



International diversity in a Finnish work community

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Abstract

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<p>Diversity has been studied in the context of the workplace in international research since the 1960s. As a concept, it covers a wide range of attributes while this thesis focused specifically on international diversity and how its benefits can be harnessed in a Finnish organisation. Previous studies have shown that diversity brings various benefits to an organisation, such as smarter teams with broader experience, learning, innovation, and a better understanding and reach of markets. Challenges, on the other hand, include increased conflicts and communication issues. However, mere diversity does not guarantee benefits; instead, certain elements are needed within the organisation, such as a culture of learning and psychological safety. In addition to the mentioned benefits, the motives for managing diversity could include ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination laws and equality regulations, social sustainability goals, ethical responsibility, and branding factors.</p> <p>International professionals in Finnish workplaces are still a relatively recent phenomenon. In Finland, the aging population poses challenges to the welfare state model, and international professionals have been presented in several government publications as a response to labour shortages in various sectors and, more broadly, to future workforce issues. However, employment is challenging for applicants with a different cultural background, with language being one of the biggest hurdles. Systematic diversity management is needed in Finnish workplaces, and maturity maps, diversity matrices, or agreed principles for language models have been suggested to support management.</p> <p>The case organisation in this case study was a Finnish energy company, whose long-standing municipal roots and local operations have kept its employee profile very Finnish. However, the energy transition and the diversification of society also impact the organisation's future skill needs, making the framework for managing diversity relevant. Within the organisation, six employees with international backgrounds were interviewed, and as part of the benchmarking method, representatives from two different industry organisations were also interviewed. Additionally, the brainstorming method was utilized among the HR team.</p> <p>The results of the study found that the benefits of diversity were perceived in much the same way as the conclusions of previous studies, such as broader perspectives and cultural knowledge. The main challenge was also, similarly, the language issue. The organisation was understood to be in the early stages of embracing diversity in the right direction. Management of diversity was seen to require structures, management support, increased awareness, and agreed-upon rules for language models, which were also identified as cornerstones of successful diversity work in other organisations. Therefore, the organisation should initiate discussions about diversity as part of supporting strategic objectives and create structures that support diversity. One important structure is the hybrid language model, for which clear rules should be established.</p>
Keywords Diversity, Inclusion, Diversity Management, Diversity Management Framework

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1 Introduction

Recruitment of international professionals has been introduced as the solution for the challenge of aging population structure in Finland. Large proportion of retired and soon retiring workers are creating problematic relation of taxpayers and services needed in a well fare state of Finland. Utilisation of immigration could provide relief to fields that are suffering from labour shortage already. (Larja & Peltonen 2023, 31; Rotkirch 2021.) In addition, previous research highlights the benefits of diversity, such as enhanced team performance, learning, innovation, and access to broader markets or customer bases (Grant & Rock 2016; Levine & al. 2014; Sommers 2005). Hence, Finnish organisations have the opportunity to leverage international diversity to their advantage.

Previous research also however addresses the associated challenges, including conflicting results, increased conflict, and language requirements (Ely & Thomas 2020; Lauring, Selmer & Jonsen 2019). It is also clear, that job seekers with a foreign background in Finland often find job hunting challenging. Proficiency in Finnish language is still generally considered a prerequisite with hiring managers seeing the lack of language fluency as hindering work efficiency. Other challenges are discrimination of cultural differences and lack of recognition of previous education or experience. (Baumgartner 2023; Oma kieli 2023.) The need and demand are currently not being utilised in many Finnish organisations. The previous research also emphasises the need for organisations to move beyond mere diversity and actively foster an inclusive work culture, exploring the role of psychological safety, learning culture and structured plan to support diversity. Managing diversity is crucial in order to enjoy the positive outcomes. (Ely & Thomas 2020; Rinne 2021, 10; Uehigashi & al. 2022.)

The case study organisation in this thesis is a Finnish energy sector company that has only recently welcomed international talents in the work community. The organisation is undergoing large transformation involving the shift in energy production from fossil fuels to renewable sources and new technology, the transition of operations from localised power stations to a more widely distributed energy system, the move from an insular, all-in-house model to collaborative partnerships, and the adaption of a more turbulent and unpredictable operating environment. All this requires new and wider range of skills. The importance of innovation and leveraging employees' new ideas in developing practices has been recognised.

1.1 Objective

This research has three objectives. First, the objective is to understand the current state of diversity and inclusion within the organisation and to identify potential challenges and areas for development. Second, the objective is to propose practical measures through which the organisation can promote diversity and inclusion in the work environment. The third objective is to raise awareness and understanding of the significance of diversity and inclusion for the organisation's success and the well-being of its employees.

When defining research questions, the objectives of the research are considered. The aim is to produce practical knowledge and helpful framework to benefit the organisation on its journey towards strengthened diversity and inclusion. There is interesting research data and theory available on diversity, its management, and its link to innovation. This will be a crucial part of the theoretical framework in the work. However, the main purpose of the work is to ascertain the current factors that are for example hindering the consideration of international professionals in recruitment. In order for the development plan to be adopted by a wider organisation, the importance and benefits of diversity must also be clearly demonstrated in the research work.

The research questions seeking answers in this research are summarised as following:

- Q1: How is diversity and inclusion seen and understood in the organisation?
- Q2: What are the measures suitable for the organisation that would encourage diversity and inclusion?
- Q3: How can we engage the organisation in the subject?

1.2 Scope of work

No phenomenon can be covered completely thus the topic under study here is also approached from a limited perspective. From the researcher's point of view, it was important to make the necessary limitations so that the research forms a meaningful and feasible entirety. As the field of qualitative research is extensive, it was inevitable to make choices related to narrowing down the perspective. (Jokinen s.a.)

Previous research introduces various forms of diversity, such as gender, cultural background, age, and educational background. In this work, the diversity perspective focused on cultural and ethnic differences, international diversity in other words. Other areas of diversity, such as age and gender diversity, were excluded when delving into diversity theory and examining its links in the research work. However, some of the diversity theory and existing research focused on the spectrum of all types of diversity, and in this context, the delineation could not have been exclusively targeted

towards international diversity. In addition, the scope of the thesis was limited to discussion and recommendations based on previous research and data collected and analysed in this case study. Implementation of the development proposal was excluded from the scope of this work.

1.3 Key Concepts – diversity, inclusion, and diversity management

Marilyn Loden developed a model, known as Diversity Wheel, that categorises different types of diversity into dimensions. Primary dimensions are national origin, age, ethnicity, gender, abilities, race and sexual orientation. Secondary dimensions are characteristics such as experiences, education, family status and appearance. (CGLI 2020.) Työterveyslaitos (s.ab.) [The Finnish national health organisation] defines diversity in organisation context as mutual differences among employees, including but not limited to age, gender, ethnic or national background, citizenship, language, religion, belief, sexual orientation, family situation, disability, health status, ability to work, neurodiversity, educational background, values, and personality. Another way to look at diversity is the division into two categories: external differences and internal differences. External differences can be detected outright and include characteristics such as age and skin colour. Internal differences are harder to detect outright and include factors such as values, religion, cultural norms, and differences in ways of working. (Rinne 2021, 10.) The focus in this thesis was on diversity based on cultural and ethnic background and therefore primary dimensions in according to Loden's Diversity Wheel and secondary differences according to Rinne's categorisation.

Työterveyslaitos (s.ab.) defines inclusion as an equal, non-discriminatory, participatory, and inclusive approach. Rinne (2021, 10) defines inclusion from the employee's experience perspective as being included in a group and the feeling of being accepted as they are. Diversity and inclusivity are strongly interconnected. This connectivity is aptly described by Verna Myers. She says (2015) diversity is being invited to the party and inclusion is being asked to dance. In essence, diversity is about the mix, and inclusion is about making the mix work by creating an environment where everyone can thrive, contribute, and feel a sense of belonging.

Diversity management was the third key concept in this research. It refers to the proactive and strategic effort by organisations to create an inclusive work environment that values and leverages individual differences. Diversity management involves programmes, policies and practises in an organisation that have been implemented to manage diverse workforce effectively and foster organisational equality (Dennissen, Benschop & van den Brink 2018). Successful diversity management requires management support and commitment, resources and clear goals and monitoring of improvement (Louvrier & Iija 2021).

2 Theoretical framework

Diversity and inclusion (D&I from now on) have been popular subjects in the past decade; however, the interest and the profession has existed longer than that (Dong 2021). As international diversity in Finland is relatively young in the workplace, relevant research material from other western countries such as US, Australia and other European countries were applied in this research (Rotkirch 2021, 65). In Australia, organisations became interested in diversity in 1980s and this is when diversity research started to have an organisational view and focus (Kulik 2012). In USA, workplace diversity training started in 1960s along with introduction of equal employment laws and affirmative action. Organisations were prompted to start diversity training programs that would aim to overcome the known history of racial discrimination. (Dong 2021.)

Increasing diversity leads to questions of what the impacts of diverse workforce to organisations' productivity, performance, and job satisfaction are. This theoretical framework begins with the benefits of diversity, including enhanced team performance, learning, innovation, and access to broader markets or customer base, and the challenges associated with diversity, such as conflicting results, increased conflict, and language requirements. Furthermore, the theory discusses the complexities of diversity management, emphasising the need for organisations to go beyond mere representation and actively cultivate an inclusive work culture. It explores the role of psychological safety, learning culture, and bias training in fostering a supportive and equitable environment for diverse employees.

2.1 Benefits of diversity

Several studies show positive impacts of diversity and act as business cases for organisational diversity management programs. Research has discovered four distinctive benefits of diversity. In this section these benefits, smarter teams, learning, innovation and access to wider market or customer base, are introduced in more detail.

Diversity can improve the results teams can achieve thus making them smarter. Grant and Rock (2016) combined findings in a literature review and argue that heterogenous teams are smarter as they focus on facts and process facts more carefully. This is based on studies that indicate diverse teams are more likely to remain objective, examine facts and refrain from relying on prejudices. Homogeneity is likely to give individuals false sense of trust in evaluations of those from the same ethnic background, leading them to refrain from analysing behaviour. In a study analysing the operations of stockbroker teams the researchers found that teams with diversity consistently assess the worth of assets more accurately. They are less inclined to agree to inflated offers and more inclined to accept offers that align with the true value, effectively preventing the formation of bubbles.

Another study examining racially diverse jury groups found that diverse teams were able to process wider range of facts and make fewer errors. (Levine & al. 2014; Sommers 2005.)

Research is showing diversity can lead to increased learning. Working in a homogeneous group can appear more efficient. Employees understand each other quicker and collaboration is likely to flow giving the sensation of progress and efficiency. Adding members to the group who are different can also add friction and slow down the working process which feels counterproductive. Grant, Grey and Rock (2016) however argue that this is why diverse groups produce better outcomes. The work feels harder because more information is being processed and members are working to confront new opinions, ways of doing things and ideas. Learning process requires more effort from individuals. (Grant, Grey & Rock 2016.) Recruiting managers often have the idea that as people with similar background are likely to understand each other quickly, a good fit for the team is someone similar to the other existing team. They are looking for the cultural fit rather than a cultural add. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2022 38.) Another study analysing groups' performance when they were introduced outsiders indicated that while a diverse group reported less confidence in their performance, they performed better than homogeneous groups. The scientists suggest that heterogeneous groups digest information more carefully, learn and therefore outperform groups with less diversity. (Phillips, Liljenquist & Neale 2008.)

Innovation is linked to diversity in claims and studies (Hofstra & al. 2019; Nathan & Lee 2013). A study that pooled data on 7600 companies in London between 2005 and 2007 investigated links among cultural diversity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sales strategies. As a result, the researchers found that organisations with diverse management are more likely to introduce new product innovations than organisations with homogeneous management teams. They also found that migrant status has positive links to entrepreneurship. (Nathan & Lee 2013.) People from underrepresented groups have origins, concerns and experiences that are different from the majority group and can therefore draw relations between ideas and concepts that could be missed or ignored by a homogeneous group. (Hofstra & al. 2019.) The successful Finnish video game company Supercell's strategy explicitly emphasises the connection, communicating to employees that without embracing diversity and inclusion, the company cannot attain the diversity necessary for innovation (Uehigashi & al. 2022).

Cultural and ethnic diversity can act as catalyst for reaching international markets and serving the increasingly multicultural population in larger cities as was found in the study of the companies in London by Nathan and Lee (2013). Businesses with diverse cultural representation were able to orient towards London's large and diverse home markets and the rest of the world more often and faster. Nathan & Lee concluded that the research findings support the claims that diversity is an

economic asset as well as a social benefit. In customer service, diverse workforce has the potential to serve customers better. Through diversity, team is able to serve diverse customer base by paying attention to different customer segments and their needs and serving in different languages. (Työterveyslaitos 2023.) In the case of business-to-consumer (B2C) companies, a diverse staff is more likely to comprehend the requirements of their progressively international customer demographic. Meanwhile, business-to-business (B2B) enterprises stand to gain notably from the collaborative environment fostered by diversity, which is essential for tackling the growing intricacies of the business landscape. Innovative resolutions to client issues frequently hinge on diverse pools of knowledge and interconnections across professional domains. (Uehigashi & al. 2022.)

2.2 Challenges of Diversity

In addition to positive impacts of cultural diversity, studies showed three challenges related to diversity in organisational perspective. These challenges are overly optimistic financial expectations regarding diversity, increased conflict and difficulties with language requirements. The first two are discussed in this section in more detail. Language challenges are discussed in the next chapter from the perspective of Finnish work community.

Direct conclusions on diversity improving business performance financially can be challenging to prove and lead to negative reactions internally. As Ely and Thomas (2020) point out, if diversity and inclusion initiatives are implemented purely on the basis of financial benefits, they may backfire in two ways. People from underrepresented groups have expressed that they question whether the company is the place where they really belong and report lower commitment if economic pay-offs are emphasised. Employees' sense of equality is seen as overlooked and secondary to financial gains, when in fact it should be the basis of building a well-functioning diverse community. Secondly, Ely and Thomas bring out that if financial gains have been promised but they cannot be shown to materialise people are likely to withdraw their support for diversity programs and initiatives in the future.

Diversity has the potential to increased amount of conflict in teams. As discussed above, without collective team identity diversity is simply a group of people with differences. Instead of the differences creating richer discussions and better decision-making, the group with different views, experiences and cultural norms can end up facing increased tension and conflict. (Ely & Thomas 2020) Conflicts are generally considered to have negative effects and associated with breakdown in cooperation. Conflicts are also known to lead to reduced creativity and team productivity. (Lauring, Selmer & Jonsen 2019) Hence, diversity without inclusion, willingness to learn and equality can reverse the positive effects diversity has been shown by studies to achieve. However, Grant, Grey and Rock (2016) argue that negative conflict in diverse teams is often due to the members bringing

in different values instead of different ideas. Value differences are harder to overcome even when members have a good intentions of working together. Conflict of different ideas can, in turn, be positive for the team when it occurs in a safe environment and each member feels able to express their thoughts.

2.3 Conflicting research results on diversity

Studies show conflicting results on improving financial performance through diversity. Ely and Thomas (2020) claim increased diversity rarely can be shown leading to better financial outcomes. They recognise that research has shown results of better decision making and higher quality work under certain circumstances. Although these elements effect business operations positively, their argument is that these outcomes would have to be extraordinarily consequential to influence the organisation's bottom line. On the other hand, McKinsey & Company (in del Mar Martínez Márquez & al. 2023) is showing data on their investigations to indicate diversity can in fact be linked to financial performance. The consultancy company has been conducting studies on diversity and the effects on the organisations' performance and represent the findings on four reports from 2015, 2018, 2020 and the latest in December 2023. All reports show relations between higher diversity and better business performance. On the latest report the results are the strongest of the series yet indicating companies with ethnic representation in execute teams perform better. The data covered 590 companies in 23 countries and showed 39 percent increased likelihood of the companies in the top quartile of ethnic representation versus the bottom quartile. Interestingly, the penalties for companies with low diversity on executive teams are intensifying through the series of reports as the companies in the top quartile show an average of 27 percent financial advantage over others.

Diversity theories indicate diversity can challenge the level of job satisfaction although the opposite can also be detected with theory. Hauret and Williams discuss diversity and its links to job satisfaction (2020, 421). They describe four main theories that are used in literature explaining the impact of diversity on well-being. Three of the theories suggest negative impact and one would lead to positive impact on well-being. The first two theories, similarity-attraction and self-categorisation have resemblance. Both are based on the idea that people prefer to interact with others who are like themselves and naturally accentuate the positive attributes of this group. The group competition theory represents the idea that competition over resources grow as diversity grows and this is likely to lead to conflict. These three theories would suggest that smaller levels of diversity lead to higher levels of job satisfaction. The fourth theory however would lead to the opposite conclusion. The social contact perspective implies that interaction with different groups leads to better understanding and work experience. Hauret and Williams (2020, 422-423) also introduced a study that suggested that ethnic diversity and company performance have a U-shaped relationship. Teams

with no diversity have high performance compared to diverse teams. This is erupted when minority members are added. This is when self-categorisation approach and discrimination are applied. Highly diverse groups on the other hand are likely having tackled discrimination and improved interaction. The company performance was found to improve when diversity is high. Overall, however, similarly to the previously presented findings, Hauret and Williams found in their own research that the effects of diversity are mixed as the environments vary – company culture for instance can have an impact on diverse teams' success or failure. Diversity needs management, policy and training. When team members share a strong collective team identity, diversity is likely to benefit them positively.

2.4 Foundations for diversity

The idea that is shared by several research findings is that simply having an organisation with heterogeneous employees does not equal to better performance and creativity. Diversity needs to be managed and it needs certain elements in the company culture. Ely and Thomas conducted research on diversity management in 1996. The findings showed that organisations that utilised minority groups' identity-related knowledge in addition to other diversity management initiatives such as recruiting and retaining more employees representing minority groups were functioning more effectively. This approach was named learning-and-effectiveness paradigm. It was based on the idea that employees use their previous knowledge and experience to view business processes, products, and procedures objectively and find improvement opportunities. 24 years later Ely & Thomas (2020) argue that organisations have largely not succeeded to adapt a learning orientation and are therefore not been able to enjoy the true potential that diversity could bring to the business.

Diversity can be linked to the framework of psychological safety as diversity in a team can accommodate a feeling of safety to speak up, show differences, express concerns, and disagree openly. However, as introduced by Ely and Thomas (2020) this applies only when people in the organisation learn to appreciate the differences and are willing to learn from them. Benefiting from diversity starts from an individual's capability to understand the differences and uniqueness of their own and those of others. Diversity that is not utilised with appreciation of others and willingness to learn from each other is simply a group of people with differences and organisation cannot capitalise on the benefits. From the viewpoint of psychological safety diversity needs to exist with inclusion, meaning that employees feel accepted and welcome as they are, and this leads to unleashing the benefits of the differences. (Rinne 2021, 10.)

Similar findings were introduced by Ferdman and Deane (2013, 5). They discuss diversity management in the workplace and state that diversity does not automatically lead to better results in areas

such as innovation. Employees must feel accepted and as equal members of the work community in order to harness the positive aspects of diversity, for example, in innovation and improving the employer's image. Therefore, Deane & Ferdman state that inclusion is an essential part of realising the positive outcomes derived from diversity. The experience of inclusivity is influenced by various practices within the organisation such as workspace solutions, or communication, for example. Interactions between individuals also play an extremely important role. For instance, everyday microaggressions, unintentional or deliberate comments, questions, or gestures that convey prejudice and othering, challenge inclusivity. (Louvrier & Iija 2021.) Incorporating everyone is crucial, as indicated by a Finnish survey that highlights a link between inclusivity and employee retention. According to the study, approximately 90% of participants who intending to stay viewed their workplace culture as inclusive. In contrast, among those planning to depart, only 45% perceived the culture as inclusive. (Uehigashi & al. 2022.)

2.5 Diversity management motives

In addition to research showing that diversity has the potential to increase efficiency and lead to certain economic value, there are three other reasons that support diversity management globally: ensuring compliance with legislation and social sustainability goals, ethical responsibility and the brand factors, and the pure necessity of immigration in countries with aging population. In this section, these three motives are introduced in more detail before moving to diversity management practices.

Compliance with relevant legislation is a clear motive for many organisations as antidiscrimination laws exist in most countries. In European Union for example Directives prohibit discrimination in employment and occupation on the grounds of race or ethnicity amongst other diversity dimensions. (Köllen 2019.) This is similar in other western countries, for example in Australia anti-discrimination law similarly prohibits discrimination in employment based on number of different attributes including race (Australian Government 2023).

The ethical value of diversity management is based on the same consideration as anti-discrimination laws, aiming to achieve a state of relative equality. The idea is that organisation has some level of responsibility toward society and therefore diversity management is legitimate management approach serving a purpose. (Köllen 2019.)

D&I are popular subjects to support by organisations leaders and marketing team. The statements suggest organisations value diversity, state their support towards inclusion and recognise the links between diversity and increased ideas and creativity. However, as discussed by Ely and Thomas (2020), apart from good intentions, often there is no research data behind the claims, nor the

organisation have a structured diversity management plan in place. Wilkinson (2021) agrees with this and describes it as the worship of the written word. She uses the black lives matter -campaign as an example of organisations using diversity slogans as if the written word is affirmative enough on the website and the due diligence of diversity management is covered.

The need for diversity management is likely to only increase according to Köllen (2019). He reasons that the driving force in addition to legal and ethical considerations is the lowering fertility rate in majority of the industrialised countries. This is leading and, in many cases, has already led to aging population that is not sustainable in terms of dependency ratio between working and supported citizens. Diversity management is seen as a response to this challenge by many entities such as countries, cities, and organisations. Köllen reminds that the pool of potential domestic candidates is shrinking, and this motivates many organisations to both utilize the current resources or talent effectively and efficiently and open new sources to access additional skilled workforce. In Finnish context this topic is also relevant and discussed in more detail later in this thesis.

2.6 Diversity management

Diversity management practises include two dimensions. The practises can aim to increase diversity by building groups at different levels of the organisation more diverse and increasing the overall diversity in the organisation. On the other hand, the goal of diversity management can concentrate on the existing demographic of the employees and attempt to increase inclusion within. This can be practises such as enabling career advancement and learning from each other. (Köllen 2019.)

As described by Kulik (2012), the interesting aspect of diversity management is that it sometimes requires treating people differently when traditionally fairness is seen as treating everyone the same. Bergbom, Toivanen and Yli-Kaitala (2021, 2) agree with this and go on by stating that achieving real equality may require considering the specific needs of certain groups that are vulnerable to discrimination. They highlight that this is not the same as favouritism, which would mean granting privileges to some in a way that discriminates others. The Finnish Non-Discrimination Act (Non-discrimination Act 1325/2014) allows and requires positive special treatment to people with special needs in order to provide the same possibilities as others. The diversity barometer conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (in Bergbom, Toivanen & Väänänen 2020) states that non-discrimination should be promoted in all levels of organisation, in practical actions as well as official policies. Equality and non-discrimination are therefore also the responsibility of the top management.

