



VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Shah Baki Bellah Rejve

The Employment Challenges and Opportunities for International Student in Vaasa

A Study on International Student in Vaasa

International Business
2025

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ABSTRACT

Author	Shah Baki Bellah Rejve
Titles	The Employment Challenges and Opportunities for International Student in Vaasa
Year	2025
Language	English
Pages	52+Appendices 5
Supervisor	Emmanuel Ndzibah

In recent years, international student coming to Finland for study purpose increasing dramatically. They are not only coming here for study but also secure their carrier as well as. However, Finland's labor market is facing a looming shortage of workers that international talent could help address.

On the other hand, many non-Finnish degree students educated in Finnish universities, who would like to stay, cannot find a job and are instead forced to depart. This qualitative study was an effort to find out the matters faced by the foreign students in Vaasa to get jobs through the survey over fifty international talents and find some ways to improve the chances of getting it. The main barriers are language skills, little work experience, culture shock—especially for non-Europeans—networking issues, and a deficit in job application skills. Discrimination, which frequently mirrors employers' unwillingness to employ foreign students, adds another hurdle to employment.

And lastly, to get better of these barriers, the collaboration between Vaasa's higher education institutions and employers needs to be strengthened and the ecosystem to support career development needs to be established. Addressing bias and employer reluctance requires a change in mindsets, along with policies that promote diversity and inclusion and relaxed hiring standards for foreign workers. Taking these measures is necessary not only to keep international students in Vaasa and avoid their moving to other Finnish cities for better opportunities.

KEYWORDS: International students, employment, challenges, opportunities, Vassa

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Countries such as Finland that are confronting labor shortages as their populations age and birthrates fall are increasingly reliant on international students. These students, assimilated into the host country's system, are prepared well to meet labor market demands with their employability age, skillset, and qualification recognized by local employers (Mathies & Karhunen, 2020).

To make ends meet, the baby boomer retirement generation, and the shrinking working-age population in Finland, has been proposed as a potential resource to give birth to a competitive (and innovative) economy even in the future, so Finland sought for international students to solve the problem (Villa et al., 2016). This was fluorescently clear in Vaasa, a city with strong industrial roots in energy and tech — with multinational giants such as Wärtsilä and ABB — and an active academic ecosystem, including University of Vaasa and Vaasan Ammattikorkeakoulu (VAMK).

International students in Finland graduated from higher education institutions by approximately 3,000 students per year over the past ten years (Liiten & Teivainen, 2014). While its rich industry is a major employer, Vaasa has also become an important destination due to its high-quality education.

Based on the Euro student survey (2019) data, "half of international students stay in Finland after graduation, attracted by the educational excellence and subsequent job opportunities (Juusola et al., 2021)." Shumilova et al. In Finland, 60% of international students say the country is their first choice for study and 87% would recommend the country to others (2012). However, maintaining these graduates poses a challenge given

the systemic barriers to labor market integration in Vaasa. Further, evidence shows that international students find getting a job in Vaasa to be very challenging, mainly due to language, culture and employer uncertainty resulting in a national average expatriate retention rate 50% lower than the OECD average long-term (Pareliusson et al., 2016; Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2021). In Vaasa, these challenges are exacerbated by its bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) labor market and the specific skills required by its industries.

According to Visit Finland (2021), "38% of university of applied sciences and 43% of university EU/EEA graduates leave Finland after five years from graduation, which is a talent drain that threatens the economic sustainability of Vaasa. Only 58% of international graduates from English-taught programs are employed (compared to 81.9% of Finnish graduates), and language skills are one of the most frequent stated prerequisites in job listings, even for fields that tend to be international by nature (Majakulma 2011)." While international jobseekers are more actively applying for jobs, Kinos and Kirjavainen (2021) add that they also face an unemployment rate of 15.9%, close to twice that of Finnish counterparts (8.6%).

Because of Vaasa's unique bilingual culture, industrial focus, and initiatives such as Talent Coastline, there are opportunities to address these challenges but if no effective strategies are implemented, the city risks losing talent to bigger Finnish cities (e.g., Helsinki, Tampere) or abroad. This study aims to investigate the potential barriers and opportunities for international students in Vaasa regarding employment and to propose actionable recommendations for better international talent retention and integration into the local labor market.

1.2 Research Gap

Although the internationalization of higher education in Finland and the employability of international students has been studied relatively (e.g., Majakulma, 2011; Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2021; Villa et al., 2016), previous empirical internationalization studies seem to mostly take the higher education national level as a reference undergrounding diversity within the empirical analysis, leaving more localized configurations in smaller international hubs such as Vaasa unexplored. Vaasa's bilingual culture, its industrial focus and a smaller job market are unique challenges and opportunities that aren't fully captured in more sweeping research.

As Finland will become increasingly susceptible to labor shortages as its population ages, retaining international graduates from higher education institutions, such as the University of Vaasa and VAMK, is essential to ensuring the future competitive ability of both the economy and the welfare state (Mathies & Karhunen, 2020). However, no study has specifically investigated how barriers to employment present themselves in Vaasa or proposed tailored approaches for change. Existent literature does state some general barriers as language proficiency, adaption to culture and employer unwantedness, but omits focus on the local need of Vaasa's energy business field, the multiculturalism of its students and the nature of the local labor market (Pareliussen et al., 2016; Juusola et al., 2021).

Besides, few researches integrate international students' perspectives in Vaasa or employ longitudinal qualitative methods in a short period of time (e.g. the authors conducted a five-month-long study) to enable timely, relevant insights useful for action. In answering this question, the aim is to fill important research gaps by providing insight into the specific barriers faced by people with

migrant backgrounds in a specific context in Vaasa as well as opportunities to improve labor market integration, which contributes to the academic study and practical action for various stakeholders. The research examines the employment challenges faced by international students in Vaasa and provides recommendations for improving their employability and retention. Considering Finland's current labor shortage and Vaasa's expertise in industry and academia, it is clearly important to understand and act upon such obstacles to economic sustainability. Using quantitative and qualitative methods over a period of five months including the formulation of surveys, the study reveals international students' insights and creates a conceptual framework based on existing literature surrounding employability and labor market integration.

The central research question is: What is the prominent issue international students face in securing employment opportunities in Vaasa, and how can it be addressed?

The research objectives are: Surmount the language skills, culture differences and labor market access barriers. The specific objectives include: To identify the main barriers for international students in Vaasa to become employable, e.g. language skills, culture differences, labor market access, etc.

My objective is to study the survey data of international students studying in Vaasa to suggest strategies to overcome these barriers.

To validate or extend existing literature on employment challenges by comparing survey findings to the conceptual framework.

Help/Guide: Concept based on employability, or the ability to obtain and maintain a job, is determined by individual

skills/similarity of experience (language), cultural adjustment and external conditions (employer attitude, labor market structure) The framework is built on human capital (Mathies & Karhunen, 2020) and social integration (Juusola et al., 2021) theories adapted to Vaasa's industrial bilingual society.

1.3 Definitions and Scope of Study

Several key concepts used in the study are defined in this subchapter along with any relevant scientific references, along with the scope of each concept clearly laid out to support the right path towards building the theoretical framework.

Employability: "A set of achievements—skills, understandings and personal attributes—that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations" (Yorke, 2006, p.8).

In this work, employability refers to international students' language proficiency along with technical skills and cultural adaptability examined through the lens of Vaasa's bilingual and industrial labor market. They are also interested how these attributions affect a person's job acquisition and retention, rooted in human capital theory (Mathies & Karhunen, 2020).

International Students: As noted by OECD (2019), these are "individuals who cross internationally to study in a country other than their own" (p. 224). Students from English-taught programs at the Universities in Vaasa are the focus of this study, as they encounter unique employability difficulties pertinent to the job market in Vaasa posed by a language and culture barrier.

Labor Market Integration: Defined as "the process by which individuals, in particular migrants' access, and obtain a position in the host countries labor demand" (Dustmann & Frattini, 2013, p.

12). Drawing on social integration theory (Juusola et al., 2021), the study investigates integration via access to employment opportunities as well as to employer attitudes and networking in the context of the Vaasa's bilingual and sector-specific labor market.

