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International Graduates Journey to Finnish Job Market

The Challenges International Graduates Face In Finnish Job Market

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ABSTRACT

Objective

The objective of this thesis was to investigate the challenges international graduates face after their graduation from the Finnish universities and if the employment office could help them to achieve their goal. Furthermore, the study provides suggestive solutions to the challenges foreign graduate face in quest of job after graduation. Thesis highlights some of the biggest challenges graduates face in the Finnish job market. The role and help of the employment office, and other major factors affecting foreign employability such as Finnish employer's attitudes are also discussed in this thesis.

Methodology

Qualitative research approach was applied in this study to collect data and its analysis. Interview was used as a tool for qualitative research to gather qualitative data. Face to face theme interview for foreign graduates and email interviews for employment officers were conducted for gathering qualitative data.

Findings

Findings show that foreign graduates are facing really difficult challenges while searching for suitable positions. The first steps are challenges within the graduates. These are challenges which graduates can overcome by improving their skills such as Finnish language skills, professional skills and interpersonal skills. The second steps are challenges which are related with residence permit, which is hard but graduates can overcome by finding odd jobs. The third and most difficult steps are challenges related with attitudes of the Finnish employers which graduates cannot affect or influence beforehand. Findings also show that the help of employment office to international graduates is very little.

Key words: International graduate, foreign unemployment, challenges, Finnish job market.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Being a foreigner is enough challenge for anyone who moves to a foreign country (Kyhä, 2011). Challenges and obstacles international graduates face while searching suitable jobs related to their professions in the Finnish job market is discussed in this thesis. The possible outcomes are explored and some solutions/improvement ideas are suggested to overcome these obstacles. Challenges will be observed from two point of view, first the point of view of international graduates and second, the point of view of employment officers to get a bigger picture of the whole aspect.

Language barrier is one of the most common challenges that most of the foreigners face when they are searching for a job in Finland (Heikkilä & Pikkarainen, 2008). Finland is small country it's quite isolated from the rest of the world. This means that a foreigner should know Finnish language at a good level to be able to find a job. There are some few positions which use English as their working language but they are very few. Educated foreigners have to learn fluent Finnish to be able to proceed for career in Finland (Bergbom & Giorgiani, 2007).

Finnish employers don't see the competences of the foreigners as they should. The appearance, culture, religion, and language of the foreigner seem to weigh much more than the knowhow of the foreigner. According to the study of Forsander & Alitolppa-Niitamo (2000), a Finnish employer mentioned that it's not the education or the competence that matters, it's what kind of person you are, you know, if you are good dude.

Lack of connections and other hidden qualities and abilities also affect greatly the employment of foreigner (Ahmad, 2005). The attitude of the employers needs a major change that could only be done if and when Finland becomes more international.

1.1 Background

The internationalization of Finland is growing older every day and more international students are coming here to study to and to look for work. The Finnish job market is still very open for the international graduates (Ahmad, 2005). The number of the foreign graduates who gained their degrees in Finland is also increasing. In the near future Finland will need even more foreign man power. Finland will need highly educated foreigners for professional positions and those who have less education for lower level jobs (Raunio, 2005). Foreigners with different educational background will be huge advantage for Finland and for Finnish job market, an advantage that Finland should understand, appreciate and cherish (Wallenius, 2001, Heikkilä & Pikkarainen 2008, Pakarinen 2004).

However, despite the facts that the number of highly educated foreigners is growing there is still quite wide prejudice among the general public which is not good for the image of Finland in the future (Wallenius 2001). These foreign graduates who would like to stay and work in Finland are facing many challenges while they are searching for professional positions according to their profession (Ahmad, 2005).

There was a need to highlight these challenges educated foreigners are facing in their daily live while searching for professional work. Thesis describes some of the major obstacles international graduates are facing and also provides some working solutions to overcome these challenges. The author is also investigating how much help could employment office offer to the graduates.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

The aim and the purpose of the thesis is to find out the challenges foreign graduates from Finnish universities are facing in the Finnish job market and the role the employment office can play in helping them. The results of this study are based on the interviews with the foreign graduates and employment officers. The study focuses on the major problems that international graduates are facing while searching professional positions relevant to their education. Study further highlights major obstacles from graduates' point of views as well as the

employment officer's point of views. Furthermore, this thesis tries to provide suggestive solutions for challenges faced by the graduates during their job hunt.

The research questions are as follows;

1. What are the challenges that international graduates are facing in the Finnish job market?
2. How could employment office help international graduates in their struggle?
3. What are the general factors and employer attitudes affecting foreign employability?

1.3 Research approach

In this thesis qualitative research has been chosen as a method of research. Qualitative research was chosen to get a wider picture of the research problem. Qualitative research is used to describe the research problem as a whole and also when the purpose of the research is to find something new or to reveal facts based on individual experiences (Hirsijärvi and colleagues, 2009).

By using thematic qualitative research respondents were given the opportunity to describe the challenges they are facing in their own words. Furthermore qualitative research is the best method to find out the challenges of special group (Borg&gall, 1989). It provided the opportunity to focus on small and limited group and to get the most out of it (Maykut&Morehouse, 1994, Patton, 1983). The method was also more flexible and it gave more space as the situation changed during the interviews (Bogden&Biklen, 1982).

2 GENERAL FACTORS INFLUENCING FOREIGN EMPLOYABILITY

Next chapter will focus on general factors influencing foreigner employability. Foreign employability is the sum of many small things which together affect directly or indirectly foreigner's possibility of finding suitable job. Some of the reasons that affect foreign employability are the purpose of moving to Finland, the nationality, education, age and gender (Forsander, 2002; Joronen 2005b; Jaakkola & Reuter 2007). Those foreigners who are well educated and who move to Finland for work purposes or to continue with their studies are often easily employed (Forsander, 2002). Finnish language skills, professional skills, interpersonal skills, and positive mindset are among other factors affecting foreign employability.

2.1 Foreigners as newcomers

Foreigners and especially highly educated foreigners are still quite new in Finland and most of the job seekers belong to the first generation (Raunio, 2005). Foreigners are still seen as new comers who yet haven't yet adapt the Finnish language, Finnish job culture and the way things are done in Finland. Finns and especially Finnish employers are quite cautious when it comes to recruitment because they don't have enough experiences from the foreigners and they don't want to take unnecessary risk (Thrux, 2000).

This expert group is very important for any country that wants to be innovative and developed by utilizing the knowledge and great skills of the highly educated international individuals (Raunio, 2005). The idea of attracting top brains from all around the world to build one's own country has been popular in many countries for some time for instance USA, Canada, and Australia. These countries have a long history of attracting world's top talents and providing high positions for them to help making their country the best with the effort of the best expertise (Raunio, 2005)

The time has positive impact on the employability of the foreigners and the longer the time lived in Finland the better the chances of getting suitable job. For

instance those who have lived in Finland more than 10 years have much more chances of finding suitable job than those who have just lived 3-4 years in Finland (Jaakkola, 2005, Perhoniemi, Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2007).

Global crisis is one of the major challenges for the international graduates at the moment (Shafae, 2010). Many born Finns are also suffering unemployment due to recession and they are competing for the same positions with foreigners (Korhonen 2010).

2.1 Similarities in culture

The best group that have succeeded to find jobs most are those foreigners who primarily move to Finland to study, they are the strongest group. The least employed are those foreigners who came to Finland as refugees (Joronen 2005b; Sjöblom-Immala, 2011). In some cases the nationality of the foreigner affects the possibility of getting job (Kyhä, 2011). Those foreigners who have similarities with the Finns in culture, language, or outlook appearance have the best chances to be employed in Finland (Kyhä 2011, Forsander 2002; Joronen 2005b; Heikkila & Pikkarainen 2008).

Similarities in appearance and culture are great advantage for finding a job in foreign country. Other possible reasons for unemployment is such as lack of working experience, the difference of culture, and the negative attitudes of Finnish employers towards foreigner's skills and competences (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2002; Jaakkola, 2009). In many cases the very essence of being a foreigner living in Finland is an obstacle to get a job (Kyhä, 2011; Vainikainen, 2011). This argument seems logical and in many aspect true one, but according to the figure below presented by Shumilova and colleagues (2013) in their Valoa-project, graduates from Asia were among the best employed in Finland despite the difference in culture and appearance. This might indicate that graduates from Asia are mostly occupied in It sector where experts are needed more and hired more easily because their professional expertise (Raunio, 2005).

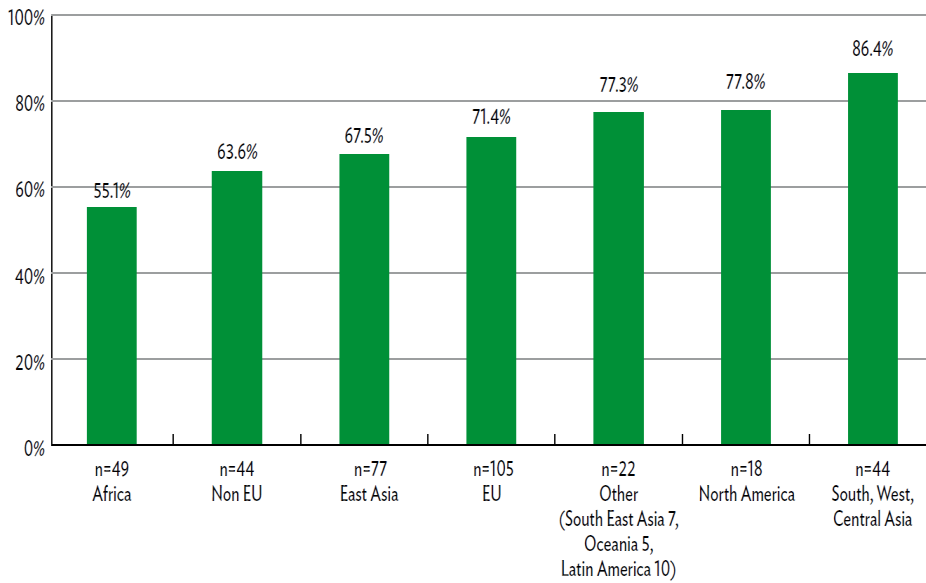


Figure 2: Employment rate of international graduates by continent of origin (Shumilova and colleagues, 2013 p. 31)

3.3 Educational background

Generally good education is a great asset in the job market but according to Kyhä (2011) this is not always the case for those foreigners who are living in Finland. According to Pekkala (2004) every fifth unemployed foreigner is highly educated, so education is not guarantee for foreigners to find job in Finland. They have to battle against unemployment, they have to accept part-time jobs, and short fixed job agreements to survive. Foreigners living in Finland are facing two challenges at the same time. First challenge is the lack of getting suitable job according to their profession. The second challenge is the difficulty of even getting inside the Finnish job market in the first place (Kyhä, 2011).

Finland is already left behind when compared the attraction of educated in other European countries. Other European countries have ten times more professional experts compared to Finland (Forsander and others 2004). Finland has just opened up to internationalization recently in 90's. This opening up was quite late when compared to other European countries which have long experience of dealing with

foreigners. These countries have also established good image that attracts foreign experts (Forsander and colleagues, 2004).