Diversity management involves creating change throughout the entire organisation, and succeeding in this requires collaboration, perseverance, and resources (Louvrier & Iija 2021). To start off, diversity management begins with assessment on the current state of diversity and what is the particular area of diversity that would be beneficial to increase. This leads to the development of different practises to support the direction the organisation aims to go. (Bergbom, Toivanen & Yli-Kaitala 2021, 2.) There are framework models and tools available to assist in the assessment and some of these are introduced in the later chapter. Key aspects in successful diversity management are long term commitment that is supported by the leadership team, realistic goals, clear monitoring practises and sufficient resources. (Louvrier & Iija 2021.) Next, the three areas of diversity management practises, recruitment, learning culture and bias training, are discussed. These areas combine the two dimensions of diversity management aiming to both increase diversity and increase the benefits of diversity through inclusion.

2.6.1 Recruitment

Diversity recruiting practises can consist of blind resume review, initiatives to attract certain minority groups or setting incentives to recruiters or hiring managers to encourage diverse recruitment. Increasing the representation of minority groups as part of diversity and inclusion program can be the goal as itself. In addition, the motives for increasing diversity can be related to employee branding, certain national recommendations, or legal requirements. (Köllen 2019.) Companies, that invest in their employee brand and aim to be seen as a fair employer include diversity and inclusion statements in their recruitment page as part of the communication strategy. This demonstrates that the organisation encourages people from under-represented groups to apply and motivates them. This also highlights the organisation's appreciation towards diversity making it attractive to people that share the same value. (Bergbom, Toivanen & Yli-Kaitala 2021, 4.) Table 1 presents examples of diversity statements.

Table 1. Examples of diversity statements (Sato 2024; Metsä 2024; Etteplan 2024).

Sato	We are committed to promoting diversity and building a better work environment. At SATO, we want everyone to be able to safely be themselves while respecting our shared SATO values. We encourage applicants from different backgrounds to apply for our positions and continuously work to ensure that every employee feels welcome and valued. We also strive to ensure that our recruitment process is open and fair to all applicants.
Metsä	We welcome people from diverse backgrounds and different stages of life. Metsä has space and opportunities for many kinds of talent, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, disability or other characteristics – Metsä is for all.
Etteplan	At Etteplan, we globally create awareness and understanding of diversity, equality, and inclusion in our workplace. We actively promote open dialogue, networking, and opportunities for learning more - advancing the DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) agenda together in our workplace!

Active recruitment often starts with a job ad. Considering diversity and inclusion in job postings helps in reaching the more diverse pool of candidates and piques the interest of individuals from different backgrounds in the position (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 14). When the goal is to reach out to wider demographic, the focus should be in clearly defined skills, competence requirements, selection criteria and the language the ad is written in. Slogans or terms that are understood only by a certain group should not be included in the ad. Selection criteria should be based on skills and experience for the job that is determined beforehand in order to lower the risk of irrelevant factors influencing the decision making during the recruitment. Language requirements, particularly in Finland are important to both consider and clearly define on the ad. Hiring manager should consider how important is it for the employee in the particular role to speak fluent Finnish and what would be the adequate level of language skills. (Bergbom, Toivanen & Yli-Kaitala 2021, 3.)

Anonymous recruitment initiatives aim for practises that are free from bias. Recruitment is particularly vulnerable to unconscious bias that can lead recruiters preferring people of certain cultural or socioeconomical background and correspondingly exclude someone applicants with certain attributes. (Bergbom, Toivanen & Yli-Kaitala 2021, 6.) In the evaluation of applicants, unconscious assumptions can create stumbling blocks for promoting diversity. There is a risk that competence is more easily recognised in a representative of the majority, while a representative of the minority is required to provide more convincing evidence. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 14.) Blind recruitment

methods aim to prevent discrimination and to make recruiters pay attention to the skills and experience, thus merit-based recruitment and looking to fill the position with the best possible candidate for the role. In blind recruitment, applications are anonymised and all information that is not related to the applicants' competence, experience and qualifications are removed. (Bergbom, Toivanen & Yli-Kaitala 2021, 6.) Strengthening and ensuring the objectivity of the evaluation improves the conditions for increasing diversity and for achieving equality and equity (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 14).

Software providers offer AI powered solutions to assist in diversity recruitment. These are recruitment platforms and screening engines that claim to make applicant sourcing more equal and skills based than traditional recruitment programs. (Breamery 2023) While technology can be a great assistant and support more equal recruitment processes it still needs to be assessed and monitored regularly. If machine learning tool is fed training data that consist of bias, the problem can intensify and become a concrete problem in recruitment. The risk is that training data bias go unnoticed and the tool is discarding talented and suitable candidates based on their sex, race or other factor before the flaw in the system is detected. One example of this was in when Amazon IT specialists realised years later that their machine learning powered resume screening tool was preferring men over women candidates. (Dastin 2018) Planning and assessing training data and auditing results are important routines working with machine learning tools. Machines need bias training as well as people.

2.6.2 Learning culture

As discussed previously, Ely and Thomas (2020) argue that the true potential of diversity comes from learning culture. Therefore, supporting the elements that facilitate learning from each other is an essential part of diversity management. Learning culture requires a fundamental change in attitudes and behaviours of the leadership. Diversity should be understood as the varied perspectives and approaches to work rather than simply different identity-groups. Thomas and Ely present their learning-and-effectiveness paradigm in their 1996 article as an approach that allows members of different groups to help organisation to grow and improve by challenging assumptions about existing functions, strategies, practises, and procedures. By doing so they are able to identify more fully with the work they do which again leads to positive results such as commitment. (Ely & Thomas 1996.)

Psychological safety is the prerequisite for learning culture. Amy Edmondson has researched work cultures and introduced the term psychological safety. Edmondson and Scott (2022) talk about leadership commitment in creating psychological safety and break the process down to four steps. Firstly, leaders should request feedback from their team on how to better serve the team and listen with the intent to understand and reward the feedback. Second, leaders should give genuine praise

to let the team know their good work is noticed and appreciated. Third, employees need constructive criticism to let them know when they make mistakes and get the opportunity to fix it, improve and grow. Finally, leaders should review how feedback is received by the team and adjust communication style if needed. (Edmondson & Scott 2022.) People need to feel as respected and important parts of the work community in order to have the courage to bring their diverse views, ideas and concerns to the table. Psychological safety can be measured in how organisation responds to setbacks or failures. When the workplace culture allows viewing setbacks as opportunities for learning, constant improvement and learning is efficient. Leadership and managers have an important role in creating a safe environment, encouraging feedback, and setting the example. (Haavasoja & al. 2023, 7.)

Implementing learning culture, structured practises such as induction program play a key role. A new employee needs a thought-out induction when starting at an organisation. When the new starter is a person with a foreign background, he is likely to need a more structured induction and more indebt training into the local working environment, policies, and employment matters. TEM introduces a term *two-way induction*. This refers to training both the new employee and the work community. When training the new employee, the focus should be on learning instead of quick results. Mentoring and peer support are good models to support the new employee to integrate into the community. At the same time work community needs training on diversity such as bias training and language considerations. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2022, 61-62.)

Microsoft has experienced positive results on their Allyship model. The model, based on neuroscience, is a learning path that helps employees understand each other and encourages to take responsibility for individual learning. It is training employees to be allies who make intentional decisions to understand, empathise and act in support of someone else. The model invites employees to embrace failure, deepen their own empathy, and encourage the challenging and sometimes uncomfortable conversations around diversity and inclusion. The organisation started the model as voluntary learning program in 2019 but is has since been added as a required training for its 160 000 employees globally. (Microsoft 2020, 30-35.)

2.6.3 Bias training

Diversity training can have an impact on both diversity management areas: increasing diversity and increasing inclusion within the organisation. Bias education is a type of training that is implemented internationally across different types of organisations and is aiming to remove stereotype-based bias from recruitment, selection-decisions, and promotions (Köllen 2019). In addition to systematic discrimination, inequality can arise from unconscious or conscious bias (Työterveyslaitos s.aa.).

No one is free from bias, and in fact they are at use every day (Työterveyslaitos s.aa.). Bias help people with the mass information flow that is faced with daily and simplify sense making process. For instance, the choices people make at a grocery shop when faced with an unknown product are based on the packaging, labelling and the brand name. This all happens without the individual having to consciously go through the process. It would be exhausting to start every reasoning path from the beginning and not using previous experience as assistance to come to conclusion quicker. The process helps people function and protects from overloading and burdening brain. However, in some cases unconscious bias take conclusions too far. The process provides reasoning that have no fact base and only a loose connection to previous experience or piece of information. If people are not aware of the process this can have drastic result in judgement and decision-making quality in situations that have long term effect on someone else. (Coffman & Gino 2021.) Although bias cannot be bypassed completely, recognising these prejudice tendencies, and understanding the effects of them can reduce the consequences of discriminating. (Työterveyslaitos s.aa.)

Organisations have ways to tackle the effects of unconscious bias that prevent opportunities of inclusion. It is critical that employees in managerial and decision-making positions can critically examine and reflect how prejudices can lead to biases in their own decision making as well as within the organisation's operation more broadly. (Työterveyslaitos s.aa.) Providing training for employees can offer valuable operational assistance, benefiting both managerial staff and the wider organisation. Fiskars Group for instance has introduced training sessions focusing on unconscious bias and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), initially targeting HR professionals, then extending to management, and ultimately reaching all employees. (Uehigashi & al. 2022.)

The aim of the training is to reduce bias in attitudes and behaviours at work, and in recruitment and promotion situations. Training needs to be planned well and include elements such as tools to manage bias, ability to track progress, continuity, and authority to develop processes like selection at recruitment. (Coffman & Gino 2021.) One-off training is not adequate for long term results in reducing the effects of bias. Organisations that aim to improve inclusion need to have diversity training on the agenda in long term. (Työterveyslaitos s.aa.)

2.7 D&I framework as part of the research process

Figure 1 demonstrates how the theoretical framework introduced in this chapter was part of the research process in this thesis. Research questions are the basis of the theoretical framework although they were created simultaneously. Research questions and theoretical framework shaped the questions for empirical research. Empirical research data was analysed and based on the analysis, a conclusion was formed, which also utilised the theoretical framework.

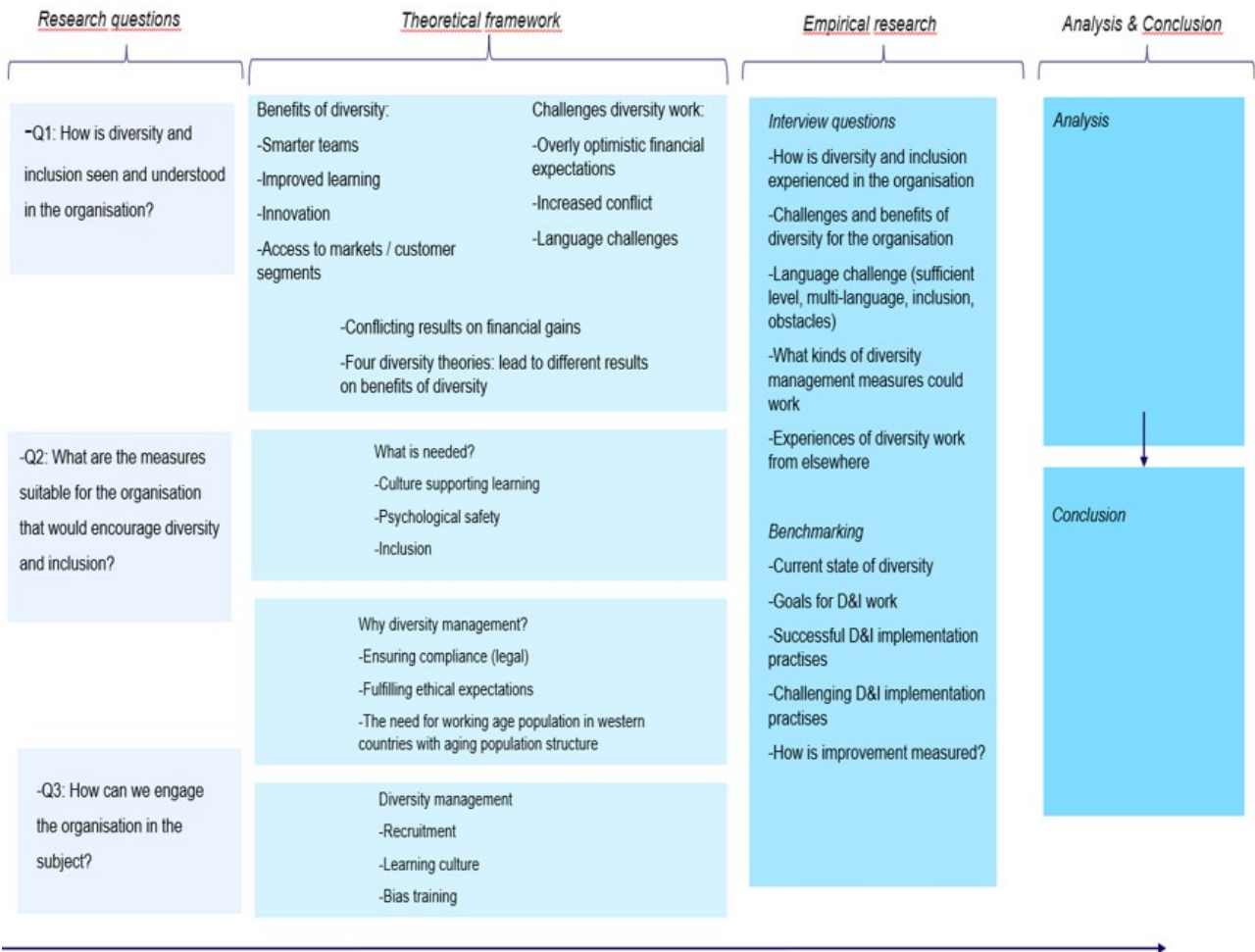


Figure 1. D&I framework as part of the research process

3 Cultural diversity in Finland

In this section the focus is on diversity in Finland still concentrating on ethnic and cultural diversity. The section begins with an introduction to the statistics of people with foreign background in Finland which is a relatively recent emergence compared to countries with a longer history of multicultural populations. The need for diversity management in Finnish work communities is then explained, emphasising the importance of immigration to address challenges related to the country's ageing population and declining birthrate. Employment is however challenging for people with foreign background. These challenges are introduced next followed by approaches used in Finnish work communities to promote diversity and inclusion. Finally, language practices in multicultural work environments are discussed, highlighting the challenges and potential solutions for fostering effective communication and inclusion.

3.1 Immigration in Finland

Research and statistics publications use different terms when referring to non-native Finns. There are certain subtle differences between terms and research scopes as some are referring to nationality or place of birth and some mother tongue and cultural heritage. International talent, according to Business Finland, refers to someone with professional education and experience and is considered in a positive light potentially helping local businesses fill talent gaps (Business Finland s.a.). According to Statistics of Finland [Tilastokeskus] immigrant refers to simply someone who has moved to Finland. This classification includes Finnish citizens returning to Finland or who have been born overseas to Finnish parent. Between 2000 and 2009 one third of immigrants moving to Finland were return citizens. The term *person of foreign background* is not considering any other attributes than the non-Finnish background and it also covers second generation immigrants. (Rapo 2011.) This is the term that best describes the purpose for this thesis as the focus is to examine the integration of cultural diversity in a Finnish work community.

In Finland, international labour is still a relatively recent phenomenon when compared to countries with a history of multicultural population such as United States, Great Britain, and Australia. Finland is still in the early stages in European and even Nordic comparison (Rotkirch 2021 65). Immigration that can be somewhat seen in the statistics began in the 1990s when there were more people arriving to Finland than moving from Finland. The first significant number of refugees arrived in early 1990s predominantly from Somalia (Rapo 2011). Since the 1990s amount of people with international background in Finland has however risen relatively quickly. In 2000 the number of people with foreign background in Finland was just over 110 000 when in 2022 the number had grown to nearly 510 000. (Tilastokeskus s.a.) In percentages, population with foreign background was

2.2% of the total population in Finland in 2000. This grew to 9.1% by 2022. According to Statistics of Finland's forecast the growth will continue and the population growth in Finland is relying on immigration. As table 2 points out the increase in total population does follow the number of people with foreign background. (Tilastokeskus s.a.) Due to this rise, there is also increased interest into how immigrants are settling in Finland and how people with foreign background are integrated in Finnish work community (Rapo 2011). Table 2 represents the share of residents with foreign background in Finland from 1990 to 2022.

Table 2. The share of residents in Finland with foreign background 1990-2022 (Tilastokeskus s.a.)

	WHOLE COUNTRY		
	Population 31 Dec	Persons with foreign background	Share of persons with foreign background , %
1990	4,998,478	37,618	0.8
1995	5,116,826	79,850	1.6
2000	5,181,115	113,245	2.2
2005	5,255,580	157,359	3.0
2010	5,375,276	237,066	4.4
2015	5,487,308	339,925	6.2
2020	5,533,793	444,031	8.0
2022	5,563,970	508,173	9.1

3.2 The need for diversity management in Finnish work communities

Diversity is a topic that Finland must succeed in. The age structure of Finland is amongst the oldest in the world. The steep decline in birthrate is threatening the financial structure of public services and creating inequality. The methods to tackle this crisis are lifelong learning, support towards long working capability and immigration. All three measures must be adapted in order for the welfare state model to continue in some form. Increasing net immigration significantly is one the ways to ensure population growth in the coming decades. If immigration is specifically desired to improve the economic dependency ratio, it should primarily be based on work or study, and successful integration and employment efforts should be achieved. (Rotkirch 2021.) The number of working aged people and people under 15 years old started declining in 2010 and the projection is continuing decline as visualised in Figure 2 (Tilastokeskus s.a.). Immigration is needed to increase the number of working population and more specifically to fill the gap of certain skills that are increasingly scarce. According to a publication by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport, and the Environment, 48 occupations in Finland were categorized as facing labour shortages in

2022. In 2021, the number was 32, and in 2019, out of the occupations analysed, 15 were considered to be facing labour shortages. (Ely-keskus 2022.) This suggests that the long-discussed change in the labour force structure is accelerating.

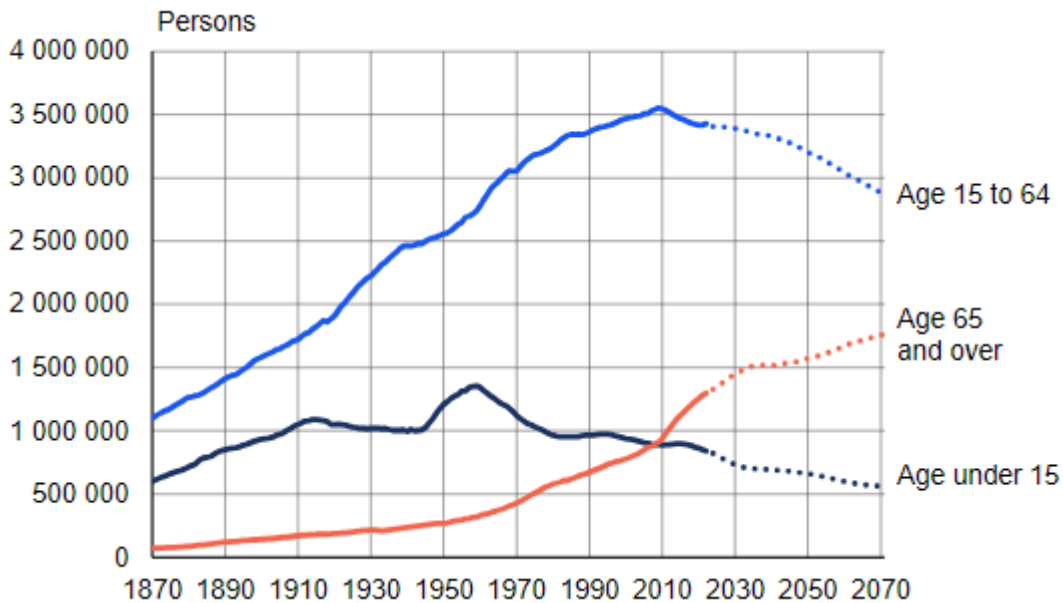


Figure 2. Population and population projection by age group 1870-2022 (Tilastokeskus s.a.)

People with foreign background are overrepresented in unemployment statistics. In the capital region unemployment rate of people with foreign background in 2023 was 22.7 percent when overall unemployment rate in the same region was 9.9 percent (Stenholm 2023). At the same time, only one in five organisations in Finland report that filling open positions has been easy (Lehmuskunnas, Kärpänoja Roth & Sandqvist 2020 2). Finland is in a situation where workforce supply and demand are not balanced. There are professions that have declined through globalisation and yet professions that people in Finland do not enter in necessary numbers. (Rapo 2011.)

Although the general view is that the hinderance of non-native workforce is the business and recruitment in the industries, there are also clear signs that the business sector is ready for and in some cases, demanding for more attention to attracting diversity into Finnish work employment market. Nokia's CEO Pekka Lundmark says it is important Finland is sending a message that foreign workers are welcome as Finland needs more skilled workers from abroad. This was a response to the new governments tightened immigration policies in July 2023. Lundmark estimated that approximately half of the new recruits at Nokia are nationals of other countries in the recent years. (YLE News 2023.) According to a study, 34 percent of the organisations currently hiring people with foreign background are worried about the possible consequences of the new planned tightening policies (Barona 2023).

3.3 Employment challenges of people with foreign background

Reaching employment in Finland as a candidate of foreign background is challenging. The topic has been a popular subject in studies and public discussions. The need for employees in the future is evident and already clearly visible in certain fields of professions. Simultaneously people with foreign background are struggling to secure employment. The challenges can be classified under language, discrimination of cultural differences and lack of recognition of previous experience or education. As language is recognised as a major obstacle, it is discussed here in more detail.

3.3.1 Language obstacle

Language skills are the major obstacle of blocking employment for people with foreign background. Half of the people with foreign background in Finland report language as the main challenge in securing employment (Baumgartner 2023). The reasons presented here in more detail are set requirements for a role and insecurities related to communication in English.

Recruiters consider language skills important with only 23 percent of organisations reporting they are ready to hire applicants with non-fluent Finnish language skills according to Ely-keskus study. When asked about language skills for roles that did not have an official requirement of fluent Finnish the requirements were still high. Lehmuskunnas, Kärpänoja Roth and Sandqvist (2020, 3) suggest it is possible language is mentioned as the reason for not hiring a person with foreign background when other reasons are seen as harder to justify or explain. It is also possible that the way the question is set plays a role. Another study conducted as part of diversity barometer 2020 shows more positive results with majority of the recruiters (88%) reporting perfect Finnish is not necessary unless it is particularly integral part of the role (Bergbom, Toivanen & Väänänen 2020 53).

