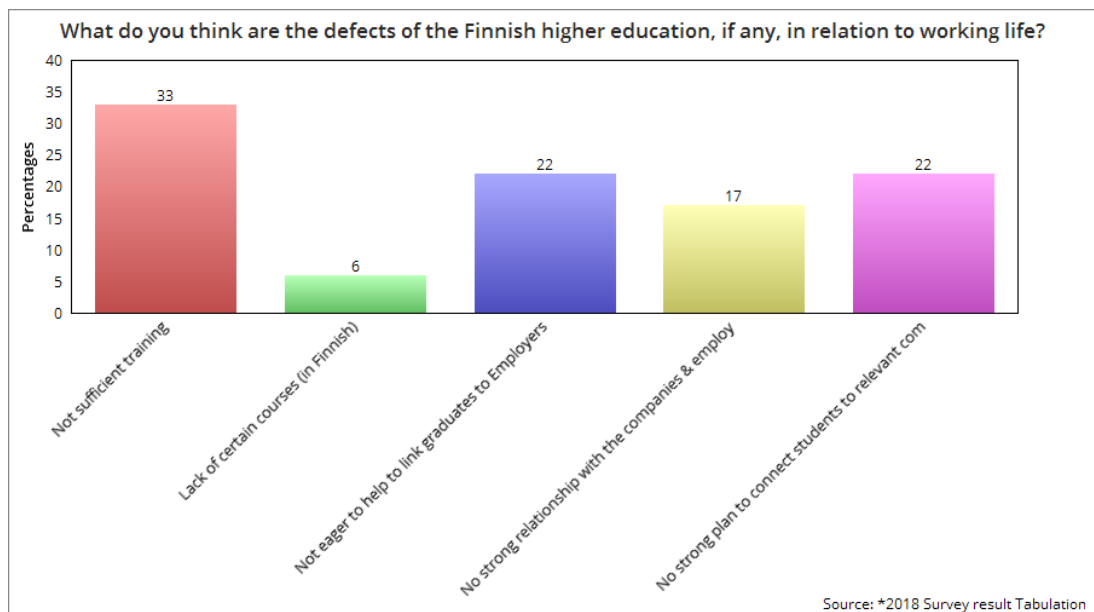


Figure 12 How have you help foreign graduates concerning working life

In the survey conducted, we equally consider the role of the university in helping the graduates to secure a job or how has the university prepared the graduates to be able to secure a position after graduating from the university. In the survey, as shown in Figure 11, the majority of the students, almost 33% noted that they do not get enough training or Finnish language skills that they will need at work. Also, 22% of respondents said that there is no healthy plan by the university to connect students to relevant companies for an internship or eager to help to link graduates to employers. 17% of the respondents said that there is no substantial relationship with the companies and employers. Moreover, 6% said it is due to lack of specific courses in the Finnish language.

5.2 Undergraduate Survey Report

During the research process, a new stakeholder was identified which are not initially considered in the research sample space. This includes the final year students who are currently studying in the universities and university of applied science. The author understands that the criteria for selecting master students at the University of applied science includes the three years of equivalent working experience and therefore concentrate more on the undergraduates from HEIs. This sample group are thoughtfully included in this research to discover from the beginning the reasons why foreign graduates upon graduation have a lower employment rate than their Finnish counterpart. Still, find it challenging to secure job opportunities. Thirty undergraduates' students responded to the questionnaire (n=30) from four universities.

Internship possibilities

In reply to the survey question *if an internship is required in the study program*. The result represented in **figure 12**. below shows that 3 6% of the bachelor's degree students that responded to our survey replied that internship was part of the requirement to complete the degree programme, where 7% said Internship is not required. 40% of the master's degree students that responded noted that internship is not needed for the completion of their program and 17% of PhD students also acknowledged that Internship is not necessary for completing their program.

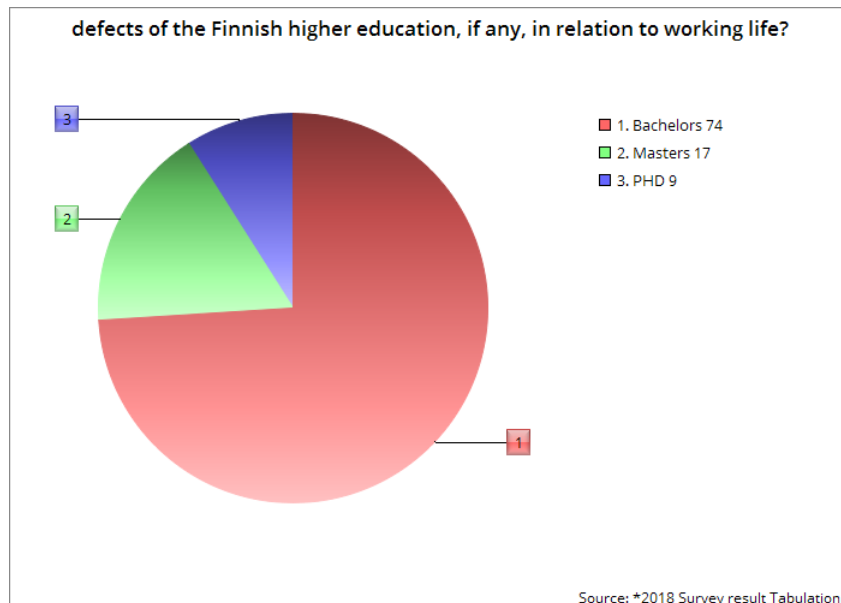


Figure 13 Student Survey 1 Result: IS Internship needed in your study program

Internship availability

In response to the *availability of internship* and if the respondent were able to get internship usually without using their friendship or network, the survey tells us in Figure 13 below that 40% of respondent were able to get a successful placement through reference and networking. 23% of the respondents said they got their internship generally without using any of their networks, whereas 37% of the respondents did not get internship opportunity in Finland.

