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## Enhancing Career Prospects for International Students in Finland: A Service Design Approach

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In recent years, Finland has emerged as a beacon for international students seeking top-tier higher education opportunities. Renowned for its world-class education system, the country has drawn a diverse cohort of students from various cultural backgrounds. Finland also needs foreign labour as the nation is growing old and the share of employed workforce is declining (Hämäläinen 2021).



However, the journey of these foreign students in Finland presents multifaceted challenges, particularly concerning integration and career prospects. The major challenges were according to

Saleem (2023) language education, for instance teacher commitment, study materials that produce comparable proficiency in Finnish. On top of that, collaboration possibilities, supportive policies, business networking, and immigrant empowerment in development could be improved. Addressing all this, the core objective of the thesis of **Ms Sana Saleem** delved into offering a service design-based solution aimed at amplifying the career trajectories of foreign students within Finland's landscape.

The significance of language in fostering integration within a culture and society cannot be overstated. To explore the assimilation of foreign students into Finland's career sphere, an array of service design methodologies was employed. Techniques such as the Business Canvas Model, SWOT Analysis, Customer Journey Maps, and surveys were meticulously utilized. A survey questionnaire yielded a substantial response rate of 58 out of 70, forming the basis for crafting four distinct personas and corresponding customer journey maps. Additionally, the research involved conducting two online workshops with a focal group, fostering brainstorming sessions and collaborative design efforts that culminated in tangible prototypes.

A pivotal revelation from the conducted research emphasizes the imperative integration of mandatory Finnish language courses, especially within non-technical degree programs. This integration serves as a catalyst for facilitating a smoother assimilation process for international students. Moreover, the findings underscore the need for Finnish authorities to further pave the way for programmes aimed at seamlessly integrating international students into Finnish society.

The service design-based solution outlined in this thesis stands poised as a pivotal stepping stone toward enhancing the career prospects of international students in Finland. By advocating for the fusion of language integration and societal integration programs, the thesis endeavours to bridge the gap and create an inclusive environment conducive to the success of foreign-background students pursuing higher education in Finland.

On top of language and technical skills, the significance of soft skills, such as communication and teamwork skills, is now acknowledged, too. Also, workplaces could organise courses in Finnish, soft skills, and culture when attracting foreign talents to solve the labour shortage and correct the distorted dependency ration in Finland.

As Finland continues to attract a diverse pool of global talent, the implementation of these proposed solutions holds the promise of not only nurturing academic excellence but also fostering a welcoming ecosystem for students seeking to thrive in the Finnish professional landscape.

- Hämäläinen, S. 2021. Työvoiman maahanmuuton ajankohtaisaiheet. Maahanmuuttojohtaja Sonja Hämäläinen 15.3.2021. Työvoiman maahanmuuton pyöreä pöytä. Valtioneuvosto.

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