There are much less international students studying in Finnish universities compared to other European countries. Even neighboring Sweden has three times more international students than Finland. Finland could easily get highly skilled international professionals from the international students that are studying here in Finland by offering to them jobs as they graduate. It would be more economic and easier process to hire graduates who already lived in Finland for some time, speak Finnish language at least little and have learned Finnish culture (Pihlajamäki 2012). Generally the international students are not given much attention during their studies because there is the assumption that they would go back home after they graduate (Forsander, 2004).

3 COMMON CHALLENGES FOR FOREIGN GRADUATES

3.1 Language as the first challenge

Throughout this research the importance of Finnish language has continuously raised in different aspects as huge barrier against the foreigners, which they cannot tackle. International graduates feel that lack of Finnish language is the main reason for unemployment. Language is the first thing that repeatedly comes to almost everyone's mind when discussing foreign unemployment. Everyone agrees that it's a must to anyone who wants to be employed in Finland to learn Finnish language fluently first. Finnish language is seen as difficult and different from any other main languages spoken in the world (Heikkilä, Pikkarainen, 2008). This fact comes as a surprise to many graduates who assumed Finnish language would be easy or at least similar to English language. Another fact that depresses many graduates is the fact that in Finland almost every work demands Finnish language skills, because its small country located far from multicultural areas and only Finnish language works here.

Some of the major challenges that international graduates are facing in the Finnish job market are listed in the figure 3 down below. International graduates who participated in Valoa-project are representing Finnish university and Finnish university of applied sciences. The top three major challenges in that list are Finnish language skills, lack of the right contacts, and lack of sufficient working experience (Shumilova and colleagues, 2013).

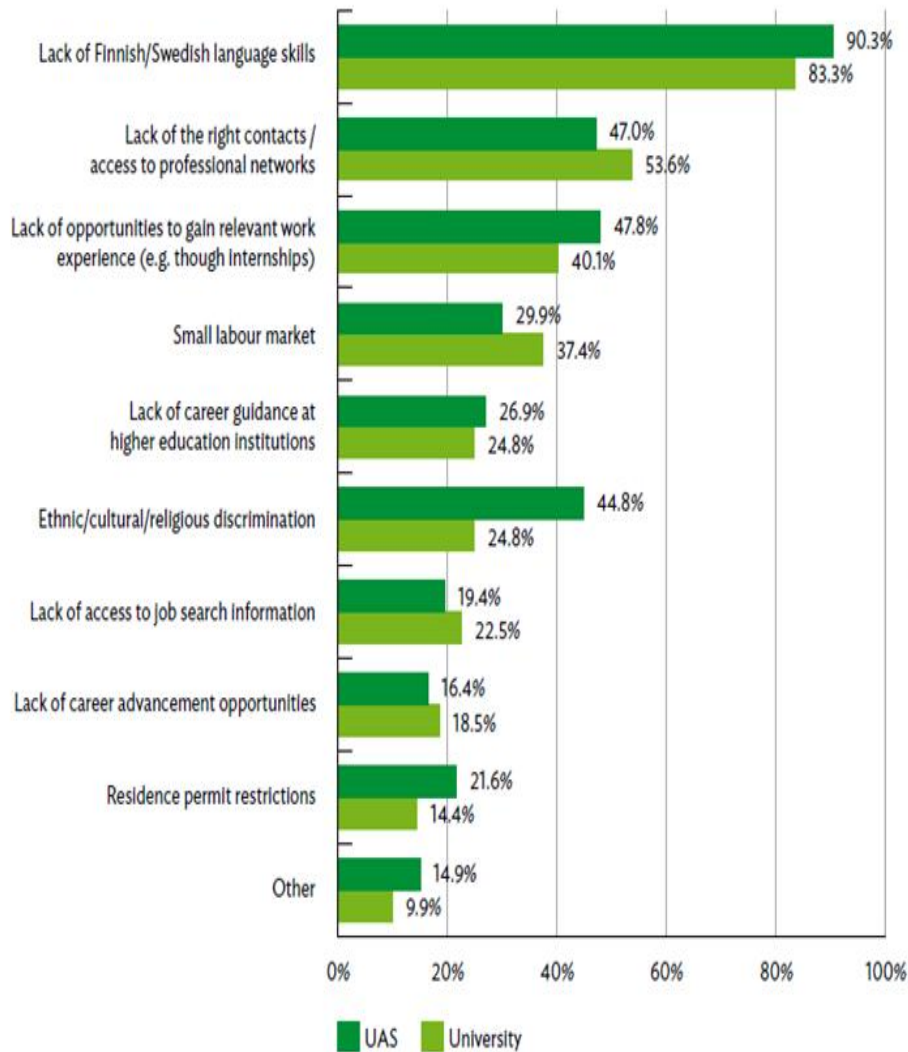


Figure 3: The major obstacles for international graduates to getting a job by institution (Source: Shumilova and colleagues, 2013, p.58)

3.2 Language as tool for rejection

Finnish employers use Finnish language as tool to reject unwanted foreigners who apply for job positions according to Akhlaq (2005) who have made wide research concerning factors which affect foreign employability. In the following discussion Finnish employer is using Finnish language skill as a reason not to hire foreign job seeker who would be suitable for the position.

“Applicant: I'm calling about the post of part-time cashier you advertised today in the employment office. I'm extremely interested in this post.

Employer: Do you have any experience?

A: Yes, I do. I worked as a cashier in a clothes shop for almost six months. I've also worked for one company as a cashier and a book salesman for six months. I believe I'd be able to do this job pretty well.

E: This job requires extremely good proficiency in the Finnish language.

A: Could I ask a question? We have already been speaking in Finnish for some time. Do you understand me well?

E: Yes, I do.

A: I'm sure I'm able to do this job pretty well.

E: Older people and pensioners who are hard of hearing come into our shop. They need to be spoken to loudly.

A: I'm sure I can speak loudly and clearly to them.

E: Extremely good Finnish is required for this job.

A: I have lived in Finland for 10 years. I think I understand and speak Finnish well enough to manage this job.

E: Living here for 10 years doesn't mean anything.

A: In my view it's a reasonable period of time in... (*The employer interrupting*)

E: It doesn't mean anything. Because a foreigner is a foreigner" (Ahmad, 2005 p.37).

3.3 Competition

One of the main challenge international graduates face is the competition from the born Finns who are competing for the same positions as the foreigners. This challenge is especially hard challenge for the foreigners to beat because there are limited positions available in the job market (Kivinen and Ahola, 1999). Finland

being developed country and Finns being well educated people, there are always more good candidates for every high position. Foreigners who want to gain that high position should present extra skills and much more competences than born Finns to get hired (Naumanen, 2002).

3.4 Working experience

After the language skills one of the most important requirements is working experience preferably from Finland (Säpyskä, 2007). Gained working experience is proof of one's skills and competences. The more foreigners have working experience from Finland the more chances they will have to be hired, because Finnish employers appreciate working experience gained inside Finland (Säpyskä, 2007).

3.5 Residence permit

Many international students who have done their degree in Finland have problems due to difficulty of getting residence permit. Graduated foreigners don't have enough time to search for a work after their graduation, even though the process of searching work is longer and harder for the foreigners in Finland (Employment ministry, 2005). The international students have only 6 months time to find work after their graduation. This stresses the students and put a lot of pressure on their shoulder even before graduating from the university. Raunio (2005) suggest that the government should broaden the rules of the residence permit and allow enough time for the fresh graduates to search for a suitable job. Raunio also suggest that residence applications should be processed faster to ease educated foreigners situations in Finland.

3.6 What if not employed

Many students are forced to continue their studies because they cannot find suitable job in time. Continuing education into higher is seen as the only option for many foreign graduates who despite persistent work search couldn't find job

(Shumilova and others, 2013). Academic sector is also seen as less discriminative for the international graduates than the Finnish job market (Pulkkinen 2003).

Most of the graduates (77.9%) would like to settle in Finland after graduation as it could be seen in the following figure 4, but that's not always possible due to unemployment and for this reason highly educated young people are leaving Finland after their graduation (Raunio, 2005). Only 12.6% return to their home country after their graduation. Small portion 9.5% seeks job opportunities in other countries.

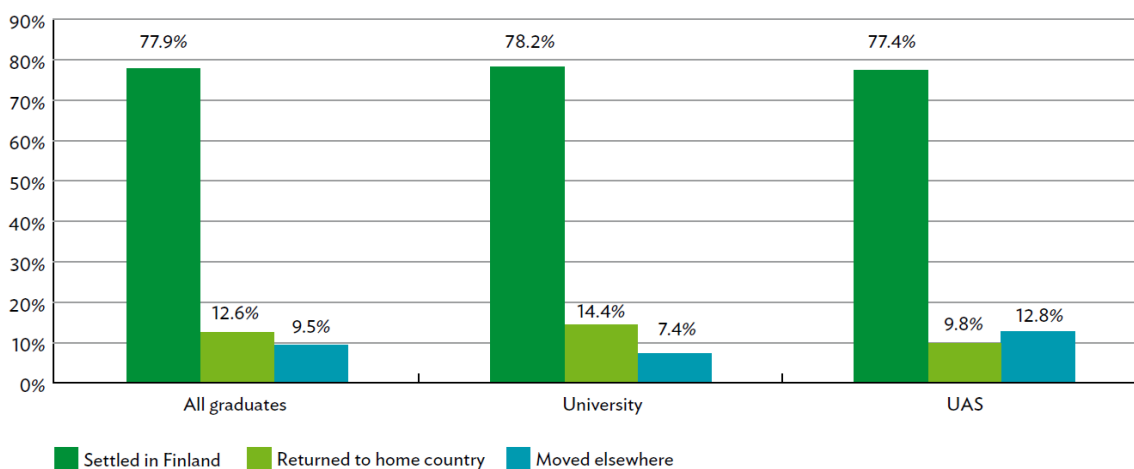


Figure 4: The place where graduates settle after graduation (Source: Shumilova and colleagues, 2013 p. 28)

3.7 Role of the Finnish Universities

Finnish universities and Universities of applied sciences don't give the right tools for the international graduates to succeed in the Finnish job market. In the research made by Shumilova and others (2013) some of the most important tools needed by the employers and which the universities don't provide are the ability to solve problems, teamwork competences, organizational skills, information searching and communication skills (Rautapuro, 2011). This highlights that with the right tools and education methods universities could influence much more positively the employability of the foreign graduates.

One of the tools universities could provide is intensive Finnish language courses right from the beginning and making compulsory to reach at least good Finnish language level by the end of their studies. Most of the students would like to have more Finnish courses during their studies.