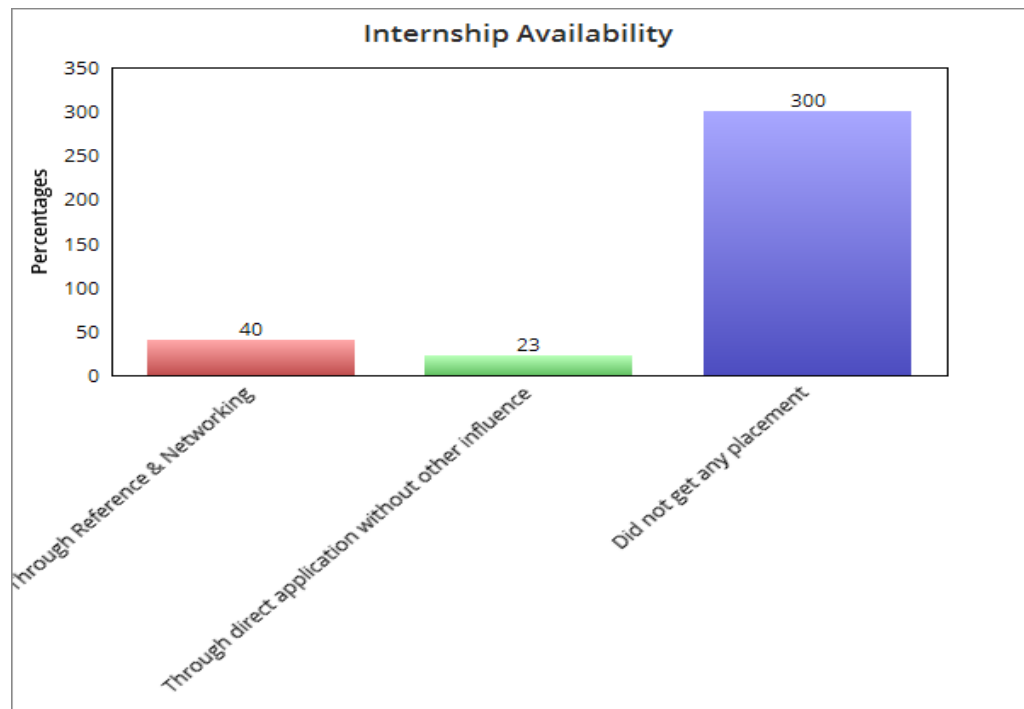


Figure 14 Internship availability

Relationship of the study to the Internship

In response to the survey question “*To what extent your internship was related to your field of studies*” Figure 14 shows below that 63% of the respondents said that the internship is entirely related and 16% of the respondents said that it is somewhat similar whereas the 21% of the respondents said their placement is not related at all.

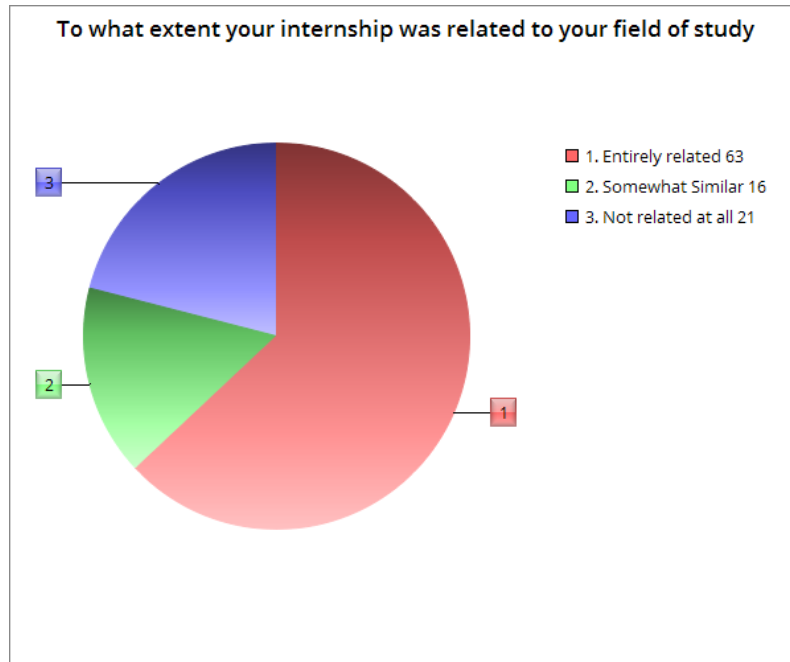


Figure 15 Survey: Extent the Internship associated with the field of study

Access to career guidance during your studies

In reply to the survey question *if respondents received career guidance assistance in their studies before going for an internship*, 37% of the respondents said yes, whereas 63% of the respondents said they did not receive any career guidance assistance before going for the internship programme as Figure 15 depicts.

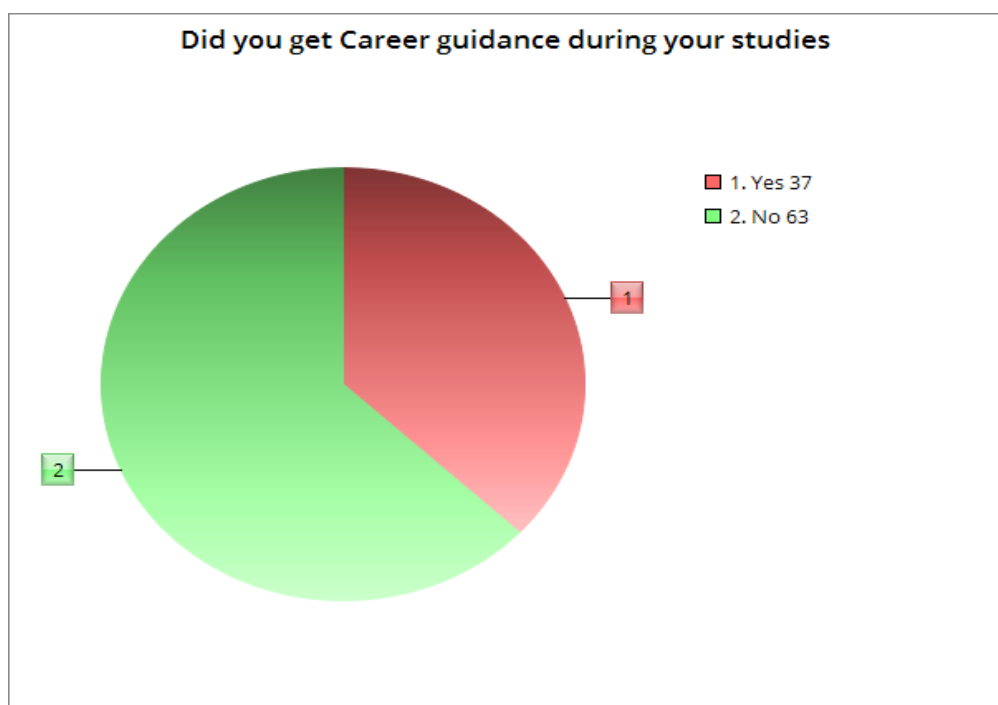


Figure 16 Survey: Access to career guidance during study

Would you come to Finland to study is no longer Tuition-free?

