

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Business Administration, Lappeenranta
Degree Programme in International Business
Specialization in International Business

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EMPLOYMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE SOUTH KARELIA REGION

ABSTRACT

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Employment of International Students in the South Karelia Region, 54 pages, 3 appendices

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Lappeenranta

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This thesis "Employment of International Students in the South Karelia Region" was formed around the issue of employment that international students struggle with during their studies and after graduation. Saimaa University of Applied Sciences had noticed the unemployment issue and wanted to find out some answers why students are not employed, as well as whether or not companies were able to offer opportunities in making the situation better for the students and the community as a whole. The main problem appears to be that the students receive a free education in Finland, yet tend to leave the country upon completion of their studies, unable to find work opportunities related to their field of studies that will allow them to pursue a successful and desirable career.

This research was conducted by interviewing both international students and local companies. In general, the outlook of the situation was that companies were suffering from the economical crisis and had difficulties in keeping their previous workers employed. Under the crisis also laid the issue that international students do not speak Finnish. Students' opinions were similar in every faculty in the Saimaa University of Applied Sciences. International students told that finding a job is almost impossible because they do not speak Finnish.

The main objective of the interviews was to get to know the topic throughout and possibly have an awakening impact on the people related to the situation. Companies were keen on trying to make the situation better for the students and at the same time they realized they should also appreciate the benefits and advantages the international background of a student can bring. Students defined having a direct contact with personnel managers of the companies as a priority.

Keywords: employment, international, students, South Karelia

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Ulkomaalaisten opiskelijoiden työllistyminen Etelä-Karjalassa, 54 sivua, 3 liitettä

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Opinnäytetyö muodostui ulkomaalaisten opiskelijoiden työllistymisen ympärille Etelä-Karjalan alueella. Työllistyminen on ongelma, jonka kanssa opiskelijat usein kamppailevat opintojensa aikana ja valmistumisen jälkeen. Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulu oli huomannut ongelman jo aiemmin, ja se halusi vastauksia kysymyksiinsä, miksi ulkomaalaisia opiskelijoita ei palkata ja olisiko opiskelijoiden tilanteeseen mitään ratkaisua, joka auttaisi opiskelijoita. Ongelmana on se, että kansainväliset opiskelijat koulutetaan Suomessa, mutta he saattavat joutua lähtemään maasta, koska eivät löydä koulutustaan vastaavia töitä.

Tutkimus pohjautui ulkomaalaisten opiskelijoiden ja paikallisten yritysten haastatteluihin. Tutkimuksen yksi tärkein löydös oli se, että usein yritykset mainitsivat kansainvälisen opiskelijan palkkaamisen esteeksi opiskelijoiden heikon suomen kielen taidon. Eri alojen opiskelijat Saimaan ammattikorkeakoulusta olivat samaa mieltä ongelmasta, työhön pääsy on lähes mahdottomuus, jos ei osaa puhua suomea.

Tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli perehtyä aiheeseen syvällisesti ja herätellä yrityksiä tilanteen vakavuudesta. Yritykset olivat kiinnostuneita auttamaan opiskelijoiden tilannetta ja ehkä jopa hyötymään itse opiskelijan kansainvälisestä taustasta. Opiskelijat toivoivat seminaareja, joissa saisivat suoraan kontaktin yrityksiin ja näkyvämpää apua työpaikkojen löytämiseen.

Asiasanat: työllistyminen, kansainvälisyys, opiskelijat, Etelä-Karjala

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Topic

Recently there has been discussion on international students' employment issues in the media. Graduated students return to their home countries after facing difficulties in employment in Finland. Applying for a job that complies with their education seems to be a dilemma. Students might not even get to show their know-how when the first question often appears to be if they can speak Finnish. Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, in this thesis referred as SUAS has attempted to do its part by helping the students to get some contacts with the working life by offering seminars where businesses and students can meet. However, students are still suffering from unemployment and are willing to find some other options to find a job.

SUAS felt that the employment of its international students was certainly an issue that needed some research. Therefore the topic of the thesis formed around employment of foreign degree students of Saimaa University in South Karelia. For two international business students, the employment of the region was especially interesting and it complied very well with the specialization. There had been cooperation between Finnish students and international students during the years of studying in the SUAS. The topic was also very interesting due to the graduation situation and working possibilities after studies. Also, there is a major age group born after the Second World War in 40's, so called Pension Bomb, retiring from the working life around 2010. That group of elders is said to leave a hole in the economy but also open positions available for younger people to take over (Wikipedia 2009a).

As the Pension Bomb might leave places for young people to work at, there is no guarantee that international students could fulfill those spots. Thousands of international students are educated in Finland, but only few of them are said to find a place to work in that complies with their education. In the year 2004 there

were already 16 670 foreign students in Finland, of which 8438 were university level students (Alanen 2006).

A minority of those students stay in Finland after graduation. The situation faced by many of those students is described in a newspaper article, where a graduating international student, Donna Owindi, talks about her ideas and opinion regarding education and employment:

I plan to get a master's degree, but I won't be doing it in Finland, because it is so hard to find a place to work in.

Owindi says that the reason for low employment of foreign students is clear; the Finnish language. Even though foreign people could speak Finnish, they are often told that their Finnish is not good enough. Owindi says that it is strange that even international companies that have very little to do with Finnish people and their native language, demand skills in Finnish language from their employees. (Iltalehti 2009a)

The problem that is to be targeted in this thesis is the fact that in Saimaa University alone, approximately 120 international students start their studies per year in five different international degree programs, yet very few manage to find a permanent job in South Karelia. As a part of the degree program, the students are supposed to complete a practical training and the Bachelor's Thesis included in their studies in order to graduate. The thesis will concentrate on the abilities the international students acquired after completing their practical training while studying. However, it also has a focus on finding a job after graduation in the South Karelia Region.

In the interviews conducted for this thesis, some of the international students expressed their willingness to stay in the region after graduation; however, it becomes virtually impossible if a suitable job simply out of reach. Each degree

program has a compulsory practice period that is conducted in companies, as well as different types of case studies and final theses can be done for those companies.

This thesis aims to provide helpful information to the international students, the SUAS and to the companies located in South Karelia. It also aims to provide insight to the complicated issue of unemployment among international students and international graduate students. The thesis will also provide some suggestions on how to improve this matter, which can be found from the last chapter of the thesis.

The dilemma around the employment has not been only noticed by SUAS but also by the members of parliament in Finland. Iltalehti reported of minister of labour Anni Sinnemäki's comments on the matter. She claims that the Finnish companies and public sector demand too fluent language skills of foreign workers. Sinnemäki spoke about the matter at an event held by the American Chamber of Commerce in October 2009.

Finnish companies and public sector should accept that people can work in Finland, even though they do not speak Finnish and Swedish.