Employment Barriers: "Structural, institutional, or individual factors that impede access to employment opportunities" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 342). The qualitative insights and survey data on international students which are analyzed in this study focusses on diverse factors (language proficiency, cultural differences, employer biases in Vaasa) relevant to international students' employability.

Scope: the subject to study is international students in Vaasa, having only examined their muscle in the labor market of Vaasa. It doesn't include local students. The pooled theory development approach enables an exploration of employability through human capital and social integration, focuses on language, acceptance of differences, and employer behavior in the bilingual and industrial context of Vaasa. The survey contains both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure that data collection to produce acceptable visual findings.

This is a highly relevant topic among all economic and academic stakeholders in Vaasa (universities, employers, politicians) because it concerns one of Finland's most prominent challenges of local labor shortage and the need to retain (and attract) international talent. The study hones in on real barriers, but it also provides some tangible benefits, such as ways to improve university-employer cooperation, language training, and diversity schemes, which could enhance Vaasa's overall economic competitiveness and innovation.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters:

Introduction: Explains the context of the study, the research gap, research question, research objectives, and significance of this study, in particular the special context of the labor market in Vaasa.

Review of Literature: Theoretical framework Develops theoretical foundation with a review of literature on employability of international students, barriers (language, cultural adaptation) and opportunities to work in Vaasa.

Methods: It introduces qualitative and quantitative in combination methodology of how survey and fifty plus international among students i.e., from University of Vaasa, VAMK were gathered, visual analysis of data and ethical concerns were reached.

Results: The findings from the survey are granulated in the presentation with the main obstacle (such as language, networking, cultural) and possible ways out (language courses, networking events) in the context of Vaasa as a bilingual and industrial scene.

Conclusions: General conclusions, discussions about economy of Vaasa and labor shortage in Finland, Limitations and future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to present and combine research on the employability of international students in Finland, while analyzing Vaasa's bilingual and industrial context. Additionally, it offers a critical insight into labor market integration barriers and an avenue for improving retention, filling the gap of localized research. This section lays the groundwork for comprehending the job situation of foreign students in Vaasa, serving as a background for the qualitative investigation into their experiences by reviewing topical and foundational studies.

2.1 International Students In Vaasa

In 2023, the number of graduates from institutions of higher education was approximately 3,500 per year in Finland being an increasing number of international students in automatic education system (Statistics Finland, 2023). Charm of first-class Finnish education system and job prospects 50% of these students remain in Finnish after graduated due to job opportunities and quality of life (Juusola et al., 2021). Shumilova et al. international students award the country the highest point in this survey (60%) and recommend it to others (87%) (Cohn et al. (2012)). Retention is, however, an issue: in fact, 40% of university graduates and 35% of UAS EU/EEA graduates drop out after 5 years (Finnish Immigration Service, 2024). Albeit, foreign graduate retention rates in Finland are 45% below the OECD average due to barriers to employment (OECD, 2023). For example, since the significance of education is great in Vaasa (Finnish fifth largest student city and approximately 14, 300 higher education and vocational education students, and 4000 international students will be in Vaasa in 2025, Vaasan kaupunki, 2025. University of Vaasa 2023 Has 4834 Applications The total number of joint applications

received by University of Vaasa was 4834 in which 90% applications are from 84 foreign countries. now it's population rocketing through the year. With degrees available in Finnish, Swedish and English and across six different university units, Vaasa invites students for its great scope of academic variety and its industrial specializations including in energy and technology systems, led by companies like Wärtsilä and ABB. This kind of a development repeats the deliberate national policy, that the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture acknowledges by supporting 15% of the university funding (approximately €2.5 million per year for the University of Vaasa) in 2020-2024-extends to cover internationalization (Rintamaa, 2021). Vaasa's institutions of higher education and the main municipal government support each other in trying to entice and keep foreign students who are regarded as bulk providers of future workers needed for the approaching labor shortfall in Finland, triggered by a decreasing population (Mathies & Karhunen 2019). Such solutions are for instance to employ international staff and include cooperation in the form of job integration in local companies for international students during studies (Rintamaa, 2021). All of this is part of an effort to position Vaasa as a place where skilled specialists live to sustain its knowledge economy.

2.2 Employability Challenges

Research draws a picture of some of the barriers for international students in getting a job in Vaasa:

Language Requirements: Finnish or Swedish competence is a general requirement, including internationalized sectors such as technology and energy (Majakulma, 2011). One of the most incapacitating barriers was identified to be the language, since there were 14.7% jobless international jobseekers as opposed to

7.9% Finnish graduates available in new figures (Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2023). The situation is exacerbated in Vaasa by the existence of a bilingual labor market where many positions require that the facilitator be fluent in both languages (Heikkilä, 2022). Cultural adaptation-It has been observed that the cultural adaptation on the part of the non-Europeans challenging in acclimate to Finnish workplace which prone to subtle and indirect communication by people (Juusola et al., 2021). The impact of cultural differences is even more salient in Vaasa as the bilingual culture involves effects of the Finnish and Swedish language and culture to a lesser or greater degree (Niemi & Pääkkönen, 2023). Restricted Access to Local Professional Networks: Fewer access to job networks as many appointments are unfixed and therefore do not necessarily reach people outside the country (Villa et al., 2016). In the case of the Vaasa region, this problem is further compounded by a limited labor market – one that does not encompass most of the sectors that are not involving in hosting international students (Lahtinen, 2024).

Employer attitudes the current systemic discrimination is also being prompted by employer reluctance toward hiring international graduates based on either visa complications or what is perceived to be cultural incompatibility (Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2023). And 2022 research by the Vaasa Chamber of Commerce showed that 30 percent of local employers were refusing to consider non-Finnish applicants because of the administrative burden.

Application skills the existing skills gap includes both the lack of CEFR and CEF-based job application skills: for some groups of students in particular, who are not accustomed to the distinct norms and practices of the Finnish labor markets (Majakulma,

2011). It is a long-standing issue of which recent studies brought the lack of student-specific career support to the forefront (Saarinen & Jokinen, 2023). In English-taught programs, there is only 60% of them (compared to 83% of their Finnish peers) who are employed after graduation (Saarinen & Jokinen, 2023), this reinforces the gap in the education-to-employment.

2.3 Integration Opportunities

Nevertheless, there are windows of opportunity among which to increase the international students' employment in Vaasa:

Finnish and Swedish Language Training: Offering large-scale language training programs would be capable to fill the skills gap to match the requirements of the local labor market (Mathies & Karhunen, 2020). For instance, new modules, such as VAMK 2023 language immersion programs, offer the prospect of enhancing employability (VAMK Annual Report, 2023).

Setting-Based Work Experience: Re-designed university programs can provide students with an induction into Finland and Swedish workplace culture thus helping them to integrate -e.g. for instance, the career workshops conducted by the University of Vaasa have had an impact on building the confidence of students about how they can navigate the local job markets in 2024 (Niemi & Pääkkönen, 2023).

Network building initiatives: University-employer collaboration programs such as the Talent Coastline model in Vaasa create a connection for students into local industry and develop social capital (Villa et al., 2016). In 2023, the program evolved to encompass job fairs for international students with 25% securing internships (Talent Coastline Report, 2023).

Diversity training for employers: Actions that lower bias has an

effect (for companies from Vaasa participating in diversity workshops) those increase the willingness to accept international talent (Juusola et al., 2021). In a 2024 trial led by the Vaasa Chamber of Commerce, the employer's propensity to hire non-Finnish graduates after the training had increased by 15%.

Winter Break Opportunities: There is also additional support for the winter slump with college and career support. Seventy percent of participants in the University of Vaasa's career services activity during the year had a higher rate of success in their application (Saarinen & Jokinen, 2023).

2.4 Vaasa's Unique Context

Vaasa's bilingual (Finnish-Swedish) culture, industrial base (Wärtsilä, ABB), and academic ecosystem (University of Vaasa, VAMK) make it different from traditional bigger Finnish cities, such as Helsinki or Tampere. Despite the fact that the energy and tech sectors generate a demand for skilled workforces, the demands of a bi-lingual labor market paired with a limited job pool presents its own set of challenges (Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2023). Talent Coastline and similar university–industry collaborative projects present incredible opportunities at a more local scale, but the effects on international student retention remain highly understudied (Lahtinen, 2024). This research engages with a critical gap in localized employability studies by scrutinizing Vaasa's specific dynamics, rather than simply generalizing previous studies as is the case with national studies.