In the survey, respondents were asked if they would choose Finland as a destination to further their studies if it is no longer tuition-free, considering that Finland institution has introduced Tuition fee to their higher education. The research shows from Figure 16 that 85% of respondents would not come to Finland if the tuition fee is added to higher education. However, 7% of the respondents reported yes, and 4% is undecided.

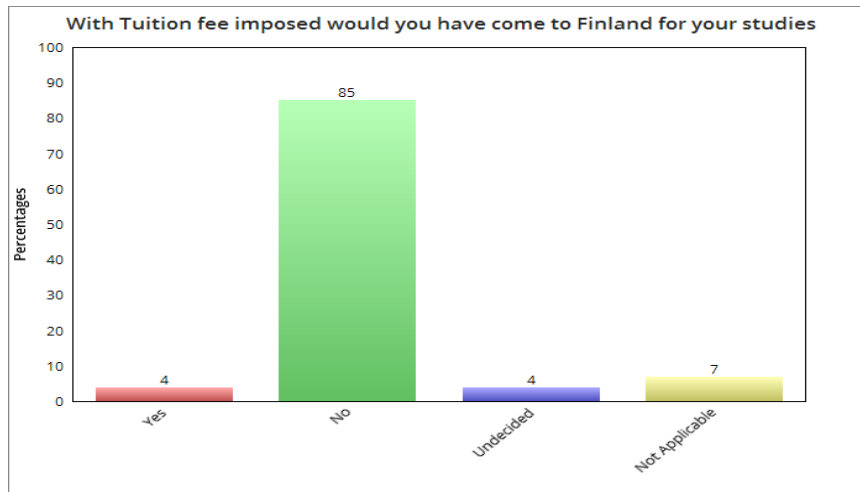
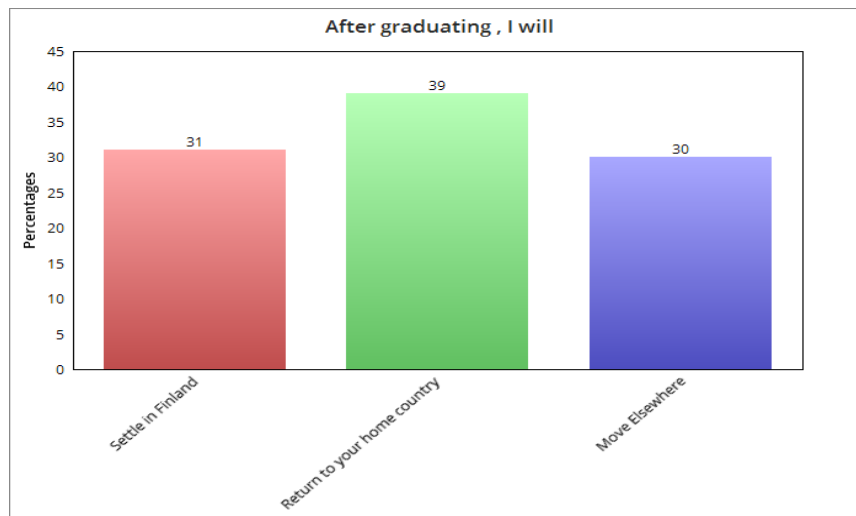


Figure 17 If the tuition fee is submitted will that change the application drive

Plan to remain or move elsewhere after graduation

One of the survey questions is to understand the intentions of international students after completing their studies in Finland. 31% of the respondents reported that they would settle in Finland. It is surprising to note that 39 % plan to return to the country after study and 30% had indicated the interest in moving elsewhere.



5.3 Employers interview report

To examine the thesis topic thoroughly, the study will obtain interviews from some employers to get their perspective on the issue. Few of the selected employers interviewed are from companies or organisations where the majority of our survey respondents are employed. The structure of the interview includes the central questions in the survey which centered on the intricacies of hiring, retaining and working with foreign graduates, the relationship and communication channel that exist between employers and Higher education institution and the employer's suggestions and recommendations on how to improve the employability of foreign graduates.

It was challenging to get companies to interview for this project. However, we got six companies that accepted to do the interview. Three of the companies answered the interview questions and sent back the copy to me, and the two of the employers was interviewed via Skype, and one employer was interviewed face-to-face. The employers that agreed to be interviewed are represented in small and large companies in different sectors, namely in Logistics (1), Public

sector (2), Services & Consultancy (1), and IT (2).

Some of those interviewed seek anonymity and some wishes their names to be reported, however for the interest of uniformity, all names of the intervened will be classified, and a numbering formula will suffice. The employee's responses have been transcribed and presented in points for clarity. During the interview, it was hard to get the total percentage of foreign graduate employees from employers. Although the logistics sector was able to say that 35% of foreign employees work in different capacities and roles, and some of the roles does not match with the qualifications of the international employees. Two of the companies among the companies interviewed, however, estimated between one to 7% of international employees in the total number of employees in their companies. One of the Service based companies owned by a foreigner noted that 75% of the employees were international, and this exception is understandable as the type of service they offer, influence the staff composition. Base on this information, we can predict that the internationalisation of foreign graduates is still not robust.

In Finland, especially when compared to other OECD countries. According to the information on OECD website, the unemployment of the labour force outcome of the migrant in Finland is accounted for 15.8% of the total labour force, which is in the 4th lowermost among other OECD countries (OECD, 2018).