In her opinion the language requirements are too strict. These requirements have given people a good reason to leave the country after graduation. In Sinnemäki's opinion it is enough that the foreign employees know English and their own work-related vocabulary. The foreign students' chances to find a placement for practice should also be improved. It would be easier to stay in the country after having a practice period in a Finnish company during the studies in here. Sinnemäki also adds that the matter is taken into account in the Ministry of Education and in her understanding of the issue is to be tackled in the near future (Iltalehti 2009b).

1.2 The Objective of the Thesis

The fundamental objective of the thesis is to study the employment of international students of Saimaa University, their attitudes and opinions towards finding a job in the South Karelia region. The students interviewed for the research are students of the degree programs from Tourism, International Business, Chemical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. Only international students (i.e. not Finnish students) from those degree programs were interviewed.

On the other hand the opinions and attitudes of local businesses are studied and taken into account when it comes to hiring foreign students in need of practical training or foreign graduates from the SUAS.

The goal of this Bachelor's Thesis is to possibly be the trigger that starts the process of helping both international students and businesses to build up an employment symbiosis where people from different nationalities could find a place to work. Through this local companies could find potential new employees and utilize their knowledge on different countries and cultures if needed. Both parties could find cultural, linguistic and other knowledge and experience of different countries useful in their working environment. At the end of the thesis, future suggestions are found on how to continue to make improvements on this matter.

The study aims to help students to understand opinions and attitudes of businesses, and also vice versa. Therefore they will know what kind of job to look for and how to look for it and maybe their chances of landing a job will be improved through their increased understanding. Also the narrow picture of the International students as employees might be broadened, since businesses may find new ways of utilizing foreign students as work force.

Another objective of the thesis was to broaden up the picture on how the SUAS, companies and the international students cooperate and how they feel about the employment situation. Simultaneously, this thesis will provide more information of the employment culture in a wider perspective.

1.3 The Division of Work

As the topic appeared wide enough for two people to work on, the written parts were divided into sections. Writers of the thesis were interested in this topic because it was close to their own studies and they had been facing difficulties in applying and finding a job in the city of Lappeenranta. As students of International Business, both of them had been studying abroad and knew that sometimes being in a new country can lead to feelings of loneliness and abandonment, and thus could relate to the international students' positions. As the work started with the interviews, the division of work had to be done. Anni Liikanen wrote the parts which concentrated on the students, and the region of South Karelia. Annika Korkeila wrote the ones about businesses and tourism. Introduction and conclusion were thought together. Interviews were written down separately following the same subdivision as mentioned above, but the actual interviews with companies and students were conducted together.

1.4 Contents of the Thesis

This thesis consists of different sections, which include the introduction to the topic itself as well as the full picture of the South Karelia as a region. The study also explains the background for the thesis and goals of the study. Saimaa University of Applied Sciences is introduced in the beginning as well as the students that come here to study. Not only opinions and comments made by students and companies are widely explained, but also the importance of tourism, economical situation and structure of the area of South Karelia is important to be acknowledged. South Karelia's economic structure and situation in 2010 gives important information to the reader in order to understand the situation also from the economical side.

1.5 Restrictions of the Thesis

The concept of South Karelia region that is used in the thesis was mainly limited into places that SUAS's units are located at, Lappeenranta and Imatra. But at the same time the research also covers other areas of South Karelia that the students may find a job from. The businesses interviewed were from Lappeenranta or Imatra, in order to find the most feasible places for the students to work at while studying, or where the graduate students could work.

The research serves the needs that the international students have when it comes to the issue of employment. Facts about the employment situation in the South Karelia area, attitudes and feelings towards foreign students as employees, issues that can come up when applying a job and so on will be covered by interviewing businesses.

At the same time SUAS gets valuable information on how the students experience the employment situation, gain knowledge of the businesses' opinions on foreign students as employees and maybe receive some feedback that helps the school build better connections to the business world and offer answers about the situation of employment for the students.

2 VARIABLE RESEARCH METHODS

At first the intention for this thesis was to find qualitative information instead of quantitative information that provides numbers and figures. Suitable sources to find qualitative information include videos, letters, diaries, archive material and photos. In this case, interviews were a good source to find information needed for the thesis (Vilkkä 2005).

According to Ruusuvuori & Tiittula (toim.) (2005, pp. 63-70) the traditionally used interview methods have been divided into two groups, structured and non-structured interviews. Structured interviews can include forms with questions

made beforehand. Possible answers can be given prior to interview to make the situation faster and more controlled by the interviewer. Questions made before hand also ensures that the interviewer does not affect on the results and opinions of the interviewee. The questions are always the same and asked in the same order, if there are many interviewees.

In non-structured interviews the shape of the interview is build up by the interviewee. The whole concept is not related to question-answer form, but it more likely reminds of an open interview.

Between the structured and non-structured interviews lie the half- and semi-structured interviews. The most used method is the half-structured, also called focused interview. Focused interview may include same questions, forms, topics and themes for everyone, but it is not necessary to follow the same order every time. The structure may vary and the interview can be proceed open. In a type of a research like this, where people should be able to discuss around the topic and give opinions of the issue, the best way was to use this focused interview method. Also elements from focused interviews were used in practice (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula. (toim.) 2005 p. 63-70).

Focused interviews are especially used in higher education institutes. Those are suitable for situations where the information is collected over specific issues. Therefore the interviewee can ramble freely, but the main points will still come up (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001. p. 43-49).

In this thesis information for the thesis was collected over one topic, the employment of international students by interviews of students and businesses mainly. Therefore for this particular thesis the focused interview was a suitable style to be used. Questionnaire forms were used to lead the conversation and get the main points asked. Those were made in a style that the interviewers' lead the conversation, but gave room for the interviewee to rumble around the

topic. That way the main points and facts were picked up from the conversation. In case the interviewee was willing to add some extra, that information could be also used.

3 SOUTH KARELIA

3.1 Location and Population of the Region

South Karelia is the most South Eastern county in Finland, and the closest EU area when considering the Russian market. There are three international border crossing points in South Karelia and the Russian trade and tourism give a distinctive stamp to the area's economy. South Karelia is formed around 10 municipalities with the biggest being Lappeenranta with 70 500 inhabitants. In the figure 4.1 below the municipalities in South Karelia are shown on the map with the cities of Lappeenranta and Imatra where the SUAS universities are located at (Kela 2009).

Figure 3.1 Municipalities in South Karelia



Approximately 70% of the area is forest and the densest forest industry concentration can be found in South Karelia. Thus, forest industry is a big employer although the development of technology has caused the number of working places to decrease. (Etelä-Karjalan Maakuntaesite 2010a)

3.2 Economic Structure of South Karelia

In 2007 there were exactly 252 815 companies in the entire Finland excluding agriculture, forestry and fish industry. Of these companies 93% were microcompanies that employ from 1 to 9 people. The second largest segment was small businesses that employ from 10 to 49 people. Largest employers, that is large companies employing at least 250 people, make up only 0, 3% of all the companies.