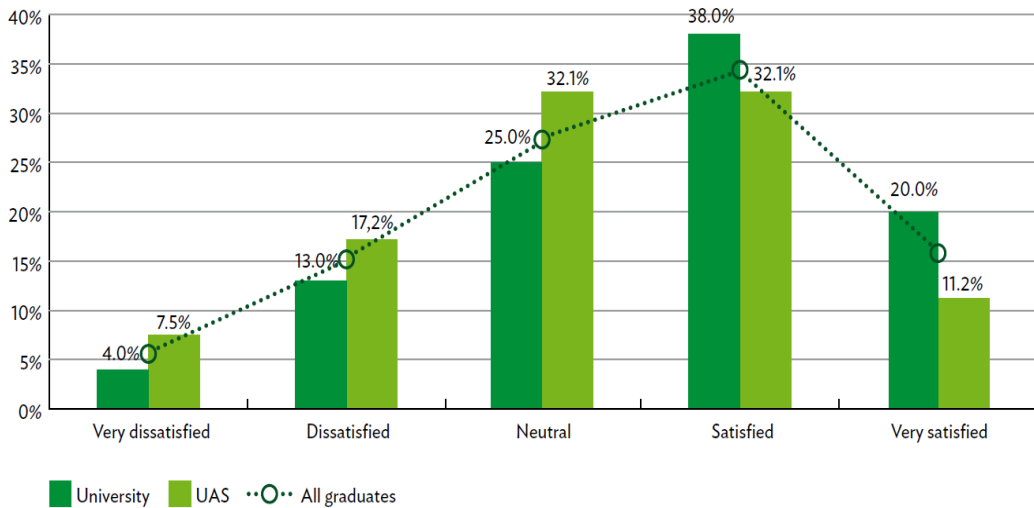


Figure 5: The level of satisfaction with the availability of Finnish language courses by type of institution (Source: Shumilova and colleagues, 2013 p. 52).

According to Forsander and colleagues (2004) international students who are studying in English are not encouraged enough to study Finnish language during their studies. The graduates realize the necessity of the language skills after their graduation. Lack of Finnish language skills will make it very difficult for international graduates to find suitable job (Pihlajamäki 2012). The above figure 5 shows the overall satisfaction level of the students concerning the Finnish language courses provided by the university. Around 24% seem to be unsatisfied with the language Courses University provided, but the majority (58% university and 42.3% UAS) seems to be satisfied with the availability of the Finnish language courses. This figure shows different than the findings of Forsander and Pihlajamäki. Forsander's and Pihlajamäki's arguments support the fact that international graduates are not employed due to the lack of Finnish language skills. The international graduates who participated in this research also felt that universities could have provided more Finnish language courses than they are currently offering. They also felt they were not informed enough the importance and the future affect of the Finnish language in the beginning of their studies.

4 OFFICIALNETWORK SUPPORTING EMPLOYMENT

Employment office is a part of employment ministry. The purpose of the office is to provide help and assistant for those who are searching for work. At best employment office successfully connects jobseekers to possible employers. The office provides plenty of services for this purpose. Some of the services that employment office offers are professional courses, training courses, career advises and many other services that helps job seekers to find job (Juuso-Silvennoinen, 2010; Te-palvelut.fi).

4.1 Source of information

One of the most important services that employment office provides is information. The office has plenty of information to offer to its customers in different stages and times of their job search. Usually customers have many questions to ask and the employment officer should have even more answers to provide. This easy access of information is especially important for foreign job seekers who have little knowledge about the Finnish job market. They need more assistance and tips for job seeking process than native Finns. Foreigners don't have good connections like Finns do (Forsander and others, 2004). The employment office could act like match maker advising the foreigners and promoting/referencing them to the employers. This type of match making is vital important for the foreigners job seeking process (Juuso-Silvennoinen, 2010).

4.2 Electronic services

Employment office is also developing its services like any other company keeping up with the development of information era. Many of its traditional face to face services are now days only available in the internet. The office is also planning to provide even more services via internet in the future. This might cause some problems to foreign job seekers who need more human contact and personal service than native Finns. There are plenty of information available at the office's web page from where foreigners can find helpful information in English language as well (Te-palvelut.fi).

4.3 Customer service and the role of employment officer

The workers in employment office are always in touch with the foreign customers. Their attitude, customer service skills and helpfulness means a lot for the foreigners (Leino, 2007). Workforce officers should understand that foreigners require more human service, more listening and people skills than normal Finnish customers. An ideal officer is the one that understand these special needs and serve them with extra flexibility. Small deeds like warm smile, encouragement, and inspiring believe that they will get work means a lot for the customers (Leino, 2007).

The employment officers who are daily serving foreigners have a great influence in the process of job finding. They are in direct contact with the foreigners who seek from them advices and guidance. They are seen as the professionals of their own field and foreigners have a great deal of trust on them (Leino, 2007). To purchase that trust officers should have a lot of competences and knowledge to provide the help educated foreigners need to get a job (Leino, 2007).

Foreigners are facing different challenges than native Finns and thus require services especially tailored for them (Lindberg et al. 2006.). The office should constantly update and improve the skills and the competences of these officers who are serving foreigners by providing for them for instance one day courses on regular bases. In these one day courses employment officers will learn more how they help their customers more. They will be taught dealing with different cultures. These courses will help officers dealing with people from different countries who have different background, culture, religion, and different way of approaching things (Leino, 2007).

The employment officers should know well their own culture more broadly, and realize the cultural behavior of the foreign customers (Leino, 2007). The officer will also need the competences and abilities to work and assist foreigners in changing situations (Metsänen, 2002). The officers who are working with the foreigners will need more education on cultural aspects generally. With the better cultural education officer will get the ability to look into bigger picture and to realize the diversity of different cultures. The officer is able to meet new cultures

constantly providing them friendly, understanding, and kind customer service each time (Lairio, Puukkari, 2001).

Body language plays a big part in many cultures. Officer should at least know some of the major body language signs and their meanings in some of the major cultures. A lot of communication is sent via body language and these could be interpreted differently by different culture representatives (Leino, 2007).

4.4 Language courses

Workforce office offers language courses to the new foreigners. In their first visit to the unemployment office, an appointment time is given to make a language test. In the language test the reading, writing, listening and learning skills are tested and evaluated. Then he/she is placed in waiting queue for a suitable course. The duration of the language courses that employment office offers usually take 1 year and in this one year the foreigner has the opportunity to increase his/her level into B1.1 which means good Finnish skills.

New foreigners also have another opportunity to learn Finnish language this is called “studying independently” which means optional language studies with the help of unemployment benefit. This is a great opportunity for those foreigners who want to learn Finnish language fast and don’t want to wait in the queue. They have to the chance to search suitable Finnish language courses and learn in faster base (Te-palvelut.fi).

These language courses that employment office offers are a great help for the new foreigners who are very motivated and who want to learn the language fast. The language is one of the greatest assets and tools that help the foreigners to integrate better and faster into Finnish society (Pikkarainen, 2005). The language courses are the most concrete tool that employment office offers to the foreigners to start their long struggle to find suitable job in Finland’s job market. Finding suitable Finnish language courses are getting harder and harder every day because constantly increasing demand (Valjus, 2005).

4.5 Trainee positions

Employment office assists foreigners to find trainee positions as well. This is usually after the language courses have ended and the foreigner now wants to create connections. At this point the new comer knows enough finish language to search for work opportunities. Trainee position is the natural second step to acquire working experience from Finland and it's easier to find than the actual work itself (Te-palvelut.fi).

Working experience is one of the most important and very much required skills in the Finnish job market (Shumilova and colleagues, 2013). The employment office gives first instructions of how to get trainee positions and what should be done if one finds suitable trainee position. Then agreement sheet is given to the applicant and asked to get it filled from the employer. Once applicant return filled trainee agreement sheet the employment office make trainee decision for the applicant and the applicant gets additional extra employment benefit while he/she is doing the trainee. This extra money is to motivate unemployment applicants to be active.

4.6 More services

Employment office gives career advices for those who want to learn new profession, change their work but don't know what jobs they are interested in and so on. Workforce office provides many services for foreigners in generally. In addition to those services mentioned before the following services are also provided by the office:

- Recruitment courses; these courses provides a possible profession, valuable skills and possible job. In the recruitment courses a company is committed to provide trainee positions for the applicants and possible job for good applicants. This is very good recruitment opportunity for many applicants.
- Assisted jobs; these are government assisted job opportunities for unemployed to ease their recruitment. Employer who hired unemployed person will get financial support from the government. This is a one way

to encourage employers to hire more unemployed people. These positions are very beneficial to foreigner who is eager to grasp all the help available.

- Workshops; the office also arranges meetings where job seekers could meet employers and discuss about recruitment opportunities. These meetings are arranged sometimes and they are important way to get new connections (Te-palvelut.fi).

5 EMPLOYER ATTITUDES

The challenge within the Finnish employers is one of the most difficult challenges which international graduates have to face. The graduates cannot do much about the way employers feel about them before hand. Graduates should first get chance to show their skills. Only by getting this one chance the international graduates will have chance to prove their actual worth to the Finnish employer.

Foreigners are facing many challenges when living in foreign country and trying to find suitable job that is according to their profession. This challenge has two points of view. The other point of view is the employer's point of view. How employers see the foreigners and what are the reasons for them to hire or not to hire foreign person to their company? Is there any benefit for them to hire a foreigner? Or is it just a way to be the good Samaritan? Säpyskä (2007) has made a large survey about recruitment of the foreigners. The opinion of the employers and their recruiting foreign employees has been taking into consideration.

Employers are more cautions when the employee is from somewhere far away (Heikkilä, 2005). Employers hesitate to hire when the applicant is a foreigner with different skin color, language and culture than the majority (Carter, 2003). The employer might refuse to employ a foreigner for the fear of losing customers especially in customer service positions (Joronen, 2005b). This indicates that even if the employer would like to hire a foreigner the general opinion of the people might be the reason not to hire.

Employers sometimes feel that hiring a foreigner takes too much time, because they have to do extra work of translating all the working instructions and guidelines into English. Employers might also have difficulties due to recognizing foreign degrees or reading the residence permits right. Employers need help from officials to know better what different degrees and documents stand for (Oinonen 2010). Other challenges employers fear is the attitude of the co-workers and how would they react with the foreign employee (Säpyskä, 2007).

Säpyskä (2007) in her research find out that most of the employers didn't get job applications from foreign applicants. One of the reasons for this might be that most of the job ads are published Finnish language. This obviously sets some

barriers to the foreign job seekers. Foreigners would appreciate if there are more job applications in English language. Another factor is that educated foreigners are not so much aware of the job opportunities of their local areas and cannot fully utilize all the opportunities nearby (Säpyskä, 2007).

5.1.1 Finnish degree

One of the most important aspects that Finnish employers appreciate is the education gained from Finnish universities. According to Pehkonen (2006) Finnish employers value much more Finnish degree than foreign degree. The employer feels secure that the foreigner has been taught according to Finnish standards and he/she knows how things are done here in Finland. The second most important factor is the work experience obtained inside Finland. This also convinces Finnish employer that foreigner's skills are real and that they could be great help for employer's company (Kuhlman-Keskinen, Hännikäinen, 2003).

5.1.2 Positive experience

In some cases Finnish employers have had very positive experiences of hiring foreigners. This has encouraged them to hire more foreigners in the future also (Kanasen, 2006, Sjöbolm-Immolan, 2006). Shumilova and colleagues (2013) have also found similar types of responses from the Finnish employers as one of them responded;

“New people can bring new issues for us, new values to us and new ways of thinking, new dimensions. Especially when we deal with elderly people, new cultures always bring us a lot of new information how to be with people” (Shumilova and colleagues, 2013, p. 75).