Motivations and rationales for employing international graduates

During the interview, the study wanted to highlight if there is any strategy in place for recruiting international employers. When the question was asked, all the respondents replied that there is no unique strategy to hire international staffs, but instead, they put up their job offers aiming to hire the best talent. Although they include some specificity of language mastery in their job description, they, however, claim that it does not limit to only Finnish born, but anyone that have the skills and level of language described is what they are looking for and not excluding foreigners. However, one of the interviewees who happen to be a foreigner noted that besides the job descriptions that she intentionally hires 75% of the foreigner. Therefore, in many cases, there are no strategies in place to hire international staffs, apart from some company that lay little emphasis on diversity. There is also a shift in the perception of most employers; most of them feel that it is cost-efficient to employ international graduates from those that also live in Finland than recruiting international staffs from abroad.

“.... In recruiting staffs, we emphasise getting the best-qualified candidate in Finland. We rarely hire from abroad because of the cost implications and the length of time required for the staff to adapt to our company culture and the Finnish environment” (i1)

“We recruit mainly from Finland, but if we plan to hire abroad, we look for most European citizens that reduce the cost related (working permit process or relocation cost), that is challenging and expensive,” (i2)

Even though most respondents claimed that they have no clear strategy in place in hiring foreign graduates, they all acknowledged having international graduates in a company has some benefits, especially concerning cross-cultural skills and other related skill. For example, appreciating the facts that these international graduates could bring some efficient ways they operate in different climates and cultures:

“International graduates can be of benefit to our working culture, and they can introduce different ways of doing things that we have not yet have, most importantly, their approach in handling and managing situation can add values to our organisation. They can also bring more information and ideas from their cultures that will advance our current processes and operations. (i3)

“.... International graduates are certainly valuable in an organisation, but Finnish people have a strong attachment to our language and culture, and often, we feel that international graduates may not fit in immediately, and it appears we are hesitant. But we also know that having an international graduate has the potential of widening our horizon, help us understand better different cultures” (i5)

Finally, it was acknowledged that it would be harder for the penetration of any foreign market without hiring experts from that market that has both pieces of knowledge of local language and cultures of the two countries. The central countries or potential markets mentioned in this case were Russia, China and India.

The official language of communication at work

In the interview, when we discussed the official language of communication in the organisations and the level of importance attached to it. Different opinions and rationales to back it up were revealed. For instance, the IT sector said that different department does not attach much importance to language, especially the coding department where English used, but some department may use Finnish and English together. However, in the public sector, the mainly Finnish language is used and a bit of the English language. However, in general, Finnish language skills are mostly required.

Recruitment channels

When we discussed the recruitment channel to understand how the jobs are advertised and to see if the process is available to foreign graduates. Most of the employers from different companies mentioned that their main recruitment channel is the leading online portals in Finland such as *www.mol.fi*; *www.justrecruitme.com*, *www.oikotie.fi* and *www.monster.fi*. Some of them noted that they use the unemployment (TE-PALVELUT) website and encourages others to utilise the service. Some also advertise on their company websites

To some degree, employees from some companies recommend a referral program where existing employees can recommend their friends or colleagues, and this makes it crucial for students to build a professional network while in the universities to benefit for such opportunities.

“...We mainly use the unemployment office for advertising our job offer because it provides a free package for companies. The TE-Palvelut also offer a lot more services to immigrants, and we encourage both immigrants and companies to utilise the pool of resources and services it offers. Every company ought to have goals and values in recruiting, and the main goal is usually to get unemployed people to work. There is a level of social responsibilities to add to it.” (i1)

Crucial Skills appreciated by the employers

In addition to professional (role-specific) skills, qualifications and educational background, most employers are interested in the following set of attributes:

“Passionate and strong interest in the future of work, behavioural change, technology and digital workplace, Self-motivated, full of energy, ambitious, and goal minded person, negotiation & Strong and professional written and oral presentation skills” (i1)

“Must be a proficient and mature, capable of demonstrating independent thought, leadership, seek out innovation and share new ideas and the independent research skill” (i3)

“good team working skills, fluent social skills and communication skills” (i6)

and

“ability to working with minimal supervision” (i2)

In general, most of the employers interviewed have a positive appreciation of the skills acquired by international graduates from Finnish HEIs:

“As long as they graduated from one of the universities of Applied science, they are good to go. I believe they have sufficient skills and knowledge to get to work immediately.” (i5)

When posed questions to know if there are the preference of university and any difference in the training and preparations from university vs UAS graduates, they were different opinions expressed. Some employers noted that UAS are more flexible and practical than the University that is more theoretical. Some employers also pointed out that most UAS graduates get some working experience before graduating from UAS, which equip them more than university graduates. However, some employers share that some UAS does not prepare students with the core practical and training needed. Overall, most of the employers affirm their satisfaction in the graduates they hired and their competencies.

Employers recommendations for Finnish higher education institutions

After the employers enumerated the skills, they would likely prefer the international graduates should have, and the employers were also asked to offer some recommendations for the Finnish HEIs in terms of improving the chances of the labour market-relevance of their programmes. The employers emphasised more on the importance of soft skills and knowledge of the Finnish culture.

“I believe there is a need for the HEIs and the students to focus more on learning about multicultural skills and communication skills, and project skills.” (i1)

“It will be important for courses on Finnish culture and society [including working culture] be introduced in all HEIs where international graduates get all relevant information about Finnish cultures and work culture before graduating; this will enable them to fit into the job immediately” (Duunitori)

All the employer emphasised the need to teach the Finnish language more intensively:

“concentrate more on teaching the Finnish language, start as earlier as they start the courses and ensure they graduate with a level B if you give the students more opportunity to learn Finnish language, I believe they will excel in their respective job” (i3)

Other specific suggestions were given in the field of software development studies:

“There is a need for the HEIs to have more courses on PHP, Java. It should be an advanced and compulsory course for a master’s degree in the IT field.” (i5)

Employers recommendations for international students and graduates

The interviewed employers also proposed some recommendations for the international graduates that would like to stay in Finland:

“Most graduates stay for a long period looking for the job that matches their qualification, although having that ambition is good, but I suggest they try to get into any available job and grow from there. Although they argue that it does not support their CV, but I would suggest they start from there to learn the rule of the game first and get information of the working culture and keep searching for open opportunities in their career goals” (i5)

“Register and apply to as many organisations and companies as you can tailor your CV to suit the need of the company and avoid concentrating on just one or two companies” (i2)