South Karelia's company size distribution doesn't deviate much from the national average. In 2007 there were 5216 companies operating in South Karelia. When comparing to national averages South Karelia has a little less companies in the service sector and slightly more companies in the construction industry. All in all, South Karelia deviates very little from national averages.

Of all the companies operating in South Karelia 44% operate in the service sector, 19% in trade, 15% in construction, 10% in industry and 10% in other types of companies. About 60 000 people were working in South Karelia in the year 2007 (PK-yrittysbarometri Etelä-Karjala).

When thinking of the existing companies and the students, the service sector seems likely to be the most potential employer for the graduating students. As stated earlier, the service sector is the best growing sector at the moment, and it is also the biggest employing sector in South Karelia. Students that could work within this sector could for example include students of Tourism, and International Business. The service sector employed in the year 2006 approximately 34 750 people, being the biggest sector in the number of employees. The second biggest employer was industry with approximately

11 750 jobs. The industry sector could employ for example students of Mechanical Engineering and Paper Processing (Tilastokeskus 2009).

3.3 The Change in the Economic Structure of South Karelia

The number of workplaces in South Karelia has been steady during the latest years. There are approximately 53 000 jobs in the county that includes 10 municipalities. The biggest growth in number of jobs has been in the service sector and the biggest losses of jobs have been seen in the agriculture and forest sector as well as in industry sector. Industrial output as well as construction output has been growing in the last years, as well as export activities (Regional Council of South Karelia 2010a).

Due to the strong position of forest industry in the country, the entrepreneurship has not developed as fast as industry in the area. Due to the change in employment outlook the situation has changed. The trend is that most new jobs can be found within the service sector. The growth in the Russian economy has increased trade with Russian and also Russian tourism in the area. Services in the trade sector have increased due to this and new areas dedicated to retail have been created. Services are being developed continuously to serve the tourists and travelers visiting South Karelia.

Tourism is certainly a sector that is growing in the region. Tourism is an invigorating extra to the economy of the municipalities in South Karelia. The majority of the municipalities in South Karelia are twice bigger in population in summer times due to tourism and that brings more services to the area. Currently the majority of tourists are from Russia, 70% of their visits to Finland are brief shopping trips, but vacation traveling is growing at the moment (Etelä-Karjalan Maakuntaesite 2010b).

3.4 Tourism as a Highlight for the Region's Economy

The service sector is the largest growth sector in South Karelia, tourism affecting most on that fact. Traditionally the tourists that come to South Karelia are from other parts of Finland, Nordic Countries and Central Europe. Majority of visitors staying overnight in hotels of the area are from Sweden and Central Europe but the amount of Russians staying in hotels is increasing. Lappeenranta's location near Russian border is excellent for the area's economy and tourism. When comparing the hotel visits for example in entire Finland, an increasing amount of nights spent in hotels are in the ones located in South Karelia. Other services than hotel visits have also been growing significantly due to the growth of tourism, for example in the year 2008 over two million visits to Finland were made by Russians (Etelä-Karjalan Maakuntaesite 2010c).

Tourists from Russia bring a valuable add into this area's economy. Over 20% of the money coming from retail sales is received from Russian tourists. The capital city Helsinki maintained the first place in tax free sales in 2009, but Lappeenranta and Imatra were following right after it. The most visited cities in Finland have concentrated on tourism. Lapland is visited during seasons like especially Christmas and winter times generally, Helsinki throughout the year as well as Lappeenranta and Imatra. South Karelian cities are popular among especially Russian tourists because of the location of the county. It is a known fact that the newest shopping centers and stores would not have been built into Lappeenranta without the vital money brought here by the Russian tourists.

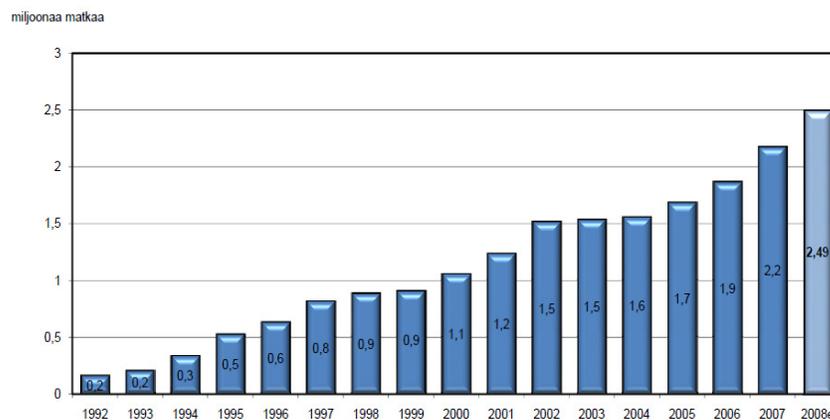
In a couple of years there will be new spa resorts in the area. For example construction of Huhtiniemi spa in Lappeenranta is estimated to start in the spring of 2011. This creates new jobs and the students that benefit from this are especially tourism students from the area. These new spas would probably also benefit from employees speaking fluent Russian (Salovaara 2010).

Figures seen below are to describe the importance of tourism for area, tourists coming from Russia, how many times they visit Finland and especially how South Karelia area is seen through Russian visitors. All the figures below are conducted in Finnish. The reason is that the research company TAK Ltd making the studies targets those especially for the usage of Finnish companies. However, the numbers are important in the figures and can be interpreted in any language. Explanations of pictures are written in English.

In the figure 3.4 shown below, there is a growth in Russian tourists' visits through the South East borders at South Karelia (TAK Ltd).



Venäläisten matkat Suomeen vuosittain Kaakkois-Suomen raja-asemien kautta



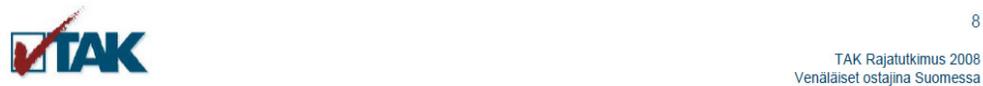
Kuva 1. Venäläisten rajanyllytykset Venäjältä Suomeen Kaakkois-Suomen raja-asemilla vuosina 1992-2007 (K-SRE Rajatoimisto) ja ennuste vuodelle 2008 (TAK Oy); miljoonaa matkaa

Kuvassa 1. on tarkasteltu venäläisten saapumisia Venäjältä Suomeen vuosina 1992-2007 sekä arvioitu saapumisten määrää vuonna 2008. Arvio perustuu olettamukseen, että matkojen määrä syksyllä 2008 jatkaa kasvua, joka alkuvuodesta oli keskimäärin 15 %. Luvut kuvassa sisältävät myös rekkakuskit, joiden osuus Suomeen saapuvista venäläisistä vuonna 2008 on noin 20 %.