A study conducted by Oma kieli -association [Own language] measured the attitudes of Finnish people toward the use of English language in different areas in life such as education, university, services and workplace. Majority, 61 percent of people in the survey agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement "Work efficiency will suffer in a Finnish workplace if English is spoken". 29 percent said they disagree or somewhat disagree with the statement suggesting there is a concern shared by native Finns that English is trying to replace the local language. (Alkio, Kim & Hormio 2023, 20.) The results of the study need to be however viewed with the association's own agenda in mind. The goal is to protect the status of the national languages, Finnish and Swedish and highlight the adverse effects of using English in the society (Oma kieli 2023).

Although English is generally known by most adults in Finland, there is still hesitation and insecurities in speaking the language. As discovered by Lehtimaja, Kotilainen and Kurhila's research

(2021, 455) the reason often is that using English is burdensome taking more energy than using native tongue. Similar was found by Jäppinen (2011) in her research thesis, where she explains that especially in spoken situations that demand speedy response, the use on non-native language is utilising larger part of the working memory. She explains that as language skills develop, in this research English, increasingly larger linguistic units can be handled in working memory as a single unit, thereby freeing up capacity for attention and speech processing. Employees might also feel as they cannot express themselves as well and feel less effective using English. Feelings of fear and shame are likewise relevant to how an employee feels if they cannot express their professional identity due to a language change. When using a weaker language, employee can find it difficult to present herself as a competent expert in the field. The research found that there can in addition be a principled resistance to the use of languages other than Finnish: the transition to a multilingual work environment is often problematic from the perspective of those employees who have previously managed their work by using only their first language. (Lehtimaja, Kotilainen & Kurhila 2021, 452.)

3.3.2 Other obstacles

People with foreign background report discrimination as a recognised challenge blocking employment (Kuusio et al. 2020, 54). Recruiting organisations are reporting cultural differences as an obstacle for integration and work performance. Two out of five responders considered that applicant must have lived in Finland long enough in order to perform well at work. Half of the hiring organisations think that the origin of the applicant plays a significant role with western and southern Europe, Estonia and Nordic countries were mentioned as preferred countries of origin for people with foreign background. Similar trend can be seen in unemployment statistics where people with these mentioned origins have lowest unemployment percentages. The reasons reported were the perceptions of hard work, language skills and similarity of culture. (Lehmuskunnas, Kärpänoja Roth & Sandqvist 2020, 3.)

Using cultural mismatch as a reason a candidate is not suitable for a certain role can be viewed as discriminatory. Lehmuskunnas, Kärpänoja Roth and Sandqvist (2020, 3) describe cultural differences as type of hiring obstacle problematic as it is a way to bundle a group of individuals together who are perceived to hold cultural traits that are seen negative. Non-discrimination Act in Finland outline that no one can be discriminated based on attributes such as age, ethnicity, citizenship, or language. In addition to direct and indirect discrimination, discrimination as referred to in the law includes harassment, denial of reasonable accommodations, as well as any instruction or an order to discriminate. (Non-discrimination Act 1325/2014.)

Interestingly, whereas multiculturalism and diversity are as concepts perceived positive, the thought of working with people from very different cultures is not seen as positive. In ELY-keskus study 80 percent of organisations state that their work community is open for multiculturalism yet only 32 percent saw colleagues from truly different cultures at their own workplace beneficial. According to Lehmuskunnas, Kärpänoja Roth and Sandqvist (2020, 3) this suggests that work communities do not wish to change along with introduced differences but expect the people from different backgrounds to change to resemble the original workforce. Another assumption the authors make is that positive attitude towards multiculturalism is seen as a sign of civilised person but in practise this is not adopted by all work communities.

People with foreign background find that unrecognition of one's profession or education in Finland is a challenge in employment. Majority of employees with foreign background working in lower income roles in Finland do not feel their current job tasks correspond to their education or expertise. In a study 76 percent of the respondents feel that they would have more to offer to the Finnish work life if their expertise was recognised in its entirety. Interestingly, in the same study, majority of employers and recruiting companies did not recognise the gap in utilised skills and knowledge. (Business Finland 2023.) Similar results were found amongst people with higher level qualifications. One in three employees with foreign background and higher university degree report they are currently working in less demanding and lower-level roles than in their previous role outside Finland. Particularly degrees completed abroad seemed to correlate with a decrease in the level of job complexity. (Baumgartner 2023). Overqualification is problematic both from an individual and economic perspective. A link between wellbeing at work and overqualification can be seen in a study in addition to motivation decrease and lower commitment rate. Our society suffering from a sustainability deficit also suffers from overeducation, taking into account the lost tax revenue and untapped potential of expertise. (Larja 2018.)

3.4 Approaches to cultural diversity in Finland

International students in Finland report positive experiences of integration with 86 percent satisfied with settling in Finland. Yet, regardless of this half of the students are likely to move out of Finland at the end of their studies. One third of the recipients find their career opportunities limited in Finland. (Business Finland 2023.) This suggests that although the statistics are stating the obvious – Finland needs people from other countries and diversity can potentially improve the performance of business - better approaches to diversity management and acceptance are needed. Finnish organisations in general may have outlined specific initiatives yet lack a structured and methodical approach to drive meaningful progress (Uehigashi & al. 2022). Models for managing diversity are

available and these are presented in this section. Despite the challenges, progress has also been made in managing cultural diversity in Finland, and positive examples can be seen.

3.4.1 Diversity management approaches

Boston Consulting Group (in Uehigashi & al. 2022) has created a three-step maturity staircase to assist Finnish organisations in their D&I work. The framework is designed to assist companies in identifying their initial position and comprehending the subsequent actions required for D&I initiatives. The first step focuses on establishing a comprehensive definition of diversity and gaining top management support to integrate D&I into the company's strategy. This includes setting targets, governance, and policies. The second step involves implementing initiatives for middle managers to address employees' functional needs, such as career advancement. The final step is including D&I into the company culture by addressing the emotional needs of individual employees, such as feeling valued and challenged at work. Finnish companies are at varying stages of maturity in their D&I efforts, with none fully mature. The ongoing nature of D&I means that continual improvement and dialogue are essential. According to a survey of Finnish companies, only half of respondents claim to understand their firm's D&I strategy and objectives. (Uehigashi & al. 2022.)

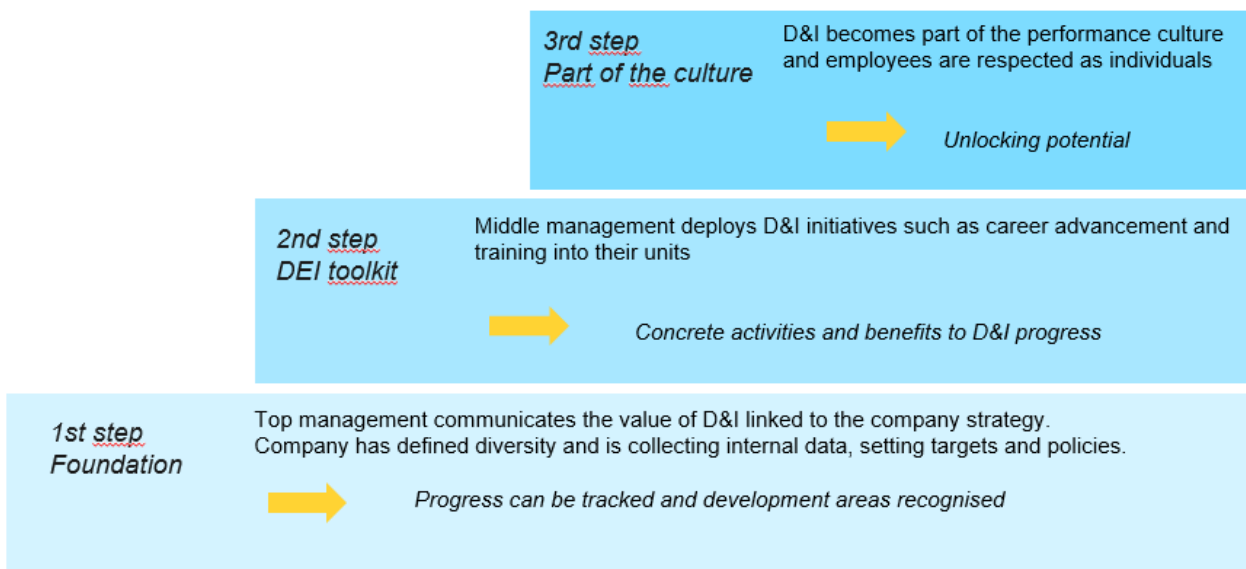


Figure 3. D&I Framework (adapted from Uehigashi & al. 2022)

Another tool for diversity management introduced here is developed by Finnish Business & Society (FIBS from now on). FIBS is a corporate responsibility network that acts as a promoter of sustainable business and developer of responsibility expertise. The original tool was developed as a part of an EU funded project and is based on similar models used internationally in countries that have longer experience in diversity and inclusion management such as United States, Australia, and

Great Britain. FIBS team evaluated the existing tools and created one which it believed would work in Finland. The Diversity Management Self-Assessment Tool aims to assist organisations to get started and make progress in diversity work. It provides an overview of what is ideally included in diversity management. Organisations can assess the level of diversity work and identify the essential areas and development needs for diversity work within the organisation from the perspectives of employees, customers, and other stakeholders. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 4-5.)

The matrix lists diversity work measures in four key themes: commitment, diversity management processes, personnel, and other stakeholders. These themes are further listed at three levels: beginner, developing, and pioneer. Using the matrix, organisation can assess the current level: it may be a beginner, developer, or pioneer in different measures. The matrix also allows to set goals and monitoring indicators for the themes and their practices. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 5-6.) The idea of the tool is presented here. The matrix is simplified, and certain modifications are made to the original.

Table 2. Diversity Management Self-Assessment Tool - commitment (adapted from FIBS 2021)

Commitment	Beginner	Developing	Pioneer
Organisation's commitment	<i>Need to communicate commitment to promote D&I indentified</i>	<i>Internal and external communication about D&I efforts</i>	<i>Internal and external communication about D&I work, commitment, goals, and areas of focus</i>
Resources and responsibility	<i>Recognised need for allocating dedicated work hours for D&I work and supportive network</i>	<i>Responsibility for D&I work allocated to an individual as a percentage and network developed to support D&I</i>	<i>Expert/s appointed to full-time positions for D&I work and the responsibility designated to a member of the management team</i>
Representation and role of the board	<i>Attention to D&I work, the need to bring the subject to the board discussions</i>	<i>Goals set to increase diversity in the board and D&I matters discussed in the board when</i>	<i>Board representation is diverse and D&I matters are regularly discussed</i>
Representation and role of the leadership team	<i>Attention to D&I work, the need to bring the subject to the leadership team discussions</i>	<i>Goals set to increase diversity in the leadership team and D&I matters discussed in the board</i>	<i>Leadership team representation is diverse and D&I matters are regularly discussed</i>
Public support of the top management	<i>Need for the leadership team to communicate the importance of D&I work</i>	<i>Leadership team occasionally communicates the importance of D&I work internally and externally</i>	<i>Leadership team regularly communicates the importance of D&I work to different stakeholders</i>

The organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion work communicates intentions to various stakeholders. Commitment externally and internally strengthens the internal legitimacy of diversity and inclusion work and the employer brand. Large organisations can do this in their annual reporting, media communication, customer or employee magazine or public appearance. Smaller organisations can utilise internal meetings and newsletters. Clear allocation of responsibilities and adequate resourcing facilitate the success of diversity and inclusion work. The representation of the board and the leadership team communicates the organisation's attitude towards promoting

diversity and inclusion, and builds the image of a responsible actor, especially when the members come from different backgrounds. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 7-9.)

Table 3. Diversity Management Self-Assessment Tool - diversity management processes (adapted from FIBS 2021)

Diversity management processes			
	Beginner	Developing	Pioneer
Focus and goals	<i>D&I planned based on internal needs. Need to set clear goals that are discussed</i>	<i>D&I planned based on internal and perational environmental needs. Higher level goals are set and discussed</i>	<i>D&I work is built on discrimination awareness and considers intersectionality. Goals are set for different levels and timelines.</i>
Measuring improvement	<i>Need for clear metrics to monitor the achievement of the work's objectives</i>	<i>Metrics to monitor D&I work are linked to goal setting</i>	<i>All set goals have clear metrics. Monitoring the achievement of the work's objectives done at different levels of the organisation</i>
Rewarding D&I work	<i>Possibility of rewarding commitment of the leaders to D&I work recognised</i>	<i>Discussions on setting individual-level goals for different areas and linking these goals to rewards</i>	<i>D&I goals at different levels are clearly tied to the reward system</i>
D&I survey and HR analytics	<i>representation of personnel and experience of inclusion. HR analytics utilised for equal pay survey and preparation of equality plan</i>	<i>Diversity and experience of inclusion assessed occasionally and HR analytics are occasionally utilised in advancing D&I work</i>	<i>Diversity and experience of inclusion assessed regularly and HR analytics are systematically utilised in advancing D&I work</i>
Documentation of D&I strategy	<i>Need to create a clear strategy for D&I work</i>	<i>D&I is being developed and plans can be accessed by all employees</i>	<i>Documented diversity strategy available to all employees</i>

The focus and goals related to promoting diversity and inclusion can be related to achieving a tangible outcome or to how D&I work is manifested in practices. The goals can be quantitative or qualitative, but it is important that the actions are guided by both long-term and short-term goals. Good goals are detailed, positive, realistic, and measurable. One measure can be survey results. In a D&I survey, the focus is on the composition of the staff, the placement of different groups in various areas and levels of the organisation, and the experience of inclusivity. The representation at different levels of the organisation communicates about equality and fairness, as well as the organisation's commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion. In surveys, it is important to ensure the anonymity of the staff. In small organisations, conducting an anonymous survey may not be possible. In such cases, diversity and inclusion can be assessed through the staff's own assessments to what extent does the staff feel there is diversity and inclusion in different roles and at different levels within the organisation. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 10-13.)

By documenting the diversity and inclusion strategy, a common understanding of the work is ensured. The diversity and inclusion strategy document clearly describes definitions, focus, goals, actions, responsibilities, and metrics. The document is also accessible to everyone and can be referred to as the work progresses. Also, tying compensation to performance in diversity and inclusion work reinforces success in the job. The compensation system can take into account the realisation of D&I goals at different levels and in different areas of the organisation (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 10-13.)

Table 4. Diversity Management Self-Assessment Tool - Personnel (adapted from FIBS 2021)

Personnel	Beginner	Developing	Pioneer
Job posts	<i>Need to recognise diversity in job posts</i>	<i>Some practices for job posting that support reaching a diverse pool of applicants</i>	<i>Established practices to ensure that job postings reach and appeal to a diverse pool of applicants</i>
Assesment of applicants and interviews	<i>Need to implement practises that ensure objectivity</i>	<i>Assessment and interview practices are being developed and have been developed to ensure objectivity</i>	<i>Widely used assessment and interview practices that ensure objectivity in evaluating candidates</i>
Career advancement	<i>Need to consider people's diversity and potential discrimination in career advancement</i>	<i>Initiatives to ensure equality in career advancement developed, some practices occasionally utilised</i>	<i>Advancement of potentially discriminated groups is actively supported and effectiveness of practices and support is monitored</i>
Wellbeing of personnel	<i>Need to consider the diversity of the personnel in supporting their well-being</i>	<i>Developed practises to consider the diversity of the personnel in supporting their well-being</i>	<i>Diversity of personnel is systematically considered when supporting well-being</i>
Training on D&I	<i>Need to train personnel on D&I matters</i>	<i>D& training offered to managers</i>	<i>Entire personnel is systematically trained on D&I matters</i>
D&I culture	<i>Need to challenge existing norms in the work community</i>	<i>Developed practises to support employees in identifying norms and challenging them</i>	<i>Organisation operates under a presumption of diversity</i>
Language awareness	<i>Need to consider the role of language in building an inclusive culture</i>	<i>Developed language awareness and practices to strengthen inclusivity through language</i>	<i>Practices that support inclusivity from a language perspective and are systematically utilised</i>

Taking D&I into account in job postings helps in reaching a more diverse pool of candidates and generating interest from individuals with different backgrounds. In the actual wording and imagery of the posting, diversity can be addressed by ensuring that the language of the posting matches the language proficiency actually required for the job. In addition, the posting can incorporate a diversity statement. Unconscious biases impact candidate assessment and interview situations if their effects are not considered. The same reasons can hinder career advancement of minority groups. Strengthening and ensuring objectivity in assessment and interview situations improves

the conditions for increasing diversity and realising equality and fairness. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 14-16.)

All members of the organisation have a responsibility and role in developing and nurturing inclusivity. To succeed in this, every member of the organisation must be able to both recognise different forms of discrimination, as well as address the issue in a constructive manner. Training is provided on various topics: different forms of discrimination, intervening in discriminatory situations from different roles, unconscious biases in different situations, the benefits of diversity, micro-aggressions, privileges, psychological safety, and religions in the workplace. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 17-18.)

The language used in an organisation can unintentionally and unnecessarily act as a barrier to inclusivity. In language-aware communication, consideration is given to what language is used in different situations, what language requirements are set for different tasks, and how the terminology used affects inclusivity. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 18.)

Table 5. Diversity Management Self-Assessment Tool – Other Stakeholders (adapted from FIBS 2021)

Other	Beginner	Developing	Pioneer
Product and service development	<i>Need to consider user diversity in product and service development</i>	<i>Developed practices to consider user diversity in product and service development</i>	<i>Practices in place to ensure the consideration of user diversity in all product and service development</i>
Marketing and sales	<i>Need to consider diversity in marketing and sales</i>	<i>Developed practices to consider diversity in marketing and sales, to avoid stereotypes and challenge norms</i>	<i>Practices to ensure the consideration of people's diversity in marketing and sales, to break norms and challenge discriminatory assumptions</i>
Suppliers and partners	<i>Need to consider promoting diversity in the selection of subcontractors</i>	<i>Developed guidelines for subcontracting, which partly address issues related to diversity and inclusion</i>	<i>All subcontracting utilises guidelines that address issues related to D&I</i>
Public relations	<i>Need to consider community relationships as part of the D&I work</i>	<i>Developed community relationships that support diversity work</i>	<i>Regular collaboration with various communities aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace</i>

By considering the diversity of customers and potential customers in product and service development, inclusivity of products and services can be improved, and a broader customer base can be served. Diversity is considered at every stage of product and service development: in ideation, design, testing, and launch. In customer relationships, the experience of inclusivity is strengthened by considering diversity in sales and marketing. This enables reaching a larger customer base. By considering diversity in procurement and the selection of subcontractors, the development of

equality and fairness in the surrounding society is reinforced through partners. In practise, diversity and inclusion are included in the procurement guidelines, and in all procurement, efforts are made to collaborate only with organisations that have clear and measurable goals related to promoting D&I. By creating community relationships to support the development of D&I in society at large, an organisation both influences societal development and communicates its values. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 21-22.)

Business Finland has conducted research on companies' experiences regarding the impact of international labour in their organisations, most recently in the spring of 2022. The results are positive, indicating that the longer a company has had international labour, the more senior roles such workers occupy, and the better the company is at benefiting from broader networks and new markets (Business Finland 2022). However, it is important to note that Business Finland emphasises the positive aspects of recruiting foreign talent since their task is to actively promote Finnish companies and work opportunities in their target countries. Therefore, it is important for them that Finnish companies view the recruitment of international employees in a positive light. However, similar was found by Lehmuskunnas, Kärpänoja, Roth & Sandqvist (2020, 4). Experience in recruiting people with international background affects the attitudes. Three out of five organisations that have recruited people with international background consider immigrants as equally skilled as Finnish employees. Correspondingly, organisations that do not have experience in employees with international background reported lower scores with only two out five agreeing to the statement. Organisations with experience are also more willing to hire more people with international background and are more flexible with the language question with more organisations accepting non-fluent Finnish language skills. (Lehmuskunnas, Kärpänoja, Roth & Sandqvist 2020, 4.) This may suggest that the longer organisation has had to implement diversity management practises, the better it is adapted by personnel.

3.4.2 Language approaches

As mentioned, language is experienced as the biggest challenge preventing employment of people of foreign background as well as cultural diversity on the workplace. Language-related issues are particularly complex, affecting not only international employees but also the work communities themselves. It is essential for work communities to update their operational methods to effectively embrace international employees and align their practices with the new language dynamics and work culture. Integration works in both directions: while international employees must adjust to their new environment, work communities must also accommodate the changes introduced by international professionals. (Lehtimaja & al. 2023, 9-12.) Different approaches to use of language is introduced in this section.

International diversity leads to an increasing number of people using multiple languages in their work, and fewer can use only the language they know best. The language used in an organisation can unintentionally and unnecessarily act as a barrier to inclusivity. In language-conscious communication, consideration is given to what language is used in different situations, what language requirements are set for different tasks, and how the terminology used affects inclusivity. (Louvrier & Iija 2021, 18.) The choice of language is usually done based on the language skills and the language that everyone knows reasonably well is chosen. Language may also be chosen based on the subject, audience or language policy selected by the organisation. (Lehtimaja, Kotilainen & Kurhila 2021, 455.) The variety of circumstances makes it impossible to propose a one-size-fits-all solution for selecting a working language or languages suitable for all workplaces. Three approaches that can be found in different organisations in Finland are introduced in table 6: English only, speaking & learning Finnish and multilanguage approach. (Lehtimaja & al. 2023, 24-38.)

Table 6. Three language approaches introduced (adapted from Lehtimaja & al. 2023, 24-38.)

	English only	Speaking & Learning Finnish	Multilanguage
Approach	spoken language is English when the first non-native Finnish speaker joins the situation, all written material is in English	the language used is Finnish even when all members are not fluent	several spoken languages, speaker can use the strongest shared language, written material in two languages
Reasons for this approach	suggested to solve problems ranging from a company's competitiveness to the overall attractiveness of society, expectation that everyone knows English well enough	employees or stakeholders are not willing to change the language, language is seen as part of the integration for the foreign employees	aims to ease inclusion and involvement, encourages to communicate without language restrictions
Ideal environment	typically information work - type environment, high education level fields	environments where other stakeholders require communication in Finnish (customer service oriented, healthcare)	certain positions do not require Finnish skills
Challenges	not providing non-Finnish speakers motivation to learn the local language which would help integration in all areas of life, may cause opposition from Finns whose English is weaker, can limit ideation and conversation	misunderstandings and feeling of burden / incompetent, requires assistance and understanding from the work community, requires structured support	requires time for translations when conversation is in Finnish to ensure involvement, choice of language can be seen as directed to certain employees, requires systematic and collectively agreed way of operating
Opportunities	seen as equal and inclusive approach, including everyone by ensuring material can be read by the whole community	speedy local language learning, learning and teaching become a shared goal, supports learning culture in general	everyone is considered, use of language does not burden

English is often seen as the easiest solution in an organisation where multiple employees do not share a native language. In Finland, the use of the English language has been presented as crucial in determining issues ranging from the competitiveness of companies to the overall attractiveness of the society. This is understandable, as in the Finnish context, English is by far the most widely spoken foreign language and is often thought to be part of the language skills repertoire of all working-age people. There are however challenges in this model. Not everyone knows English and apart from the burdensome nature of working in foreign language, this can lead to limiting brainstorming and simplification of language use, which could potentially narrow creativity. (Lehtimaja & al. 2023, 24-27.) Finnish employees do not always expect foreign-language-speaking workers to have any Finnish language skills or to participate in discussions in Finnish. This does not encourage, or support learning the local language and therefore can challenge integration into the local society. (Espoo 2023.)