“Always ensure that you study the job roles and requirement and follow the application guidelines very well to ensure you meet the requirements stated in the job. Most applicants ignore this important fact and end of not being selected” (i1)

In the end, when it is impossible to get your dream job or any job at all in Finland, do not lose hope, you can use your entrepreneurial skills to practice. Remember:

“Whenever you plan to set up your own company to become an entrepreneur in Finland – always ensure you get a Finnish entrepreneur partner to make it easier for you. It is tough to survive alone!” (i5)

The challenges of having international employees in the Finnish working environment

The employers interviewed also expressed their views on the possible challenges that exist in getting international staffs to their companies. Among the top views shared, the employer's responses about Finnish working culture is that in a typical Finnish environment, there is honesty and openness, straightforwardness, lack of supervision, trust and flexibility, but the international employee may have a different experience in a working environment where they operate in different working cultures. For instance, international graduates might need guidance and follow up on work but Finnish counterpart work with minimal guidance. The employers gave some examples of the challenges they have on issues about getting feedback from international staffs, being proactive and perceptions of trust:

“A typical Finnish person is honest and straightforward. It is a Finnish lifestyle, but sometimes it seems difficult to understand what to expect from different cultures. For example, if you are working with Asian employees, it will be difficult to get feedback or receive feedback from them.” (i2)

“Getting some international employee who had little or no experience to work in a Finnish environment can be a frightening mission as they might expect more bureaucratic leadership and will wait for instructions to be given all the time without knowing that we are more proactive and use more an intuitive approach” (i5)

Another more significant challenge employing international staffs is language issues. From the responses, it appears that even in companies where English is the working language of the company, the employers are still feeling hesitant to employ non-Finnish speakers:

“When an international employee is hired, and he speaks little Finnish, it complicates the work of his team. It is usually a big challenge to change the language for a few individuals where others are not strong in communicating their views well in English. This is preventing the managers from employing the international staff because of the extra work to do to accommodate one or two foreign staffs” (i5)

Companies 'scared of change.

From the findings of this interview, it appears the future is bleak for international graduates in Finland. The companies interviewed could not estimate the number of foreign staffs in their companies but the fewer foreigners employed are roughly in the city areas. Only a fewer percentage of the foreigners occupy a management level at any of the firms. The perception of

the employers about the international graduates is to accept any job available to them or start their careers at the lower levels than their Finnish counterpart to be able to learn more of the Finnish working environment.

It appears that most foreigners are currently employed in the field and sector not that are not master-level graduates target. Moreover, none the companies have any strategy of recruiting international graduates, although they shared similar views that their employment can add to the diversity. Unfortunately, most advertised jobs in the online platforms are mainly in the Finnish language and also require strong Finnish language skills and international graduates with limited Finnish language skills cannot benefit from the job advertisement.

Most of the companies are sceptical of changing the official working language just because of a few international staffs, but instead may be reluctant to employ those without enough Finnish language to avoid appearing less Finnish or especially the older one is scared English-speaking staffs. One of those interviewed points out that these fears were maybe counterproductive, especially for companies that plan to export or internationalise.

In the end, the critical issue here is that the Finnish firm should understand that although the international graduates may not have proficient Finnish skills as their counterpart, they sure bring to the table additional professional skills and cultural and academic knowledge and information that can advance the Finnish companies and prepare them for expanding abroad and gaining a competitive advantage in the global economy.

5.4 Government interview report

In order to understand what the government has done, or policy implemented so far on this issue. Interviews were conducted. The first interview was with the labour and unemployment official who decides and develop the integration programs and unemployment scheme in Finland, and the interviewed decides to be anonymous. The second interview was with a parliamentarian, National coalition party leader Kale Jokinen from the Finnish parliament. These are the officials that enact laws and create policies on such matters.

These interviews were organised in a way to get views of these officials on the ways of improving the employability of international students in Finland and to know if there is an effort by the government to facilitate this problem and in general improve the Finnish economy and internationalisation standard. For clarity purpose, the study has summarised the responses of

these interviewees in the subsequent section of this document.

Reply from the second Interviewer from the unemployment office

Do you have plans or policies in place that improve the international graduate's chances of employment

There are a lot of integration packages available for immigrants but not specifically for only the international students. We, however, give the international students opportunity through granting of a one-year resident permit to stay in Finland and look for a job. Through our website, we also provide an opportunity for immigrants to apply for unemployment benefits and register for job applications. We also train immigrants through several vocational and technical skills that will equip them to find a job.

What are other programs available to help international graduates in getting a relevant job?

One of the critical problems we have identified among immigrants is the lack of Finnish language skills; we have a tested and successful integration plan that engage immigrants to an intensive Finnish language and culture education. We believe that immigrants that are fully integrated and have command of Finnish language have a better chance of getting a job in Finland.

Reply from the Third interview, Party leader Kale Jokinen

What does the Finnish parliament position regarding the high unemployment of immigrant and especially international graduates?

It is a big concern to the government. Hence, we have been passing laws to alleviate the sufferings and improve on the chances of getting immigrants fully integrated to contribute to the Finnish economy.

What concrete laws or plans have been enacted to this effect

For instance, we have passed laws that extended the permit period for international graduates from 6 months to one year. We have also opened up for more people to follow the part of entrepreneurship, and hence, any immigrant has the opportunity to register as self-employed.

What can be done to get Finnish employers to consider hiring international graduates?

Efforts are being made to educate the Finnish employers that the world is becoming international, and English is becoming more relevant. As such, they should open up to enriching their workforce with divergent cultural personnel's who can bring more values and skills to their organisation.

5.5 Institutions roles or perspectives

During the research, the study conducted two telephone interviews and one Face-to-face interview to exchange ideas and perspectives with experts in the area of the study. The first interview was with the head of the International Business program and a principal lecturer from Lahti University of Applied science, who came to Finland as an international student and later gained employment and have risen to different higher positions in his career. The second interview was with the labour and unemployment official who decides and develop the integration programs and unemployment scheme in Finland and decides to be anonymous.

These interviews were organised in a way to get views of these officials on the ways of improving the employability of international students in Finland and to know if there is an effort by the government to facilitate this problem and in general improve the Finnish economy and internationalisation standard. For clarity purpose, the study has summarised the responses of this interviewers.