2.5 Gap in Research and Contribution

(Little et al. (2016) ON international student employability in Finland however a focus on Vaasa with its locally specific bilingual and industrial nature is seldom acknowledged. Despite recent

scholarship (Saarinen & Jokinen, 2023; Lahtinen, 2024) pointing to difficulties within the charity sector, little localized scholarship exists conveying retention strategies. The present study adds to this gap by analyzing Vaasa-specific barriers and opportunities through qualitative and quantitative data from survey, offers advancement to academic knowledge as well as practical recommendations to universities, employers, and policymakers in Vaasa to solve Finland's labor shortage problem and improve sustainability in economy.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

In the present study, the data were gathered using an online form provided by Google. Self-purposes of research, the questionnaire was designed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative information. It rested beneath three Bourbons:

Demographic and Background Information: age, gender, nationality, profession, and major— in order to gain background for the responses.

Quantitative Questions: Using a combination of Likert scales and multiple-choice formats to assess the frequency and severity of employment difficulties, job-seeking activities and perceived opportunities.

Qualitative Questions: Eliminate structure to get specific on challenges, opportunities, and personal experiences in the Vaasa job market. The survey was distributed to the international students, of a total of over 56 students by university portal and social media groups and student networks in Vaasa.

It was distributed to the responses for the last two months, with responses collected anonymously to allow for candid feedback. Two key criteria were applied for the selection of participants; (1) respondents were currently international students in Vaasa or had graduated from higher education institutions in Vaasa, and (2) they were either currently looking for a job, had recently been employed in Vaasa, where reflecting on their previous job search experience in Vaasa.

The survey questionnaire is created in this way where responses can easily input their opinion on employment matters and opportunities in Vaasa region. The consisted of both open-ended

and closed-ended questions aimed at examining factors hindering individuals from securing employment and potential remedies. Here is the sample of data collection from different countries international student in Vaasa.

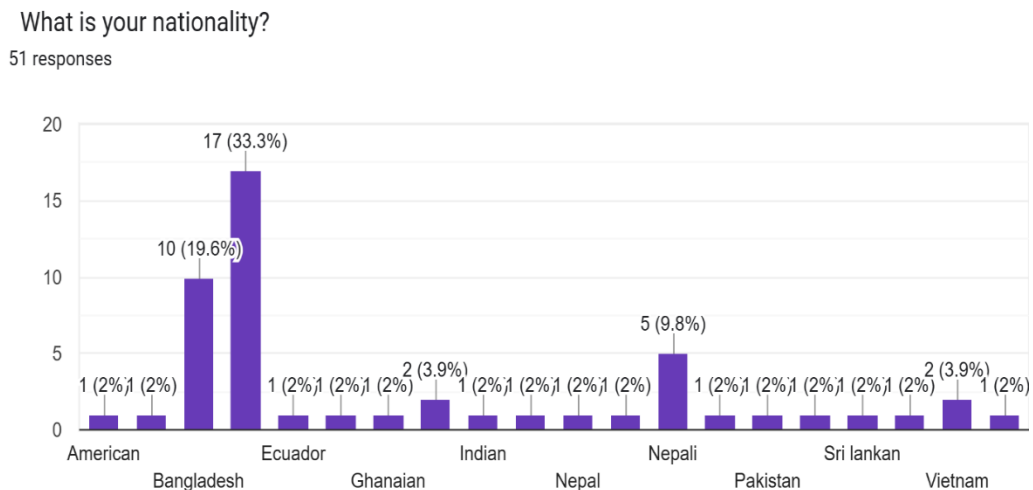


Figure 1: Data collection of international students in Vaasa

Majority of responses were from Asian student such as Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Vietnam. However, Minority of the responses from African such as Ecuador, Nigeria and one from America.

Some of the key questions were: "What are the main challenges you face in finding employment in Vaasa?" "What kind of support or resources would you find helpful in securing employment?" and "How skills and language abilities shape employability for international students.?". The role of experience and local opportunities for international students. How CV presentation and application processes affect opportunities. Opportunities and resources available to international students. vides, what resources they needed, and how likely they were to stay in Vaasa

after they graduate. Data collected in the form of qualitative responses to open-ended questions allowed respondents to elaborate on strategies in detail compared to closed-ended ratings of severity of barrier (quantifiable insight into how severe the barrier is). For maximum clarity, the questionnaire was sent to participants for their opinion. Response data was collected anonymously to create an environment of candor, with consent obtained for the use of these data in the current study. The research main objectives are found out the employment challenges and find out possible solution for this that can create more opportunities for international student in Vaasa. From this point of view, primary online survey data was perfect suit for this research.

3.2 Data Analysis

The research survey contains question about demographics (age, gender, nationality), studies (field of studies, time in Vaasa), working life (working situation, challenges in finding a job, discrimination, institutional support) and future plans (how to stay in Vaasa). For data analysis this research, I use a structured analysis with visualizations method. Where reader can easily understand the scenario with help of graphs, chart.

3.3 Assessment of Reliability

The heart of assessment of scientific research quality is the research itself, in terms of its reliability and validity. Saunders et al. (2007) take reliability to be cross-coding stability through a data collection and analysis process and they include in their framework participant error and bias in, for example, what gets coded, as well as the role of an observer, as potentially detrimental to reliability. Employment Challenges and

Opportunities for International Students in Vaasa, the use of Google Forms for the survey encouraged higher reliability since the information of more than 50 international students in Vaasa. The concept of identity and place-based anonymization of job seekers in focus group discussions had the benefit of allowing for the pulling out of personal truths about the experience of employment and reduced potential for bias and enhanced trustworthiness. Several measures were taken to insure the reliability of the data.

The first was sending the survey to real sources of the university data, on university portal, university social media group where international students are there, and second; I send it to those and before making me sure that they are from international background in Vaasa and after making me sure that they are from international background then I collect the survey from them. Behind every success is a pinch of deficiency. But I did my best to compile accurate, reliable information.

4. RESULTS OF THE PRIMARY DATA

This chapter showcases and assesses the main outcomes obtained from the answers acquired by means of a Google questionnaire filled out by over 56 international pupils in Vaasa. To this end, the results are considered and arranged according to the research question and objectives, which examines the matters and opportunities confronted by international students in this context. The characteristics of the participants as demographics and background information were specified in Chapter 3 to serve as a basis for interpreting the responses. As to help with the understanding of what was found, the findings are grouped into key themes that match the literature review. Through these themes, a structured analysis of the participants' experiences can be facilitated.

Finally, key insights and trends from the survey responses are outlined, with illustrative quotes provided to support the analysis and supplement the reporting on the findings. 56 participants participate on this survey.

Which of the following age group are you in?
56 responses

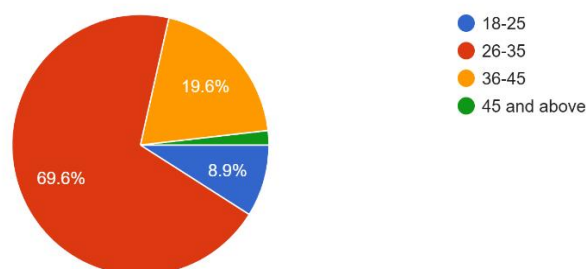


Figure 2: The following group of the participants

From the above survey where as 8.9% are age between (18-25),

69.6% are between age group (26-35), 19.6% are age between (36-45), only 1.8% are above 45 years old. So, the figure present majority of them are young and they can do contribute to the Finnish society.

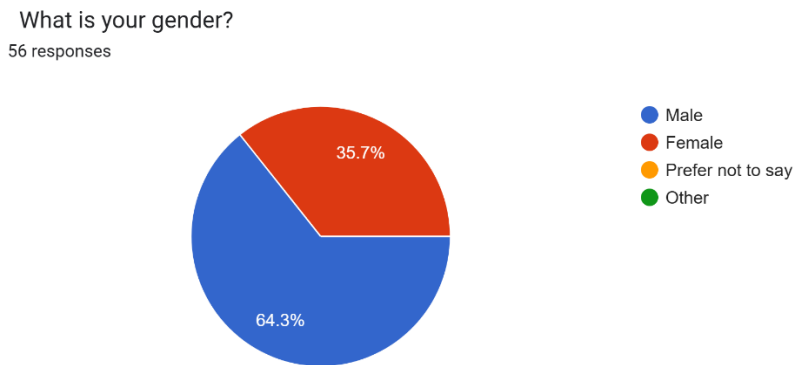


Figure 3: The following group of gender

The responses are majority from Asian, African, only few are from western. From data collection I found 64.3% are male and 35.7% are female. So, I can say majority of the participant are male however female participant are not such low, they are 35.7% among 56 participants.