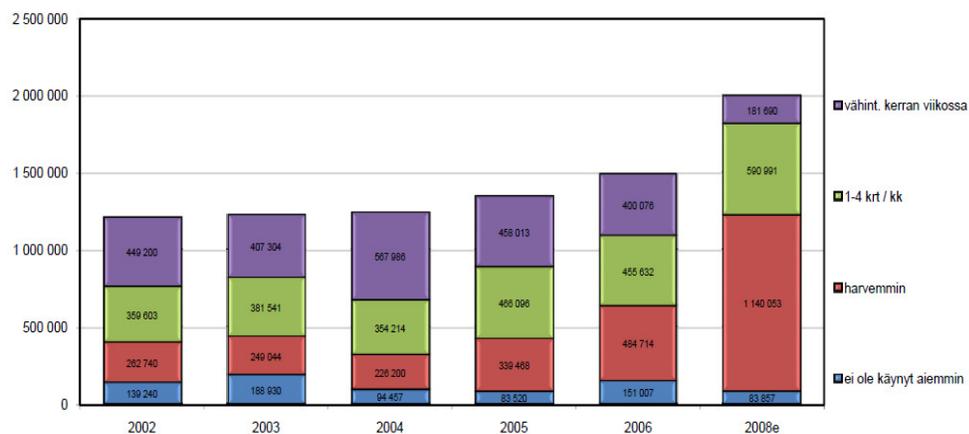
In the figure 3.4 a closer look is taken into the amount of visits made by Russian tourists from 1992 to 2007. In the border study, the amount of visits reached closer to 2,5 million visits per year. Since tourism and service sector is growing,

this may result in an increase of jobs in that sector in the future according to the research made by TAK. The numbers of visits still seems to be growing in the future. Since the tourism and service sector is growing, this may result in an increase of jobs in that sector (TAK Ltd Rajatutkimus 2008).

Figure 3.5 Shows how often Russians visited Finland (TAK Ltd)



Kuinka usein venäläiset käyvät Suomessa?



Kuva 5. Oletetko käynyt Suomessa aikaisemmin - Kuinka usein?; % vastanneista (painotettu aineisto)

Suomessa ensimmäistä kertaa vierailneiden venäläisten määrä ei ole kasvanut. Toisaalta vähintään kerran viikossa täällä käyneiden venäläisten määrä on pienentynyt selvästi. Yhä suurempi osa matkoista on täällä muutaman kerran vuodessa vieraillevien matkustajien tekemiä.

Figure 3.5 shows that over 180 000 visitors from Russia travelled to Finland once a week in 2008. More randomly, more than twice per month, Finland had over one million tourists coming from Russia. In this part of the country, the importance of Russian speakers is rising every year. Already many of the stores in Lappeenranta area have Russian speakers as employees. The importance is especially seen in service sector. However, most of the Finnish businesses dealing with companies abroad, English remains as the main language to

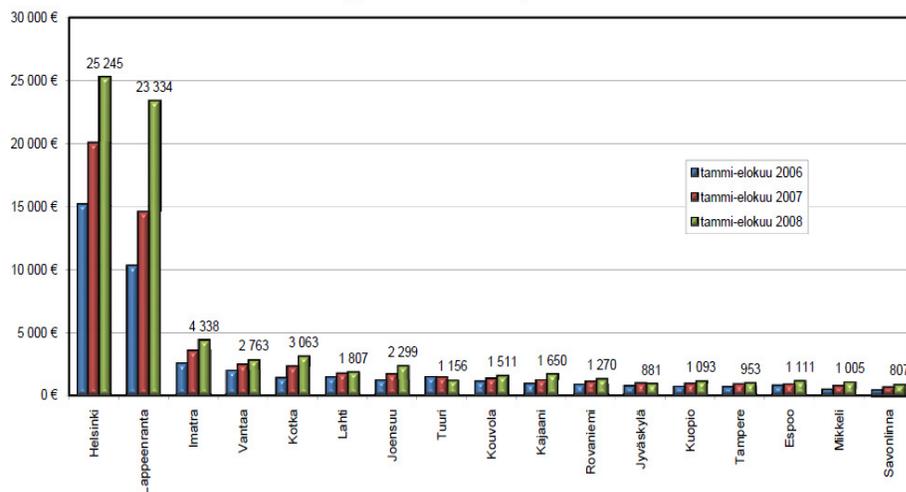
communicate with. It is important to notice the fact that truck drivers were not included in this research, only Russian tourists visited Finland over 2 million times (TAK Ltd 2008).

From January 2009 to August 2009 4% of travelers were visiting Finland for the very first time. The amount of first time visitors has not grown but the growth of travelers is explained by their increased visits. Russian tourists meet friends, relatives, do shopping and spend holidays in Finland by visiting spas, skiing centers and so on. However, business travel into Finland has decreased (TAK Ltd).

Figure 3.6 presents the Tax Free sales to Russians by cities, where Lappeenranta stands second in the sales, right after the capital city Helsinki.



Tax-free -myynti venäläisille paikkakunnittain



Kuva 20. Tax-free -myynti venäläisille paikkakunnittain tammie-lokuussa 2006 - 2008 (Global Refund Finland)

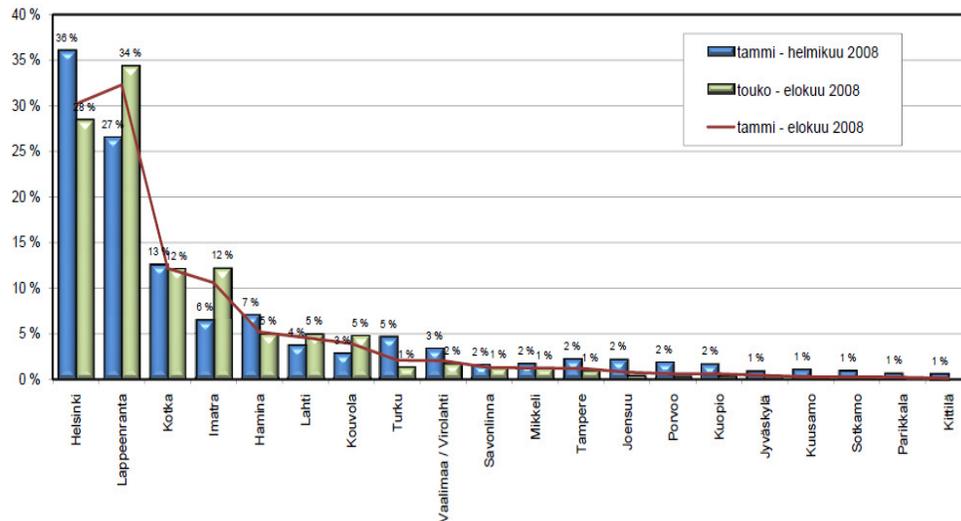
- Tuurissa ja Jyväskylässä tax-free -myynti on pienentynyt vuoden takaisesta.