An example of English only approach is the consultancy company Deloitte. 95 percent of the employees located in Finland are Finnish speaking. Nevertheless, all events are conducted in English. In the consulting industry, English holds a strong position as a working language, but this choice reflects the organisation's commitment to equitable treatment. (Anteroinen 2021.) Another example of English only approach is Nokia. Nokia's company language is communicated through their career sites that are in English only. (Nokia s.a.)

The reason for choosing the Finnish language as the only working language may be that not all employees or partners are able or willing to use English. In such situations, Finnish remains the main language of the work community, even if an international employee joins the community. (Lehtimaja & al. 2023, 28-29.) This approach has the potential to support employees' integration into Finland beyond the workplace. When the work community supports an employee's Finnish language development, it simultaneously promotes the immigrant's workplace readiness and overall integration. The work community has a shared goal in supporting language development which can lead to positive team cohesion. Language can be further supported by studies. TE-office [employment office] offers local language courses that are built to further support language skills while working. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö. s.a.) The challenges in this model are that it can be difficult to reconcile the roles of language learner and employee and employees may feel that they cannot act as competent professionals in their field with inadequate language skills. A second-language speaker may feel that they are burdening colleagues with their slow speech and requests for help. Colleagues, on the other hand, may become tired of providing language support and dealing with the language challenges of the Finnish learner. (Lehtimaja & al. 2023, 28-29.)

Examples of Finnish only approaches can be found in healthcare sector. Mehiläinen for instance has a training program where students study the Finnish language in their home country, as well as the theoretical studies required for the care assistant training, which are part of the practical nurse training module. Once they arrive in Finland, they are employed in Mehiläinen's social services working in Finnish. (Mehiläinen 2022.) Another example is the art centre Kannusali in Espoo. Finnish is the only working language and the decision was made to assist professionals who have moved to Finland to learn the local language. Kannusali has employees who have lived in Finland for several years, but only though the work community have managed to learn the language. (Espoo 2023.)

Multilanguage model or in some cases parallel language model are introduced as solutions in several publications (Lehtimaja, Kotilainen & Kurhila 2021; THL s.a.; Työterveyslaitos s.ac.). International Talent Finland explains the model as language-aware working culture where meetings are held using a two-language hybrid model. The community agrees that along with Finnish, employees are allowed to speak English if their expertise is best shared in English. The same can be agreed when majority is speaking English thus use of Finnish is allowed. The purpose is to remove barriers to understanding and participation (E2 research). The challenge is that when certain language is used in communication that is not understood by everyone, part of the work community is excluded from the information. The choice of language can be considered as a method of using authority and consciously or unconsciously discriminate thus work community needs training and open discussion about the language choices. (Lehtimaja, Kotilainen & Kurhila 2021, 455.) Multilanguage model does not necessarily mean that all speech or all texts are translated in their entirety. The use of parallel languages can, in fact, compel the writer to find the most essential aspects of the message or document. The entire work community benefits from this clearer communication that guides leaving out ramblings. (Lehtimaja & al. 2023, 24-38.)

Talent Hub Espoo is an example of a multilanguage work community. The working communication consists of ten different languages although Finnish and English are the dominant in meetings and casual communication. Multilanguage model can potentially lead to situations where essential information is not understood when it was communicated in employee's weaker language. Multilanguage model, as the other two language models introduced above, also needs clear shared practises, channels to ensure understanding, and a safe atmosphere where it is okay to ask. (Espoo 2023.)

Companies rarely have language strategies, and languages often have no place in the general strategies of companies. Language strategy is not just part of the language skills aspect of the personnel strategy but should also part of the company's business and diversity strategy. (Pyykkö

2017, 114.) The danger may be that language practices are based on assumptions, and their overall impact or consequences have not been considered, or their appropriateness has not been openly discussed. Without guidelines, language choices may be inconsistent or based solely on assumptions about the recipient's language skills. (Lehtimaja & al. 2023, 38-40.) It is important to ensure that the entire work community understands that the guidelines are in place to ensure the participation of all employees and to promote a sense of community (Työterveyslaitos s.ac.). The future of languages in Finnish work communities is an interesting topic. The strengthening and improvement in the quality of machine translation will certainly have a significant impact, especially in service industries, sales of services, and everyday activities (Pyykkö 2017, 114.)

4 Organisation – Helen Oy

The commissioning organisation for this thesis is the Finnish energy company, Helen. In addition to heating, cooling, and electricity, Helen provides solutions for regional and renewable energy, solar panels, and electric transportation. A significant part of Helen's energy production is carbon neutral and includes wind power, hydropower, and nuclear power. The goal is to develop a smarter carbon neutral energy system that enables everyone to produce, use, and save energy while respecting the environment. The focus is on the future, aiming to develop towards a comprehensive environmentally friendly energy production and ensuring sufficient energy supply. (Virta 2023.) Helen published its new strategy in October 2023. The strategy is to increase the flexibility of the energy system and enhance customer value through new competitive services, technologies, and business opportunities. The target of carbon neutral energy production by 2030 is still in place and additionally, Helen is planning to phase out combustion-based energy production by 2040. (Helen 2023b.)

Helen group employs approximately 750 employees, all located in Finland. The group comprises Helen, Helen Electricity Networks and several smaller power generation companies such as wind and solar plants. The company headquarters are situated in the heart of Helsinki at Sähköotalo. As the organisation is entirely owned by the city of Helsinki, this ownership structure significantly influences its operations. For example, the city has tasked Helen with the challenge of developing alternative heating solutions as part of its non-burning target. (Helen 2023a.)

The steering group for this thesis consists of the contact person representing Helen, Janna Anttila, the thesis supervisor from Haaga-Helia Johanna Vuori and the student. Janna is the senior vice president of Employee Experience and therefore has the opportunity to take the D&I subject to the leadership discussion. Janna's coaching approach provides great support and collaborative partnership in my work. She also has prior experience in international talent recruitment from her previous employer. Johanna has provided experienced coaching in the writing, data collection and thesis guidelines. Monthly meetings with Johanna kept the thesis process rolling and added clarity in the different steps of the research project. The thesis is believed to cover topic that will be relevant and timely for the organisation in the near future, as international professionals will be needed to strengthen the company's capabilities.

4.1 The need for new ideas

Helen originated from the need to create a safer and more environmentally friendly way to produce energy for the smoky city. Throughout its over hundred-year history, the organisation has mainly operated locally and municipally, and its identity has been strongly grounded in locality and power plant environments. (Virta 2023.) This has a likely link to the organisation's workforce being quite

homogenous. Especially in terms of cultural backgrounds, there are few diverse employees in the organisation, and the working language is predominantly Finnish. The organisation is now undergoing a change in operational level as it is transitioning from a localised power station model to a more decentralised and widely distributed energy system. This change leads to a shift from an all-in-house operational model towards collaborative partnerships which in turn requires new skills and cultural understanding.

The larger change that the entire energy sector is undergoing is the rapid shift away from fossil fuels to mitigate climate change. The future energy system is built on renewable energy. The role of energy in society is so significant that the energy transition affects the whole society, but energy companies and producers are in the centre of the change. The focus can be placed on new technology that enables the production and secure transmission of energy in the grid. For some, this means that their old profession disappears, and they need to pursue further education. New energy solutions rely on fresh ideas and innovations. (Fortum s.a.) In many cases, there is a shortage of professionals in these fields in Finland, while in other countries, valuable experience has been gained in various areas. Examples include the utilisation of hydrogen in energy production and the scaling of offshore wind farms.

4.2 The current state of diversity at Helen

Helen HR has noted that certain open positions advertised get only a few applicants, and the profile often needs to be compromised due to lack of skilled or experienced candidates. International recruitment as an option has been discussed recently at Helen. HR has been making preparations for international talent in the form of translations of contracts, induction material and instructions. The digital solutions unit has provided AI assisted translation solutions and subtitle options for larger internal presentations streaming channel. In Autumn 2023 a milestone was reached when the first non-Finnish speaker was recruited. Soon after, late 2023 two more employees were hired who are working in English. Due to the new starters, the working language was changed to English in two teams, in Power Generation and Hydrogen team. In addition, Helen has a few specialists employees with different cultural background but working in Finnish.

The need for preparations has been noted by the senior management although specific goals that would communicate commitment have not yet been set for diversity management. The senior management team gathered for a workshop in 2022 where D&I was one of the topics. They recognised the lack of regular conversation on D&I matters. The challenge was to pinpoint the obstacles that were hindering diversity and inclusion in Helen. The leadership team found the subject difficult as it was not a clear-cut matter but represented new ideas and potential changes to the way the company operates, and it was not as concrete as other more technical topics on the agenda for the

day. The senior management team did however note that the lack of diversity can lead to homogeneous way of thinking and difficulties in adapting to change. Lack of inclusion was recognised to potentially lead to introverted culture, lack of language diversity or skills and committing to change. The suggestions to implement change in this area included better use of HR data to recognise the strengths and weaknesses in the personnel, customised career paths such as trainee programs, widening the recruitment pool by advertising positions in English and gradual changes to working language. The careful hesitance in this subject can be seen in the lack of ambition in the suggestions. The widening of the recruitment pool was specified to focus on the Nordic countries. This could be interpreted as a need to reach out to people with similar cultural background. Also, the suggestion of changing the working language was written with a note that some level of Finnish language skills would still be expected. The topic is still lacking the regular discussion in the senior management meetings. (Helen management team August 2022.)

The annual personnel survey is measuring the employees' perception of diversity and inclusion. In the 2023 employee survey, the results clearly indicated that employees did not perceive Helen as being open to all professionals. Employee diversity scored below benchmark and the topic was in the lowest five percent of the scores. Considering gender diversity at Helen is high, the score was low and indicating the dissatisfaction around cultural diversity in particular. The themes of the open-ended responses depicted a desire for increased diversity. The requirement for the Finnish language was seen as a barrier in the survey. (Ilmapuntari 2023.)

Currently, few managers have been willing to consider the option of advertising positions in English. The job posts that have been posted in English have attracted more applicants than job adverts in Finnish. This could be thought to be oblivious when reaching out to larger market of applicants. However, the number of Finnish applicants has also been higher in the ads that have been posted in English. This would suggest that job advertisements in English, particularly in the field of renewable energy and IT are more attractive for the Finnish applicants in addition to making it possible for the non-Finnish applicants to apply. Further, this could suggest international environment is interesting for the local applicants as well as to international talent.

5 Methodology

In research and development work, the research aspect involves the creation and dissemination of new knowledge, using systematic and analytical approaches, and facilitating critical examination of matters. On the other hand, development entails the careful definition and planning of goals, as well as their implementation plan. Essential to development is the learning process of both the individual and the organisation. (Suvanto 2014, 13) In this chapter the nature of empirical research is described first. Then, the approach of the research, methods of data collection and methods of analysis are explained and justified. Finally, the evaluation methods and process are discussed.

5.1 Empirical research

Empirical research involves gathering data from real-world observations or experiences that exist outside the available academic texts. The aim is to understand and analyse a social phenomenon or behaviours. (Alvesson & Kärreman 2013, 1, 4-5) As a result the goal is to present ideas and practices that can assist in resolving the initially recognised challenges related to the phenomena by offering development opportunities to the target of the research. Research-based development is conducted with systematic collection of theory and practical information using variety of methods. The emphasis is in practical development needs which are supported with theory. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 18-20.)

Theoretical framework and diversity statistics and experiences in Finland are the basis of the empirical research presented later in this thesis. Empirical research is invariably linked to theory yet the approach how theoretical framework is utilised varies and can be categorised into three drivers, deductive, inductive and abductive approaches. Deductive research starts with a theory, which is then empirically tested. Inductive research, on the contrary, begins with empirical data and is therefore more theory-free from the outset. (Alvesson & Kärreman 2013, 1, 1.) In abductive approach, the process involves deriving general rules or hypotheses from specific observations and situations. Suitable theories are proposed to explain empirical observations, leading to an interactive process between theory and empirical study. The term *theory-driven* describes the approach well. Theoretical framework is providing models or theories that are fitted into the analysis of the empirical data. (Kovács & Spens 2005, 137-138; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 80-81.) In this thesis abductive approach is dominant. The challenge has been noted in the workplace as well as a phenomenon in the Finnish society, which has led to the research questions and construction of a theoretical framework related to the subject. With empirical data, the aim is to understand the phenomenon better. The process can be thought as a cycle-like research flow. The conclusion of this thesis is likely again to create further research questions, which can lead to new theory of relevance.

5.2 Research approach and perspective

The management and implications of cultural diversity and inclusion in a Finnish workplace are the social phenomena that is the focus of this research. The aim is to tailor a diversity management plan for a Finnish organisation that allows the organisation to open opportunities for international talent and benefit from larger range of skills, experience, and perspectives. Implementation of this plan requires commitment from various levels within the organisation, leadership, management, and team members. It also requires time, change management, understanding and the correct ways to measure improvement. The researcher, in this case, the employee of the organisation, only has limited control over these requirements (Eriksson & Koistinen 2014, 4). The emphasis of the work is on investigating the case which is diversity in an organisation, proposing development ideas and creation of diversity management framework. Implementation of the diversity management framework is recognised as a long-term process that will require commitment from various levels in the organisation. Implementation is scoped out of this development research. Therefore, combination of case study and constructive research is the most natural approach in my work.

A case study is a traditional research strategy originating from scientific research and is suitable for work aiming to produce development proposals and ideas. Its aim is to gain a deep understanding of the organisation's situation and generate new information to support development (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 52-55). The case study can be delimited by focusing into a specific case that can be defined based on the research questions. The case could be a process, organisation, or phenomenon that is examined for analysis and the formulation of a proposed solution. The case study is generally recognised as a research strategy or approach that can encompass several different methods (Eriksson & Koistinen 2014, 4). This research aims to determine how a phenomenon with broader implications for Finland, such as the recruitment of international professionals, can be prepared for and benefitted from within the target organisation and to ensure that the organisation can capitalise on the opportunities it presents. The subject or the case in this study is therefore the organisation introduced in the next chapter.

The case study approach has faced criticism because it relies on the personal experiences of individuals, making it hard to validate sociological theories based on these experiences. Additionally, there are doubts about whether a single case can explain a broader issue and if the case study is truly representative. (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin 1993.) In this case however, the purpose was not to prove the accuracy of any particular theory or claim purely objective results based on empirical research. Rather, this study was accepting a different perspective on examining the nature of reality and the knowledge derived from it. The specific goal of the theory in scientific research is to circumvent common evidence, that is based on personal experiences, in order to achieve an

explanation that can be demonstrated. The case study does not aim for the same strict disclosure of facts. The empirical description of the social facts it characterises is based on common sense. (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin 1993.)

As it is not possible to describe a phenomenon exhaustively, certain perspective must be selected. Perspective guides the choices throughout the research process and the way the student examines the nature of reality. The perspective chosen in this thesis is constructivism. It emphasises the social construction of reality (Toikko & Rantanen 2009, 36). In constructive perspective the interest lies in meanings. These meanings are more cultural rather than subjective meanings. Reality is not seen as something "out there" waiting to be discovered, but rather as constantly constructed in action and speech. In this view, the researcher's interest is particularly focused on cultural attributions of meaning, interpersonal interaction, and activities in which reality is constructed. (Jokinen s.a.) The phenomena that is the focus of this research is observed and studied as interaction between colleagues and the meaning and effects these offer to the organisational culture.

5.3 Methods of data collection

Both, case study and constructive research approaches typically utilise a range of data collection methods (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 55, 65). The methods of human sciences research are commonly categorised broadly into qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative methods are well suited for situations where the research aims to test the validity of a theory and the collected data is analysed using statistical methods. The researcher does not have influence on the subject of the study and does often not meet the subjects physically. Qualitative research methods are used in situations where the topic is not well understood, or the aim is to deepen the understanding. In qualitative research, there are significantly fewer subjects under study, but a large amount of data is generated for analysis. The aim is to understand the phenomenon better and more comprehensively. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 104-105.) At times these two categories of methods can be combined in the same research (Juhila s.a.). In this thesis the focus is on qualitative research methods and therefore the characteristics of qualitative research methods are described here in more detail.

Qualitative research has certain characteristic features that suit case study and constructive research approaches. Typically, qualitative research methods commit to close-up examination valuing certain level of subjectivity. They focus on action emphasising the meanings and interpretations of the participants and analysis. (Juhila s.a.). In qualitative research, the starting point is the description of real life, which is understood as a diverse entity. The subject of the study is deliberately chosen and is one from which more information is sought. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015,

105.) The qualitative methods of data collection used in this research are interview and benchmarking. These are introduced here in more detail. Another method used is community ideation which itself is also part of development process and is explained in the later section under other development methods.

5.3.1 Helen Interviews

The aim of the interview is to clarify the understanding of the operating environment, its structure, and its operating methods (Toikka & Rantanen 2009, 140). Interviews allow for the rapid collection of in-depth information about the subject of the study. Especially if the area of development is under-researched, interviews can provide the opportunity to gather new and insightful perspectives. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 106-108.) The interviewer's questions, their limitations, formulations, and style have a significant impact on the kind of responses and discussions that are obtained in the data. Interview data can be aimed at accumulating very different types of information. Based on interviews, it is possible to analyse, for example, facts, experiences, or cultural meanings and speech patterns. These areas of knowledge require different ways of conducting the interview. For instance, interviews can aim for accurate descriptions, the interviewee's narrative, or open discussions. The choice of the interview style and type needs therefore consideration based on what kind of information is needed and how is the data used and analysed. (Hyvärinen, Suoninen & Vuori s.a.; Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 106).

In a structured interview, the questions are pre-formulated and presented in the same order each time. In a semi-structured interview on the other hand, the questions are also prepared in advance, but they can be presented in a different order during the interview, and the wording of the questions may vary. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 108.) This leaves the interviewer more influence on the flow and direction of the interview (Hyvärinen, Suoninen & Vuori s.a.). The interview type that suited the data collection needs in this research was semi-structured interview.

Interviews played a central role in the methods of data collection in this research. The objective was to gather information from various parts and levels of the organisation to understand the current barriers to international recruitment and inclusion and how we could improve in this area. The perspectives of the interviewees are diverse. Interviewees include international talents, with variety of language skills. Therefore, the questions in the interview vary slightly depending on whom the conversation is held with. With interview data, it is possible to collect detailed and, to some extent, tacit information in a structured manner. A certain structure in the interview framework helps to organise the material and collect data on the desired topics. A thematic list is used to guide the conversation, ensuring that essential questions and topics are brought to the forefront.

The interview frame (Appendix 1) was build utilising the theoretical framework, statistical information about diversity in Finland and the current knowledge of the organisation. The interview questions were divided under four themes. The first section consisted of questions related to perceptions of diversity and inclusion prior to employment and currently. The second section was finding out how participants viewed benefits and challenges through increased cultural diversity. In the third part of the interview was the language related matters such as the current language model and the possible models for the future. In the final section, diversity management needs and opportunities were discussed. The frame was tested at the first interview and some changes were made to make the flow or the conversation more logical. For example, it seemed to work better to ask about the positive impacts on diversity has brought in the team first and then go to the challenges. Also, it was more logical to have the language related matters in one section and clearly communicate to the interviewee when the purpose was to discuss topics not related to language. Thus, the frame of the interview was adjusted slightly as the interview process progressed.

The interviewees were internal employees, later referred to as Helen interviewees, and selected based on their international background. This criterion was made because it enables analysis from the same perspective. Data is providing answers from the viewpoint of some who has been in the minority in terms of cultural diversity and experienced the differences. All interviewees have lived in Finland for at least a few years. This is an advantage in the interview, as it enables them to describe differences and opportunities more realistically. One interviewee is originally from Finland but was chosen due to their international work experience. The other interviewees are originally from outside of Finland. The number of interviewees was six, which is a small sample. However, the organisation does not have more individuals meeting the interview criteria. Table 7 introduces the interviewees. Gender and country of origin are well represented, effectively reflecting diversity evenly. All interviewees work in specialist roles. Table 7 is also listing the durations of the interviews. All discussions were booked for 50 minutes allowing time for a small break before the next potential meeting. Most interviews did however run for the full hour. The topic was clearly important to all the interviewees, and they were happy to share their experiences and thoughts.

Table 7. Helen interviewees

Interviewee	Origin	Role in the organisation	Duration of interview
Female	EU	Senior specialist	60 minutes
Male	EU	Specialist	55 minutes
Male	Outside EU	Specialist	60 minutes
Female	Outside EU	Specialist	50 minutes
Female	EU	Specialist	60 minutes
Male	Outside EU	Senior specialist	55 minutes

The environment where interviews are conducted can influence the information that is received. In natural working environment interviewees are likely to provide more in-depth answers. Ideas are easier to remember and describe when discussion is taking place where the phenomena is set at. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 106-108.) The interviews conducted for this thesis were completed during working hours and via video conferencing tool Teams. Teams is a commonly used tools for meetings in the organisation, thus, it can be considered as natural working environment. Some of the interviewees were in the head office of the organisation, in the centre of Helsinki at the time of the interview.

5.3.2 Benchmarking interviews

Another data collection method used in this thesis was benchmarking. Benchmarking in practise is a method of comparing two or more subjects. The method is based on an interest in how things are done elsewhere. Benchmarking allows organisations to compare their performance, processes, and practices against those of their peers or industry leaders. This evaluation provides valuable insights into areas where the organisation excels and areas that may require improvement. Benchmarking as data collection can be used in variety of settings. (Chambers & Miller 2018, 488.) It involves studying the operations of another organisation or group that has successfully taken a specific developmental step or completed a project. Benchmarking process begins by clearly defining the target for development. Next, suitable comparison targets are sought. In this research case, the comparison targets are other organisations. In general, benchmarking organisations can be from the same industry, of similar size, or have a similar history in the area of research. In this case the organisations have been selected on the basis of the stage they are in the international diversity

journey. Then, information about the comparison organisation is gathered, examining how the organisation has succeeded in carrying out the targeted development work. In this thesis the information was collected using structured interview technique and organisation research using publicly available sources such as company websites and job advertisements. Benchmarking data was then analysed, and success themes were identified. Finally, these themes were evaluated based on how they could be applied at the target organisation. It was expected that some of the operating models could be easily implemented, while others might require a different approach, for example, due to the different organisational structure. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 186.)