The second employer continues in the same course as the previous;

“It will broaden your own view, improve understanding of different cultures. [...] you will think out of the box” (Shumilova and colleagues, 2013, p. 75).

This shows that despite of the negative attitudes of the Finnish employers in the beginning towards foreigners, ones the foreigners get a chance they manage to

change the perception of the employer. Foreigners are also more grateful for the one time opportunity and they use this opportunity by showing hard work, sense of responsibility and excelling others in their work (Forsander, Alitolppa-Niittamo, 2000).

5.2 Negative attitudes

Most of the people who go to a new country will face prejudice in a way or another. People generally have prejudice attitudes towards new people and new things which are not familiar to them (Allport, 1954). Prejudice is described as a pre-picture that people form from certain group or people (Ethical equality 2002). Prejudice is tightly connected with racism even though racism develops from prejudice but it's stronger than prejudice. Racism is defined as keeping a group of people as lower class because of ethnicity, color, culture, language, or religion (Red Cross 2012). Furthermore a racist like to think that everyone belongs to a certain race and some races are superior to others by nature (Vartiainen-Ora 2005). Foreigners might sometimes raise feelings of insecurity in some people. Foreigners are seen as a threat and this feeling of treat usually changes into hatred. The appearance, culture, and values of the foreigners are all seen as a treat to one's own identity and existence (Vartianen-Ora 2005).

The Finn's attitude towards foreigners has been getting more positive recently even though the general attitude is still more negative than positive (Haavisto, 2010). A research made by Jaakola (2005) clearly shows that there have been some positive changes. Finns were more acceptable towards immigration in 2003 than they were in 1993. Generally when it comes to immigration Finns are more positive towards "beneficial" foreigners such as professional experts, teachers and other highly educated foreigners that come to Finland for work purpose. Beneficial foreigner has all the skills and competences needed to be employed and he/she is ready to contribute to the society.

Recently the number of highly educated foreigners has been growing steadily from 2000 (1.3%) to 2010 (2.2%) and it's still growing as could be seen in the figure 1 below.

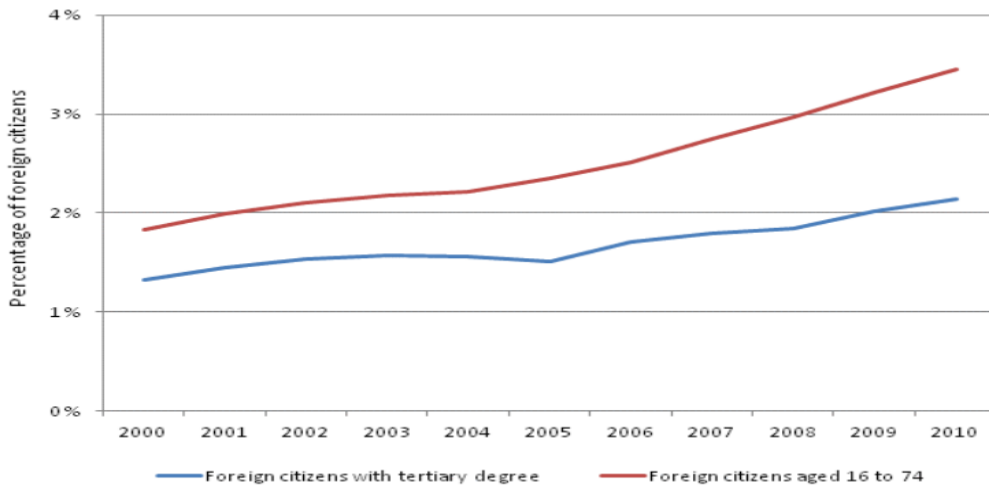


Figure 1: Share of highly educated foreign citizens of the population in 2000-2010 (Source: Tilastokeskus, 2013)

The following discussion is based on a research conducted by Akhlaq Ahmad (2005) it's between Finnish employer and foreign job seeker who have applied for an open position. Applicant is really motivated and has the requirements needed for this open position. The discussion began as follow;

Applicant: I would like to apply for the post of sales assistant that you advertised a few hours ago. Has the job already gone?

Employer: No, it hasn't gone yet.

A: I'm very interested in this post.

E: (*in a rather cold manner*) well, this job requires extremely good proficiency in the Finnish language. You might speak very good Finnish but it's not good enough. Let me tell you straight! This job is not for you!

A: But I have understood everything you have said so far...

E: (*the employer interrupting*) I don't want to hurt you but it's not enough. This job demands really good skills in the Finnish language. That's why I can't ask you for an interview. I suggest you look for some other type of work (Akhlaq Ahmad, 2005 p. 38).

The author has a personal experience of the similar issue related with employer's attitude. The author has done his bachelor degree in Finland and has lived since childhood here in Finland. The author speaks finish language as fluent as his mother tongue and has adapted the Finnish culture very well. The author has sent many work applications without receiving any positive answer after his graduation. One employer actually called the author to tell that he would hire the author if he wouldn't fear the reaction of the customers when they see a foreigner behind the desk.

6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The topic of this thesis is dealing with challenges international graduates are facing after their graduate and start searching for suitable positions according to their profession. The role of the employment office as the supporter of the graduates is also investigated. The research question states; what are the main challenges international graduates' faces in the Finnish job market? And how could employment office help graduates to find a job? The thesis clarifies first the challenges graduates are facing, and secondly tries to find out in which ways the employment office could help graduates more. Finally thesis will provide some suggestions and ideas for further research.

The target groups of this research are those international graduates who have gained at least one degree from Finnish university and have searched for work after graduation. The target group has all stayed in Finland at least 4 years. They have all finished their studies and they have been searching for suitable work in the Finnish job market from few months up to three years.

The second target groups are those employment officers who are closely working with international graduates. They possess first hand information regarding the recruitment services that could benefit graduates. Their opinions and advices are included into this research.

6.1 Methods

Qualitative research was chosen as the main method for thesis. Qualitative research is the suitable research method in this case because this topic is dealing with real life experiences. Qualitative approach used to reveal true nature of the research problem and to find new solutions (Hirsijärvi and others, 2009). Qualitative research is also used to understand more widely how people behave, the way they think, act, and the experiences they have gained from the surrounding world (Merrim, 2009). Especially in this research it was very important to use an approach (Qualitative) that enables the overall understanding of the research problem (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2012). The purpose of this research is to discover the main challenges international graduates face in

the Finnish job market and how could employment office help to overcome these challenges. Through the interviews international graduates shared their experiences from the Finnish job market. They relate all the obstacles and the major challenges they have faced during their job hunt. The graduates have also give suggestions and improvement ideas to tackle these challenges. Employment officers have also share their point of view and how they viewed the challenges international graduates were going through and the role of the employment office.

6.2 Tools

Interview was chosen as one of the tools to conduct the research. Interview as a tool of qualitative methods is livelier and allocates experiences and opinion of the subject which can be analyzed and process with wider perspective. Interview is a good way to capture the actual meaning of what respondent is describing and to understand it well (Kvale, 1996). Interview is also a way to capture the real story and experiences of the respondents in clear and detail way (McNamara, 1999). It made easy for the respondents to talk and describe their experiences and the obstacles that they have faced in the Finnish job market. Because of this a lot of additional information was discovered during the interviews. It also made possible to ask additional questions to gain more related information. Especially this additional information gave extra new findings to this research. During the interview respondents could relate their stories freely which bring extra information and valuable resources to this research.

The interview was tape recorded first and the tape record was transcribed into paper. Transcribed text was then typed into the computer. During the interviews a note was used to write important issues and questions that rose from the interview. These notes were then added into the research. Most of the interviews were made face to face interviews with the respondents. There were 11 main questions in the interview and few additional questions to further clarify the questions.

Table was used to put the questions and answers of each respondent down. Table is used to visualize easily and clearly the questions that were asked and the answers that were given. Each question with its answers was clearly displayed in one page. The table is further used to analyze the results of the questions.

The second tool that was used was a questionnaire that consisted of 5 questions. Questionnaire was sent via email to all participants. A follow up email was sent to the participants to remind them to respond. Questionnaire was mainly used to gather responses from the employment officers. Three international graduates also took part in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 14 employment officers and to three international graduates. All the graduates answered the questionnaire but only 5 officers managed to return response in time.

The respondents who participate in this research were two groups. 9 respondents were representing international graduates and 5 were representing employment office. The respondents 8 were males and 5 were females. The age of the participants was between 24-50 years. The international graduates were representing different nationalities two were from Nigeria, one from Somalia, one from Kenya, one from Ghana, two were from Bangladesh, one from Nepal, and one was from Ukraine.

Those participants who were representing employment office were mostly from Finland, but one officer was from Estonia. The questions were asked in Finnish language to make them easy to understand to give a proper answer. The answers were then translated into English language by the author.

6.3 Process

The interviews took approximately 25 min each. The questions have been sent to the respondents a day or two earlier so they could ponder over before the interview. The respondents were then called by phone and made appointment for the interview. The interviews depended heavily on the schedule of the respondents. A suitable time was then organized so that the respondents could give a good interview without hurry or without being very tired, enable to give good and fruitful interview.

The questionnaire that was sent to the international graduates included the same questions that were asked in the face to face interviews. The questionnaire was made because these graduates were living elsewhere in Finland and it was hard to arrange face to face meeting with them.

The second questionnaire that was designed for the employment officers was simple and short and there were only 5 questions asked so that it would be easy for respond to participate. The answer level was however very low (5/14) due to busy schedule of the employment officers.

At times it was very hard to arrange an interview because the author is working full time and most of the respondents were doing odd jobs and were available at different times. At times some of the interviews had to be made late evenings when that was the only time respondent could give the interview. This was quite challenging for the author.

6.4 Data Analysis

Two types of data were analyzed in this research primary data and secondary data. In the primary data the information gained from the interview and questionnaire was gathered in a table. The table was then analyzed.

In the secondary data the information gathered from the books, e-books, e-journals and other forms of articles were read and analyzed.

6.5 Validation and reliability

To ensure the reliability of this research short and simple question were designed for the respondents. These short and simple questions make sure that respondents do understand the questions with ease. Then the answers of the respondents are recorded with a tape recorder. During the interview the questions is asked one by one. In case the respondent didn't understand the question or gave an answer which was not related to the question, the question was repeated once more time. This made sure that all the questions were fully understood by the respondents.

Respondents were also given enough time to ponder over a question and to really create their own opinion regarding the questions. In cases additional questions was asked to extract the most information from the respondents. All the answers were first recorded, then listened carefully and transcribed to a notebook. The written text was then typed to the computer. In each step extra caution was taken by the author to restore the originality of the findings throughout the research.

As the author shares plenty of similarities and experiences with the both of the respondents it was easy to relate and trust the reliability of the findings. The author has faced same challenges after his graduation and thus has personal experiences about the challenges international graduates are facing. The author is currently working in the employment office and deals with international graduates on daily basis. The author has a chance to utilize his background and his experiences from the Finnish job market to help foreign graduates better. The foreign graduates also get motivated when they see a foreigner behind the desk and they get hope of achieving their professional job one day.