Also seen from the figure 3.6, shopping is the main reason Russian tourists visit Finland. Tax free sales in Lappeenranta are counted as the second highest. Clothing and shoe shopping is one of the Russian tourists' favorite pastime activity. As stated earlier, 70% of Russians visits in Finland are brief shopping trips. Over one third of Lappeenranta's clothing shopping was made by Russian tourists and in Imatra the percentage was seven. Tax free sales in figure 3.6 are counted from January to August and from 2006 to 2008. Different years are marked with different colours. Every year starting from 2006 the tax free sales have grown. The best year so far has been 2008, Lappeenranta again following Helsinki (TAK Ltd 2008).

Figure 3.7 Most visited cities in Finland by Russian Tourists



Paikkakunnat, joilla vierailtiin



Kuva 6. Millä paikkakunnilla kävitte?; % vastanneista (painotettu aineisto)

- Kuvassa on mukana vain Imatran, Nuijamaan, Vainikkalan ja Vaalimaan raja-asemien kautta saapuneet matkustajat (noin 79 % kaikista Suomessa käyneistä venäläismatkustajista).
- Saman matkan aikana matkustaja on voinut käydä useammalla kuin yhdellä paikkakunnalla.
- Kuvassa on mukana vain ne paikkakunnat, joilla on käynyt yli 1 % vastanneista.

3.5 Employment Rates in South Karelia

In the end of October 2009 there were 18911 unemployed people looking for a job in South Karelia. The number of available jobs has decreased from last year by a third and the number of the unemployed has increased by 34%. About 2400 people of employed were laid off. The increasing unemployment is harsh especially on young people. In 2009 there were 49% more under 25 year-olds unemployed than a year ago in 2008. The employment situation does not only make it hard to enter the working life, it also prolongs the period of unemployment. Employers announced 717 new jobs in South Eastern Karelia during October 2009. The jobs are mainly focused on health care and social services, trade and personal services. Available jobs in the manufacturing industry were only 23 and in administrative work only 35 (Kaakkois Suomen TE-Keskus 2009).

4 STUDYING AND WORKING IN FINLAND

In general, education in Finland is free. The higher education system includes universities and polytechnics, in which the admission requirement is a secondary general or vocational diploma. Education in universities and polytechnics is based on the Bachelor's or Master's degree system. Polytechnics offer work-related education in response to labor market needs. Polytechnic degree requirements are 3.5 - 4.5 years of full-time studies including mandatory practical training (Ministry of Education). At the moment Saimaa University does not assist international students in finding placements. Of course help is around when students, for example, encounter difficulties when looking for a company to do the compulsory practice period in (Saimia 2010a).

Education is highly valued in the Finnish society. Living is built on education, culture and knowledge. All children are guaranteed opportunities for study and

self-development according to their abilities, irrespective of their place of residence, language or financial status (Ministry of Education 2009).

Some limitations for international students exist when they wish to work in Finland. They need a permit to study in the country and also an allowance form from the state that might limit the working hours. Students from the EU do not need working permits, although exceptions, especially for European Union Member States and equivalent people exist (Finnish Immigration Service 2010a).

A foreign person that wishes to study in Finland needs a residence permit. To get the permit, the person must have a study place in a Finnish educational establishment, and the studies must lead to a degree or a profession. Granting the permit also requires sufficient assets to be able to study here, in practice approximately 500 euros per month or 6000 euros per year. Also valid health insurance is needed.

A foreign student with a student's residence permit can work or receive a payment from thesis without a limit, as long as it is related to studies. During semesters when there are lessons in that the educational institute in question, a part-time job is limited to 25 hours per week. During vacations and holidays there is no hour limit to working. The money earned from the part time job can be taken into account when deciding on the livelihood allowance.

After graduating from a Finnish educational institute the student is able to apply for a temporary residence permit. The Finnish police grants a work search permit for six months and during those six months a student is able to search freely for a job and start working immediately. Before the work search permit's 6 months is through, it is possible to apply for a residence permit on the grounds

of the new found job. To be able to get this permit, the applicant must have a secured livelihood (Finnish Immigration Service 2010b).

There might be a change just around the corner when it comes to free university level education in Finland. Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen suggested in the opening ceremony of the new Aalto University in January of 2010 that the selling of education should be allowed as soon as possible. In his opinion, scholarship programs would still ensure that students from developing countries would have chances to study as well. As Vanhanen expressed:

- - it is time to give up the allergy towards selling Finnish education with tuition fees to the world.

Rectors of universities have had a positive attitude toward tuition fees. Tuition fees could lead to more education in English and they could draw more top experts from other countries. The impression that has influenced this issue is that free education would look dubious and implausible to foreigners. Vanhanen also believes that this change in might draw in more students from e.g. Arab countries. (Iltalehti 2010c)

Current Economic Turbulence

South Karelia's location near the Russian border should be seen as advantage that brings tourism and monetary flow to the area. However, the global economical crisis is also touching this part of the World. The current economical situation, recession, is named to be the worst in decades. It will affect business for many years to go. It mainly progressed around the world starting from the United States because of their real estate markets. At this point in the beginning of 2010 the recession is said to be only halfway, though positive signs have been noticed already (Roubini 2009).

As the recession is said to affect on the world economy for a long time, the businesses have to ensure that the minimum capacity of employees is in full use. Layoffs and closures of factories are making the employment situation harder in the area since the paper factories are the major employer in South Karelia. For example, chemical engineering from Imatra must be aware of the situation going on at the Kaukas paper mill in Lappeenranta. Decreased amount of jobs and closure of the ply will leave many unemployed. UPM Kymmene is making big cuts and the ply mill in Lappeenranta will close down entirely, thus leaving nearly 300 people unemployed (Etelä-Saimaa 2010).

In a Finnish newspaper article “Recovery of the recession according to Speaker of Parliament Sauli Niinistö might take six years”, is predicted that recession might take quite a long time. Economic balance will stumble and the recovery in full may start after few years of time, says the Speaker of Parliament Sauli Niinistö. He reminded that in the 90’s the improvement in the economic situation took nearly 15 years. Neither the government nor the municipalities will survive the future without cutting the costs, increasing taxes and monetary reform changes in economics.