International recruitment has been carried out in several organisations in Finland for some time now and diversity management is evident in many organisations that are suitable as comparison targets for this thesis. Benchmarking method is used to study the integration management of international talents in other organisations in Finland that have made some progress already in their diversity journey. Comparative information clarifies the level of the commissioning organisation's operations, accelerates development, and inspires improvement (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 186). Comparison data supports the primary data collected from internal interviews and provides credibility for the development opportunities. The message of the importance of the development of diversity and inclusion is supported by the experiences and ideas of other organisations.

In this thesis, two organisations were used as targets for benchmarking. The selected organisations wished to remain anonymous and therefore they are referred to as Benchmarking A and Benchmarking B. Both organisations have long Finnish roots and operate in either Finland or across Nordics. The benchmarking organisations were selected from a different field, finance sector, because international diversity has advanced further in this field. These organisations were able to provide best practises and experiences on how the international diversity journey has started and is progressing. Both organisations are larger than Helen, employing approximately ten-fold of employees in comparison to Helen. They also have a large customer base, providing similar type services needed by everyone.

Benchmarking was done utilising structured interview technique with a set interview frame (appendix 2). The interviews were scheduled for 45 minutes and held in Teams with the HR professional in charge of the diversity matters in the organisations. The company websites and job advertisements provided additional information about the organisations. Interviews were structured around four themes: current state of diversity, goals and methods of measuring the improvement of diversity and inclusion, successful diversity management measures, and challenges in implementation. Although the interview type used in both interviews was structured, the reality was that there were two people discussing a topic that they are deeply interested in. Both interviews ended up being

more discussion-type events and exchange of ideas, especially towards the end of the call. Both benchmarking interviews were inspiring and yet comforting. New ideas and interesting realisations were discussed, yet the challenges were very similar to what they are in the commissioning organisation.

In addition to the primary benchmarking organisation, six other organisations were benchmarked using a lighter method. Benchmarking was carried out in conjunction with interviews at Helen. Internal interviewees at Helen were asked about the Diversity and Inclusion approaches and practices of their previous employers. The interviewees held specialist roles in their companies and were not directly responsible for D&I matters. Therefore, they were unable to provide HR-level information about the cause and effect of measures. However, this method provided additional comparative data and ideas for potential methods for Helen. The additional benchmarking organisations were a small size IT company, a large Finnish energy company operating internationally, a large Finnish IT consultancy company, university and a global consultancy company.

Table 8. Benchmarking interviews

Role in benchmarking	Organisation size	Field of the organisation	Country of operation	Role in the organisation	Duration of interview
Primary organisation – Benchmarking A	7900 employees	Finance	Primarily Nordics	Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	45 minutes
Primary organisation – Benchmarking B	13 000 employees	Finance	Finland	DEI Specialist	40 minutes
Secondary organisation	Small	IT	Finland	Specialist	5 minutes (part of the primary interview)
Secondary organisation	Large	Energy	Global	Specialist	5 minutes (part of the primary interview)
Secondary organisation	Large	Business Consulting	Global	Specialist	5 minutes (part of the primary interview)
Secondary organisation	Medium	Finland	Education	Specialist	5 minutes (part of the primary interview)
Secondary organisation	Large	IT	Global	Specialist	5 minutes (part of the primary interview)
Secondary organisation	Large	Energy	International	Specialist	5 minutes (part of the primary interview)

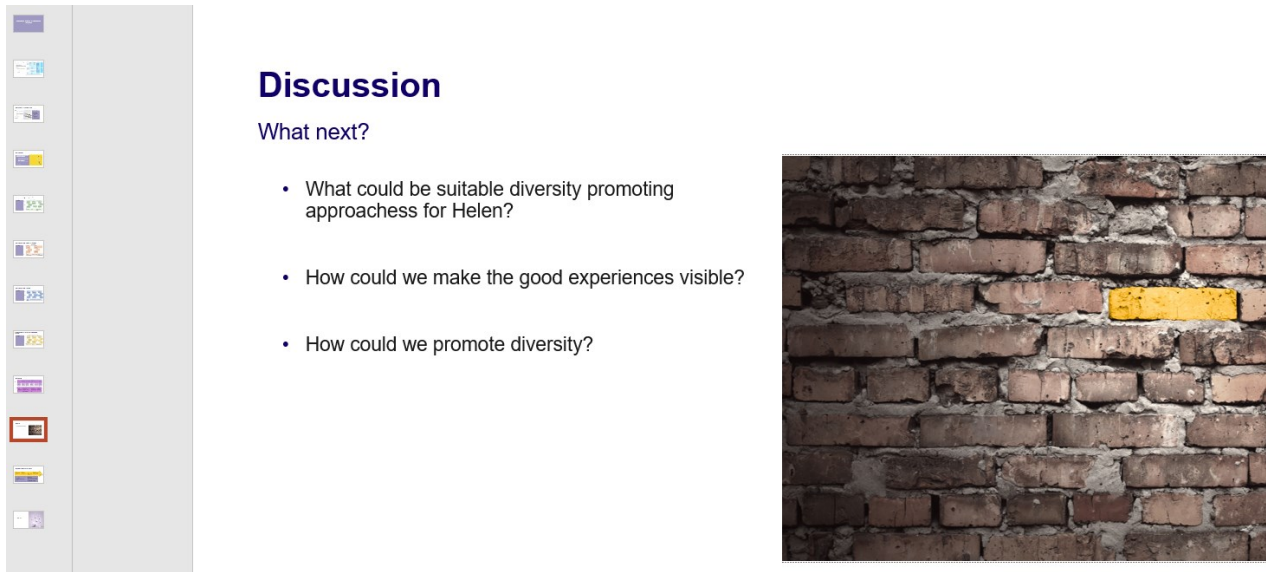
5.3.3 Brainstorming with HR

Typically, in the development process, knowledge generation and directing activities are closely related to each other. A data collection method can also be an essential part of development

process itself. (Toikka & Rantanen 2009, 114.) Discussion-promoting techniques are often used in work and workplace development. In knowledge work organisations, the development of discussions in the workplace and organisations is not self-evident. Various techniques that promote developmental discussions led by facilitators are needed in work communities and organisations. (Toikka & Rantanen 2009, 103.) Globalisation, changing operational environments, and rapidly evolving technology have created a need for organisations to adapt and change rapidly. It is believed that groups can solve problems more effectively than individuals. (Sipponen-Damonte 2020, 15-16.) In facilitated discussions, a group of employees participate in a facilitated workshop for project involvement, innovation, and decision-making, led by a neutral facilitator who does not have direct decision-making authority. The facilitator assists the group in identifying and addressing challenges and guides the process toward efficiency by adding structure to the work (Schwarz 2017).

Creativity is at the centre of facilitation methods, and it requires an open and positive atmosphere. Brainstorming is one of the ideation methods of creative problem-solving, which is used to generate ideas in a group. A typical brainstorming session involves a group of 6-12 people, led by a facilitator, aiming to brainstorm new approaches or solutions to a particular problem. (Moilanen, Ojasalo & Ritalahti 2015, 159-160.) Brainstorming method was used in this research. HR team was gathered together after the internal interviews and benchmarking data was analysed. With HR having a broad perspective throughout the organisation, it was possible to gain a realistic understanding of the starting point, maturity levels in different teams, opportunities for working in English, and recognise priorities.

The type of brainstorming used in the organisation is called Demo. It is utilised for presenting and brainstorming new and unfinished projects. The same method was chosen as data collection for this thesis, as the team is familiar with the concept. The facilitator has 15 minutes to present the topic and objective, along with a few related questions for which the group's ideas and comments are sought (figure 3). The following 15 minutes involve informal discussion on the topic. The facilitator's role is to guide the discussion back to the presented questions if it strays too far off topic. Trust and respect are particularly important in the workshop, enabling ideas and comments to be brought forward. To ensure a trusting and safe atmosphere for all participants, the Demo sessions are typically not recorded. However, in this case, the transcription tool was used after the participants agreed to this. The use of the transcription was also explained in the calendar invite.



Discussion

What next?

- What could be suitable diversity promoting approachess for Helen?
- How could we make the good experiences visible?
- How could we promote diversity?




Figure 3. Demo session introduction

The idea was to raise awareness of the research, present the findings and get ideas for the suggested procedures for the organisation. The Demo session was 30 minutes in duration as the demos typically are. Scheduling was easy because there are ready morning coffee slots for demos in the HR calendar. The participants were representing all three HR teams, HR management, HR development and HR Business Partner team, 10 people in total. The data was interpreted by highlighting connections with interview and benchmarking data.

5.4 Methods of data processing and analysis

In this research interviews and the demo session were transcribed using artificial intelligence (AI) assisted function. This allows concentration to the conversation and possible non-verbal communication and ensures essential information is not missed. The interviews and Demo session were completed online via Teams and benefit from new technology. Teams has recently rolled out a new feature that allows automatic transcript in addition to recording. The quality is of the transcript is not yet perfect and occasionally the results were quite comical. It is important to arrange the time to return to the notes and transcript soon after the interview in order to process them accurately. As the purpose in this thesis is to collect information about attitudes, feelings, and culture in addition to facts, the way ideas are shared has certain significance. That is why it was helpful to have the transcripts written the way they are heard and observed (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 110).

The conclusions presented must be based on the data and the analyses conducted and the process of the analysis should be described. Analysis could be defined as condensing and refining the material into conceptual or theoretical form (Günther, Hasanen & Juhila s.a.). Research tools or

strategies can ensure systematic analysis of development activities and, thereby, persuasive argumentation. (Toikka & Rantanen 2009, 170.) The process of data analysis in this thesis was divided into three main parts. First, data was organised into a cohesive whole so that it was ready for analysis. This phase meant transferring the recorded data into clearly readable format by cleaning the Teams transcripts. (Eriksson & Koistinen 2014, 33; Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 138.)

Second, the data had to undergo analysis using a specific analytical approach. In this research the approach to analysis was dominantly research data driven. This meant the analysis was done merely based on the empirical research itself and previous research was only linked to the conclusions of the analysis. The aim was to set aside previous conceptualisations and primarily rely on the raw material to code it into categories. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 110.) This approach was chosen because the aim was to find development opportunities from the data collected through interviews and benchmarking. Connections to the theoretical framework were however made as supporting ideas for the analysis.

The method used for interview data in this research was classification using colour coding. Coding means assigning codes to the substantive matters in the material. The researcher created a coding frame, in which a verbal definition or topic for each named code was named. Codes used are presented in table 10. Because coding was research data driven, the researcher needed to familiarise herself with the transcripts well before creating the coding frame. (Eriksson & Koistinen 2014, 35.) Key ideas or concepts were arranged into themes using colour coding. For instance, all comments about the fluent Finnish requirements in job ads were categorised using a particular colour highlighter. Coding was a tool for the researcher to analyse the material in a way that provides answers to the research questions. In itself, coding did not produce answers but enabled further analysis. (Eriksson & Koistinen 2014, 35.) Similar coding was utilised in benchmarking interview and brainstorming analysis in smaller scale. There were less themes to code in these two other data sets.

Table 10. Colour coding table for analysing the empirical material

Codes for interview analysis
Expectations of diversity beforehand
Current perception of cultural diversity
Current perception of inclusion
Perceived benefits of diversity
Perceived challenges with diversity
Language practises used in the team currently
Language model that could work in the future
Language requirements for positions
Management support
Reasons for resisting the change
Diversity management practises
Experiences from elsewhere

Third, the observations and findings obtained from the analysis were interpreted. This meant that the observations made from the data were given significance, explanations and understanding were provided for them, connections were established, and conclusions were drawn. (Eriksson & Koistinen 2014, 33.) In interpretation, the researcher brings out something new about the phenomenon. Previous theory and research can serve as a source for interpretations, requiring the ability to perceive potential connecting and differing factors. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 143-144.) Based on the analysis conducted, interpretations and conclusions regarding the topic in relation to the research problem are made (Günther, Hasanen & Juhila s.a.). The challenge in the analysis is often sticking with the planned scope (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 78). In the data collection process for this thesis, there were many interesting ideas and topics that came up in the interviews. However, it was not possible to include and analyse all of them due to the pure volume and also the focus of the thesis. The analysis needed to be in line with the research questions and scope.

The supporting data for this research was material collected from public sources and brainstorming session ideas. The analysis process for the supporting material was similar to the primary data analysis but more straight forward, content analysis. The focus in content analysis is on what matters, topics, and themes the material conveys, for instance what issues are addressed in media texts, or what a photograph depicts. (Günther, Hasanen & Juhila s.a.) The material was collected into one document and organised into themes. These themes were then interpreted and links to the primary data were drawn.

6 Findings - Helen interviews

Analysis of empirical data from Helen interviews was divided into four sections according to the subtopics of the interview frame: perceptions of diversity and inclusion, effects of diversity in the organisation, language practises now and in the future and diversity management needs and opportunities. In this section, the results of the empirical research analysis is presented within these four categories. As described above, the analysis method used is abductive thus theoretical framework is discussing with the findings and analysis. Primary data that is collected by internal interviews is analysed first, followed by benchmarking data and finally brainstorming data.

6.1 Perceptions of diversity and inclusion

The interviews were aiming to find out how the organisation was perceived from the outside prior to employment and how the perception is currently as part of the work community. Questions, such as how you ended up in the employment, how did you rate the organisation in terms of cultural diversity beforehand and how are you seeing diversity and inclusion now were targeted to discover these perceptions and ideas.

6.1.1 Perceived diversity prior to employment

The interviewees had varying expectations of diversity before joining Helen. Prior to employment, Helen was seen very local and Finnish by three of the respondents. One respondent mentioned that Helen was perhaps their last choice when it came to the internationality of companies and that it seemed impossible for them to join. Succeeding in the employment is still seen as a small-scale miracle by the employee. Another interviewee had the image of Helen being a local player with its local district heating product, not showing signs of wanting to transform into a more internationally friendly employer. The use of "last choice" and "impossible" suggests a contrast with the individual's expectations. One of the respondents mentioned she was advised during the recruitment process that she would be the first non-Finnish speaker in the company if chosen. The communication during the recruitment process made her mentally prepared for the possible language challenges indicating an awareness of potential cultural differences and a willingness to adapt. All the respondents came from culturally diverse working environments. This lead two of the respondents on the other hand to anticipate a similar level of cultural diversity at Helen or did not have any specific expectations about diversity prior to joining. The realisation of the limited cultural diversity came as a surprise to majority of the respondents.

6.1.2 Perceived diversity currently

Current perception of diversity in the company was described very similarly by all the interviewees. The predominant sentiment across the responses is a recognition of a lack of international diversity at Helen. Three of the respondents described the lack of diversity in numeral descriptions such as “less than 1% of cultural diversity” and “there are only three of us”. The limited representation of international or culturally diverse talent is highlighted as an area for improvement. However, the current situation was seen as a phase, and all respondents had a positive trust that things will improve from here. Comments such as “we are at the beginning of the journey” and “we are on the right track” describe the recognition and understanding that Helen is in the process of evolving and becoming more open to diversity. One employee mentioned that although Helen has public utility roots and has been static in its structures and operations, it is transforming its image to a more open company that appreciates international backgrounds and actively looks for diverse talent. The recognition of this transformation signals an awareness of the company's efforts to embrace international backgrounds and diverse talent, which is viewed as a positive step forward. One interviewee mentioned that he does not want to use the word "disappointing" because the company is only starting to make progress in this area. They compared Helen to other companies they have worked for, both in Finland and abroad, and stated again that Helen lacks diversity, but that this is likely due to the fact that Helen only recently opened up to international talent. One of the respondents made the distinction between gender and age diversity, where the company is perceived to be in a relatively good position, and cultural diversity, where there is a recognized need for improvement. Overall, the participants perceive a lack of diversity in the company and express the desire for change in this area but recognise that the company is making efforts to improve in this area.

6.1.3 Perceived inclusion

The overall sentiment of current perception of inclusion was positive, with a focus on the support and understanding received from colleagues and line managers. There were three themes that were raised in the discussions related to inclusion. All responses highlight the supportive and inclusive nature of the work environment at Helen. Colleagues and managers were described as open, understanding, and willing to help, creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere for international employees. Two respondents in particular raised the important role of their own manager as the facilitator of inclusion and supporter of diversity with comments such as “the hiring manager is the person who made this possible” and “my manager makes sure we feel as part of the team”. Reactions from colleagues towards newly entered diversity were described as positive, contributing to a sense of belonging within the organisation.

The second theme related to inclusion was the acknowledgement of the language barrier with an emphasis on the need for patience and understanding from both sides. The significance of language in facilitating inclusion is evident. Respondents described feeling of appreciation for efforts made to accommodate language needs. There was also some concern and advise to ensure that the infrastructure and the team is ready before Helen attempt to attract international talents to new teams to ensure the new starters feel welcome and truly as part of the community. As the infrastructure is not yet ready and English translations are not available in all software and instructions this was noted as potential challenge for someone with no Finnish knowledge. The third theme was the room for improvement. While the overall tone is positive, there are also mentions of potential challenges of inclusion for individuals. The areas were related to people with foreign background without Finnish language skills and unconscious bias towards people that appear different. Overall, the responses reflect a positive perception of inclusion at Helen, with an understanding of the challenges and the need for ongoing efforts to support international employees and foster a truly inclusive environment.

6.1.4 Conclusion of perceptions of diversity and inclusion

In conclusion (figure 4), the perception of diversity at Helen prior to employment was either realistic or it was not an area of concern as previous environments had been international. The realisation of the limited international diversity at Helen came as a surprise to most of the respondents. Currently, the interviewees unanimously described a lack of diversity at Helen, with a recognition of the company's efforts to evolve and become more open to diversity. While the lack of diversity was acknowledged, there was a positive trust that the situation would improve. In terms of inclusion, the overall sentiment was positive, with an emphasis on the supportive and inclusive nature of the work environment at Helen. Colleagues and managers were noted as open, understanding, and willing to help, contributing to a sense of belonging within the organisation (see 2.4). However, there were also mentions of potential challenges related to language barriers and unconscious bias, indicating the need for ongoing efforts to support international employees and foster a truly inclusive environment at Helen.

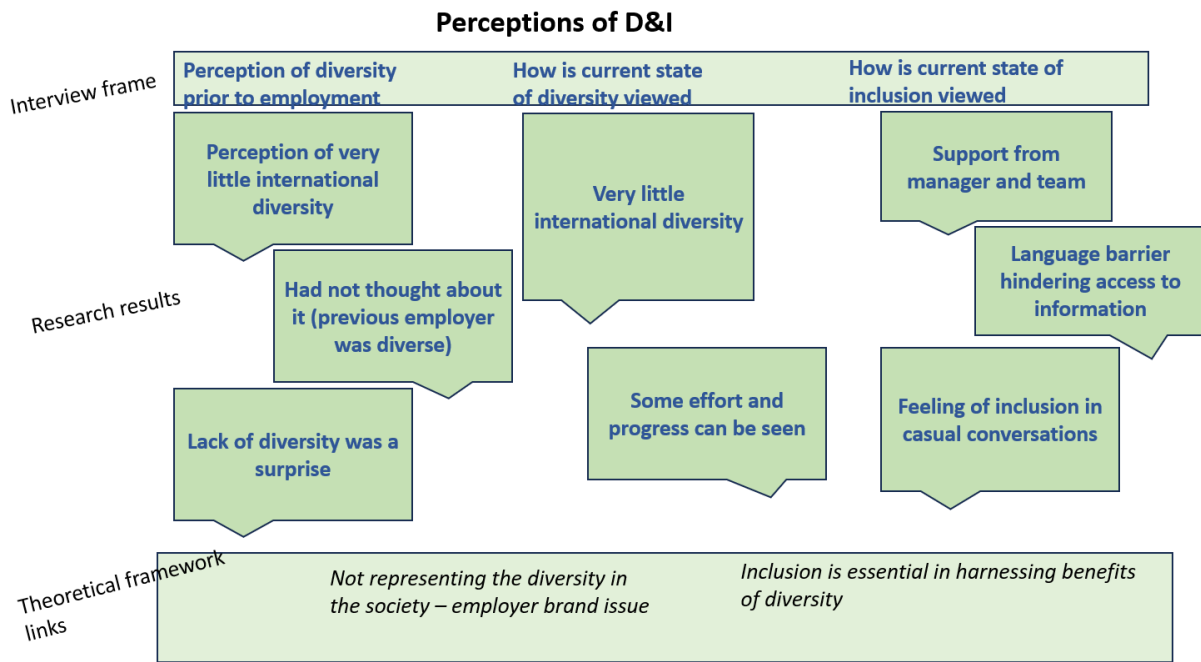


Figure 4. Perceptions of D&I

6.2 Effects of diversity

The second topic in the interview was aiming to discover what kind of impact the increased cultural diversity has made in the team or in the organisation. Questions such as what kinds of benefits you can see diversity has brought to the team and have you noticed challenges to communication or cooperation due to cultural diversity were used to discover how the interviewees see the effects of diversity in practise. Some discussions were describing the effects of diversity in the more general level and reflecting on benefits experienced elsewhere.

6.2.1 Benefits of diversity

The question, what are the benefits diversity has brought for the team was a difficult one for most recipients at first. There was some hesitance of describing benefits from their viewpoint and two interviewees mentioned this is a question we should ask the native Finnish colleagues. However, there were three benefits that were raised in the discussions. Diversifying perspectives was raised as a benefit to reduce risks in operations and gain multiple viewpoints. New team members from different cultural backgrounds are more likely to challenge existing work culture and ways of operating and contribute to improvement than people with the same background. Team members with different type of background have the potential to bring in fresh perspectives. This can also enrich the team by combining positive elements from various cultures. Second, cultural knowledge as a tool for increased global communication and cooperation was raised as a benefit. This means understanding the working styles of suppliers from specific countries, facilitating communication in

partners' languages, and providing a strong foundation for effective collaboration. One particular team has already been able to benefit from this in practise with solid understanding of German business etiquette. The market insight at the moment is heavily relying on Finnish market while employees from different backgrounds have the potential to point out benchmarks from different markets. Third, language proficiency was emphasised as an advantage. Some of the interviewees have a long experience in working in English and feel as they are able to show their colleagues this can work at Helen also. They are able to assist the team with the comfortable communication with partners and setting an example for working in English. Exposing teams to English or bilingual model make them more flexible and enables yet more international talent to enter the team and this way adding flexibility in recruitment market. Overall, these responses collectively showcase the value of diversity in enriching perspectives, improving operations, enhancing international collaboration, and facilitating effective communication, ultimately contributing to the team's success at Helen.