7 RESULTS

In this section the results gained from this research is both presented and analyzed. The results are consisting from two parts. First part deals with the interview results of the international graduates and the second part deals with the responses of the employment officers.

The sub-chapters of this section explains the answers of the questions received during interviews/questionnaires in correspondence with the theories and the experience of the author at times, since he belongs to immigrant background and has personal experience of struggling for job in Finland after being graduated.

Furthermore, author being an officer of employment office in Finland has dealt with real cases of the immigrants' joblessness. The phenomenal aspect of the research data is based on the observation of the researcher at his daily work dealing with clients of immigrant background. The role of phenomenological insertion in the empirical analysis asserts the validation of the study since the comparison between the answers of the interviewees and real case subjects (clients) is made by the researcher while explain the data analyzed.

7.1 International graduates

The study was conducted by interviewing 9 foreigners who have all been educated in Finland. The respondents were carefully chosen and the requirement was that respondents have made degree in Finland, lived in Finland for some time, and has searched for work after graduation. There were 11 main questions all together to cover the research problem and to find out the real problems foreigners are facing. The participants who took part in this research were all dealing with major problems of finding suitable positions.

International graduates who have participated in this research have lived in Finland from 4 to 7 years of time. Most of them have done at least one degree in Finland and one degree in their home country. Majority of them have gained work experience from Finland but the work was not related to their profession. Few of them are still working outside their professional area. Some of them have continued to a higher degree studies in Finland having two degrees but still

battling with jobless or cleaning floors. The participant's language skills differ from poor to good level. Most of them could speak enough to survive in their daily lives. The empirical findings of this research are based on the tables presented in the appendices 1 and 2. The tables were used for filtering data and set for analyzing the raw data collected for research through interviews and questionnaire.

All the respondents were very happy and willing to give the interviews. They felt it was important issue that needed to be investigated it, discussed about it in public and in media to open up the Finnish job market in the future.

7.2 The respondents

The respondents who took part this research were quite international group. They have all lived in Finland more than 3 years. Each one of them has experienced unemployment since graduation. At the time of interview three of respondents were working full time and two were doing part-time jobs. Four respondents were unemployed despite the fact that they were searching for work constantly. One of the respondents has found paid trainee position from Germany and he moved to Germany during the research. The respondent informed that it's very unlikely for him to return to Finland ever again because of the unemployment he experienced. The respondent had just recently very negative experience from Finnish employer. The respondent was doing part-time cleaning job that he started only a while ago. Without any warning or even explaining to him the employer told him he was fired and he need to leave at once. One respondent was on her maternal leave at the time of interview. Since she lived in Finland for a long time and spoke fluent Finnish she was very confident she will employed after her maternal leave. She also had plenty of working experience from her field already during her studies.

7.2.1 Educational background and Finnish language

All the respondents have graduated between 2007 and 2013. Among the respondents 6 of them have studied IT, three of them had masters in IT, and three had bachelor in IT. One respondent had Masters in English literature. Two

respondents had Bachelor degrees, one in business, and one in social science. The IT sector was well represented in this research.

The Finnish language levels of the respondents differ greatly from excellent Finnish speaker to beginner level. One of the respondents (R6) spoke Finnish very well since she stayed in Finland long time. Three of them spoke good level but felt they need to upgrade their language skills to increase their possibilities in the future. The rest of them spoke beginner level of Finnish language and they knew they really need to study hard Finnish language to be able to work according to their profession.

7.2.2 Results of the work search

Four respondents inform that most of the feedbacks they received in the job hunt were positive. These four respondents generally felt that it depended mostly on their effort and skills to find the job they are looking for. They were the most motivated and most positive of all the respondents. Two out of these four respondents were quite confident they would find job according to their profession, they knew the language well, and they had gained plenty of working experience. The other four respondents were hopeful of finding a job but felt it's too hard and challenging due to language skills. One respondent lost all hope of ever finding job in Finland and was preparing to leave for Germany in the time of interview. The respondent decided to send work applications to other European countries as well and has received positive answer from Germany and Switzerland very quickly. The respondent was even more surprise when he was informed that he will get paid during the trainee period and he has good chances to be employed permanently later on. This respondent R5 has been doing odd jobs during his studies and after graduation haven't succeed to find suitable job according to his profession from Finland. R5 has been searching even unpaid trainee position but couldn't find it at all. The respondent expressed his situation in the following.

“How will I find a job in Finland when I couldn't even find unpaid trainee position from here? All the employers expect me to have working experience but how could I get working experience without getting the chance in the first place?”(R5).

7.2.3 Finnish language

Most of the respondents believed that Finnish language was their one of the biggest challenges and barriers to get job. One respondent spoke very well and she didn't see Finnish language as a challenge for her. At the time of the interview she was on her maternal leave but before that she has been actively working in her professional field. All the other respondents saw the language as a major challenge and as an obstacle between them and their professional position they are seeking for. Those respondents with the IT background believed language was not as much necessary in IT works than in the other fields. They believed that they could well manage with the English language but the employers demand good or very good Finnish language skills. Throughout the research the issue of the language skills and the problems that the foreigners are facing due to the lack of Finnish language raised repeatedly. All most all the respondents were dealing with the challenge of the language skills as it can be seen in the following quotes of the respondents.

"I feel that there are not many jobs for foreigners in Finland. Employers always expect that you speak fluent Finnish. Good Finnish language is always required in every job announcement. It seems to me that Finnish employers don't want or understand any other language than Finnish. I have also realized that there are hardly or very little Finnish speaking positions available" R1.

"I think Finnish language is my biggest obstacle and a reason why I couldn't find a suitable job. I haven't tried to apply much for positions of my area because of the language requirements. I have sent just couple of applications to Sokos hotels. I didn't apply for more because I knew I need to study more Finnish language. I found a job in hospital, the job doesn't suit my profession, but I had to accept it to build myself more and to learn the Finnish language more". R2

"One of my biggest challenges is the language skills". R3

"One of my major obstacles was the lack of Finnish language. The employers use to say that I should have very good knowledge of the Finnish language. One of the most common rejection reasons was that I didn't have enough Finnish language skills" R4

“The employer told me that because of the poor Finnish language he couldn’t hire me” R5

7.3 Working experience

All the respondents felt working experience was the second most important challenge after language skills. Especially the working experience gained from Finland. They felt that employers are asking too much and too early from the fresh graduates without providing opportunity to gain the experience first. The respondent R3 felt regarding working experience the following;

“Finnish employers want to hire a ready package, fresh graduate who have plenty of experience and all the competences right away”

Respondents also felt that the Finnish employers valued only the working experience that was gained from Finland and not outside Finland. This further make it harder for the foreigners because some of them have had working experience from abroad which doesn’t help them at all here in Finland. Respondents feel that even though they have all the skills and competences needed for the position and even the working experiences from their home country still Finnish employers don’t trust them.

“I have a lot work experiences from my country but Finnish employers require working experience required from Finland” R2

7.3.1 Residence permit

Residence permit was seen as one of the major challenges foreigners face. Respondents felt great pressure and stress even before graduating from their universities. Five respondents start part time job during their studies to secure their residence permit. They also continue working full time after their graduation to further ensure their residence permit. They were all doing odd jobs that were not according to their profession. Respondent R4 stated his thought related to residence permit;

“Even before graduating I was thinking what will happen to me if I don’t get job right away? Will I be send back home? I was constantly thinking ways to secure my residence permit and I had to start doing odd jobs. I had no other choice.” R4

During the interviews the challenge of the residence permit has become one of the greatest obstacles for the foreign students. Residence permits influence in many ways foreigners’ situation and plans. The respondents had to start worrying about their residence permit early in their studies and had to do odd jobs just to ensure their residence permit. Respondents didn’t have enough time to search jobs that were related to their profession due to residence permit. They were forced to do odd jobs and by doing odd jobs they couldn’t uphold their skills and competences that needed constant update to remain. Another major problem that odd jobs caused is the fact that employers always want to know what the applicants have done after their graduation.

“Odd jobs affects negatively to ones skills and competences. In two years if you don’t work in your own profession you will forget many things. As the gap between your graduation and finding your own profession job grows the employers will ask you in the interviews what have you been doing since you graduated? And doing odd jobs will look very bad in the employer’s eye. The employers asked me what have I done in these two three years of time and I told them frankly that I had no other options but to do these odd jobs. I had to do these odd jobs because of my residence permit. Employers want to see that you are in touch with your real field. In my field which is programming it’s something you can forget if you don’t practice it regularly. I was forced to do odd jobs. I had to work like 8 hours every day and after that I didn’t have time or energy to practice my field” R4

7.3.2 Connections

Another great obstacle which all the respondents agreed upon was the lack of connections. In many times educated foreigners feel alone and separated from the majority. Even though they have all that it takes to be employed still they felt they need that little push to get their position. That little push is commonly seen as to know the right people. All the respondents felt they would be employed much

easier if they would have the right connections. Those who have the right connections will be employed very soon after their graduation.

“The Finnish students from my class have got jobs before we even graduated from the school. I was more qualified and I got better grades than they did and still they were employed immediately.” R1.

“Finnish people are well connected and they get employed much faster” R6.

7.3.3 Part-time jobs

Two respondents raise an interesting issue related with the part-time jobs foreign students do along with their studies. Respondents saw this as a major setback for the students because they cannot concentrate on their studies as they ought to be. The respondents felt that foreign students are doing more and more works during their studies and this affects negatively their skills and competences as they graduate. As R5 said

“You might pass the courses but if you are not there in the class when they are teaching you the most important skills required from your field how would you manage to present these skills to the employer?”

Many foreigners are forced to do part-time jobs to survive and even send money back home. The students should however focus on their main goal and gain the best skills from their studies. Respondent R3 suggested as follow;

“Students should do minimum hours if they have to and they also inform back home to give them some time and be patient until they graduate” R3

7.3.4 Employment office

Generally the help of the employment office is seen as very little or even not existing. Among the respondents are those who visited the employment office and felt that they didn't get any help. Three respondents R2, R3, and R8 didn't have experiences from the employment office neither used any of its services. The respondent R1 has visited the employment office several times. He was offered

“Sanssi card” which supposed to give extra value to job seeker by providing financial support to the possible employer to motivate them to hire job seekers. R1 was very hopeful after receiving this card;

“ I was very happy when I received this card and I was very much hopeful of getting job with the help of this card, but unfortunately I was not employed” R1

The respondent R4 had negative experience from the employment office. In his first visit they couldn't find the title of his profession from their database due to language barrier. R4 felt that if there would be officers with IT background or even know more about IT he could get better services from the employment office in the future. Respondent R5 went to employment office once and he was offered Finnish language course and he had quite positive image about employment office. Respondent R6 had little experience from employment office. Her experience was more negative than positive regarding the little services she received from the office. R6 felt that getting job through employment office was quite complicated and difficult. She also felt that it was easier for her to seek and find job elsewhere.

R7 also visited the employment office she was welcomed and treated very friendly, she didn't gain any help however. She felt that the office is quite passive and not active in helping and providing jobs for the international graduates.

7.4 Employment officers

This part of the research was done to get working solutions to overcome the challenges international graduates are going through. Since employment officers are working daily with all types of foreigners, it was important to get their point of view to this matter.