Compared to the recession in the 90’s, Niinistö sees the same figures in the economics and predicts that the recession today might take the same time to recover. He even claims that the worst is still ahead when the payback time comes. Businesses in bankruptcy, small companies and unemployed people will appear as payers of the recession and suffer the most. (Pohjonen 2009)

5 INTERVIEWS WITH COMPANIES LOCATED IN SOUTH KARELIA

5.1 Companies Chosen for the Research

This thesis, being more practical than theoretical, was conducted through making several interviews with businesses from South Karelia. Company

interviews were in important in this thesis, in order to hear stories and details from the employee side, but also to get new ideas on how to improve the situation, if possible.

The kick-off for the company interview process was to validate suitable companies. Five companies were selected from South Karelia area as prominent amount of companies for the survey. Companies were picked from different sectors such as industrial, financial, convenience and wellness. Mostly those businesses were chosen by using common sense of the potential companies that would maybe be at least in theory employ international students, or whom might be willing to give out thesis work for students.

Companies agreed to be part of the thesis

- Larox
- Ylämaa Granite
- Prisma
- Lappeenranta Spa
- Stora Enso

5.2 Background Information for the Research from South Karelia Entrepreneurs

Etelä-Karjalan Yrittäjät, South Karelia Entrepreneurs, is an organization that runs the interest of local entrepreneurs. In the beginning of the company interviews the CEO of South Karelia Entrepreneurs was interviewed in order to get background information from the businesses perspective. The CEO of the organization was interviewed on this topic and he had very insightful information on why the international students and graduated have difficulties in employment in the region. Many facts, figures and information were received from the organization for the usage of making the thesis more informative. Research

received from the organization according to studies of tourism, visitors from Russia etc. was conducted by TAK Ltd, a research company located in Lappeenranta.

TAK Ltd had made a research of the companies in Lappeenranta area. The number of the businesses is close to 2100 and in half of them the company form is self employed. South Karelia Entrepreneurs' organization was chosen to be interviewed for the research because of their status as an organization that advocates the entrepreneurs' issues in the business world. The CEO of the organization gave information of the areas employment, company structures, tourism and so on. The studies used and received from the organization are conducted by TAK Ltd. A company that studies the economical issues related to the tourism, population etc. Facts and figures conducted by TAK Ltd were received from the organization and used in this thesis.

The unemployment issue came up during the interview with the CEO of the organization. South Karelia is suffering from youth unemployment according to the CEO. As an area of a two universities, Lappeenranta University of Technology and Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, South Karelia has a great amount of students that could be used as new working force that could bring companies new information straight from school, new ideas and new working methods to this city's companies. Finding a summer job or a steady working place during the studies is challenging.

The CEO explained that in a research conducted by TAK Ltd, overall unemployment rate in Lappeenranta was 13% in 2009 (TAK). The situation does not seem to be getting any better at least in few years. For example closure of one of the most important factories in the South Karelia area, Kaukas Papermill, left approximately 870 people unemployed (YLE 2010). Also shutdown of the Konnunsuo Prison is leaving 150 people unemployed (Etelä-

Saimaa 2008). CEO explains that of the South Karelia area, the only growing sector at the moment is the sales industry.

5.3 Conducting the Company Interviews

Once the contact information of these companies was gathered, the next step was to make phone calls to schedule interviews. Contacting the people turned out to be interesting and challenging, especially when the interviews were tried to be conducted before Christmas. Especially contacting managers from the upper ladder of the company structures was difficult since e-mails were left out of question since those would have been easy to dismiss. Preliminary calls were made in such a manner that the topic of the thesis was briefly presented and interest of cooperation asked politely.

The employment of international students from the SUAS had been thought of earlier in different organizations, for example in advisory boards, where representatives from different businesses take part in. Some of those companies were happy to take part in interviews when asked. People were fairly quick to reach and had time for the interviews even though they explained being busy during the months before Christmas. Declining answers were also received, those varied from being busy into security issues. Other companies were chosen by their location, sizes and branches. Businesses from wellness, retail, industrial sector etc were chosen. Companies were also picked by their size varying from family-run business into large corporations.

Businesses to be interviewed were not chosen by favoring some special businesses. The target was to choose companies around the South Karelia area, in order to concentrate on the potential businesses that could hire international students in the area nearby. The concentration was mainly in Imatra and Lappeenranta only as those were areas international students could easily start applying for jobs without further travelling. The plan was to pick a company or two from each branch. All of the existing companies could not be

chosen for the interviews, though the area consists of many good ones. Unfortunately some overlapping existed. For example major amount of the companies are located in Lappeenranta and therefore companies had to be chosen also using Imatra's business sector.

Interviews were made before Christmas 2009 which was maybe one of the busiest times of the year. People for the interviews were at times hard to reach and arranging time was sometimes challenging. However some of the companies were helpful and keen on the issue too. They had time for the interviews even though their working days were busy. Help received from these companies was vital in order to get the topic studied.

5.4 Attitudes and Answers Towards the Interview Requests

Organizations and companies that were not interviewed for thesis had very various answers when called. First of all, finding the contact information from the internet was simple in today's IT-technology world, but reaching the person responsible for the employment was a task itself. Some people reached did not seem be interested in helping with the topic. Few of the companies had never had foreign employees or were not interested at all in the prospect of maybe hiring one in the future. Others were busy or claimed the security reasons and language issue right at the start beginning of the phone call.

For example a middle-sized processing company in South Karelia told they need people that can speak Finnish properly. They are handling materials that can cause danger in case misunderstandings in communication happen. Overall most of the companies contacted and not made appointments with, replied they needed Finnish speaking people working for them. A same kind of short negative answer was also given by a wood industry company from South Karelia.

A manager from banking sector was reached by phone. He said the situation according to hiring international students or workers was hard for the banking sector. Language issues come up as well as in some other businesses. Service has to be conducted in Finnish because of the various customers from different age groups, but also for the security reasons when there is no chance of make mistakes. However, manager told that banking sectors are cooperating with the universities of South Karelia area. Practical trainings, theses and other projects have been conducted by the students, but this is limited to concern only Finnish students. International people have not been hired for the actual work in the bank. Finnish language is a requirement in order to apply for the job. Security issues and serving in Finnish are the main reasons. For example a cashier has to be able to communicate in Finnish with the customers. Any other ways of cooperation, with especially international students, they find the methods difficult to conduct.

6 COMPANY INTERVIEWS

6.1 Granite Development Ltd

The first company interview was made in Granite Development's office with the manager of the company. Granite stone company producing and trading granite is dealing with international trade, concentrated especially on Asian and European countries. The company belongs to Ylämaa Group and is a family-run business that employs around ten people in marketing, selling and exporting granite.

Management people and personnel overall in this company are native Finnish speakers, though not all of them can speak fluent English. They have had an international employee working for the company in the past. Coworkers were satisfied with the worker coming from Asia. The manager of the company also added that the Asian girl hired was internationally invigorating. Communication

in English was not an issue. The Asian girl spoke fluent English and studied Finnish on her spare time.