6.2.2 Challenges with diversity

Similarly, the challenges diversity has brought in the team was perceived as a difficult topic to answer at first. The discussion was led to different areas that have been presented as challenges in the theoretical framework and these were reflected to practise. Although all the interviewees first response was that there have not been any major challenges due to diversity, four areas of challenge were recognised. Internal communication was one area that was seen as a challenge at times. The group level material and tools that are primarily in Finnish only. This creates an additional effort in translation and may impact participation in certain platforms like the Intranet. Particularly when addressing the entire company, it should be ensured that everyone can understand the communication effectively. Second, difficulties in expressing ideas and technical expertise in meetings in real-time or misinterpreting the meaning due to the language barrier or cultural differences in using language was discussed. This was mentioned as a challenge from two different perspectives, the difficulty in communication in Finnish for a non-native speaker and also difficulty for Finnish speaker when the meeting was held in English. The way ideas or comments are expressed also have cultural differences in directness and choice of words. One of the interviewees raised this as an example where misunderstandings can happen. Third, challenge was the lack of awareness of international talents currently at Helen and the need for them in the future. There are indications of the challenge in changing the perception of Helen as a company that is open to diverse backgrounds, particularly for international talents who may view the organisation as static in its structures and operations. Even internally, the international people feel as the organisation is not really aware there are teams that work in English and have people from different cultural backgrounds. Finally, there were mentions of perceived prejudices, although the interviewee

acknowledges that it might be a result of overthinking. This suggests a potential sensitivity to feeling judged or misunderstood due to cultural differences. Overall, these responses provide insights into the challenges related to communication accessibility and internal communication, language limitations in real time communication, awareness of cultural diversity and potential prejudices. However, the answers were also highlighting positive reactions and an overall lack of major challenges within the individual's team.

6.2.3 Conclusion of the effects

The conclusions of the benefits and challenges noted by the interviewees are presented in figure 5. Three key benefits emerged from the discussions that line up with the theoretical framework (see 2.1). Firstly, diversifying perspectives was seen to reduce operational risks and gain multiple viewpoints, ultimately leading to improvements in work culture and operations. Secondly, cultural knowledge was acknowledged as a valuable tool for enhanced global communication and cooperation, providing insights into working styles of specific countries and facilitating effective collaboration. Additionally, language proficiency was emphasized as an advantage, enabling comfortable communication with partners, and showcasing the potential for working in English. While the initial response from all interviewees was that there were no major challenges due to diversity, four areas of challenge were recognised. These included challenges related to internal communication, expressing ideas and technical expertise in meetings, lack of awareness of international talents at Helen, and perceived prejudices.

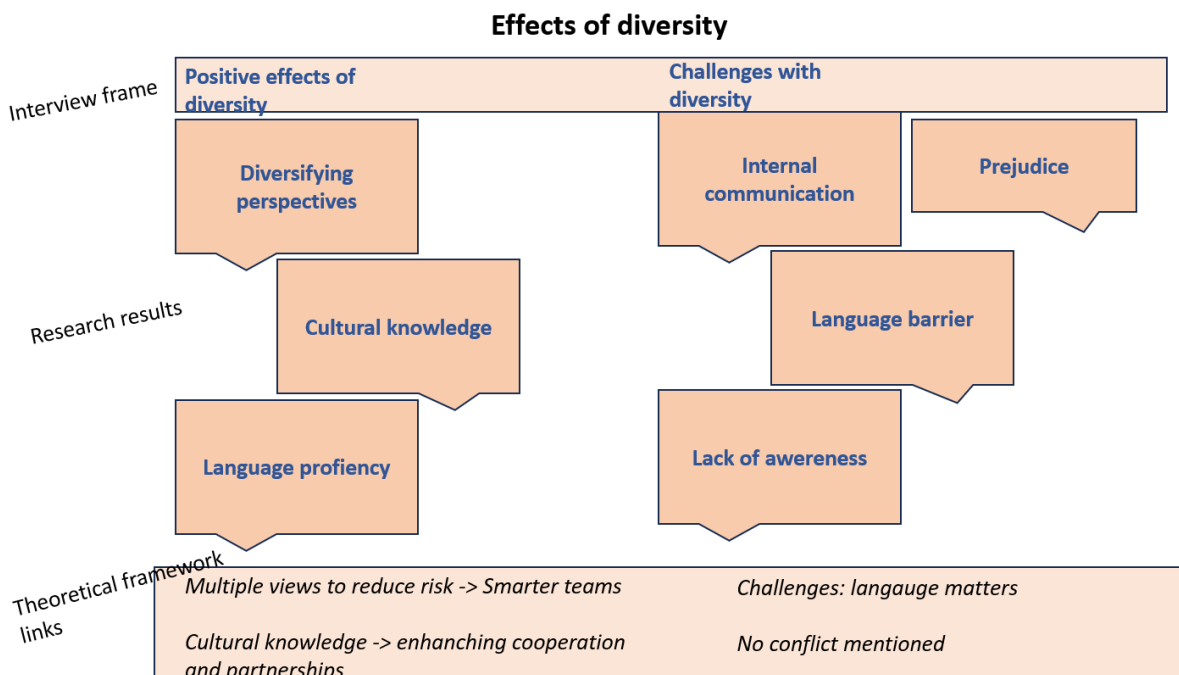


Figure 5. Effects of diversity

6.3 Language practises now and in the future

As the language is recognised the main obstacle for cultural diversity in Finland (see 3.3.1) language matters were concentrated on in the third part of the interview. The topic was discussed through questions such as what kinds of language practises you have in your team currently, what kind of language model could work at Helen and how the interviewees perceive the language requirements for open positions at Helen.

6.3.1 Language practises in teams currently

The language practices in the teams of the interviewees vary. Some teams at Helen have started working in English, while in most teams at Helen, the language is Finnish. Three of the interviewees currently work in English and three work in Finnish. The decision to change the language to English in the team was made when the first non-Finnish employees were hired. In these teams all communication from team meetings to Teams chats are in English. There was a clear decision made and this has led to consistent way of communication in English. The colleagues have adapted to the language change well. One of the interviewees works in a team that is reasonably new to Helen and most team members have prior experience in working in English thus adapting to the change was likely to be easier. In the other English team, most of the work involves English as the team communicates with partners and suppliers that do not operate in Finnish. The change of working language therefore feels natural. The interviewees highlight the appreciation of the flexibility of colleagues with the language. When they join a situation, formal or informal, the language is always changed to English. Two of the interviewees mentioned that there have been occasions in some larger event where language has been changed for part of the presentation or for the entire event because of them. This was showing acknowledgement and they felt it was great. However, the non-Finnish speaking interviewees did raise the language barrier issue when it comes to the wider communication outside their team operations such as organisation wide communication, new letters, Intranet, and tools.

Two interviewees mentioned their department has started to write most of the documents in English while the working language is still Finnish. In one case the use of English in IT context was highlighted as a practical and logical choice due to its widespread use in the field. This acknowledges the importance of using the language commonly used in the industry for technical documentation. All team members have good English skills but working language is Finnish. The idea in the team is that they are not yet ready to accommodate a non-Finnish speaker. This is mainly due to infrastructure still being partly in Finnish but in addition the worry of a new starter being included in the informal work community discussions in English was evident. The employee started in the role with weaker Finnish level but has been able to improve his language skills through work and

support of his colleagues. He mentioned the language journey was a shared effort. The support received for language learning was acknowledged as crucial for effective integration. In the other case the team has agreed to write all the material in English but due to everyone in the team knowing enough Finnish, the working language is still Finnish. The team is flexible with working language though and is ready to change to English if an international colleague would enter the group.

6.3.2 The language model suggested for Helen

All interviewees agree there should be a plan and preparations for the future language model. They were all introduced the three language models that are used in Finnish organisations: English only, Finnish only and Hybrid or to language -model. These options were discussed, and the most suitable model that Helen could adapt was contemplated. All employees interviewed supported the idea of a hybrid model, where both English and Finnish are used in different capacities, such as using English for documentation and presentations while allowing teams to discuss in their preferred language. This approach was viewed as a way to accommodate diverse language preferences and to facilitate effective communication across teams. They also emphasised the importance of ensuring that everyone can work with the materials, even if they are not proficient in English. The use of both Finnish and English in corporate announcements and the availability of English translations for key information, such as CEO presentations, is recognized as beneficial for international employees and reflects an effort to accommodate diverse language needs. It was recognised that this may require some additional support and translation help from colleagues, as well as the establishment of rules and practices for language use.

Some employees expressed the view that the transition to an English-speaking environment should be gradual and that it is essential to consider the impact on employee experience and team dynamics. Hybrid model was seen as a transition stage moving towards a long-term model of working. What this is, should be determined by the management and based on our needs. Additionally, there were considerations for maintaining a sense of community and belonging by ensuring that employees, including non-native Finnish speakers, can participate in informal conversations. One response in particular was highlighting the importance of having a solid foundation in place before attracting international talent, emphasizing the need for infrastructure and proficiency in English within the organisation. Some respondents on the other hand saw a quicker transition to a company level hybrid model better avoiding halfway there -stages and clarifying the communication and translation principles. The adoption of a hybrid language model is seen as aligning with the strategic vision and values of Helen – world class expertise. The organisation is communicating a forward-looking approach where collaboration, innovation, and openness to different

perspectives are appreciated. The interviewees are seeing enabling diversity through flexible language models would fit into this vision well.

There were suggestions to consider the specific needs of different teams and the potential customer base, with some employees advocating for a shift towards more English in some parts of the organisation to attract international talent and cater to English-speaking customers and other stakeholders. Some interviewees shared the idea that apart from some basic guidelines or practises in the organisation level, each team can work in the way that is most convenient for them in their internal communication as long as everyone can feel as they can express themselves and work efficiently. The responses emphasise the importance of creating an environment that is inclusive and supportive of international professionals and this is done in the team level in practise. In summary, a hybrid language model was considered the practise that could work at Helen in the near future, involving the use of both Finnish and English in the workplace. This would require the establishment of rules and practices for language use, as well as support and understanding from colleagues.

6.3.3 Language requirements for open positions

Interviewees provided a diverse range of perspectives on the language requirements for open positions at Helen. Several employees emphasised the need for fluent Finnish in certain roles, particularly those involving customer-facing interactions, control room operations and other roles dealing with authorities, and roles with extensive Finnish documentation. Apart from these roles that were seen as “compulsory Finnish” there were differences in the views. Some responses indicated that the language requirements should be lowered with other roles to enable the recruitment of international professionals with the necessary expertise. Suggestions were to lower the language requirements to provide opportunities for international professionals, especially in roles where Finnish fluency may not be critical. An interviewee similarly mentioned that if language is the only barrier to recruiting an international professional with the necessary expertise, then the Finnish language requirements should be lowered or removed to enable their recruitment. Two responses saw a more ambitious move towards English only advertisement of positions possible and necessary. Several interviewees recommended to trial international recruitment by opening roles in English for so called lower risk and fixed-term positions, such as summer trainees or thesis workers, as a way to sample the hybrid model without a long-term commitment. The unutilised potential in international energy industry students in Finland was also recognised. Many master’s programs focusing on energy technology or sector in Finland are in English. If Helen does not adapt to the changing society and modify the language requirements, it cannot benefit from part of the newly graduated professionals in the field.

On the other hand, responses also touched on the challenges of transitioning to English or adopting a hybrid model, acknowledging the potential resistance from managers and the historical precedence of Finnish as the primary working language. The importance of having a solid foundation in place before attracting international talent was highlighted, emphasising the need for infrastructure and better proficiency in English within the organisation more widely. Furthermore, the need for advanced language skills, especially in technical roles, was emphasised, suggesting that fluency or advanced proficiency is crucial for effective communication in specialised areas. The challenges that were mentioned were the potential for misunderstandings and reduced participation if English only is required. Overall, the most respondents summarised that fluent Finnish may be necessary in some positions, while intermediate-level Finnish or no Finnish may be sufficient in others. There were differences in the preparedness level that the organisation is on currently with some participants seeing the reduction of Finnish requirements relevant now and some in the more distant future.

The prevailing use of Finnish in job advertisements and the requirement for fluent Finnish were seen as attributed to managerial perspectives and the comfort zone associated with the Finnish language as the primary working language. There is a call for challenging existing norms and advocating for a more inclusive approach to language requirements. One respondent saw that the reason why most roles are still advertised in Finnish is due to the legacy of company structures and the predominance of Finnish as the working language. The question of onboarding was also raised as a potential reason to seek for a Finnish candidate. Managers may think that an international employee would require significantly more time for onboarding amongst other support. It was suggested that onboarding is finetuned to hybrid option and the existence of English onboarding path is communicated to the hiring managers.

6.3.4 Conclusions of the language practices

The conclusion of the language practises now and in the future are visualised in figure 6. Language was recognised as the primary obstacle for cultural diversity in Finland as the prior research indicated (see 3.3.1). The current language practices in the teams of the interviewees varied, with some teams working in English while others primarily used Finnish but supporting language development. The decision to change the language to English in some teams was made when the first non-Finnish employees were hired, leading to consistent communication in English within these teams. When discussing the language model suggested for Helen, all interviewees supported the idea of a hybrid model, where both English and Finnish are used in different capacities, accommodating diverse language preferences and facilitating effective communication across teams.

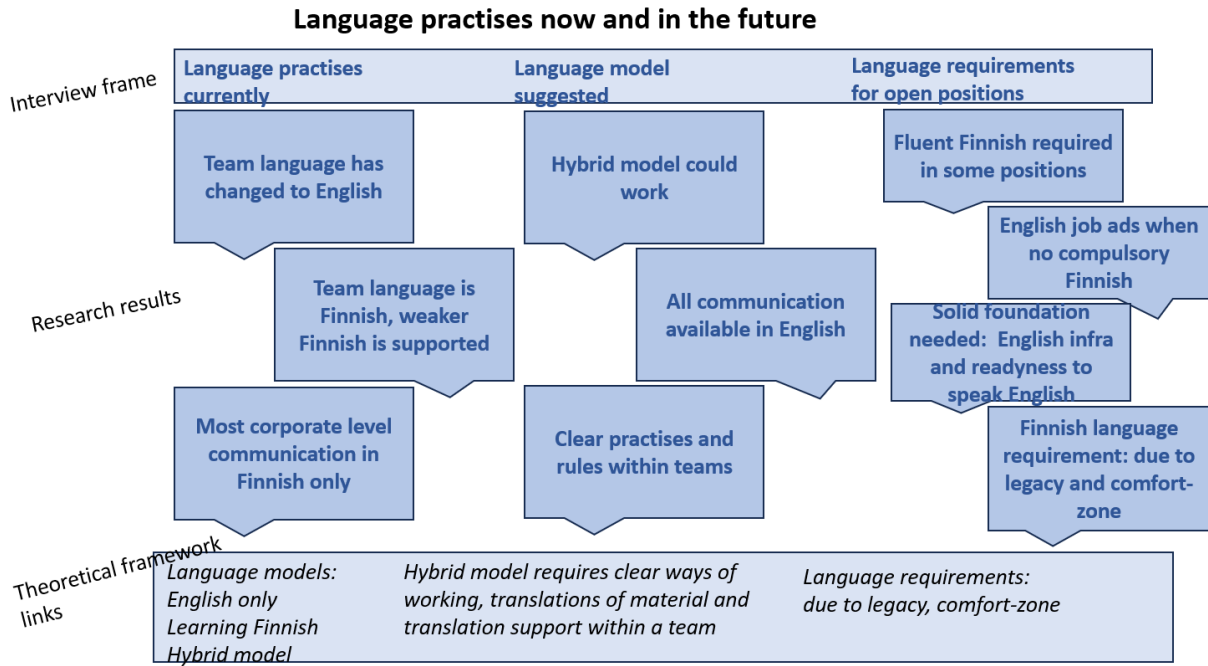


Figure 6. Language practises now and in the future

The adoption of a hybrid language model was seen as aligning with the strategic vision and values of Helen as the world-class expert. There were also suggestions to consider the specific needs of different teams and potential customer bases, with some employees advocating for a shift towards more English in some parts of the organization to attract international talent and cater to English-speaking customers and stakeholders. Regarding language requirements for open positions, several employees emphasised the need for fluent Finnish in certain roles, particularly those involving customer-facing interactions, control room operations, and roles dealing with authorities. However, there were also suggestions to lower the language requirements to provide opportunities for international professionals, especially in roles where Finnish fluency may not be critical. The prevailing use of Finnish in job advertisements and the requirement for fluent Finnish were seen as linked to managerial preferences and the comfort zone associated with the Finnish language as the primary working language.

6.4 Diversity management needs and opportunities

In the last section of the interview, different diversity management methods were discussed and the potential for adapting these approaches at Helen were evaluated. Discussion on management support was raised as a key area by the interviewees and therefore analysed as a separate section here. Also, the reasons for resisting the change were discussed based on the perceptions of the interviewees.

6.4.1 Management support

The responses indicate a mixed perception of management's support for cultural diversity at Helen. While all interviewees feel supported by their own managers, they all express uncertainty about the overall direction or idea from Helen's management regarding increasing internationality. One of the interviewees described the differences as subcultures within the organisations that view the need for diversity very differently. Several responses note that the support from the unit leader is clear, and their background was not an obstacle to employment. They feel as they are appreciated as professionals and their diversity is seen as positive. Responses indicate the manager has showed significant effort in enabling an inclusive working environment for the people with diverse background. This is demonstrated as support of Finnish language learning at work, in other teams facilitating English working environment and allowing and appreciating ideas and suggestions that differ from the norm. The support from the team manager towards diversity was anticipated as they have made the hiring decision. One of the responses indicated that in addition the senior manager in the business unit has openly showed support towards diversity both in communication and action such as holding all meetings in English.

All of the interviewees however note there is variation in the level of support for diversity in the top management and within Helen managers in general. The use of English in presentations and internal communication is seen as a demonstration of support for diversity from some leaders. While some senior managers prepare and present part of the information in English for example, other seem to not be aware of the need. Some respondents express a sense of ambiguity or absence of a clear diversity goal or direction from the top management, noting a lack of concrete discussions or investments in diversity beyond individual manager initiatives. This absence of direction seems to leave international talents feeling excluded and uncertain about their career opportunities, especially when language requirements pose a barrier. The issue of diversity appears to be acknowledged only superficially, without concrete actions or goals, and is not for example integrated into the company's sustainability program or corporate goals. It is suggested by two interviewees that his lack of a defined diversity goal from leadership may leave employees and potential candidates questioning the company's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. The need for leadership support was highlighted by majority of the interviewees, with emphasis on the role of management in setting the tone, providing encouragement, and demonstrating a commitment to diversity and internationality. Open discussions with management could be beneficial to encourage increasing diversity, and while the recruiting supervisor ultimately decides whom to recruit, support from management could be encouraging.

6.4.2 Reasons for resistance

The interview was aiming to find out what interviewees thought might be the reasons for resisting internationalism and increasing diversity. Majority of the first responses to the question suggested that there has not been overt resistance to cultural diversity. However, there was an acknowledgment that resistance could exist particularly due to the significant shift it represents for teams that have traditionally operated in Finnish only. The discussions discovered three topics that were identified as reasons for resistance or hesitance: cultural prejudice, lack of understanding for the need of diversity and language barrier. Some responses highlighted that language is often blamed for resistance to diversity in the organisation, but the reasons for resistance are not solely based on language barriers but also touch a broader range of cultural and social factors. Interviewees felt that even individuals fluent in English may resist using it in the workplace, indicating a broader resistance to change and internationalisation. Similar was found in the previous research (see 3.3.2). The reluctance to work with people who appear different due to prejudices and the fear of the unknown are significant contributors to this resistance. The interviewees recognise that this phenomenon is not unique to Finland but is a common challenge globally. In one conversation, the fundamental importance of trust in all interactions was linked to this topic for Finns. People from less familiar cultures may initially be treated with more scepticism before it is known whether they can be trusted.

A lack of understanding of the need to increase diversity is also mentioned as a potential reason of resistance. Concerns have been raised about the necessity of switching to another language, such as English, when the target market is Finnish. For instance, teams around district heating may feel that they are working in a very local market as we cannot take the product outside the city borders. The change could be especially difficult to understand and challenging for long-standing employees who have worked exclusively in Finnish so far.

Language barrier is a wider topic and includes several perspectives mentioned by the interviewees. Although English is a global lingua franca, it remains a foreign language to many Finns, which can pose challenges in its adoption in professional settings. Concerns about the impact of diversity on work and the expression of expertise, as well as the fear of new challenges and communication barriers, contribute to the resistance. The responses highlighted that resistance might stem from a lack of skills or confidence in language use, especially when individuals are required to switch to English in meetings after not having used the language for a long time. The comments support the previous research (see 3.3.1) suggesting that some individuals may be reluctant to embrace diversity due to their strong attachment to their native language and culture. One interviewee referred to the societal discussions in Finland about preserving the Finnish language, which may contribute to

resistance against diversity from an ideological standpoint. The reluctance to make mistakes, a trait compared to German people, is identified as a barrier to speaking another language. This fear of errors may lead to resistance to diversity due to language concerns. Additionally, in the energy sector, a lot of specialised vocabulary and abbreviations are used, and one interviewee pointed out that they can be challenging to translate and ensure that the same correct terms are being used.

6.4.3 Diversity management practices

Diversity management needs and methods were discussed in the final section of the interview. Different practises introduced in the theoretical framework were discussed and the suitability of them for Helen were evaluated. Interviewees actively raised diversity management practises in the discussion as they had experiences from more culturally diverse working environments. These experiences are introduced in the benchmarking analysis. Here, the possible practises that Helen could trial are analysed. The responses provide a comprehensive range of diversity management practices that could be effective within the organisation. The initiatives included language support, recruitment strategies, training programs, and goal-oriented approaches to diversity.

Supporting language development emerges as a key theme mentioned by all interviewees, with a focus on both Finnish and English language skills. The idea of supporting language development for both international professionals and native Finnish speakers demonstrates a commitment to enabling effective communication and integration within the workplace. This approach aligns with the goal of creating an environment where all employees can communicate effectively and collaborate with international partners when necessary. English training is already provided for native Finnish speakers, which is recognised as an important step towards a more international business setting. Similarly, Finnish language support could be provided for non-native speakers. Organisational support for cultural diversity could be demonstrated by encouraging the learning of Finnish among international professionals, as proficiency in the language is deemed important for both work and personal life integration. Few interviewees mentioned this commitment could act as an asset in the recruitment market amongst international talent. On the other hand, in the interviews, the importance of personal motivation in language learning and speaking was also mentioned. Language proficiency cannot solely rely on language courses. If a person is motivated to learn and use the language, ways will be found, whereas if there is no motivation, a language course will not remedy the situation.