Questionnaire was sent by email to 14 officers working at the employment office. Only 5 responses were received by the due time. The officers were contacted couples of days and reminded to part-take the research, but without any result. The officers who responded had working experience varied from 3 to 17 years.

Officers have also worked in many different parts of the employment office previously and gained valuable experience of dealing with different customers. Most of them are currently dealing with international customers on a daily basis. Their task is to provide guidance and support for the foreigners as they began their struggle of finding suitable job. Foreigners are sometimes lacking some of the very basic information related to searching work in Finland. Employment officers are seen as information bank from which international job seekers could get all the necessary information they need to support their job hunt.

7.4.1 Employment officer's views

There can be seen a lot of similarities between the two respondents group. Major obstacles that were mentioned by the international graduates are also mentioned by employment officers.

Employment officers all agreed that Finnish language is the biggest obstacle for the international graduates. For this reason employment officers believed that providing Finnish language courses would be the most important service employment office could provide. Officers suggested that job hunting training courses led by skillful coaches could be very helpful for the graduates. These

courses could help graduates to focus enhancing their professions and upgrade their own skills.

Serving international customers is not always easy in the employment office. Officers who are serving customers from different countries with different cultures create certain challenges. These challenges appear in the form language barrier, when the officers don't fully understand what the customer is saying or if the customer really understands what is being said.

There are also cultural differences that need to be considered. Even though officers understand the difficulties graduates are going through, they feel they cannot do much to help them more. As one of the officers put it "Language barrier is sometimes problem when there is no common language. Officers don't possess enough skills and knowhow to serve highly educated international graduates" (RO4).

All officers agreed that graduates should be very active and they should not leave no stone unturned until they get job. Graduates should participate also all the different courses and training positions that employment office offers. They should also visit constantly the employment office and ask for help continuously. Employment office has good web-pages that provide a lot of information concerning professional courses and other helpful services such as recruitment workshops.

Employment officers are aware the challenges that international graduates are going through in the Finnish job market. According to RO3 "international graduates are facing racism, language barriers, and cultural differences. Convincing Finnish employer is harder for the international graduate than native Finn". Officers know that graduates are not treated the same way as Finns in the job market and even their previous education and working experiences are neglected by Finnish employers.

"Their previous degree, old profession, and working experience will lose value in the Finnish job market. They face negative attitudes and racism while searching for work" (RO4).

Other challenges are lack of connections, little knowledge about the Finnish job market and the Finnish job culture. All these factors affect graduates chances to get suitable job.

At the end officers provide very encouraging advices to the graduates. The most common advice was never to give up and being always very active as RO1 put it;

“Be very active and never give up. Finnish job market is challenging to even native Finns. Graduate should actively utilize all the helpful resources available such as employment office and job hunt coaches” (Ro1). Another encouraging advice was given by RO2 who emphasized the importance of knowing Finnish society and how Finnish job market works.

“Put extra effort on learning Finnish language. Convert your previous degrees into Finnish degrees. Create connections with people from your profession. Attitude is very important, try to be more active than born Finns” (RO2).

According to the officers graduates should size any given opportunity even if it's lower level jobs or part-time jobs. Working experience gained inside Finland is also valuable asset in the future. Graduates should also constantly improve their skills, to be patient and keep searching for suitable positions.

The challenges graduates are facing might seem too great to overcome but there are always chances and opportunities for those who are willing give more. Graduates should depend on themselves and on their hard work first. They should also actively search for work, make valuable connections, and to participate all the recruitment workshops possible. Starting new career is not easy as one of the officers put it, “Starting new career in new country starts always from the bottom, unless you are an expert” (RO2).

7.5 Summary of the Findings

The findings show that there are really big challenges facing international graduates in the Finnish job market. These challenges could be divided into three parts. In the first part are challenges which the graduates can overcome by

themselves. This requires extremely hard work, learning Finnish language well and building one's professional skills in a way that exceeds native Finns.

The second part is related with immigration policy mainly with the residence permit. Graduates can find odd jobs and secure their residence permit. Even though immigration policy of Finland is hard towards foreign graduates still they can manage by searching and doing lower jobs.

The third challenge is the attitudes of the Finnish employers, which is the most difficult challenge of all since graduates cannot affect the negative opinion of the Finnish employers beforehand. Even if the graduates overcome all other challenges the attitudes of the Finnish employer is very hard to overcome.

While graduates are facing so many challenges there is very little help they could receive from elsewhere. Employment office is one place foreign graduates turn for help, but unfortunately they cannot find enough help from there. The office is lacking useful resources such as good Finnish language courses, strong connections with the Finnish employers and general know-how skills to assist foreign graduates.

8 DISCUSSION

Finnish language, residence permit and the negative attitudes of the Finnish employers were among the biggest obstacles international graduates had to face while searching for working opportunities in Finland. The results of this study confirms and explains in detail the multiple difficulties and challenges international graduates have to pass before getting suitable position from the Finnish job market. The help of the employment office is not always enough to support the graduates. Employment office also lacks the skills and the resources to provide helpful services for the international graduates.

Finnish employers set high requirements for the graduates. International graduates are required to speak fluent Finnish. They are also required to have working experience after their graduation. Graduates should also have exceptional professional skills and competences to overcome native Finns who are competing for the same position.

There seem to be information gap between the Finnish employers and the international graduates. That gap is the real reason why Finnish employers don't hire graduates. Most of the cases international graduates are told that the position has been filled, there have been too many good applicants, or no response is given at all. The gap could be simply attitude related, that Finnish employer doesn't want to hire a foreigner. Gap could also be the lack of Finnish language or other professional skills. Feedback concerning why graduate is not chosen this time would help him/her improve their skills more and it would give idea of which are to develop more.

8.1 Lack of skills

The Finnish employers are not always to be blamed because of foreign unemployment. The foreigners need to acknowledge the short coming from their behalf. The international graduates are sometimes lacking all the required skills because of doing too much part-time job during their studies. Two respondents highlight this issue as they mention that graduates should focus more on their studies and do less work during their studies. The international graduates who are

from poorer countries are sometimes forced to work more and to support families back home. Graduates are battling in many frontiers and they are under pressure constantly. Graduates could inform their families back home to be patient for a while until they graduate after which they could provide for more help. Another possible solution is interference of the universities on the working hours. Universities could limit the amount of absence each student is allowed to have to ensure that students are present enough to gain the required skills. The lack of those skills sometimes comes up in the work interview, where the employers realize graduates don't possess all the competences needed.

8.2 Three stakeholders

There are three stakeholders in this matter which are the international graduates, Employment office, and Finnish employers. Each of the stakeholders has duties and responsibilities. The responsibility of the graduate is to become strong candidate by learning good Finnish language and by developing his/her professional skills. The responsibility of the employment office is to provide more helpful services that will enhance the employability of the graduates. The employment office should also act as link that connects graduates and Finnish employers. The Finnish employer has also responsibility towards Finnish society. The responsibility toward Finnish society is to improve the image of Finnish people and the image of Finland as a good country that provides working possibilities for foreigners.

8.2.1 Similarities and limitations

Forsander and Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) have made similar research concerning foreign employability in Finland and also the factors that affect foreign employability. Shumilova and others (2013) have also made similar study that partly touched this research topic. In their study Shumilova and others have gone through the overall experiences and employability of the international graduates. The difference between these two researches and this particular research is that this research focus more deeply on the factors that affect graduates unemployment and it also observe these challenges through employment office's point view.

The limitation of this study is that it only focuses two points of views which are the international graduate's and employment officer's point of views. There is need for more research that;

1. Concentrates on those graduates who are employed and why they are employed?
2. Finnish employers who hired them and what are the reasons they are hired?
3. What reasons Finnish employers reject international graduates?

8.2.2 Benefits of the study

This study could be benefitted from by the future international graduates who are planning to stay in Finland after their graduation. Study could open their eyes and help them to prepare better for the upcoming challenges. There are some improvement ideas for the Finnish universities as well such as preparing graduates better for the Finnish job market and providing them more extensive Finnish courses. Employment office could also benefit from the ideas and suggestions presented in this research.

8.2.3 Future asset

The international students who come to study in Finland are valuable asset for the future of Finland. They bring cultural richness different way of doing things and add the essence of internationalization to Finland. This research shows the skills, ambitions and effort international graduates are making to find job in Finland. The research also shows the strong resistant hard working graduates are facing in the Finnish job market. In the future it's even more important to make similar types of researches and to publish them in the media as a message for the Finnish employers. This will perhaps open the minds and the eyes of the Finnish employers. These valuable assets will be an entrance key to international markets for many Finnish companies in the future.

Furthermore graduates need good examples to follow. They need examples that would inspire them to dream high and to pursuit their goal. Those graduates who

have succeeded in finding suitable positions will inspire and motivate other graduates with their accomplishment. They will also open new doors for the coming graduates. They play key role in changing the perception of Finnish employers into a positive one towards international graduates.

The author has faced all the challenges international graduates are facing while searching for suitable position. After long search the author has succeeded in finding suitable position. Since the author began his work in the employment office he was the only one with Somali background. After one and half year a second Somali was hired in the employment office and just recently a third Somali is also hired. This shows that it's possible to open new doors for the fellow graduates. It also shows that it's possible to change the mindset of the Finnish employers with a positive attitude, commitment, and hard work. It is the responsibility of the current graduates to open more doors for the future graduates. They have to leave a positive impression in every place they work so that the next foreigner is welcomed with open arms.

9 RECOMMENDATION

Finish universities should provide more extensive Finnish language courses to international students who aim to settle in Finland. Universities should include in their curriculum Finnish courses which are compulsory with mandatory participation. One of the goals of the universities should be that at the time of graduation foreigners should have at least good level of Finnish language. This will open more doors for the foreigner's right after they have graduated from the university.

Foreigners should generally understand that in Finnish job market they are the competitor to natives and they should have something extra that native job hunter does not possess. Foreigners cannot take situation and condition granted like natives therefore, they have to make extra effort to get a job. Foreigners have to work hard to gain all the skills and competences required from their professional area and gain even more to secure that extra value. Foreigners should stay positive and motivated while searching for work because being positive eventually opens more doors.

Attitudes of the employers are more challenging issue which graduated foreigners unfortunately can't do much about. Attitudes might hopefully change gradually with the time and with the internationalizing of Finland. Media has a great influence in the opinions of the general public and affects their opinions. With the help of the media the image of the foreigners could be gradually transformed into more positive. This positive image could then eventually affect the attitudes of the employers and create working possibilities for the foreigners in the future.

Governmental assistance is also needed to overcome these great challenges. Government could offer bonuses and tax reduction to those companies that hire foreigners. As a recommendation to a new research, it is suggested that this study needs to be taken into wider level by conducting a full fledged study of international graduates in Helsinki metropolitan region in last 5-10 years. Such a study may result in finding that what is the level of acceptance of foreign graduates in Finnish job market and support decision making for internationalization.

10 CONCLUSION

There are many challenges and many steps foreign graduates have to pass to find a job. In each step the foreigner have to work hard and have to excel all others to secure that one possible position. Because of these great challenges foreigners have to develop their skills and competences and they have to provide extra value to their future employer. Foreigners should realize the challenges a waiting ahead as early as possible and to prepare for them. This early start of preparing and developing ones skills will give them extra edge in the future and bring possible position one step closer.