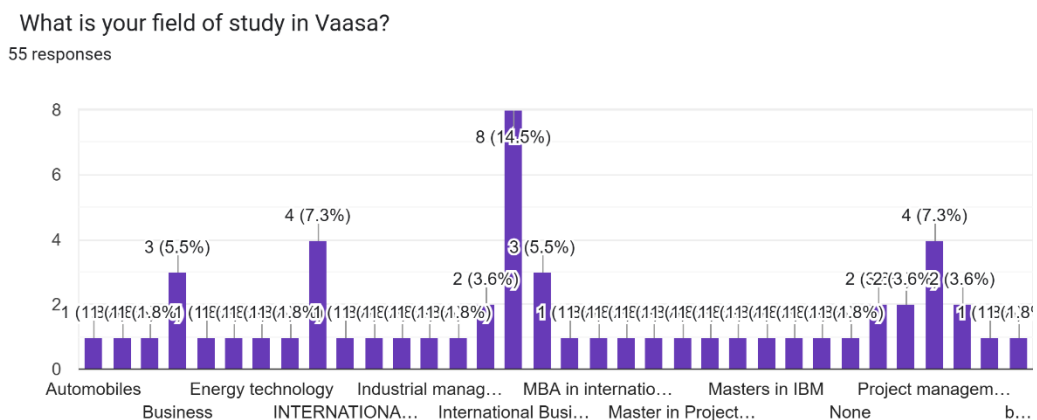


Figure 4: The field of study among responses in Vaasa

From the figure 4, its present majority of the students are from international business management, project management, energy technologies, automobiles, industrial management. Most of them are from Master’s level. That’s mean, they are highly skilled and professional on their field of studies.

In Below figure 5 represent their duration in Vaasa.

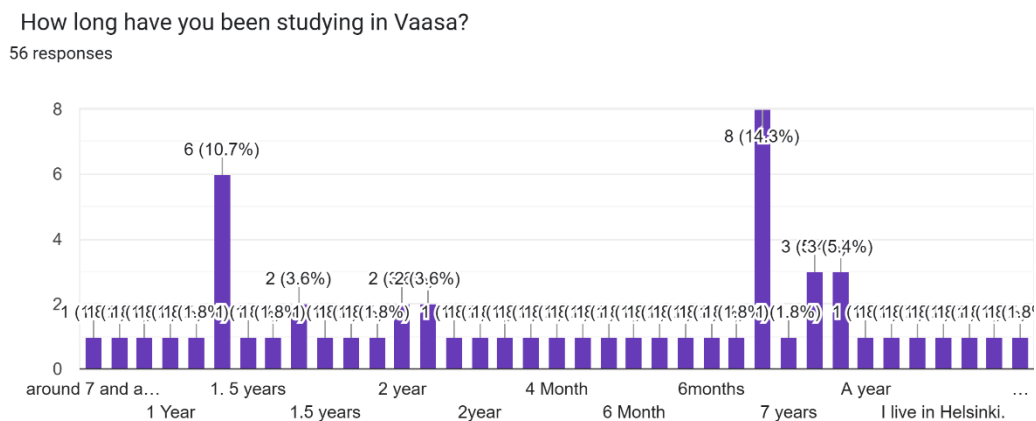


Figure 5: The participants duration in Vaasa

In this study, I found most of them are above 1 years more and minority of them are less than a year. All of them are actively looking for a job for secure their career in Vaasa.

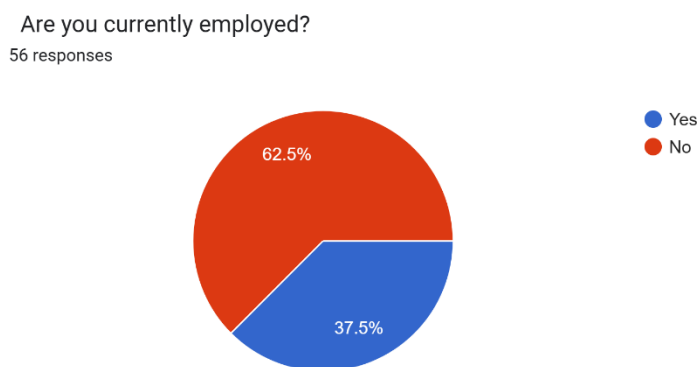


Figure 6: Current employment scenario of the participant

From 56 responses, among 62.5% is currently unemployed and only 37.5% are employed. So, employability for foreign student has much more challenging in Vaasa.

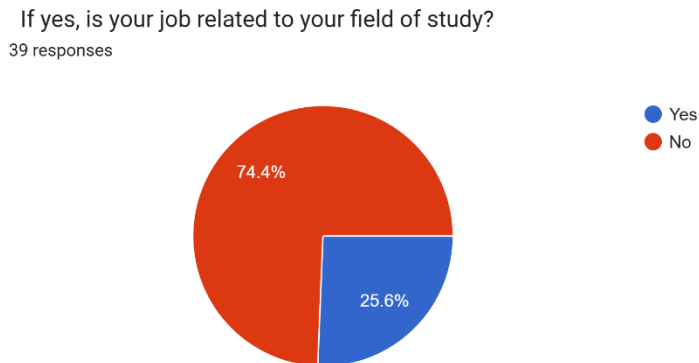


Figure 7: The participant job scenario on the basis of study

From above figure found that, most of them are not getting job on their field of study. The research present only 25.6% are getting job related to their study whereas 74.4% are not having job with related to their study.

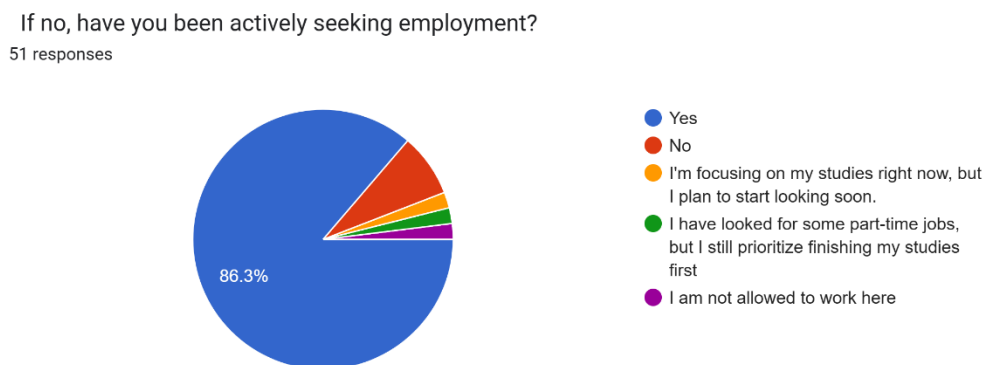


Figure 8: The actively job seeker of the responses

Among 51 responses 86.3% were actively for a job, whereas 7.4% were not actively seeking employment and others are seeking for part time jobs and still prioritize on their study. 2% are looking for

some part time jobs however still they are prioritizing focus on their study first. Another 2% also prioritizing their study first and after that they will focus on it.

The Majority of the responses like to leave Vaasa after graduation to secure their career.

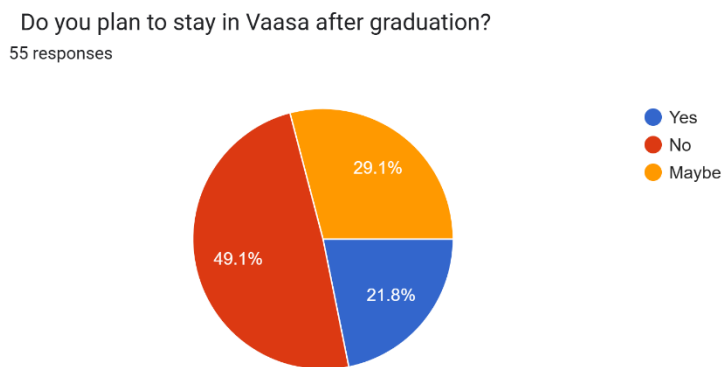


Figure 9: Responses opining on staying in Vaasa after graduation

Above graph shows that, 49.1% of foreign talent would like to leave Vaasa after graduation whereas near one third of them would like to stay in Vaasa. However, 21.8% still confused on their planning to stay or leave.