The concept of anonymous recruitment was introduced to the interviewees as means to mitigate biases and promote diversity. By removing identifying information during initial screening rounds, organisations can create a fairer and more inclusive recruitment process, potentially addressing biases and increasing the diversity of the applicant pool. The practise raised curiosity and most

interviewees saw the practise as a suitable for Helen. The respondents mentioned this could give some applicants a chance who would normally be excluded in the first round due to a foreign name or appearance. There was some hesitance to the practise however with few respondents highlighted the tool would need to be tested and only used for the first screening and one respondent not seeing anonymous recruitment appropriate tool for Helen.

As mentioned above, offering traineeships, thesis work and summer jobs for international students was unanimously seen as a potentially successful practise that should be adopted. The practise is seen as a great opportunity for more teams to tackle the barriers of working with English speaking colleagues. However, there were comments regarding the importance of ensuring the trainees are able to efficiently work in English and receive all the relevant support as they are already less experienced. Additionally, there were suggestions to advertise job positions in English. Few of the interviewees saw the change to English only advertisement current while others suggested more careful consideration of the requirement of Finnish in needed and only positions where fluent Finnish is compulsory should be posted in Finnish.

Diversity training such as unconscious bias education was seen as vital components of diversity management by all interviewees. The importance of the training for managers and employees involved in recruitment was emphasised but the need for the entire organisation was also recognised. Diversity training was seen as a way to provide employees the tools to address biases and promote inclusivity. HR provided a bias training session for managers in the previous year. This received positive feedback. However, the importance of ongoing education and awareness to create a more inclusive workplace environment was mentioned in the discussion. Two of the interviewees wondered if the senior management has received training in this area and pointed out this is where the training should be started at. Diversity training was seen as a tool to raise awareness and answer the question of why diversity is needed and what it could prove Helen.

The idea of setting specific diversity goals, such as achieving a certain percentage of individuals from different backgrounds and cultures by a designated timeframe to managers and rewarding accordingly was not seen as suitable practise as such. The interviewees saw this unfair for the managers as they cannot affect the nationality or cultural background of candidate pool. The practise was also seen as potentially leading to recruiting based solely on cultural background. The selected recruits with international background could potentially be labelled as quota recruits. Few interviewees did however raise the idea of rewarding diversity initiatives at the organisational level or as part of senior management goals. This approach is linked to management support that was discussed earlier and reflects a strategic and goal-oriented approach to diversity management leading to a more systematic and structured approach to diversity management.

Another diversity management practise that was suggested for Helen by the interviewees was enhanced onboarding for international talents. Especially people that have not yet worked in Finland should have a support person in the organisation who is able to assist with the basics in relation to employment in Finland. All interviewees agreed that international talents should have a systematic onboarding path and a dedicated buddy in the team who is able to assist with integration in addition to the manager. Overall, the importance of ensuring international talents have access to all orientation in English or basic Finnish that is available was mentioned as crucial not only for the success in the position and understanding of the industry but also for the feeling of inclusion.

6.4.4 Conclusions of the diversity management needs and opportunities

In conclusion, the interviews provided a range of diversity management practices that could be effective within the organisation, emphasising the importance of management support, reasons for resistance to change, and potential diversity management practices (figure 7). Regarding management support, the responses indicated a mixed perception of management's support for international diversity at Helen. While interviewees felt supported by their own managers, they expressed uncertainty about the overall direction or idea from Helen's management regarding increasing internationality. Open discussions with management were suggested to encourage increasing diversity, reflecting the importance of a supportive and inclusive environment at the organisational level. The reasons for resistance to internationalism and increasing diversity were identified as language barriers, cultural prejudice, and lack of understanding for the need of diversity identified as significant contributors to resistance. The reluctance to embrace diversity due to strong attachment to native language and culture, fear of new challenges, and communication barriers were highlighted as factors contributing to resistance. Most of these are in line with previous research (see 3.3.1; 3.3.2) with the lack of understanding the need mentioned as a new reason. In terms of diversity management practices, supporting language development, anonymous recruitment, and offering traineeships for international students were seen as potentially successful practices that should be adopted. Diversity training, such as unconscious bias education, was emphasised as a vital component of diversity management, with a focus on providing employees the tools to address biases and promote inclusivity.

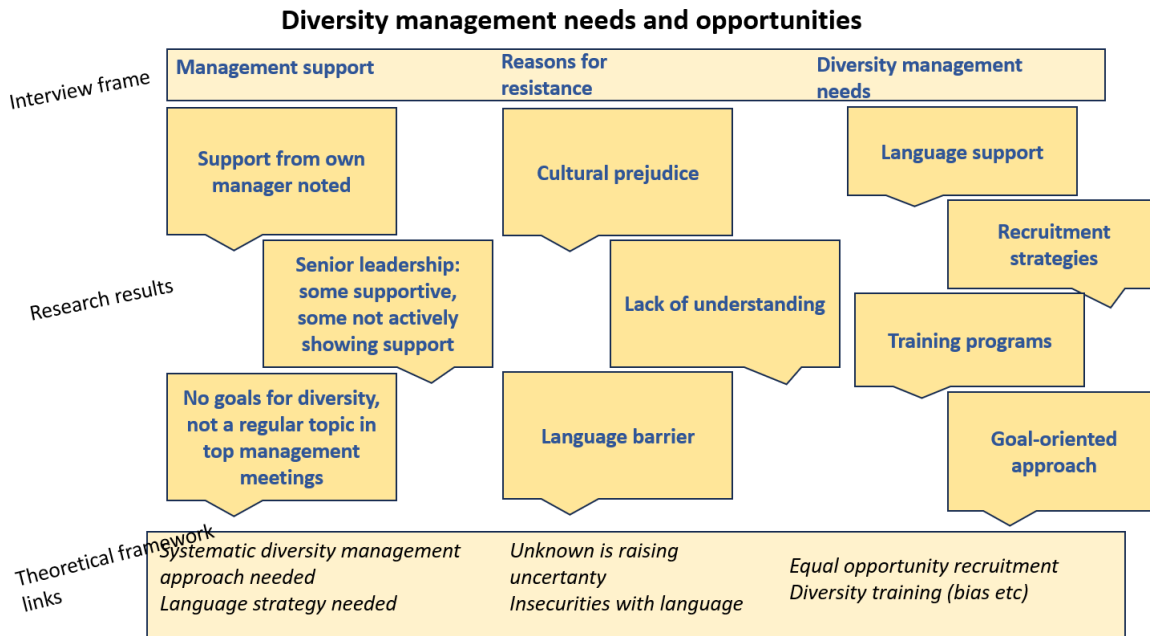


Figure 7. Diversity management needs and opportunities

7 Findings - Benchmarking

The aim of benchmarking in this thesis was to collect best practises in the area of diversity management and evaluate which practises could be adapted at Helen. Benchmarking was conducted with two primary organisations and six other organisations that were discussed with internal interviewees. In this section, the data is analysed by themes. These insights contributed to a deeper understanding of best practices and potential areas for improvement in fostering diversity and inclusion within Helen.

7.1 Diversity and inclusion in the organisation

Benchmarking A operates across Nordic countries, thus the expectation is that the organisation has the potential to represent several different cultural backgrounds due to experiences working in multiple languages for example. The interviewee however stated that the organisation still has a long way to go in its diversity journey. The organisation's local operations in each country are noted to have less diversity than the broader society. The challenges are arising from the slow-moving nature of the finance industry and the prevalence of long careers with low turnover. Support functions represent more diversity, but the organisation has a large customer facing function and these roles are very local and predominantly lack of cultural diversity. Tensions around language use and the need for inclusion and psychological safety are also highlighted, indicating ongoing challenges in this aspect of diversity management. The dedicated role in D&I does communicate commitment in the area, however. The interviewee started in the role part time while working in learning and development. The D&I area was growing partly due to the recognised need in the organisation and partly due to the increased EU regulation requiring reporting and a more structured measures on diversity. All the internal interviewees conducted at Helen reported high rate of diversity in the previous employer. All these organisations operated internationally, or their customers were international.

Benchmarking B operates in Finland only but has started to open opportunities to international talent for a few years now. Approximately 15 percent of employees are non-Finnish speakers today. Most of the roles that have been opened for international talents are in B2B sector and support functions. Similarly to Benchmarking A company, most customer facing, legal and compliance roles still require fluency in Finnish. In the beginning of 2024, a dedicated small team was put together that is focusing on coordinating diversity management and DEI initiatives organisation wide. This communicates commitment and will towards diversity management similarly to Benchmarking A.

7.2 Diversity measures and goals

Benchmarking A has set a primary diversity goal. It is aiming for a 30 percent increase in diversity across various dimensions, including cultural, disability, sexual orientation, and skin colour. The company produces all typical diversity reporting but has also realised the data can provide a lot more information when it is drilled into which is leading to more areas of improvement and sub-goals in the D&I area. For instance, diversity overall might have increased, but in certain areas, such as senior management, there is very little diversity. The interviewee emphasised the importance of inclusion which is part of the goal setting. The company utilises the annual employee survey as a key tool for measuring diversity management improvement, with a focus on perceptions of inclusion and equal opportunities. The goal is 80 percent satisfied rating on perceived inclusion. This is a goal that the company is reaching at the moment however once again, when data is drilled into, inclusion amongst diverse employees is lower. The need to ensure that minority representatives rate inclusion as high as the majority is currently in the company's improvement agenda. One of the internal interviewees similarly explained how the previous employer's ambition level towards diversity was evident as the D&I goals were part of the organisation level goals that were constantly aimed higher.

Benchmarking B's DEI-team highlighted that there is a clear need for understandable and concrete goals yet focusing on a few areas simultaneously instead of aiming to tackle the entire field of diversity management. There are three main goals for the team for this year. Firstly, the team aims to increase awareness of diversity and inclusion matters and include it as a regular consideration in everyday operations across the wider organisation. Secondly, the team aims to improve gender balance in leadership roles leading to more women in these positions. This is part of the official sustainability program of the company. Finally, the team's goal is to improve the employee experience of the English-speaking employees. The concrete actions were harnessing AI tools to assist in translations and subtitles in order to enhance access to communication. One of the measuring tools of diversity and inclusion are employee surveys. The discussion however pointed out that at the end of the day the experience of inclusions for instance is dependent of variety of factors in the moment. Small fluctuations in results or differences between teams may not necessarily deeply reflect the state of leadership or inclusivity in the long run. The interviewee also mentioned that as numbers and key performance indicators are in the DNA of Benchmarking B, it can be challenging to get people involved and show progress at times when diversity management generally cannot be measured in purely numeric terms.

7.3 Successes and challenges in diversity approaches

Benchmarking A is utilising a D&I maturity tool in its improvement journey. This is another sign of commitment in the area. The company has a clear vision that is supported by the management. The interviewee introduced the diversity maturity steps -tool that is similar to the presented D&I framework earlier in this thesis. The first step considers some of the basic areas, such as equal opportunity recruiting, diversity reporting and methods of measuring improvement. As the company matures towards to desired goal, more areas are considered, reported, and monitored by the management. The framework makes adoption of different diversity measures easier as they can be connected to the program towards the goal. In one of the secondary benchmarking companies, one of the previous employers of the internal interviewees was similarly utilising a D&I framework to monitor the current state of diversity and the areas requiring improvement. Also, one of the previous employers had their senior management team complete a comprehensive diversity program that rewarded them with an official diversity certificate. The interviewee saw this very helpful as this highlighted the importance of the area and the idea was then able to permeate throughout the rest of the organisation.

Benchmarking B does quarterly planning, where all DEI initiatives and the three main goals are broken into more concrete projects. This helps goal setting, monitoring, and keeping the operations visible and transparent. Especially at the beginning the dedicated DEI-team, focus is on finding good ways of working together with the wider organisation and implementing DEI initiatives by coordination.

Some of the successful diversity management measures adapted by Benchmarking A are the final candidate principle, succession planning, multi-view assessment process and speedy and on time bias training. The final candidate principle refers to the practise of aiming to have at least one candidate who represents diversity in the final round of recruitment. This has led to positive experience and has given visibility to different type of talent and experience. In succession planning managers are encouraged to plan a successor for a position who represents different background in terms of culture or education. The practise is actively supporting career advancement and learning within the minority groups and increasing diversity in the local branches. Multiview assessment process requires hiring managers to involve another person to rate candidates to receive multiple perspectives. This has been a successful practise although sometimes challenged due to time pressure. In some cases, assessments in the recruiting process are given to hiring managers anonymously with only HR seeing the personal information to remove biases and focus on skills and experience. Benchmarking A has also found that quick five-minute training to unconscious bias to people involved in recruitment processes has been effective. Additionally, the organisation has been

involved in research to investigate the role of language in equal opportunities, sense of belonging, and dynamics in meetings, indicating a commitment to continuous improvement and understanding the impact of language diversity on the organisational culture.

Benchmarking B has been successful in selling their case and managing to have DEI as the main topic of the annual leadership forum for the managers, leads and influencers on the organisation. The topic clearly interests the organisation, as the event was fully booked. In addition, an example of a successful initiative has been a self-study online course on diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias that was put together in record time. The course works as a support tool in the goal of raising awareness and understanding. In addition to tools, the team does a lot of legwork throughout the organisation, discussing diversity-related topics, enlightening, and justifying the importance of the work. This has led to increased consideration and realisation of the existence of bias.

In the area of language, Benchmarking A has started to expect proficient level of English skills from certain positions to enable movement and flexibility across different countries and branches. The company is offering language courses and the interviewee acknowledged they can help to break language barrier and increase confidence, but they are not the most effective way. In his experience the best practise is to simply get people to use English or the local language if that is what they are learning. Managers and other key roles need to show employees examples and create an environment that everyone can make mistakes in and do not need to speak perfectly.

Language is a major topic within the diversity concept at Benchmarking B also. The challenge is the change from a long history of Finnish only operations, where English has not been expected from employees and new recruits in the past to an environment where international employees need to be included. The interviewee put this challenge in two levels. One is group level communication that is yet to improve but is an easier obstacle with bilingual material and translation assistance tools. The other level is the working level, and this is more challenging because it requires starting to use English at work which can be an uncomfortable or even terrifying thought to some employees. This is a balancing act to consider all sides. Some teams have switched their team language to English similarly to some teams in the commissioning organisation.

The internal interviewees highlight the significance of language as a crucial factor in creating an inclusive and supportive environment for international professionals. In the secondary benchmarking organisations, English as the main working language. Some teams were flexible changing the language according to the preference of the colleagues. The unifying factor from the previous employer experience was that English as the primary language enabled a sense of belonging and made it easier to recruit new individuals, as the language issue had already been decided. Three

of the previous employers of the internal interviewees also supported Finnish studies allowing one or several lessons on work time.

All initiatives have not been successful at Benchmarking A. Diversity management methods can raise resistance, especially when they require people to adapt new ways of working or work with someone less like themselves. The interviewee has found that is very important to sell the tools with the business case providing the answers to why this is beneficial. He may not be always liked in the company when introducing new ways of operating as this requires effort from the people involved in the process. But once he can get people to understand why, it become easier. Managers need to be shown the benefits of diversity and inclusion and if this does not work, they need to be told how these practises are required so the organisation does not violate different local discrimination requirements or EU diversity policies. The interviewee also provided some examples of past mistakes, such as unclear expressions in employee surveys that do not translate to other language, highlighting the need for ongoing refinement and improvement in diversity management practices.

In Benchmarking B, the interviewee mentioned some challenges that occurred due to lack of understanding. For instance, there was a group of employees that was aiming to develop the language model in the organisation. The idea was to include English speaking employees in the development process, yet majority of the communication on the dedicated Teams channel was in Finnish. The intention was good but lack of understanding of inclusion and possibly lack of experience in representing the minority group was missing. Another challenge here was to make corrections without blaming or discouraging the initiators. Making the essence of diversity and inclusion clear across the organisation takes time and patience.

7.4 Benchmarking conclusions

The empirical research data from benchmarking had strong links to the previous research and the conclusions are illustrated in figure 8. The benchmarking analysis also provided valuable insights into diversity and inclusion practices, goals, successes, and challenges within the primary organisations and other organisations discussed with internal interviewees. The common denominator among some of the compared companies was clear goal setting aimed to increase diversity across various dimensions. One of the primary benchmark organisations utilised a D&I maturity tool and had a clear vision supported by management, indicating a commitment to diversity and inclusion. The other one had a dedicated DEI team that organised diversity initiatives by quarterly planning. Successful diversity management measures included the final candidate principle, succession planning, multi-view assessment processes, online diversity study material, forum for managers, and bias training. Additionally, the organisations have begun to increase possibilities for

international talents by making working in English easier and offered language courses to break language barriers and increase confidence. However, the conversations also revealed challenges in diversity management, particularly in raising resistance when new methods require people to adapt to new ways of working or collaborating with individuals less like themselves. Also, the balancing act in introducing English expectation in a traditional Finnish working community was discussed. The importance of selling diversity management tools with a strong business case, highlighting the benefits of diversity and inclusion to gain support from managers and employees was emphasised. The need for ongoing refinement and improvement in diversity management practices was also highlighted, with importance of considering inclusion in all initiatives raised.

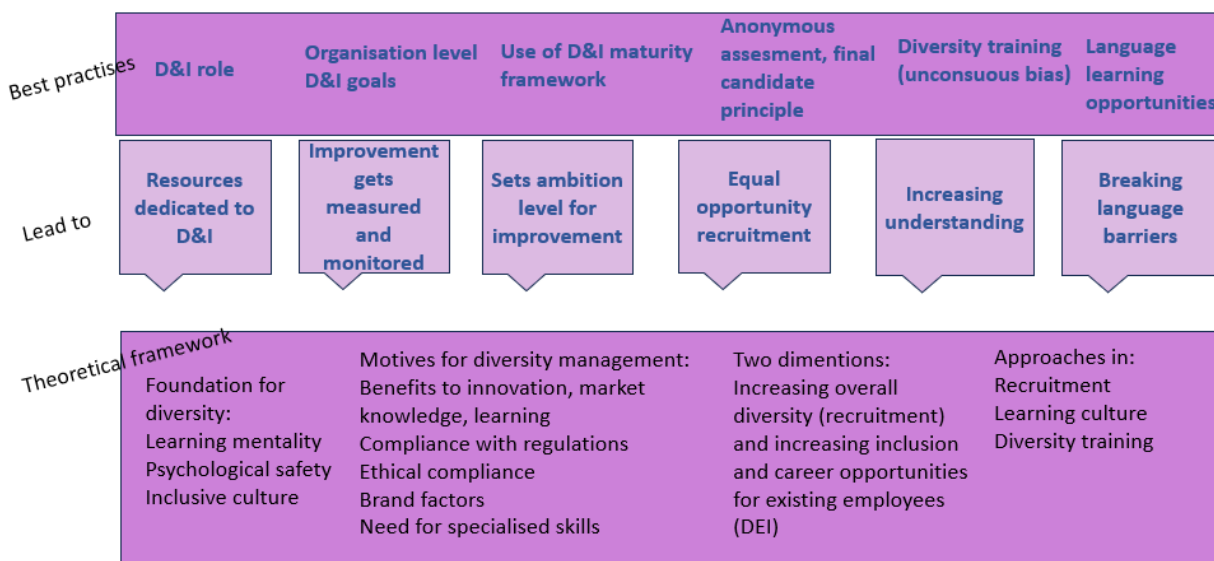


Figure 8. Best practises from benchmarking

8 Brainstorming ideas

At the outset of the work, the HR department was engaged in conceptualising of the next steps using the community development method, Demo. With this user-friendly ideation tool, the thesis work, its purpose, approach, and empirical research results were presented. After the presentation, an equal amount of time was allocated for discussions pertaining to four theme-based questions. HR team has a good insight into the maturity stages of different teams within the organisation regarding international recruitment. Additionally, HR has information about internal processes in the company and the recruitment markets for various professionals. The purpose of the brainstorming session was to discuss the next steps we should take to support diversity and inclusion in the organisation. The discussion and ideas are presented here under two main themes: promoting diversity and action points to HR team.

8.1 Promoting diversity

HR shared a consensus that diversity needs to be made more visible within the organisation. This involves actively highlighting and promoting diversity in all aspects of the company's operations. Some concrete suggestions were Intranet stories and cooperation meetings with the employee representatives. The participants emphasised that when promoting diversity initiatives, it is essential to articulate and sell the benefits in a way that resonates with everyone, ensuring that all stakeholders understand the advantages and value of diversity. The reasoning can look different depending on why the target audience is. By clearly articulating the advantages, such as improved creativity, problem-solving, and better communication with our international partners, majority of the organisation can see the value of diversity. To some audience there might be a need to explain the social sustainability guidelines and regulatory restrictions of potential discrimination in recruitment. Selling the benefits of diversity in a way that everyone understands is essential for garnering widespread support and buy-in for diversity initiatives. This logic was similar to what was found in benchmarking interviews (see 8.3).

8.2 Action points to HR

The brainstorming session led to a discussion on the actions HR should take to support diversity and inclusion. The importance of communicating language issues was underscored, with an emphasis on creating an inclusive environment where individuals are not expected to have perfect English proficiency. Communicating this lowering of English proficiency expectation was seen as something HR should promote. Individuals should feel valued and supported regardless of their language abilities. These ideas support the hybrid language model suggested by the previous interviews. (see 6.3.4.) Secondly, it was noted that HR should allocate more thought and attention to

the development of international diversity within the workplace development plan. This plan is continuously updated, and therefore, supporting and monitoring diversity should also be consistently monitored and integrated into the equality plan. Currently, the plan lacks concrete measures to support international diversity. Connected to this conversation, the participants talked about the importance of continuity and systematic structures for diversity work and therefore agreeing with the findings of Helen interviews and benchmarking. (see 6.4.1; 8.3.) Lastly, HR team noted there should be more active questioning of language requirements in new job positions. The discussion recognised that fluent Finnish language requirement is often purely due to the managers desire to stay in comfort zone similarly to what was discovered in previous research and Helen interviews (3.3.1; 6.3.3).

8.3 Brainstorming conclusions

Figure 9 presents the discussion topics and main ideas that were raised in the brainstorming session with HR colleagues. The ideas have strong links to previous research presented in the theoretical framework and also the other empirical data collected by Helen interviews and benchmarking.