The challenges international graduates are going through can be divided into three different stages. In the first stage are challenges which the graduates can influence by themselves. These challenges are the Finnish language skills, professional skills, interpersonal skills, ability to create strong networks and positive attitude.

Challenges in the second stage are the attitudes of the Finnish employers and the attitudes of the Finnish society at large. These are probably the most difficult challenges to overcome because they are not in the hands of the foreigners.

The third and final stage is the Finnish immigration policy. Residence permits as of one the biggest challenges that create obstacles for the graduates. Graduates however have the ability to influence the outcome of this rule by finding odd jobs and thus secure their residence permit.

Global recession is currently creating more challenges for international graduates. Born Finns are competing for the same positions especially because of the recessions Finns are competing with the foreigners in different levels and thus making it hard for the foreigner to find any suitable position. The economic situation of Finland affects greatly the employability of the foreigners as well. When the economic situation of Finland is good foreigners have better chances to be employed and when the situation is bad foreigners have the most difficulties to be employed (Forsander, Alitolppa-Niitamo 2000).

The journey and the challenges of the international graduates to Finnish job market will continue in the future. The future is however brighter than past. The

current international graduates are already breaking the ice and opening new doors for the future graduates. They are changing the perception of the Finnish employers one by one. They will carry the heavy responsibility of determining the worth of the international workforce in Finland.

In the future, the next Finnish generation will be more international than previous ones as they take over as the new employers. Some of these new employers might have international class mates as they were still studying. Some of these future employers might have participated in exchange student programs and thus gained international experience abroad. They will be more open-minded towards foreigners and they hopefully welcome future international graduates with open arms. Until then the journey of the international graduates will continue with full of challenges and with full opportunities for those who maintain positive attitudes and exceed all others in their skills.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Tabular form of interview data analysis

What have you studied in Finland?	
R1:	Business information technology
R2:	Bachelor of Hospitality Management
R3:	Information technology
R4:	Information technology
R5:	Business information technology
R6:	Social services
R7:	Bachelor in business administration
R8:	BBA and Masters in engineering
R9:	Bachelor of engineering
When have you graduated?	
R1:	June 2013
R2:	2011
R3:	Bachelor 2010 and master 2012
R4:	2010
R5:	2013
R6:	2013
R7:	2011

R8:	2010
R9	2012

How long have you searched for work?	
R1:	Since January 2013
R2:	After graduation still searching job in the field of studies
R3:	I start looking for job even before I graduated
R4:	3 years
R5:	Over one year
R6	For few months now
R7:	I have been searching for work 2 years now.
R8:	I have always worked in Finland, got my first job in 2 weeks, I got professional position in 1-2 months.
R9	Over year and still searching for suitable job.

What are the main challenges you are facing?	
R1:	Finnish language, lack of trust from Finnish employers, little positions for English speaking, lack of connections
R2:	Finnish language, Residence permit, Working experience, connections.
R3:	Language skills, Economy recession, Competition from native Finns, Perception and attitudes of the employers, lack of connections, Part-time jobs.
R4:	No working experience from Finland, Lack of Finnish language, Lack of reference, residence permit, forgetting the skills I have learned.

R5:	Language skills, Working experience, lack of connections, part-time jobs.
R6	Finding job that suits my profession, lack of connection, not much challenges since I know the language and in my field educated foreigners are needed.
R7:	Finnish language skills, lack of feedback from the employer enable to improve.
R8:	the time for searching appropriate job position, the location of the company offering job
R9	Finnish language is the main challenge, Job ads are in Finnish,

How could employment office help you?	
R1:	Being more active helping foreigners, Connecting foreigners to the employers, referring foreigners to the employers, Arranging recruitment workshops
R2:	No experience.
R3:	No experience.
R4:	Fixing trainee positions for the foreigners,
R5:	By arranging special courses for foreigners that focus on Finnish job market, build the skills that the employers are expecting and improve their CV.
R6	I haven't use employment office services much, Employment office could help foreigners by connecting them to Finnish employers
R7:	I haven't get any help. The office should connect foreigners to Finnish employers. To be more helpful and active.
R8:	No I haven't
R9:	I have visited employment office several times, I was printed job ads but no luck finding job.

What are your experiences from the employment office?	
R1:	I write an email and request for help but I didn't receive any respond.
R2:	No experience.
R3:	No experience
R4:	They couldn't provide me trainee position
R5:	Generally good experience
R6:	I have visited employment office only twice, I have found difficult using the services of the employment office, I don't think I could get work through employment office.
R7:	They are not very helpful, they should provide courses for foreigners that teach them how to get job in Finland.
R8:	No experience.
R9:	The employees of unemployment office are good people with good interpersonal relations but the employers contacted never offered any good thing

What are the positive and negative experiences you have from employment office?	
R1:	Receiving Sanssi card was positive, I have sent email but didn't receive any answer, which was negative.
R2:	No experience
R3:	No experience

R4:	There was no one in the employment office with IT background so that he/she could understand my situation, They told me it's my duty to look for trainee position
R5:	No answer
R6:	Difficult to use services not much help received.
R7:	They are friendly but helpful. They just ask me if I have been searching for work.
R8:	No experience
R9:	Good intention but no luck of getting job.

What advices would you like to give to new students who come to Finland?	
R1:	Learn Finnish language, establish connections
R2:	To learn Finnish language as soon as they get here.
R3:	Focus learning language, Increase your competences, Make a good CV.
R4:	Be aware that you have only 6 months to find a job after you graduate, To secure their residence permit, to start learning Finnish as soon as possible.
R5:	Learn Finnish and learn it hard from the start, build network, make connection with other students, develop your skills.
R6:	No respond.
R7:	Not to get hopes up of getting job, network with Finnish employers, Learn Finnish language.
R8:	Be active, open minded, use all possible sources to find job, manage time well be ready for interviews, be confident
R9:	My candid advice is to concentrate on the Finnish language and master it well to be able to cope when looking for good jobs.

Appendix 2

How could employment office help international graduates to find job in Finland?	
RO1:	Providing Finnish language courses. Providing job hunt coach who could help expanding graduates network.
RO2:	By providing both Finnish language courses and professional studies. Assisting to find trainee positions and government assisted jobs.
RO3:	By searching suitable positions with the graduate. Offering trainee positions and training courses. Graduates own activeness is very important as well.
RO4:	Employment office could help by offering intensive Finnish language courses.
RO5:	Providing Finnish language courses and job search technique courses.

What are the challenges employment office face serving international graduates?	
RO1:	Lack of suitable professional courses that could help graduates enhance their profession.
RO2:	Graduates own attitudes restrict them to apply suitable jobs. The high demands of the Finnish job market. Starting new career in new country starts always from the bottom, unless you are an expert.
RO3:	Do graduates have good job searching skills? language barrier, cultural differences.
RO4:	There are not many services for highly educated foreigners in the employment office. Language barrier is sometimes problem when there is no common language. Officers don't possess enough skills and knowhow to serve highly educated international graduates.
RO5:	Difference in working culture. Foreigners approach work differently. Negative attitudes of the Finnish employers, employment office have difficult convincing Finnish employers.

How could international graduate utilize best the services of the employment office?	
RO1:	By using the web-pages of the employment office actively. Graduates own activeness is very important. Employment office also arranges sometimes recruitment workshops where graduate could participate.
RO2:	Studying Finnish language courses actively.
RO3:	By being active, by participating different services employment office arranges. Finding out all the possibilities that could help finding job.
RO4:	By participating all the Finnish courses available and applying government assisted jobs through employment office.
RO5:	By asking employment office recruitment services actively.

What are the challenges international graduates are facing in the Finnish job market?	
RO1:	Finnish language is a big challenge, not knowing the Finnish job market or the Finnish job culture. Lack of connections.
RO2:	The attitudes of the Finnish employers. Previous studies and working experiences have no value in Finland. Finnish language is a great obstacle.
RO3:	International graduates are facing racism, language barriers, and cultural differences. Convincing Finnish employer is harder for the international graduate than native Finn.
RO4:	Their previous degree, old profession, and working experience will lose value in the Finnish job market. They facing negative attitudes and racism while searching for work. Finnish language is huge obstacle.
RO5:	Lack of Finnish language and little knowledge regarding Finnish job market.

What advice would you give to international graduate searching for work in Finland?	
RO1:	Be very active and never give up. Finnish job market is challenging to even native Finns. Graduate should actively utilize all the helpful resources available such as employment office and job hunt coaches.
RO2:	Study how the Finnish society and job market works. Put extra effort on learning Finnish language. Convert your previous degrees into Finnish degrees. Create connections with people from your profession. Attitude is very important try to be more active than native Finns.
RO3:	Be always active apply and participate services that employment office offers. Apply actively job from the job market. Consider all types of jobs even if it's odd job or part-time job. All the working experience gained on Finland is valuable.
RO4:	Focus on Finnish language, study Finnish culture well, be patience and search for work continuously.
RO5:	International graduate should upgrade his/her skills all the time, they should also accept all possible jobs even if it's lower level job.

Appendix 3

Example of the Interview with international graduate

Respondent 1

Where are you from?

I am from Bangladesh.

How long have you lived in Finland?

I have lived in Finland for 4 years now.

What have you studied in Finland?

I have studied information business technology.

When have you graduated?

I have graduated in June 2013.

How long have you been searching for work now?

I have been searching for work since the beginning of 2013. Before I was searching for jobs only sometimes. Since the beginning of 2013 I have been sending at least 2 applications every month.

What are the results you have got so far?

So far I have got just a couple of interviews but I didn't get a job yet.

What are the main challenges you are facing?

I feel that there are not many jobs for foreigners in Finland. Employers always expect that you speak fluent Finnish. Good Finnish language is always required in every job announcement. It seems to me that Finnish employers don't want or understand any other language than Finnish. I have also realized that there are hardly and very little Finnish speaking positions available.

I feel that Finnish employers are not open minded yet towards foreigners. They are not willing to trust foreigners yet. Even I have graduated from Finnish university I still feel that they don't trust me.

The Finnish students from my class have got jobs before we even graduated from the school. I was more qualified and I got better grades that they did and still they were employed immediately.

I also feel that Europeans have better chances to be employed than for example Asians. For instance a post I was applied to European applicant who didn't have any better skills than I did.

I think that Finnish employers are not yet ready to accept and provide opportunities to the educated foreigners. I have also realized that some countries are more favored by the Finnish employers than others. For instance Finnish employers seem to think that Indians are more skilled in IT than other foreigners.

How could the employment office help you?

The office could help me by doing more than they are doing now. The office could connect foreigners and the employers more. The office could assist foreigners by acting as reference on their behalf to the employers. The office could further keep a list of the biggest companies that hires foreigners and introduce them to the new foreigners.

Once I have contact the employment officer and I write him an email in which I request if he could assist me in my work search. I further ask him if could kindly be my reference and introduce some IT companies, but I never got any reply from him.