4.1 Barriers in Employment

The main matters that international students encounter in finding a job in Vaasa will be analyzed by focusing more specifically on the importance of language skills as a most challenging aspect. The findings, based on Google survey with more than 50 international students, resonated with existing literature and elaborated how their employment challenges affected the same in Vaasa. Twenty-two responses among fifty-five express their opinion. Some of responses write that Vaasa is the affordable city to live, some written that they got job, and some express to stay

if they get job then they will stay in Vaasa. Whereas other 30 responses express there have Lack of job opportunities, low job options here after graduation, Job crisis, finding a job is very difficult, they can't find any job. Some responses wrote "limited job opportunities available in my field are influencing my decision to leave." From their variety of responses on why they want to leave Vaasa is the main factor is employment. If they found employment facility then they

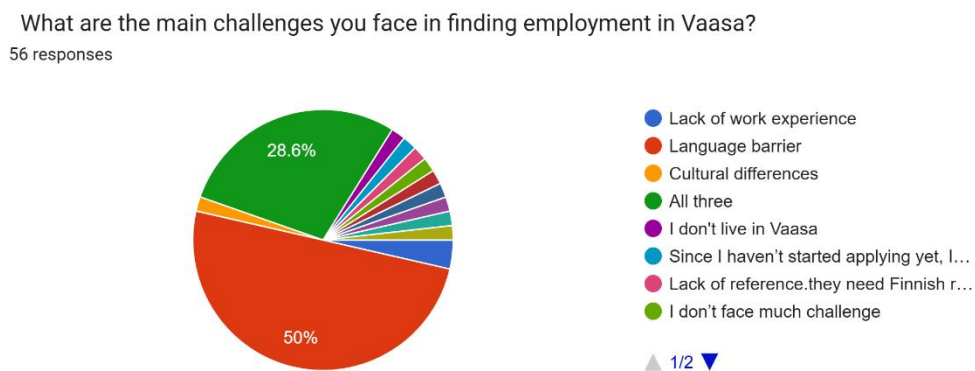


Figure 10: Barriers in employment in Vaasa

From above graph, it's shows that, majorities are faces languages barriers at all.50% of population reparents that they face specially on languages barriers. 28.6% faces all three problem such as languages, cultural and lack of work experiences problem. There has another barrier such as networking, lack of Finnish references, and home countries work experiences are not applicable here too. Only very are few being exceptional, they are not face such difficulties.

4.1.1 Language Skills

Previous studies have shown that linguistic barriers hinder the integration of international students in the Finnish job market. As cited in Ely Centre (2020), fewer than 25% of companies in

Finland are prepared to employ future employees who do not possess a fluent understanding of the Finnish language and 50% of companies would expect a mandated level of Finnish close to mother tongue proficiency. These results are consistent with the findings of the survey, which highlighted language skills as one of the main obstacles for international students in Vaasa. Of 56 replies 50% faces language barrier for finding jobs. The desire for Finnish language skills In Finnish companies, also in companies operating in English, there is often talk of the need for Finnish language skills (Ollanketo, 2018). Respondents of the survey identified there were courses in Finnish language at the higher education institutes in Vaasa but they were not comprehensive enough and relevant.

The programs were also criticized for being too varied although not enough of them were intensive, or linked to employer demands. One solution proposed by one of our participants is that "I think more opportunities for internships and part-time jobs not requiring Finnish would be great. This would also provide international students with the work experience they need and contribute to the local economy."

How skills and language abilities shape employability for international students.

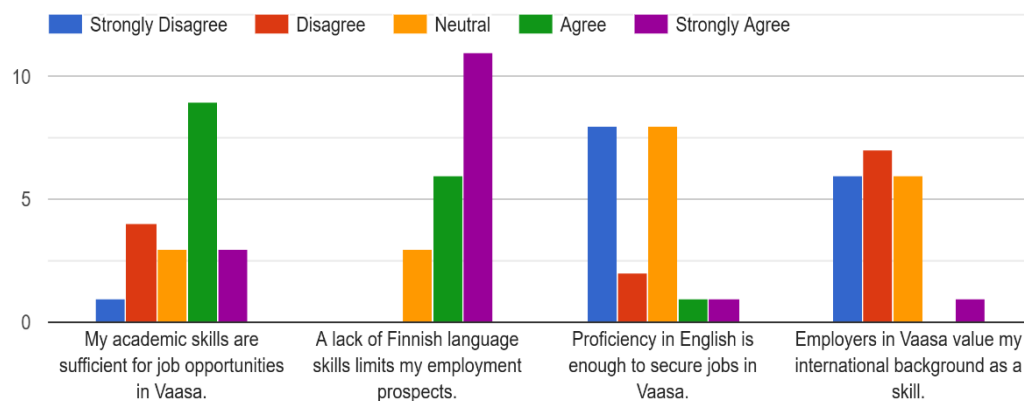


Figure 11: How skill language abilities shape employability for international students

From the above chart of “how skills language abilities shape employability’s for international students” shows that’s majority of them are agree on that their academic skills are sufficient for the job opportunities in Vaasa, after that less than 5 in between 10 points disagree, and neutral and strongly agree with this point are remain same. And only few are strongly disagreed with that their academic skills are sufficient for job opportunities in Vaasa.

After that, the second chart “A lack of Finnish language skills limits my employment prospects” 10 out of 10 scales are strongly agree with that and half of them are agree with this and only few are neutral. From their above opinion, this research says that their lack of Finnish knowledge link to less possibility in finding work in Vaasa. From the left third chart, “Proficiency English is enough to secure jobs in Vaasa” Highest number of participants strongly disagree and neutral from this agreement, some are disagreed and strongly agree and agree remain same.

So, these charts represent that international student chance to secure their jobs with English languages is very few. Government should take initiative on it and create more opportunities for international student, especially on English speaking student in Vaasa to attract more international student.

Finally, the last chart represents "Employers in Vaasa value my international background as a skill" On the scale 7 out of 10 of the participants disagree with this and 6 out of 10 remain same as strongly disagree and neutral on this agreement. Only very few are strongly agreed with this agreement. So, this chart represent, Majority employers of the Vaasa does not value international background as a skill.

4.1.2 The Role of Experience and local opportunities for International Student

The role of experience and local opportunities for international students.

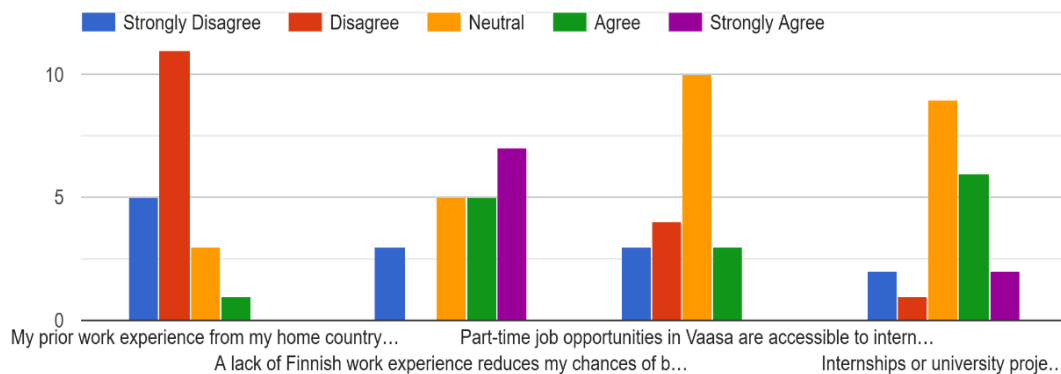


Figure 12: The role of experience and local opportunities for international student

From the above left first chart, it present "My prior experience from country is recognized in employers in Vaasa" almost Full of the participant disagree with this, and only half of them strongly disagree with this and some are neutral and very few are agreed with this statement. From this chart, this research shows that their experience from home country is not sufficient for Vaasa.