What factor(s) helped you to gain employment in Finland?

The respondent noted that his employment in Finland has been unconventional and may not suit the narratives of the majority of international graduates although he recognises that it is usually tricky for foreign graduates to get a job opportunity.

Does overall work experience so far meet your expectations?

In response to this question, the respondent said that he is relatively satisfied, but in the Finnish workplace that there are still unbreaking ceiling and a limit to the level one can climb. He also mentioned that skilled graduates still find it challenging to rise to the top.

Your thought about the employability of graduates in Finland general?

International graduate's employability rate is still rated low, and mostly Finnish companies still prefer job seekers who have a solid finish language skill and therefore the majority of graduates who have little or no knowledge of Finnish language still finds it difficult to get a job in Finland.

As ahead of the program, what do you think the universities should do to promote and integrate foreign graduate to the Finnish market?

The university should develop a well-planned curriculum that addresses the issues of employment and equipping the students will all necessary social, technical and professional skills that they need to be successfully employed after graduation.

In your role as the head of the program, what do you think the universities are not doing that may help in making this possible

Universities should ensure that from the day, students are prepared for the tasks of equipping students.

What kind of solutions or program could be possible that can help get the employers to work with institutions in creating an excellent opportunity for integrating foreign graduates?

As tuition fees become compulsory for non-EU/EEA students from the academic year 2017, do you observe any changes in applications from foreign graduates

The applications for international students have dropped since the introduction of Tuition fees, although most of our programs are for a permanent resident employee who has had work experience in the past. In the program, it is not noticeable.

Does your university give career guidance for an international student?

Career guidance is given to students, but more effort is needed to have a well thought out plan and policy around it.

Why is the university not arranging an internship for foreign graduates?

No, the student arranges an internship for themselves.

Does your university conduct career fairs during your studies?

No, career fairs are not organised in the university.

6 RECOMMENDED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

As indicated in the research objectives of this study that the primary purpose of this research is to create a framework that will present an opportunity for foreign graduates to gain employment after graduation. Having studied the problem associated with this low immigrant employability after graduating from university and university of applied sciences.

The study presents a recommendation and guidance that if followed, will assist in improving the employability of foreign graduates in Finland. The recommendation will be categorised into four segments and may form part of a training tool or model that can be referred to when developing policies to improve or solve the problem.

6.1 Strategy

In applying the concept of PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act), which is a four-step scientific and management method that is often applied in business for the management and constant improvement of processes and products. The author developed the framework where there is a strategy segment where all the relevant policies are developed by the policymakers and the government. The first part of the framework is to develop a Strategy. This strategy will fall in the plan step of PDCA, where the government plan and develop all relevant policies and laws that will enhance the chances of international graduates to participate actively in the Finnish labour market. In this strategy section, the author advice the policymakers to develop a policy that gives incentive to employers that promote multiculturally driven workplaces. The policy should include also detailed how to train foreign graduates in relevant skills that employers have recommended. The policy should also include instructions of what the institutions must do to help international graduates.

6.2 Knowledge management

In the Do step of the PDCA, the author refers to knowledge management in the framework. In this section, the institution and relevant agencies are expected to implement the policies enacted in the plan step of the strategy. All the relevant institutions must ensure that foreign graduates are prepared and have acquired all the relevant skills and knowledge they need to function. The author recommends that various institution revised its program structure to ensure that the Finnish language is done in the first year of their studies 1+2 or 2+1 programme structure. In

that, the Finnish language programme is done in the first year before the proper course is done.

6.3 Performance management

In the Check step of PDCA, it is when the data and outcome of the institution operations that were carried out in the do phase or performance management stage are evaluated. Data are compared to the expected outcomes from the policies to find out if there is any difference. The author proposes performance management. At this stage, there is a need to set up procedures to measure or check if the policies set in the strategy segment are duly implemented and to measure the progress of the strategy. At this level, there should be a parameter to check the involvement

Conceptual Framework for the employability of foreign graduates in the Finnish labour market