Importance of learning from foreign culture perspectives had been noticed. Business hoped that the other companies would maybe learn from their experience and realize how educative it could be to hire an international worker. Manager told that international students will be hired for the company also in the near future. Right kind of personality and knowledge that the person can bring of his or her home country's marketing area would be seen as an advantage.

The manager of the company encouraged other businesses to employ international students. He had thought of some perspectives on improving the cooperation between SUAS and the businesses in Lappeenranta area. Those ideas mainly concentrated on improving the connections to the businesses. Seminars and informing meetings for students could be arranged. Contacts between businesses and the SUAS had been in their opinion very scarce. For example information on the Asian girl working for them came through the AIESEC program, not from any of the schools in the area. They saw the AIESEC as a good source of being in touch in the future regarding the recruitment.

Years to come, the granite company would be interested in taking part in those seminars proposed, meetings or intro sessions made for businesses by the SUAS. Shared information between parties would be only useful for both the students and the companies. More contacts or cooperation in future was their wish. This company gave an example of an open minded and future oriented business which has no prejudice of international people and has the will to improve the skills of their own personnel through international co-workers.

6.2 Prisma

A retail and convenience store complex Prisma is located near Lappeenranta's airport. Prisma is part of the S-group, which operates in the entire Finland. Sales in Lappeenranta's Prisma alone per year are close to 72 million euros. About 150 employees working for Prisma alone makes it as one of the largest in Finland.

International students have been working for Prisma mainly during the summertime. Prisma's manager says that positive feedback was received from the other employees according to employing international students. Co-workers did not only learn to use their skills in English, but they also got to know the people and felt that they got to see a glimpse of a different culture as well.

Two of the international students came to Prisma from Holland. These girls were able to do the same tasks as everyone else in the complex. As the manager says, there exists good work with a purpose for everybody in the store. Nobody is placed only to make so called dirty work.

At the moment there are four Russian students from the Saimaa University working at the cashier's point, because they all can speak Finnish. It is clear that in order to communicate with customers at the checkout point, a person needs to know Finnish. For example in sporting, packaging or grocery departments inside the store the serving in Finnish is not the main point. International employees are able to do the same tasks as others, with a little help though. No matter of the nationality or language skills, a person employed needs orientation, foreign students a little more. However, students tend to learn quickly and do not need much additional guidance later on.

Prisma is aware of the possible cooperation methods according to practical training and thesis making, even though they have not had anyone doing so

from the SUAS itself. University of Technology has been using this possibility, but not too many times either. Prisma could be interested in taking part of some cooperation with SUAS according to case works, practical training and other related options. The manager of Prisma says that the group concept EeKoo, which provides economical statistics and banking services for S-group may have provided some of these works and other projects before hand that Prisma is not aware of. As EeKoo consists of many S-group members, there are many chances to contact some department stores or even higher level of management in order to find a job or a place for practical training. The concept consists of 66 different outlets for example of gas station ABC's, Sokos clothing stores, convenience stores and so on.

The manager had noticed that some students are not too happy to apply for basic placements for example working at the cashier. Prisma has offered placements for students that are willing to find any kind of work, even though work was not related of what their major is. Manager especially recommended so called morning hour works for students. Work started at five in the morning and last until the school usually starts at nine. Therefore the school work would not have suffered of the work. Sadly, somehow these morning hour works were not taken too happily among the business administration and technical students. People have been quite selective according to working anywhere at the store and also wished to have jobs at some other times, the manager tells. Storage work is somehow seen as dirty work and not suitable for educated students. However, morning hours from five till nine could be a good step to start working for Prisma and to progress in their career. At these times of recession the manager of Prisma is wondering how even Finnish students do not want to get a job to manage with their monetary situations. It seems that working for the convenience sector is not always perceived that inspiring for the university students. However, Prisma welcomes all job applicants no matter what nationality.

6.3 Lappeenranta Spa

Wellness and Spa Foundation's concentration in Lappeenranta is to expedite the health of the population by offering spa, healthcare and rehabilitation services. Lappeenranta Spa employs about 50 people. The company does not have any experience of the international students as employees but however they might be interested in having some people from abroad in the future.

As the company did not have any experience of the international students, the interview was made in a way that it concentrated on the future aspects of the issue. The interview concentrated especially on how they feel about hiring international people in the future, what might be the challenges, cultural differences, possible pros and cons, opinions and so on.

From the Lappeenranta Spa's everyday business, only spare time and wellness sectors are targeted towards the international markets. Those are the sectors that could consider having a foreign employee. Other sectors of the Spa are divided into serving seniors and rehabilitation where Finnish language is the only language spoken everyday when communicating with customers and personnel. It was obvious that the language issues were seen as a great challenge because of the reasons mentioned above.

Senior managers and managers overall are busy running the company with the capacity they already have. Recession is a difficult issue to the wellness sector as it is for other businesses as well. Less people are running the everyday services and limited monetary sources are making it even harder to run the business. Even though sources are limited, the company was still interested in hearing of various opportunities they might have according to hiring an international student. Practical training, thesis and other obligatory work made for the universities are possible to subcontract. The personnel manager of the Lappeenranta Spa sees the cultural background of the international students as enriching and interesting. Learning something new from the other cultures

would expand the employees own views. In the past, university students have conducted theses for the company but none of those theses were made by the international students.

Hiring an international student is not an option for the company at the moment. Maybe having degree students as employees could be executed in tourism sector in the near future.

Lappeenranta spa had been contacted earlier by SUAS about the employment topic. Although no future cooperation was made after that discussion, awareness of making practical training, case work and so on however exists.

In the future, more information by the school was expected to be offered. Seminars, leaflets etc. would be welcome. The aspect on how to approach each other, the educational institutes and businesses should be thought of. Maybe either the companies should take part in the seminars that school would organize in their property, or the students from schools should visit the company in order to make some contacts with businesses. However, the meetings or seminars should be organized with the content of telling about different opportunities of having a job and trainings or how to the student should contact the business.

6.4 Larox Ltd

One of the most important industrial companies in Lappeenranta, Larox Corporation, the parent company of Larox group, was founded in 1977. Their main goal in the early days was only to export the products they made. Years back the company produced energy saving and environmentally friendly solutions for classification, concentration and filtration processes used in the mining industry. At this time Larox employed 84 people.

Company started growing and for example in 2008 the amount of employees was over 560. Their revenue in 2008 was 208,0 billion euros, from which over 93 percent came outside Finland.

Nowadays their specialization is in developing, designing, manufacturing and supplying industrial filters. Customers come from different fields for example from mining and metallurgy, chemical processing and related industries. Manufacturing facilities are located in Finland and China (Larox 2009).