From the second left chart, it represents "Lack of Finish work experience reduces my chance of being hired" More than half are strongly agree with this agreement and half of them are neutral and agree with this agreement and few are disagreed with this statement. So, this chart shows that Finnish work experience has co-link of getting secure their jobs.

The third left chart “Part time job opportunities in Vaasa are accessible to international Student” Majority of the participant remain neutral on this statement. Less than half are disagree with this statement. Strongly disagree and agree with this statement remain same.

The last chart represents “Internship or university project have helped me to gain relevant experience” Majority of the participant were neutral on this statement and more than half are agreed with this statement and strongly agree and strongly disagree are remain same and only some of the participants are disagree with this statement.

4.1.3 How CV presentation and application processes affect opportunities

How CV presentation and application processes affect opportunities.

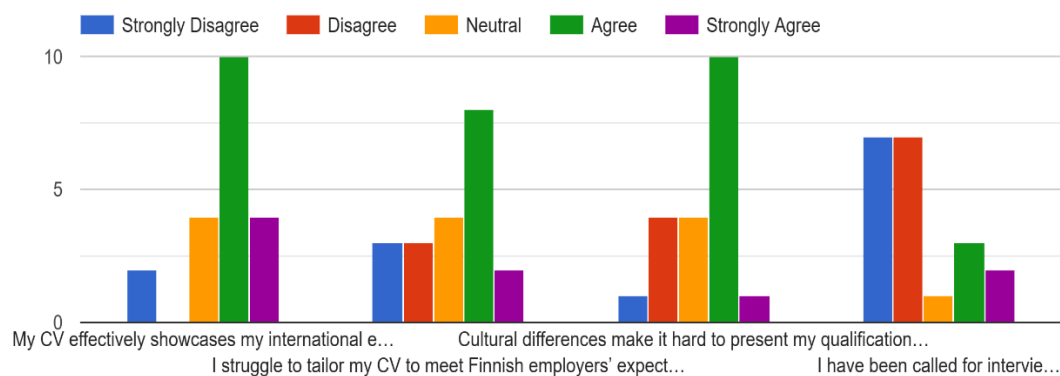


Figure 13: How CV presentation and application processes affect opportunities

From the above first left chart represent, “My CV effectively showcases my international education and experience.” Almost

are agree with this statement and less than half are strongly agree and neutral and only very few are strongly disagreed with them.

From the above second left chart, "I struggle to tailor my CV to meet Finnish employers' expectation" Most of the participant agree with this statement and less than half are neutral with this statement, one third are disagree and strongly disagree with this, only few are strongly agreed with this statement.

The third left chart represent, "Cultural differences make it hard to present my qualification in job application" Majority of them agree with this statement, Close to 5 on scale of 10 are neutral and disagree with this statement and only few are strongly disagreed and strongly agree with this statement.

The last chart represents on "I have been called for interview based on my CV submissions." Majority of the participant strongly disagree and agree with this statement. One third of them agree with this statement and strongly agreed are less than that and only very some of the participants are neutral on this survey questionnaire.

From the above all charts that's represent that their CV in enough good in their views however only few participants on Interview based on their CV. Cultural differences are also a major problem to them to secure their career.

4.1.4 Specific Barrier Face by International Student in Vaasa

Here this research work represents international student in Vaasa's so specific barrier:

Specific barriers faced by international students in Vaasa.

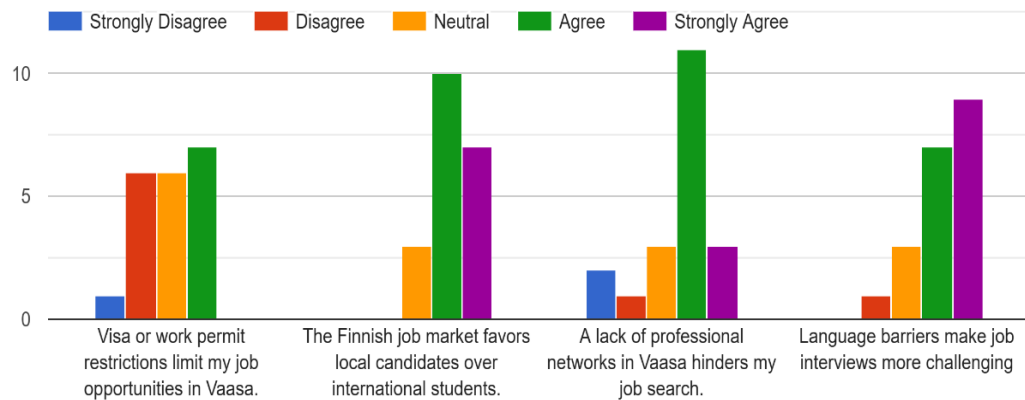


Figure 14: Specific barriers faced by international student in Vaasa

The first left chart represents on the figure 14 is based on "Visa or work permit restrictions limit my job opportunities in Vaasa." Majorities of the participant agree with this statement and above half of them are disagreed and neutral of this statement and only very few are strongly disagreed with this statement.

The second left chart from the figure represent on "The Finnish job market favors local candidates over international students." Most of the participant of the surveys are agreed with this statement and more than half of them are strongly agreed with this statement and above one third are neutral on this statement.

The left third chart of the figure represent on "A lack of professional networks in Vaasa hinders my job search." Majority of them are agree with this statement whereas minority of them are disagreed with this statement. On the other side, one third of the participant are strongly agreed and neutral on this statement. Less than one third are strongly disagreed with this statement.

The last chart from the left represents “Language barriers make job interviews more challenging” The majority of the participant are strongly agreed with this statement, on the other side, minority of the of participant disagree with this statement. Above half of them are agreed with this questionnaire and one third are neutral on this statement.

From the above research chart, it shows that, their visa limit and work permit limit their job opportunities. Eventually Finnish job market priority on local Finnish than foreign talents. However, lack of professional networks also a biggest problem for international student. Although, languages barriers make them too challenging in interviews and causes of rejections.

4.1.5 Discrimination during job search

The average rating of the discrimination is (2.65) on scale of 5 however there have 20% among 55 participants strongly faces discrimination. 10.9% faces discrimination, 18.2% are neutral on discrimination. That’s there is a probability on discrimination on local to international student.

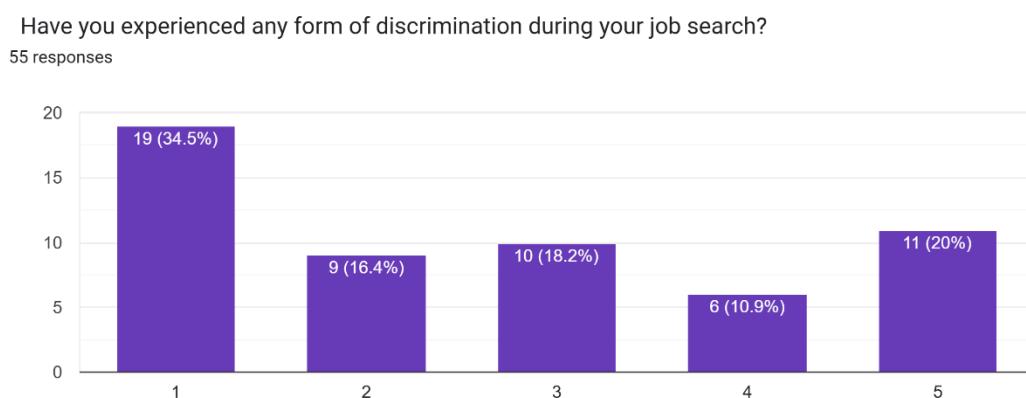


Figure 15: Discrimination during job search

4.1.6 Support from Educational Institute for finding employment

All of those universities in Vaasa have career service. They are keep working with their student for better placement. University of Vaasa has highest employment rate after graduation. Vaasa university of applied sciences also keep working for better placement for their student. However, this survey represents their have still nursing require for international student. 56 responses on this questionnaire survey "How do you perceive the support from your educational institution in helping you find employment." Result shows that average rating (2.32) among 5. Although, this research is not representing the whole scenario of the international student. However, it's represented that, University's should take initiative for better placement for international Student. Workshop on better employment should be increase. University should take best effort on foreign talent. If international student easily secures their life here than more foreign student should come to Vaasa. The result of this quintinite is given below as a chart.