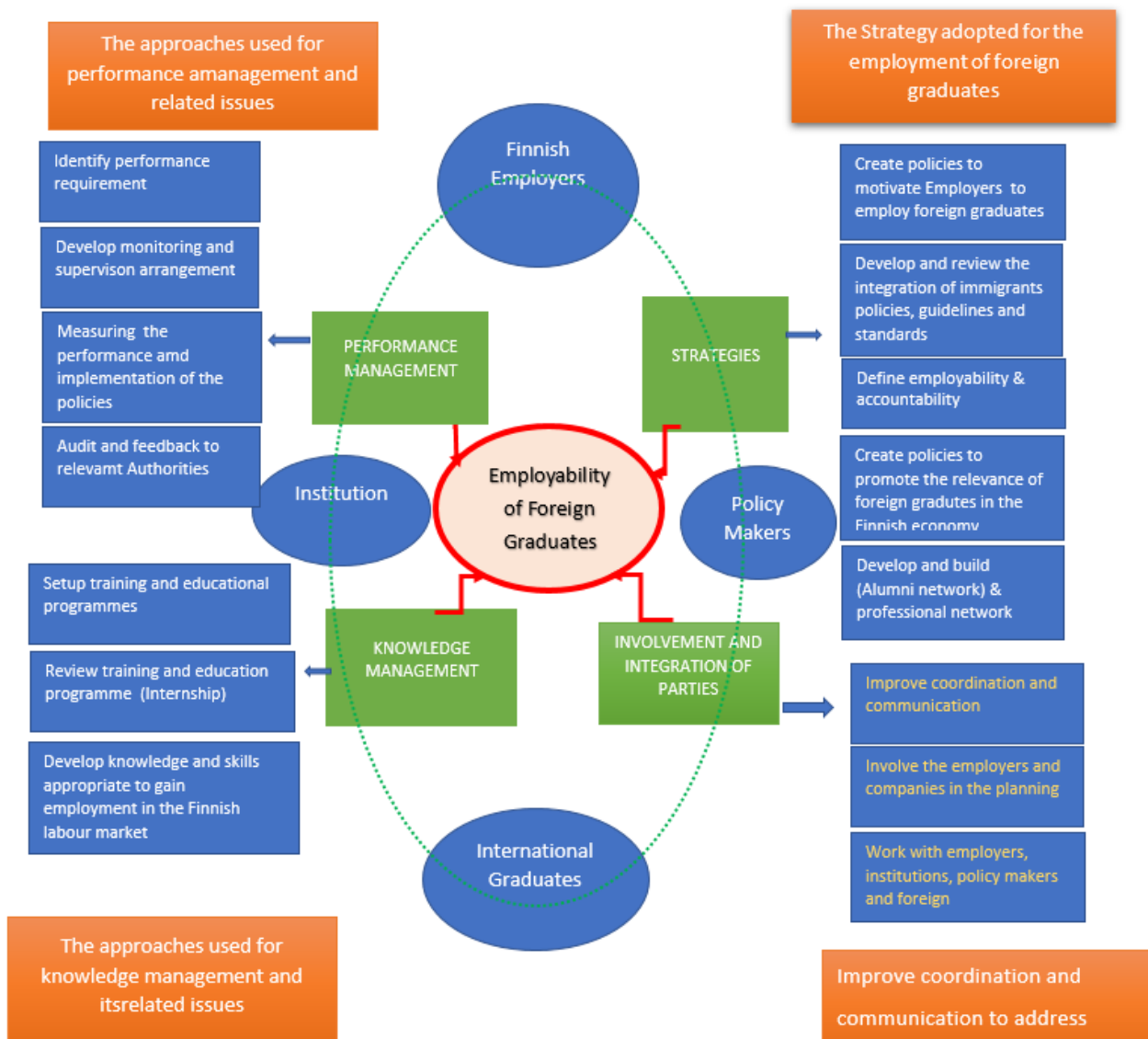


Figure 18 Conceptual Framework for the employability of foreign graduates

of foreign graduates in the labour market. A feedback system to audit the process. These will be an iterative process, especially if the process is not efficient or implemented as proposed; there may be consequences and strengthening of the policies will be recommended.

6.4 Communication management

In the next segment of the framework, the author suggested for the improvement of the process. It is also where he recommends that an active communication channel is created between all the actors where they can be able to look through the other phases to together identify the issues and problems that hinder the progress. At this stage, problems of non-conformities or inefficiencies and underperformed graduates are evaluated to see where outcomes are less optimal, and the root causes and plan on how to fix it.

7 Discussion & Suggestions

7.1 Build a professional Networking

In today's world, we cannot exist alone. People need people to survive. Most professionals use networking as a means to connect with fellow professionals in order to improve one's effectiveness in the organisation. Networking also helps the actors to enhance their expertise and competence (Vanhanen et al. 2015).

We discovered different factors affecting the employability of international graduates during the data gathering. Moreover, after discussions and consultations with the international graduates and local experts, the study limited the number of factors to seven factors. This includes; Finnish language incompetence, insufficient working experience with Finnish companies, sparse professional networks, lack of internship experience, lack of cultural awareness, negative employers' attitude and unavailability of job opportunities.

7.2 The teaching style of the Finnish language in the Higher Education Institutions

Currently, the Finnish language taught in the higher institution in Finland cannot help an international student to conduct business or engage in any meaningful discussion besides basic greetings and simple social interaction. Hence there is a necessity to modify the teaching style that requires a large-scale change in the degree structure. The study recommends that all university of higher education to create a program that enable international students to do 3+1 degree program or 1+2 whereby, the international students will do a complete one-year Finnish language study and integration program at the beginning of their research before continuing their program, and the curriculum should put much emphasis on speaking because it then helps them to take up jobs immediately or to run their internship programs effectively and start work immediately after they have graduated from the university. The study also proposes that if the first year is dedicated to learning the Finnish language that most international students will be willing to take their degree program in Finnish language and this will help to improve the labour market eligibility of international students who graduated from English program to acquire professional competence and networks. The purpose should be to build a foundation for a level of B2 Finnish or Swedish language skills, that can improve in working life (Vanhanen et al. 2015).

7.3 Higher Education institution to find an internship placement for international students

The study shows that international students have had many challenges trying to get an internship placement with Finnish employers by themselves. For international students to have the experience and skills needed to be ready immediately after graduation, the Finnish higher education institution should collaborate and build a strategy on how to match international students with Finnish companies. The higher education institution should take it as their responsibility to construct direct contact with companies in Finland and categorise them appropriately for the efficient matchmaking with students. They should also arrange a practical approach to getting feedback from the employer and monitor the progress of the interns in the workplaces. The employers should also be willing to accept the interns and be able to train them and assess their capabilities and prepare a report to inform the university authority on skills that are lacking. In this way, the employers will be willing to employ them after graduation as they have to build a network, and their experience will be of great benefit to the organisation.

7.4 The teaching of job-seeking skills

The higher education institution should develop programs and skills that prepare students to be ready to take up the job immediately. Effort should be made that students have full knowledge of how to prepare curriculum vitae, resume and application letters to a more in-depth understanding of local companies and other ways to build both social and technical skills needed in the market.

7.5 Lack of career guidance

Lack of career guidance can also make finding employment more complicated: in addition to separate careers services, higher education institutions should also integrate career guidance and labour market information into studies.

7.6 Avoid ethnic, cultural or religious discrimination

International students think that attitudes of employers and other employees, such as ethnic, cultural or religious discrimination, also make finding employment more difficult. Higher education institutions can help in this by promoting the skills of international students in their

cooperation with business and industry. It is essential to take needs of the labour market into account already in the design of training programmes, although the task of higher education is not only to prepare students for work but also to have an influence on the development of work and the society.

7.7 Engage international students with local students

The study shows that most times, the international students do not have a reliable network with the local students who perhaps will help international students to settle well in the country and as well in the job places. Efforts should be made that the institutions develop programs and strategy through group works and other social mechanisms that will engage both the international students with the Finnish students to build a lasting social network. Currently, the alumni networks are not organised in Finland because of the lack of coordination from universities. Therefore, the universities should encourage graduates to register and effort are made to follow the progress of the graduates and their successes in career progression.