I would appreciate if the employment officer could provide more personal services to the foreigners. Employment officer should assist more actively those foreigners who actively searching for work. Employment office could also arrange at times recruitment workshops were the companies and educated foreigners could meet. In these types of meetings the foreigners have the chance of creating new connections and finding new opportunities.

What are your experiences from employment office?

I got one good experience from employment office which is that they gave me card called Sanssi card. I was very happy to get this card because I thought it will help me find job. Unfortunately it didn't help me to find a job.

Employment office could offer more trainee courses in which the foreigner could have a training position in Finnish company. A good idea would be a concept called work per model, which means that a company would outsource its works. There would be a Finn and foreigner working together. The Finn would teach the foreigner Finnish language and other practical things related to Finnish working culture. Both would do their own tasks as well. This will enhance foreign employability and adaptation of work.

In my opinion I have more connections than my foreigner friends. I have made connections very actively every time I got chance, like one a company visits our school or whenever company representative visit us I would take their contact information.

In the first years of my studies I had some connections with Finns in my class but latter on we lost the connection so I couldn't utilize their connection in work search. In the future will still try to search for work but if I don't succeed I will try to find some cleaning works. At least I could get Finnish passport and with that I could find other opportunities outside Finland. I would try my luck in English speaking countries like UK, US or Australia.

Appendix 4

Example of the interview with international graduate

Respondent 4

Where are you from?

I am from Bangladesh.

How long have lived in Finland?

I have live in Finland almost 6 years.

When have you graduated?

I graduated in 2010.

How long have you been searching for work?

I have been searching work for 3 years.

What are the results you have got so far?

The results I have got were very hard. The Finnish job market is not open for the foreigners that were my experience.

What were the major obstacles you have faced?

The main obstacles were that I haven't had any working experience from Finland. The other major obstacles were the lack of Finnish language. The employers use to say that I should have very good knowledge of the Finnish language. One of the most common rejection reasons was that I didn't have enough Finnish language skills.

Another important was the lack of reference. I didn't have any one who could have referred me to a good company and I didn't get any help from anyone.

I also have big problem with my residence permit. I was afraid that I would be send back to my country if don't get job. I was forced to do odd jobs that were not

related to profession to secure my residence permit. According to regulation when someone graduates from Finland he/she will get 6 months to find job. According to my experience 6 months is not enough at all. It's impossible to find job when there are so many other obstacles such as the lack of language skills and working experiences. There was a constant worry even before I graduated that what will happen to me after I graduate and will I find a job? Will I be returned to my country? I came to Finland to get better education and to gain at least couple of years of working experience.

Even I have applied for so many jobs still I haven't get any work interview yet. I tried my best to fulfill all the requirements. Even in my personal interest I did some certification exams because in my opinion the Finnish companies give more preference to certificates. For three years I was searching very hard job according to my profession but I couldn't find. Then I start to do odd jobs and with that odd jobs I got residence permit. Then I had the chance to go employment office. Before getting my residence permit I was scared to visit employment office in case I would be send back home.

Odd jobs affects negatively to ones skills and competences. In two years of not doing your own profession, you will forget many things. As the gap between your graduation and finding your own profession job grows the employers will ask you in the interviews what have you been doing since you graduated? And doing odd jobs will look very bad in the employer's eye. The employers asked me what have I done in these two three years of time and I told them frankly that I had no other options but to do these odd jobs. I had to do these odd jobs because of my residence permit. Employers want to see that you are in touch with your real field. In my field which is programming its something you can forget if you don't practice it regularly. I had to do odd jobs. I had to work like 8 hours every day and after that I didn't have time or energy to practice my field.

I have found recently one job that is related to my profession, but unfortunately I had to speak English all the time so I didn't get chance to practice Finnish language.

In the future I will try search more for jobs that are related to my field, and if I don't find I intend to look for trainee positions. I don't want to do odd jobs any more.

How could employment office help you get job?

I would appreciate if the employment office could make companies to take at least one or two foreigners as trainee so that the foreigner could gain working experiences. I already ask them could you provide me trainee position and they told me no, it's your duty to search for trainee position. I would also appreciate if the employment office had some officers with IT background because they would understand better the challenges that I am facing. They could assist me more and provide me beneficial advices for instance, which companies I should contact.

Appendix 5

Example of the response from employment officers which was given originally in Finnish language.

1. Miten TE-toimisto voisi auttaa Suomessa koulutetun maahanmuuttajan työllistymisessä? Minkälaisia palveluja TE-toimisto tarjoaa auttaakseen heitä?

TE-toimisto voi auttaa tarjoamalla työpaikkoja, työnhakuvalmennuksia, uravalmennuksia jne. Oma aktiivisuus on kuitenkin tarpeen.

2. Millaisia haasteita koulutetut maahanmuuttajat kohtaavat työnhaussa Suomen työmarkkinoilla?

Mahdollisesti syrjintää, kieliongelmiä, kulttuurieroja, tarve vakuuttaa työnantaja ammattitaidosta korkeampi kuin kantasuomalaisilla.

3. Millaisia haasteita TE-toimistolla on koulutettujen maahanmuuttajien työllistämiseksi?

Osaavatko hakea työpaikkoja (CVt yms.), samat oikeastaan kuin yllä

4. Miten koulutettu ulkomaalainen voisi itse hyödyntää TE-toimiston palveluja parhaiten?

Olemalla aktiivinen ja hakeutumalla palveluihin, ottaa myös itse selvää asioista.

5. Millaisen neuvon antaisit koulutetulle maahanmuuttajalle jotta hän työllistyisi paremmin Suomessa? Mitä hänen tulisi tehdä toisin?

Ole aktiivinen, selvitä asioita, hakeudu aktiivisesti palveluihin ja työmarkkinoille. Myös pätikätyötä kannattaa ottaa vastaan, ei kannata jäädä odottamaan vakituista paikkaa. Kaikki kokemus on hyvästä, myös ne työt, jotka eivät välttämättä ole omaa alaa. Osa-aikatyötä kannattaa myös harkita.

Appendix 6

1. Miten TE-toimisto voisi auttaa Suomessa koulutetun maahanmuuttajan työllistymisessä? Minkälaisia palveluja TE-toimisto tarjoaa auttaakseen heitä?

Useimmiten koulutetuilla maahanmuuttajilla oppimistaito on huomattavasti parempi kuin kouluttamattomilla. Tämän vuoksi todella intensiivin ja nopea kielen opiskelu on perusteltua, sillä muutamassa vuodessa on mahdollista saavuttaa hyvä kielitaito, jos vain motivaatio on kunnossa.

En tunne TE-toimiston palveluita juurikaan vasta maahan muuttaneen maahanmuuttajan kohdalla, joten en osaa sanoa minkälaisia palveluita tarjotaan. Kielikoulutusta kyllä tarjotaan, mutta jonotus ajan kursseille ovat mielestäni kohtuuttoman pitkät.

2. Millaisia haasteita koulutetut maahanmuuttajat kohtaavat työhaussa Suomen työmarkkinoilla?

Koulutettuja maahanmuuttajien ulkomailla hankkimaa koulutusta ei välttämättä Suomen työmarkkinoilla arvosteta yhden vertaisesti suomessa koulunsa käyneeseen verrattuna. Tämä on haaste maahanmuuttajille, sillä he voivat joutua uhraamaan aiemmin hankkimansa ammattitaidon ja työllistymään jollain vähemmän koulutusta vaativalla alalla.

Sairaanhoitajat esimerkiksi voivat joutua hankkimaan lisäkoulutusta, sillä ulkomailla hankittu pätevyys ei ole lainsäädännöllisesti yhtäläinen suomalaisen työntekijän kohdalla.

Tämä nyt koskee kaikkia maahanmuuttajia, mutta rasismia voidaan kohdata. Esimerkiksi haastattelusta voi kariutua ihan jo pelkän nimen perusteella. Toisaalta maahanmuuttaja voi olla joissain työyhteisöissä merkittävässä roolissa esimerkiksi kansainvälistymisen suhteen.

Jos ajatellaan korkeakoulutettua maahanmuuttajaa, niin esimerkiksi liian heikko kielitaito voi olla esteenä työllistymiselle. Otetaan esimerkkinä saksalainen psykologi maahanmuuttaja asiakas, jonka suomenkielen taito oli arviolta B2.2. tai C1. Mutta silti työnantajat eivät häntä suostuneet työllistämään, sillä kyseisessä työssä kielen täydellinen hallinta on vaatimuksena.

3. Millaisia haasteita TE-toimistolla on koulutettujen maahanmuuttajien työllistämiseksi?

Ylipäänsä ainakin korkeasti koulutettujen työnhakijoiden kohdalla te-toimiston rooli on pitkälti työttömyysturvan hoidossa, osaamista koulutettujen työnvälitykseen TE-toimistossa ei juurikaan ole. Korkean koulutuksen vaativia ammatteja ei tunneta, monesti ihan pelkän alan erittäin laajan substanssi osaamisen vuoksi. Tämä osaamattomuus korostuu erityisesti haasteellisen maahanmuuttaja asiakasryhmän kohdalla, jos esimerkiksi yhteistä kieltäkään ei ole.

4. Miten koulutettu ulkomaalainen voisi itse hyödyntää TE-toimiston palveluja parhaiten?

Suomenkielen kurssit ja palkkatuki merkittävimmissä roolissa. Varmaankin yhteinen kieli on tärkeä asia. Lisäksi Suomen byrokratian rattaat poliisin, maahanmuuttoviranomaisten, maistaarin ja kelan välillä on turhan hidas. Toki TE-toimisto on myös hidas toimija. Monta kuukautta voi tuhraantua pelkästään byrokratiaan.

5. Millaisen neuvon antaisit koulutetulle maahanmuuttajalle jotta hän työllistyisi paremmin Suomessa? Mitä hänen tulisi tehdä toisin?

Kielitaitoon on panostettava ja suomalaisen kulttuuriin on toki tutustuttava jos haluaa pärjätä suomalaisilla työmarkkinoilla. Yli päättään maahanmuuttajat tuppaavat viettämään vapaa-aikaansa omissa oloissaan, jolloin kielitaito ei välttämättä kehity riittävän nopeasti. Sen vuoksi esimerkiksi tulisi mennä vaikka työväenopiston ompelukurssille, tai vastaavalle pelkän kielitaidon oppimisen vuoksi ☺

Varmasti hyvin monet koulutetut maahanmuuttajat joutuvat tekemään uhrauksia selviytymisensä vuoksi. Nöyryyttä ja kärsivällisyyttä.

Monet maahanmuuttajat, jotka tulevat opiskelemaan suomeen ammattikouluun tai korkeakouluun englannin tai ruotsin kielellä, eivät ymmärrä opiskella kolmen- viiden vuoden opintojen aikana suomenkieltä, mutta päätyvätkin jäämään Suomeen. Tämän vuoksi oppilaitokset saisivat ottaa tässä asiassa merkittävämpää roolia, sillä suomen kielen osaaminen on toisinaan hyvin tärkeä osata tässä maassa. Lisäksi ulkomailla suomenkieli on kysyttyä tavaraa ja pelkällä suomen kielen osaamisella voi esimerkiksi Puolassa pyytää helposti 2-3 kertaa parempaa palkkaa, kuin paikalliset saavat