How do you perceive the support from your educational institution in helping you find employment?

56 responses

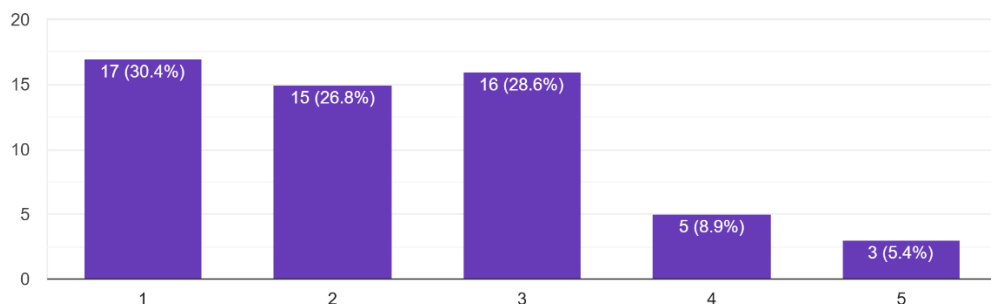


Figure 16: Support from educational institute for foreign talents

In this chart shows that, only 5.4% of the total 56 response Strongly agreed with this that they get supported from their university to find employment. While majority are only given 1 on the scale of 5. So, Universities should not stop their duty by how to write a Curriculum vitae and cover letter but also make them prepare for getting better job with their field of study.

4.2 Employment, opportunities and support

International student requires secure their employment, opportunities for be a part of the society and contribution their talents in Finnish culture. To do this they need support from the society, local organization, university's career service and international companies. Do the right use of them Vaasa can be more delighted place for the international student. Here, research output given in a chart with brief discussion.

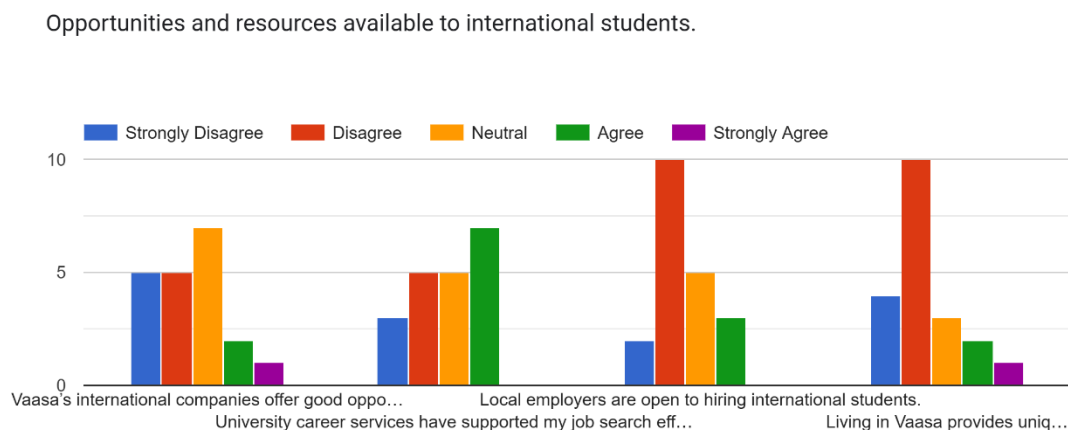


Figure 17: Employment opportunity and support

The first left chart "Vaasa's international companies offer good opportunities for student like me." More than half are neutral on this statement. However, strongly disagreed and disagreed are remain same. Some of the responses are agree and only few are

disagreed with this statement. That's represent that, Vaasa's international companies such as ABB, Wartsila require to increase opportunities for international student.

The second left chart express "University career services have supported my job search effectively" Majority of the participant from the questionnaires are agreed with this and half of them are neutral and disagreed with this statement and near one third are strongly disagreed with this questionnaire. This research chart represents that, although universities career services help on job search but also lots of them are not yet proper satisfied with their services. University authorities should take initiative on it.

The third chart from the left represent, "Local employers are open to hiring international students." Almost all participant is disagreed with this statement and half of them are neutral and above one fourth of them are agreed with this statement and less than one forth are strongly disagreed with this statement. This chart represents local employers require more local employee than foreign talents. There has a gap between foreign talents and local employee. This spread should closer and fair for all to attract more foreign talents.

The last forth chart represent "Living in Vaasa provide unique advantage for my career goals." The majority of the participant also disagreed with this statement whereas minority of the participant are strongly agreed with this statement. Neutral and agreed with this statement are go down tremendously. This research living in Vaasa not provide unique advantage to the international student to fulfill their career goals.

4.3 Overcoming the barrier

To overcoming the barrier of employment, require increasing Finnish learning course in every semester so that student from international background can adapt themselves with Finnish culture. To reach Finnish culture first stage is language to reach them. In Vaasa language is the major barrier to secure career. In recent job circular from Wärtsilä, ABB, most of all are require Fluent in Finnish. Universities of Vaasa's region including adult education center Alma require to increasing their Finnish learning course as well as duration of the course. In a weekend only two class and two hours duration course are not sufficient for foreign student to adopt a new language. From the survey over 50 responses, I found 28% of the participant believe that language will helpful for them to securing their career in Vaasa. However, 58% thinks languages, networking event, internship should help them to secure their career and one of the participants said "I think more internship opportunities or collaborations with companies that actively hire international students would be great. Career counselling in English would be very beautiful." Another participant recommendation that, "Make more Finnish friends"

What kind of support or resources would you find helpful in securing employment?
56 responses

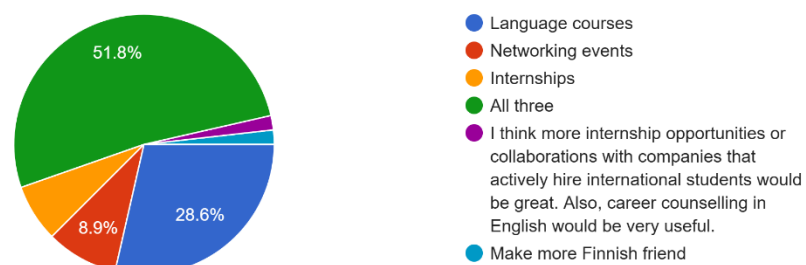


Figure 18: Overcoming the barrier

Therefore, the following suggestions are proposed to breaking the obstacle based on the purpose of the study. discrimination between local and foreign student should be reduced. Jobs should be spread more equitably and openly. More international event should be increase for local student to get mingle up with foreign student so that their understanding gap would become low.

From The previous questionnaire and recommendation from participant. I can say the drawn conclusion to surmount international student obstacles for job university in Vaasa's, Vaasa entrepreneur even largest which is organization in Vaasa, and the policy maker together should collaborate at attracting and wish international student.

Language courses More intensive employer-oriented Finnish as a Second Language courses: More courses in adult education centers Alma and Universities e.g. more extensive or more frequent courses. It can be a step towards international student's language skills platform and help them in accessing to Vaasa employability.

Vaasa universities can provide more cultural activities for students for free, such as free ice hockey pass, free event for others ->. But yes from there students can make Finnish network and that can help them somehow create more connections to the local Finnish. That can cover the dots between Finnish and foreign student.

Diversify the internships and part-time jobs: Collaborate with global companies such as ABB and Wärtsilä to create entry level jobs that do not require knowledge of Finnish to provide students a local experience of work.

Improve the career services: This is crucial, where universities must have an efficient career service in place for international students, organize job application workshops targeting for Finland in English, counselling also in English and networking events.

Implement non-discriminatory hiring procedures to guard against discriminatory hiring, both in terms of opportunity and transparency.

Facilitate Cross-Cultural Interaction: Plan events between local and overseas students to create networks and understanding across cultures.

Hire the Globe's Best: Sell employers on how the various life experiences and training of international students can be useful to them.

Based on the result of our primary data's we identified number of challenges that international student is encountering throughout the career development path in Vaasa. The authorities of Vaasa and the city Universities of Vaasa should solve those problems.

Finally, I can conclude that the City of Vaasa if they respond to and address the matters and opportunities that the international students would become a more attractive, equal and inclusive destination to international students and the students could play a active role in the local economy and social life.