7.8 Finnish government to make policies that support the recruitment of international graduates

From the result gathered from the study, it shows that the government and policymakers have not done enough to reinforce the strategy that will improve the recruitment of foreign graduates. We suggest the policymakers should create a quota system for companies and enforce them to ensure a certain number of foreign graduates are recruited which invariably reduce the burden and over-dependence of the foreign graduates on the social benefits and services available.

The policymakers should develop a particular route for employment in the countrywide regional and local labour market by constructing within the degree program a form of traineeships, internship, mentoring and workplace visits and ensure universities adhere to plans. The government should also include the international students into the integration programs already organised by the Finnish Unemployment (TE-palvelut) and KELA and ensure foreign graduates are given equal opportunity to participate in the labour market

7.9 Provide Opportunity to work in the Finnish labour market

The study suggests that international students should be allowed to gain employment in order to improve on their Finnish language skills. The active engagement in work with Finnish colleagues will help enhance the mastery of the Finnish language. The opportunity of working

with Finnish colleagues in Finnish companies is already an excellent opportunity to learn the Finnish language. The study suggests that the policymakers should encourage the managers and employers to be open to employing foreign graduates even when their language skill is not very strong as it can improve while working in the company.

7.10 Job and career fair in universities

Most universities abroad engage in career fairs to enable students and employers to meet and create possible career paths and opportunities for employment. The Finnish higher institution should organise different career fairs throughout the year and invite Finnish companies to participate in the program. By this, the employers will have the chance to engage with the pool of international graduates that might suit their job specification and also learn how to profit from the international students' knowledge and skills.

This program will also help the employers, the trade industry and the public sector to evaluate the graduates' skills and competencies and enable them to form an opinion and make decisions on the spot. It will also bring a special connection that will enhance the acceptability of international graduates and enhance their chances of gaining employment.

7.11 Encourage Finnish Employers to recruit international graduates

The study reveals that a majority of Finnish companies are not yet ready to employ the foreign graduates either due to lack of knowledge in Finnish language or insufficient skill set required. Moreover, there are a lot of international companies that language does not play a significant role. Effort should be taken to ensure that those English-speaking companies employ foreign graduates to those positions, especially in IT, accountancy, engineering since there is little or no need for the Finnish language required. A study shows that international graduates that work in Nokia were valued high and very efficient in their respective tasks and employers should emulate this by opening up more opportunities for foreign graduates instead of losing them to other economies.

7.12 Discrimination and Segregation should be drowned out

The policymakers should set up training centres and workshops to educate the employers about multiculturalism and need to be tolerant and embrace international, and globalisation and hence should ensure that employers are not biased or discriminating against the international graduates for their country of origin or colour of their skin, but instead should encourage and embrace multicultural environment.

7.13 Foreign degree students should develop localised competence

International students should endeavour to create localised capability during their studies in Finland that would expedite employment when combined with their expertise in the following areas

7.14 Communications

Higher education institution should inform the students during the orientation at the beginning of their studies of the importance of Finnish language for those who might want to pursue a career in Finland. That most companies use the Finnish language as their official working language. A Finnish language curriculum should be developed, and international students interested in pursuing their careers must follow that part at the beginning to ensure they learn Finnish.

Higher education institutions should liaise with companies and recommend to them to use the Finnish language for interns who will help them to learn the language faster and be prepared for taking up a job after graduating.

7.15 Work experience

International students should be informed at the beginning of their studies that working knowledge from the Finnish companies in Finland help increases their chances of getting a job after their graduation. Therefore, they should make

An effort to gain internship experience within their time. The higher institution of learning should try to make this easier by collaborating with Finnish companies to making it easier for such training and internship experience.

7.16 Group work

International students should ensure that they get involved in the group work in their universities and take it seriously. Most companies use the same approach in tackling problems, so effort must be made that they utilise the opportunity of learning how to work in groups. In doing so, there are also chances up building social networks which can be helpful after their graduation.

7.17 Acquire Problem Solving and critical thinking skills

To compete with Finnish counterparts, international students must possess both problems solving and critical thinking skills. The international students, therefore, must ensure that in their studies, such skills and competencies are gained as employers will only accept skills that are equivalent to the Finnish student counterparts.

8 CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we maintained that there is an economic benefit of retaining high skilled foreign graduates and the mobility of international student provides an easy avenue of transferring high skilled immigration. With the numerous advantage and benefits of international students coming to Finland, we assess the scope of government & higher education policies that will facilitate such inflows. We also observed that foreign graduate has a higher tendency of staying back if job opportunities are favourable.

Using statistical methods and quantitative and a qualitative tool, we find out that most international students come to Finland because of English taught programs and the quality of higher education. We also find out that many foreign graduates move out of Finland after graduation because of the lack of job opportunity.

As indicated in the conceptual framework, we offered four iterative steps of addressing the problem of unemployability. The approach includes the strategy, knowledge management, performance management and communication management. we argue that the Finnish universities should increase the number of Finnish programs or create a compulsory one-year Finnish language program that will be entrenched in the full English programs to integrate international students easily and prepares them for the labour market as most companies are disposed to hire job applicants with Finnish language competency.

We maintained that universities should create an opportunity for international students to build secure networks and open a channel that will make it easier for international students to participate in IT and further invite companies for matchmaking of open positions.

9 APPENDIX Interview

- i. Please identify yourself and where you are working and your current role in the workplace
- ii. Are you a foreign graduate or a Finnish graduate? What factor(s) helped you to gain employment in Finland?
- iii. Did your overall work experience so far meet your expectations?
- iv. What do you think about the employability of graduates in Finland general?
- v. As a head of the program, what do you think the universities should do to promote and integrate foreign graduate to the Finnish market?
- vi. In your role as the head of the program, what do you think the universities are not doing that may help in making this possible
- vii. What kind of solutions or program could be possible that can help get the employers to work with institutions in creating an excellent opportunity for integrating foreign graduates?
- viii. As tuition fees become mandatory for non-EU/EEA students from the academic year 2017, do you observe any changes in applications from foreign graduates
- ix. Do you think students of international background would have come to study in Finland if they know that they have to pay tuition fees?
- x. Does your university give career guidance for an international student?
- xi. Why is the university not arranging an internship for foreign graduates?
- xii. Does your university conduct career fairs during your studies?
- xiii. Do you have any particular suggestion(s) regarding the integration of international students in the Finnish job market?

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