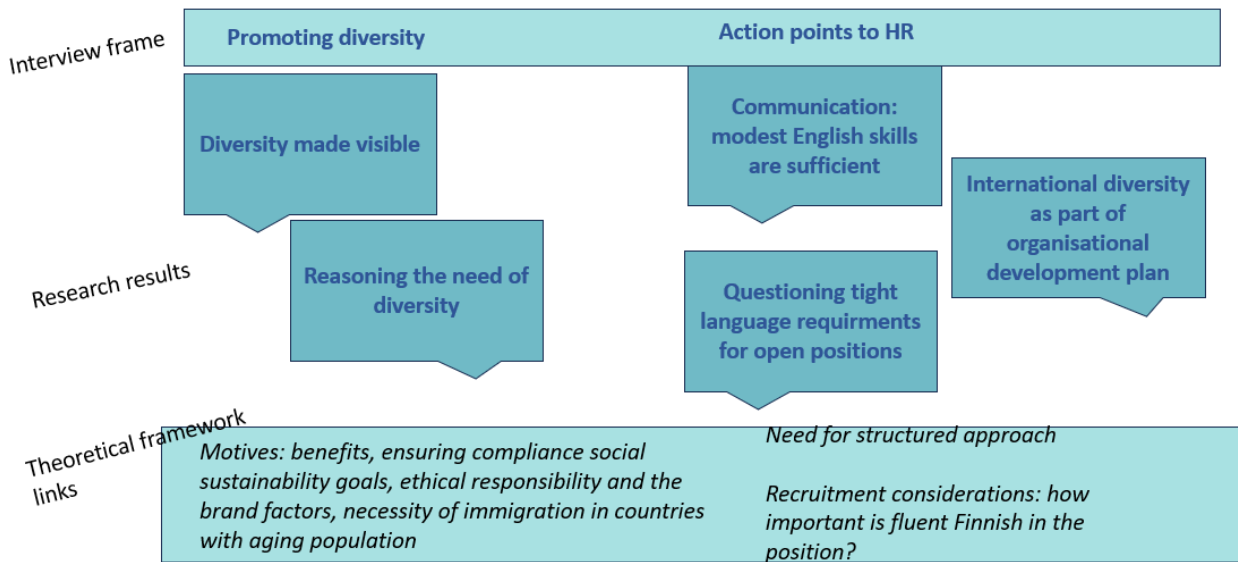


Figure 9. Ideas from HR

9 Discussion

One of the main objectives for the thesis was to determine the existing state of diversity and inclusion as well as factors that may hinder the inclusion of international professionals in the recruitment process and inside the organisation. The second objective was to gather data based on previous research, statistics in Finland and empirical research and build a framework suggestion for the commissioning organisation based on this data. The purpose of the framework is to serve as a guide towards a more diversity friendly and inclusive working community across the wider organisation. The third objective for the thesis was to increase engagement in the subject by creating awareness and reasoning around the topic. This thesis is aiming to show research-based evidence of the advantages of international diversity as well as what contributes to the successful development of diversity and inclusion. For the implementation of the development plan across a broader spectrum of the organisation, it is essential to effectively showcase the significance and advantages of diversity within the scope of the research.

The thesis provides an overview of diversity concentrating on international diversity highlighting the benefits and potential challenges. Diversity is discussed in the Finnish context highlighting the need for the society to succeed in integrating international talent in the Finnish working communities. The message is quite clear, but the topic is associated with a lot of emotions, uncertainties, and even political attitudes. These related issues can obscure the accessibility of the message. In the context of the commissioning organisation however, the main objective can be considered achieved. Challenges in increasing international diversity were identified and framework suggestion for the organisation was created based on the previous knowledge and empirical research. Implementation of the framework is outside the scope of this thesis. However, in order to progress the matter, it is necessary to discuss, justify, and understand it. One of the objectives of this thesis was to raise awareness and discussion on this topic. The thesis required engagement from several individuals in the research phase such as interviewees and brainstorming participants. Wider introduction of the results will be introduced via the group level Teams channel to raise awareness and thoughts. In addition, research findings will be material for HR when supporting managers in recruitment decisions and succession planning. Therefore, the objective of raising awareness can be considered fulfilled.

9.1 Key results and conclusions

Key results and conclusions of the research are presented in this section. The results are discussed under two headings: language model conclusions and diversity management conclusions. These results are the basis for the diversity framework suggestion for the organisation.

9.1.1 Language model conclusions

As recognised based on previous knowledge, language is the major challenge when a Finnish organisation is starting to increase international diversity within the workplace (see 4.3.1). The findings of the empirical research supported this with majority of the challenges being linked to language and communication. Summarising, the root causes of the language challenge are insecurities of speaking English and poorer language skills. Also, non-native language use in the workplace, particularly English, can consume larger part of the working memory, leading to more effort required and difficulties in situations that demand quick responses. (see 3.3.1.) Sticking to the familiar and secure requirement of the Finnish language is a safer and less demanding option for the manager in terms of practical arrangements. English language training for native Finnish-speakers and Finnish for international talent is seen as a good tool to support exposure and confidence in the matter. However, building opportunities to use the language in working situations is likely to bring the most efficient results in improving skills and boosting confidence.

Language is a crucial factor in creating an inclusive environment. Empirical results show that whether accommodating weaker Finnish skills and supporting the language learning or changing all team communication to English has increased the feeling of inclusion of the international talents. In the team level, language arrangements are perceived to be working well. Effort made in the organisation level communication is appreciated and these moments are remembered. For instance, the few sentences spoken by the CEO at the beginning of the induction event was seen as a great gesture by only non-Finnish speaker in the audience. However, majority of the information is still not easily accessible to non-Finnish speaking employees. This has the potential to hinder information flow, inclusion and cooperation between teams and business units (see 4.4.2).

A clear language model, guidelines, or a plan that the organisation is working towards together is missing. Previous research in the matter introduced the three main language choices made in Finnish organisations (see table 6). Findings of the empirical study support the hybrid model for the organisation. This would allow flexibility in language use catering for employees with less comfortable English communication as well as non-Finnish speakers ensuring they are able to have access to all information, use of tools and participation option on all occasions. As pointed out in previous research, in the absence of guidelines, language choices could lack consistency or rely entirely on assumptions regarding the recipient's language proficiency. (see 4.4.1.) Hybrid model does therefore require groundwork in setting the guidelines, communicating them with justifications and monitoring the practise. As language skills develop across the organisation through exposure, larger linguistic units can be handled more efficiently by the memory, freeing up cognitive resources for attention and speech processing. (see 3.3.1.) The constantly improving AI assisted tools are making

multilanguage communication less time consuming and more accessible. As a result, practical considerations can be more effectively organised to provide support for the hybrid model, facilitating a smoother transition and operational efficiency. The organisation needs a language strategy that supports the enablement of new and diverse skills, the utilisation of new perspectives, and a stronger sense of inclusion. The language strategy should take the organisation further towards world-class expertise.

9.1.2 Diversity management conclusions

In the empirical research, clear benefits of diversity, as found in theory, emerged. Interviews provided some very concrete examples of how the team has been able to leverage the advantages of diversity. Diversifying perspectives was highlighted as a distinct advantage and also foundation for new ideas. Within the theoretical framework, this was recognised as smarter teams and increased innovation. Adding cultural knowledge to benefit business decisions and language proficiency to assist working with stakeholders and enabling further international talent engagement were also recognised in the research supported by theory. (see 2.1.) However, leveraging these benefits more broadly to support the organisation requires conscious management of diversity, support for inclusion, and the establishment of psychological safety both at the team and corporate levels (see 2.4).

Engaging people to support international diversity requires understanding and willingness to learn (see 2.4). One of the recognised obstacles to international diversity support was the lack of understanding the need. Justifying international diversity with a business case is important because it provides a clear rationale for the value it brings to the organisation. By presenting a business case, decision-makers can understand how international diversity contributes to the company's knowledge growth, and overall success. Highlighting the potential benefits by raising awareness of the research is one of the objectives of this thesis as presented above. If the business case for diversity is not sufficiently credible in the minds of all members of the organisation, supporting diversity must also be justified by numerous anti-discrimination laws and regulations, reputational damage, and inevitably, the talent shortage that organisations will face in the future (see 2.5).

Investments into diversity management need to come from the leadership team. The need for leadership support was highlighted in the empirical research as well as in the previous research with emphasis on the role of management in setting the tone, providing encouragement, and demonstrating a commitment to diversity and internationality. (see 2.6.) Benchmarking research supports comprehensive diversity training that is started by the top management which enables leadership team to find its role in supporting diversity. Management support allows for strategic planning and

resource allocation, ensuring that diversity efforts are aligned with the organization's broader goals and objectives.

The insights from the interviews and benchmarking analysis led to a deeper understanding of best practices and potential areas for improvement in fostering diversity and inclusion within the organisation. The two areas of diversity management approaches are recruitment and diversity training with clear links between each other. As mentioned, diversity training for top management is important but offering regular training for the entire organisation can help mitigate unconscious biases and promote fair treatment in all interactions. By raising awareness of biases and providing tools to address them, employees can foster a more equitable and respectful work environment, reducing the risk of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities for all employees. (see 2.6.3.)

Recruitment is an obvious area of diversity management as it is the gateway for an organisation to increase international diversity. Results of the empirical research and prior knowledge (see 2.6.1) support more emphasis on tackling bias in recruitment and focusing on the applicant's skills and experience. Benchmarking provided a good practise of final candidate principle. This would not guide the recruiting managers to hire so-called quota international employees but to provide the opportunity for an international candidate to present skills and expertise related to the role. Training on bias targeted at recruiting employees and integrated into recruitment tasks could be an effective way to utilise bias training. Other recommended practises based on the research are providing trainee and summer work positions for international students and systematic evaluation of the need of fluent Finnish in positions.

9.2 Evaluation of the development methods

Evaluation played a role in several stages and reflective concepts of this thesis. In stage perspective, evaluation was both constant throughout the research and its own separate stage at the end of the research process. In concept perspective, different concepts helped to assess the quality of the research, such as reliability, validity, and objectivity. (Toikko & Rantanen 2009, 63.) These two different time perspectives of evaluation are discussed here. Also, the concepts, reliability, validity, repeatability, and objectivity are introduced and explained how they are used in evaluation. Finally, ethical aspects of evaluation are discussed.

One of the tasks of constant evaluation of research is to guide the process. The goal is to produce information that can be used to steer the research and development process. (Toikko & Rantanen 2009, 63.) In this thesis, constant evaluation shaped the theoretical framework and finetuned the interview questions for example. As the theory was shaping, the categorisation was changed to make it more reader friendly. As the interviews progressed, the interview structure evolved through

experience of how to encourage conversation in the area of interest. The development of the research was evaluated at multiple stages of the work so corrective actions can be taken without completely redesigning the work.

Evaluation is, on the other hand, considered the final stage of research. The purpose of the final evaluation is to demonstrate the success of the development work. Assessment involves systematic data collection and analysis. Based on the results obtained, the effects of the research and potential development actions can be evaluated and compared to the goals and efforts of the work. (Moilanen, Ojasalo & Ritalahti 2015, 159-160.) A question structure can assist in evaluation. The following question pattern was used in this research (Moilanen, Ojasalo & Ritalahti 2015, 48):

- How well were the initial objectives of the research fulfilled?
- Were the results available for broader audience within the organisation?
- Does the research generate awareness and further discussion of the topic?

The reliability of research methods is often discussed in terms of validity and reliability, meaning is the research investigating what it is was set to and are the results repeatable (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 62). The question of reliability applies to research methods, the research process, and research results. Reliability and validity are key characteristics of scientific knowledge and have traditionally been linked to quantitative research. Qualitative research methods often use the concept of usefulness which primarily means reliability. It is not enough for the knowledge generated in development activities to be accurate; it must also be useful. Validity links the research objective and questions to the empirical research and results. The researcher must present data and the underlying argumentation as openly as possible, thus convincing the audience of the validity of their research. (Toikko & Rantanen 2009, 121-122.) Usefulness could be evaluated through one of the objectives of the research - discussion and awareness on the subject. This thesis presents the future workforce of Finland and how diversity has been managed in other organisations, resulting in positive influences on the organisation. Does the research manage to engage employees and management of the target organisation in the subject and its timeliness? The success of this objective of the work would mean that clear action proposals are generated for the organisation's use, and the subject is identified as important to be promoted by supervisors and management. The first action point is completed as diversity framework suggestion (appendix 3) and the conclusions presented in this thesis. The second action point's delivery remains to be seen.

In development activities, reliability is associated with complex issues. For example, the requirement for the repeatability of social processes is a problematic issue. Achieving a similar group process with a new group is never a given, even if the external conditions of the group and the task remain the same. (Toikko & Rantanen 2009, 121-122.) This is also a typical characteristic of the

chosen research approach, case study. As mentioned before in research approach section, Hamel, Dufour and Fortin (1993) point out that although case study method is criticised for the lack of repeatability proof, the aim is not to create a “good for all situations”-model. The processes are influenced not only by the many individual factors of the group members but also by various cultural and communal factors in the case study organisation and the researcher. (Alvesson & Kärreman 2013, 1, 16-17.) The suggestions built based on case study research might not apply to another case even when the industry, structure or the diversity rate are similar.

The strong belief in using data and empirical research as aspect of knowledge development has faced opposition due to the "non-objective" interpretivist viewpoint. This highlights how our existing understanding, worldview, and political ideas can shape the way we conceptualise the subjects we aim to research. Our attitudes toward and understandings of our experiences are influenced by a complex network of assumptions, anticipations, and terminologies, which ultimately steer entire projects and significantly impact the conclusions we reach. (Alvesson & Kärreman 2013, 5-6) Objectivity is evaluated throughout this research process. The researcher has personal connections to international talents and experience in working in multicultural workplace. Politically, the researcher has frustration towards nationalistic policies and statements. These factors needed to be considered when interview questions were planned, how the research was described and how results were analysed and interpreted. Certain influence of the researcher had to be accepted as it is not possible to study a phenomenon truly objectively. However, personal attitudes and beliefs were excluded consciously, and their influence was limited as far as possible.

Objectivity has a link to the ethical principles of research which is the final perspective to evaluation presented here. Ethics is a field within philosophy that explores concepts of right and wrong, good, and bad, and moral behaviour. Research ethics specifically addresses the conduct required by researchers to ensure the production of trustworthy information and the appropriate treatment of research participants. (Vuori s.a.) In accordance with general ethical principles, research must respect the dignity and privacy of the participants and avoid causing risks, harm, and damage to the individuals, communities, and other subjects of the research. The participants must be informed about the research topic and their role in it. All these ethical principles were considered in this thesis process. All information obtained from participants was valuable. Sometimes the researcher did not personally agree with the interviewees, but this did not impact the interpretations of the research data. (Moilanen, Ojasalo & Ritalahti 2015, 47-48; Vuori s.a.)

9.3 Recommended framework and further research

The findings of the empirical research provided ideas for development and form the basis for the diversity management framework suggestion that acts as recommendations for the organisation.

The framework (appendix 3) has drawn inspiration from the D&I tools presented earlier in this thesis. However, it has been designed to be kept somewhat simpler and more concrete than other examples of D&I tools in order to appear as a clear and user-friendly tool. Based on the research completed in this thesis, the foundation for more systematic diversity management is in place in the organisation. The will is there, and few teams have been brave and operate in English already. Next step is to apply structure and the tool presented would be the starting point.

The framework consists of five areas: language, recruitment, training, inclusion, and structure. Language area concentrates in creating, implementing, and maintaining hybrid language model that enables group level communication that is including everyone. In recruitment area the concentration is in job ads and assessment process. These steps are critical both for increasing diversity and for promoting an equal and competence-focused personnel policy. In the training area, the aim is to build a systematic and consistent training program that is setting the tone for diversity management, educating on unconscious bias, and explaining regulatory and business case reasons for the program. Inclusion is elevated as its own area to ensure sufficient attention to its importance. Inclusion is an experience, so it is measured in the employee survey. Finally, structure is the fifth area to ensure that diversity is managed systematically, monitored and it is linked to the group strategy.

Each area has a key performance indicator that represents successful management in that area. Each area has three different maturity descriptions. The first level is called “setting the scene” and is the level Helen could start from. The next level, “getting there” can be pursued only once the goals of the first level have been achieved. However, Helen should have a set target date for reaching the next level of maturity. Different areas may progress in a different order. The third maturity level, “world-class”, represents well established diversity management. However, the journey is not completed there and new areas requiring attention and management are likely to arise along the way.

The scope of this thesis was diversity based on country of origin and this is what the empirical research was concentrating on. Previous studies on diversity have often included several different diversity attributes such as gender and disability. The results on the benefits are often however uniform, all types of diversity increase knowledge and experiences in a team leading to more perspectives and different ideas. These can be benefited when the foundation of inclusion, learning culture and psychological safety are in place. For further research, it would be recommended to find out how larger scope of diversity is represented the organisation and if career advancement opportunities for example are equal regardless of the matters outside the working performance.

Neurodiversity is one aspect of diversity that has sparked discussion both publicly on LinkedIn and within the context of a case study organisation. Neurodiversity, or in other words, neurobiological

diversity, essentially refers to human diversity and uniqueness related to how brains function and how they are used (Grönqvist 2023). This would be an interesting topic for research, investigating the kinds of workplace accommodations and changes that could enable neurodiverse employees to work well and thrive as integral parts of the work community.

9.4 Conclusion

Given Finland's relatively recent journey towards internationalisation, it is understandable that prejudices exist and the change needs support and justification. The change is particularly visible in an organisation that has been able to rely on local expertise and has not seen any particularly compelling reasons why it should prepare for international employees. The age structure of Finnish population is however not supporting the idea that organisations can rely on local workforce without preparations for changes in the future. Also, new skills and variety of perspectives are needed. Particularly in the energy sector, given the pace of change and unpredictability, it could be speculated that only organisations capable of agile adaptation and innovation will be able to keep up.

For successful diversity management, it is crucial for organisations to foster an environment that supports language learning, flexibility, and use, promotes cultural understanding, and clearly communicates the benefits of diversity. Diversity management needs to be systematic and simultaneously targeting different key elements leading to improvement. Anonymous recruiting practises will not have the desired effect if recruiting managers continue to have prejudice against international employees or lack flexibility in terms of language. Hybrid language model supporting language flexibility is likely not going to be implemented in the organisational level if leadership support is lacking. While keeping a team homogeneous may feel like an easy and effective choice, in the long run many learning and development opportunities may be missed.

While the case study organisation is in the very beginning of the international diversity journey, it is in a good place to adapt and implement a diversity strategy. The few international talents in the organisation are reporting a good level of inclusion, the language matters are supported in few different teams already and the benefits of diversity can be seen and described in practise. The organisation is going through a change in the way energy is produced, the way it is operating, and international stakeholders are increasingly important to the organisation's success. Smarter teams, advanced learning, innovation, and international market understanding are needed. Achieving this goal is now more crucial than ever.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Helen interview frame

How did you end up at Helen?

Perception of diversity at Helen

1. What was your idea of international diversity at Helen prior to joining the organisation?
2. How do you see international diversity at Helen currently?
3. How do you see management is viewing the need for diversity?
4. As a non-Finnish speaker – do you feel as you are getting all role related relevant information?
5. As a non-Finnish speaker – do you feel as you are included in the “coffee table / hallway”-conversations?

Benefits and challenges

6. What kind of benefits international diversity has brought to your team?
7. What kinds of challenges international diversity has brought to your team?

Language challenge

8. What are the reasons most of the positions require fluent Finnish at the moment?
9. If Finnish is needed – what is the sufficient level? Could there be different levels of language skills?
10. What are the language practices in your team currently?
11. What type of language model does Helen have potential moving to (English only, learning Finnish, Hybrid model)?

Diversity management

12. Do you think Helen should be active in providing opportunities for learning Finnish for international employees?
13. As a non-Finnish speaker – do you wish you would be offered opportunities to practise Finnish skills at work?
14. How is the management communicating about diversity?
15. How are Finnish colleagues seeing language changes?
16. Are there a hidden obstacles towards international diversity and towards speaking English (is this due to skills or confidence)?
17. Do you think the following methods would assist diversity and inclusion at Helen (why so and why not)?

- advertising all positions in English
- anonymous recruiting
- recruitment communication (statements, providing the current state picture)
- setting diversity goals for recruiting managers / rewards
- enhanced onboarding for international talents
- opening thesis / practical training positions for international students
- language training (Finnish and English)
- leadership discussion / open support
- management training on inclusion and psychological safety
- bias training

Appendix 2. Benchmarking interview frame

Benchmarking with Helen interviewees

1. Do you have experience how diversity management has been done elsewhere?
2. How did these approaches work?
3. Could these approaches work at Helen?

Benchmarking of external source

1. Your role in diversity management work – how did you end up in the role
2. What is the current state of cultural diversity in your organisation
3. What kinds of goals do you have in terms of increasing D&I?
4. What types of diversity management measures have been successfully implemented?
5. What types of diversity management measures have been challenging to implement?
6. How do you measure diversity management improvement?

Appendix 3. D&I Framework suggestion

	SETTING THE SCENE	GETTING THERE	WORLD-CLASS
Language	Hybrid language model implementation: Communication strategy, tools to support translations, templates in documents	Hybrid language model is adopted to group level communication: Intranet, instructions, presentations	Hybrid language model is adopted to all communication
<i>What does successful look like</i>	<i>Hybrid model principles have been established and communicated</i>	<i>All group level written communication is available in English and alternatively in Finnish in addition</i>	<i>All group level spoken and written communication is available in English and alternatively in Finnish in addition</i>
Recruitment - job ads	Finnish language requirements are accessed in each role	Practices for job posting that support reaching a diverse pool of applicants; trainee, thesis positions	Established practices to ensure that job postings reach and appeal to a diverse pool of applicants
<i>What does successful look like</i>	<i>50% job ads are in English, 50% no fluent Finnish requirement</i>	<i>75% job ads are in English, 75% no fluent Finnish requirement</i>	<i>100% job ads are in English, 75% no fluent Finnish requirement</i>
Recruitment - assessment	Training needs for assesment identified	On the spot training on unconcious bias for recruiting managers and anonomyous assesment tool available	On the spot training on unconcious bias for recruiting managers and anonomyous assesment tool in use in all recruitments
<i>What does successful look like</i>	<i>25% final round candidates have international background</i>	<i>50% final round candidates have international background</i>	<i>75% final round candidates have international background</i>
Training on D&I	Diversity and inclusion management training needs for identified	Diversity and inclusion training provided to all managers	Diversity and inclusion training provided to all employees and systematically monitored and improved
<i>What does successful look like</i>	<i>Training plan established</i>	<i>All managers have completed training program</i>	<i>All employees have completed training program</i>
Inclusion	Need to assess the experience of inclusion	Experience of inclusion monitored systematically	Experience of inclusion as part of managerial goals
<i>What does successful look like</i>	<i>Employee survey - at industry benchmark</i>	<i>Employee survey - +5 industry benchmark (nps)</i>	<i>Employee survey - +10 industry benchmark (nps)</i>
Structure	Need to create a clear strategy for D&I work	D&I is being developed and it is linked to the group strategy	D&I is being developed and it is linked to the group strategy
<i>What does successful look like</i>	<i>D&I framework established and approved in management team</i>	<i>D&I framework has an owner and improvement is reported to management team</i>	<i>D&I framework has dedicated resources and improvement is reported to management team</i>