5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research chapter includes brief summary of the findings, recommendation, limitations and direction for the future study.

5.1 Conclusion

The International student in Vaasa can be of important for Vaasa's labor for if they get over the obstacles such as language, cultural, networking, discrimination. In our research we discovered that language is the one difficult for international student to adapt on Vaasa's work Force. Other major constraints include lack of recognition of previous work experience in students' home countries, restrictions on visa and work permit and limited professional networks. Both of these barriers altogether contribute to a relatively high rate of unemployment for international students (62.5% of respondents employed and 74.4% of respondents working in an un-related field).

However, the study also suggests there is work to be done. Access to internships, part-time jobs or networking sessions for which they don't need to speak Finnish would help make respondents more employable, they said. Ironically studying 28% agreed if Finnish language courses were better it would support their prospects of work, and 58% believed all three features language, networking, and working to be equally important. Schools were also surveyed and average a rating of 2.32 (5 is the worst!) for career services, so it seems that they definitely are in need of a much more customized international service. And while some respondents acknowledged the support provided by university career services, they don't believe or feel that those services meet international students' specific needs. However, Vaasa attracts an

diverse international student population, but structural barriers limit access for internationals into entry-level work and thus job market prospects. These concerns must be addressed in the form of coexistent and shared efforts between the universities, local employers, policy makers and local community organizations, in order to create an environment more inclusive that could not only accommodate but realize the potential of the international expertise.

5.2 Discussion

The results of this study is in align with the literature on how hard it is for international students to find a job in Finland particularly focusing on the importance of mastering the Finnish language (Ollanketo, 2018; Ely Centre, 2020). Language as a barrier. The emphasis on language as an obstacle is consistent with the Finnish labor market in general, where a linguistic-cultural proximity to Finni city largely takes precedence over potential applicants who lack fluency in Finnish.

This creates a paradox: Vaasa's universities attract international students into English-taught programs, but the labor market demands Finnish proficiency, rendering this degree virtually worthless. The survey's revelation that Finland has only one job out of four that would hire a person who does not speak fluent Finnish only makes the mismatch worse. International students' previous experience is also commonly not acknowledged, not always do they have the possibility to work in part-time jobs or to perform an internship.

If the perceived experience from working in their home-country is not of any value for the Vaasa employers the above again implies that additional understanding and acknowledgement are needed

immediate to all international experience within the profession. This is in line with the findings of the literature, which highlight the advantages of local contacts and working experience for Finnish employers, which international students are not able to build up due to limited access to starters` positions. Among those who were neutral as to whether part-time work was easy to find, respondents might have been talking about the lack of opportunities that would help move them into more secure work. To a lesser degree Juration was also a major challenge — Cultural differences in CV style and the conduct of job applications. Although the overall confidence in their CV was quite high most notably Finnish employers stood out as promoting the most challenges, with low interview call-back rates (many strongly disagreed that their CV led to interviews), supporting the need for further nuanced guidance support. Universities could fill this gap by offering workshops on finishing job application norms and even getting people in touch with local employers.

As for the perception of discrimination, it is not widespread but is widespread enough. The 20 percent who reported they strongly felt discriminated against in job searches point to systemic biases that could potentially favor local candidates. "This will involve an even deeper dive into the schools hiring process, of the creation of a diverse and inclusive workforce in Vaasa.

Lastly, on a general level, it seems that while current services are adequate, they are not as current put in place for the needs of international students (see low rating of 2.32 on University Career Support). The figures of high employment rates of graduates, in particular, from the university of Vaasa, contrast with the results from the survey which suggest that international student

graduates do not have positive employment outcomes. The constructive feedback also suggests what the opportunity to improve might be. By offering of the extra Finnish language courses at a reasonable tempo, the students would have a chance to learn the necessary words had the possibility of competing in the job market. Other projects that can be considered may be in the form of moving networking events, and sending internship opportunities with international companies to narrow the divide between locals and internationals in terms of chances of employment. The suggestion “to make more Finnish friends” signifies the necessity for social inclusion, which could be facilitated with local or regional initiatives, or verbally by means of intercultural schemes.

The findings are also relevant for the attractiveness of Vaasa as a study location. If international students can't find their livelihood here, they might look to a brain drain to other cities or countries where the job market is more open. Some form of incentive to companies who hire international students — subsidies for jobs that do not depend on English proficiency or that celebrate diversity — should be on the agenda of policymakers. Policy makers of any country should make English as a third language, an office language for job purposes. On the other hand, universities need to enlarge their career services: mentor programs, more Finnish language study courses, job fairs targeting international students, develop more events for students to grow their network, and collaboration with local companies for creating a talent pool for research goals.

Universities of Vaasa, policymakers, and employers need to meet the research objective as well as stimulate foreign student-friendly

policy, guiding appropriately can be the joined effort to manage labor shortage. International students' employability along with overcoming their barriers, help can be reduced if above guideline is followed.

5.3 Limitations

The average sample size used in this study was 56 respondents, the results may not reflect the feeling of all the international students in Vaasa. Only single-city approach also restricts the external validity of the findings for other Finnish areas. There is also a degree of bias in that the survey relies on self-reported data, where perceptions of discrimination or that of support may differ based on individual experiences.

5.4 Direction for the further future research

Future studies could take advantage from this research. They could increase the sample and perform qualitative interviews to get a greater understanding of students' experiences. Similar comparisons with other Finnish cities, such as Helsinki, Tampere or Turku, might highlight local differences in employment challenges and opportunities. They can on them and get their situation too. That might helpful for international student too to take their decision based on cities. Lastly, questioning employers on hiring international students for a fuller understanding of the labor market dynamics.

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APPENDICES

Survey on "The Employment Challenges and opportunities for International Student in Vaasa."

1. Which of the following age group are you in?

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 45 and above

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other

3. What is your nationality?

4. What is your field of study in Vaasa?

5. How long have you been studying in Vaasa?

6. Are you currently employed?

- Yes
- No

7. If yes, is your job related to your field of study?

- Yes
- No

8. If no, have you been actively seeking employment?

- Yes
- No
- others

9. What are the main challenges you face in finding employment in Vaasa?

- Lack of work experience
- Languages barrier
- Cultural differences
- All three
- Others

10. Have you experienced any form of discrimination during your job search? (Rating 1 to 5)

11. How do you perceived the support from your educational institution in helping you find employment? (Rating 1 to 5)

12. What kind of support or resources would you find helpful in securing employment?

- Language course.
- Networking event.
- Internship
- All three.
- others

13. How skills and languages abilities shape employability for international student (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- My academic skills are sufficient for job opportunities in Vaasa.
- Lack of Finnish language skills limits my employment prospects
- Proficiency in English is enough to secure job in Vaasa for employer in Vaasa value my international background as a skill.

14. The role of experience and local opportunities for international students. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- My prior work experience from my home country is recognized by employers in Vaasa.
- Lack of Finnish work experience reduces my chance of being hired.
- Part time jobs opportunities in Vaasa are accessible to international students.
- Internships or universities projects have helped me gain relevant experience.

15. How CV presentation and application affect opportunities. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- My CV effectively show case my international education and experience.
- I struggle to tailor my CV to meet Finnish employer expectation.
- Cultural differences make it hard to present my qualification in job application
- I have been called to interviews based on my CV submission.

16. Specific barrier face by international student in Vaasa (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- Visa or work permit restriction limit my job opportunities in Vaasa.
- The Finnish job market favor local candidate over international student.
- A lack of professional network in Vaasa hinders my job search.
- Language barrier makes job interviews more challenging.

17. Opportunities and sources available to international student (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- Vaasa's International company offer good opportunities for students like me.
- University career services have supported my job search effectively.
- Local employer are open to hiring international student.
- Living in Vaasa provide unique advantage for my career goals

18. Have you participated in career development program offers by your university or local organizations?

- Yes
- No

19. How do you rate the effectiveness of these programs? (rating 1 to 5)

20. Do you plan to stay in Vaasa after graduation?

- Yes
- No
- c. Maybe

21. If yes, what factors influence your decision to stay?
22. If no, what factors influence your decisions to leave?
23. Do you have any additional comment or suggestion regarding employment opportunity for international student in Vaasa.

Submission