The interview with Larox's personnel manager was made in order to take a future aspect in the interview. They had been contacted by international students earlier, but they had never thought of closely different options that students could have conducted for the company. Mostly the contacts had concerned the making of theses for the company. Somehow practical training was almost unknown for them. Larox was interested in hearing and thinking about possible cooperation chances with the students and schools in the future.

As some other companies also had mentioned earlier in the interviews, a mentor guiding the employed international student was almost a necessity. A mentor should be educated to help the international person to get adapted into the working life. That costs money and time and therefore it is not even taken into consideration during the times of economical crisis.

However, in the future, cultural differences and international market knowledge brought to the company by the student would be very useful. As well as enriching their own personnel's knowledge about other cultures and ways of doing business would be good to learn from.

Suggestion for the university was that there should be meetings arranged systematically. Maybe already at the beginning of the fall there could be some meetings or information banquets arranged for the students where the company representatives could take part in. Students should be informed better when it would be the time to apply for a job, whom to contact and what kinds of companies to contact when concerning of employment. Also companies should have awareness of the periods when for example the practical training is arranged and held for the students. Therefore the company can prepare to

educate the trainer or mentor for the student applying for the job. Maybe the personnel also can prepare themselves for the possible additional guidance.

SUAS could also tell companies of the possible case works students are able to conduct for the companies. Larox's personnel manager said that the last year had been very difficult. They had not hired summertime workers in 2009 because of the layoffs and the difficult financial situation. They were not sure either about becoming the summer 2010. Recession brings challenges for the businesses, but also for the students.

6.5 Stora Enso

Stora Enso Mills located in Imatra, is a part of the Stora Enso Group, one of the world's largest forest industry companies. Stora Enso is a global manufacturer of paper, packaging and forest products, newsprint and book paper, magazine paper, fine paper, consumer board, industrial packaging and wood products. Imatra mill's sales in total in year 2008 were 11 billion Euros. The Group has 29 000 employees in more than 35 countries worldwide.

Customers mainly come from industries like printing houses, publishing sectors, paper merchants but also from packaging, joinery and construction industries. On their front webpage they tell their main focus to be in new growth markets in China, Latin America and Russia in the future (Stora Enso 2009).

For the past years the company has had some international students as employees, but mainly from schools around the world, only few from the Lappeenranta University of Technology. Some employed foreign people were not students but youngsters with educational background in technical engineering.

International people employed for Stora Enso sent their CV applications straight to personnel manager at the factory. They were chosen to work for the summer

time after their CV's showing some special talent was reviewed. Personnel Manager from Stora Enso emphasized the meaning of that special skill, talent or experience, the person applying for a job has to have. Most important thing is to add some extra value for the company no matter of the nationality. A person having that special something could come from Finland or some other country. However, Stora Enso has had some experience on international students. A paper process student from Brazil had been working for Stora Enso for the last three summers. Selection of the employee was based on the contract made between the Finnish and Brazilian paper industry. The student's English skills were fluent and experience received was positive.

A financial administration student from a Swedish school of economics was doing the practical training for Stora Enso Imatra in 2007. Mostly their experiences in international students as employees have been positive but a little less convenient case emerged in 2008 when a Chinese student applied for a summer job from Stora Enso. This student was employed but some cultural challenges were faced. Decent English skills, no skills in Finnish and lack of communication lead to difficult situations and the employee did not work in the company for too long.

Different stories and experiences, languages skills or not, Stora Enso sees especially summer training as a good start to build up a career for student. International students are not ignored but some difficulties might appear. Lack of skills in the Finnish language might cause security risks because not everybody speaks English. Especially, when there still exist older employees without English skills as majority of the employees. Cultural differences have also caused issues with employment. Working for summer time has not usually caused any issues, but staying for longer periods has affected on their comfortability, especially during winter times. Students have often felt lonely and bored after days at work.

Training an international student for a certain task takes also time and money. There should always be someone acquainting the person into working life. That time would be taken of one person's own tasks. Otherwise an extra person should be employed and that could be expensive especially during the times of recession. In case the international person to be hired is open minded and willing to get involved with the surroundings, other employees may find it easier to get closer to this person and work with him/her.

The company being well-known for its international operations, especially international students could be placed as part time workers studying some marketing area of the country they know well. For example in this case if Stora Enso was willing to penetrate some country or do a marketing study, international student coming from the place could help with language, cultural manners and knowledge of the country.

Schools in general should be more aware of the cultural backgrounds and how that affects on the working life. International students should be trained by the school before entering the working life on how the Finnish culture is like, how the employment works, language skills and overall training should be provided to the student to understand the whole working culture. Workshops, in class training etc. could be helpful. Even native Finnish speakers have hard times getting employed at these times, therefore international students are asked to show something special in them. By showing some special talent, knowledge or enthusiasm often helps to be employed. However, personal abilities are more important than nationality.

6.6 Summary of Interviewed Businesses

The interviews were conducted with a relaxed manner which was helpful since real opinions and comments surfaced in them. The interviewed companies agreed on most matters. The company representatives all saw international students as a potential workforce that could really help especially internationally

operating businesses. They also had very similar ideas on the negative aspects of hiring an international student.

It seems like no matter of the branch, same issues and challenges are faced in every business. Recession is affecting everybody. Layoffs, closures of the factories, lack of product orders etc. are the main dilemmas that will be faced for at least a couple of years to come. The need for summer workers is at its lowest level for decades.

Employing new people, especially international ones is a challenge for employers. Special talents and linguistic skills are seen as a good thing, but language issues are almost always in the way. Finnish language seems to be insuperable demand in most of the cases. In case the company is operating in the public sector, it is quite obvious that the Finnish language is needed. For example, elderly people in most cases do not speak English and communication in Finnish is vital. Also security issues might cause some problems at work, but mainly that should not be a problem. Non-Finnish speakers could be placed doing different tasks where maybe communication with customers is not needed.

Every interviewed business expressed their willingness to maybe trying to find flexible solutions for hiring international students in the future. The companies wished to have more interaction with the students and the school and agreed that finding employment for the international students benefits all sides in this issue.

7 STUDENT INTERVIEWS

7.1 Saimaa University of Applied Sciences

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences operates in Lappeenranta and Imatra, South Eastern Finland. There are two campuses in Lappeenranta and the

University can be found from three locations in Imatra. SUAS has bachelor's degree programs in Technology, Business Administration, Tourism and Hospitality, Health Care and Fine Art and Design and has all together approximately 3000 students with the majority of 39% studying technology. The second biggest degree sector is Business with 26% of students. The university has a staff of approximately 280 people.

There are 18 different degree programs that lead to a Bachelor's degree. Four of these degrees are conducted entirely in English; Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, International Business and Tourism. Each of the programs has an intake of approximately 20 students, international business being an exception with 40 students, starting each year so that makes about 120 international students every fall starting their studies (Saimaa University of Applied Sciences 2009a)

7.2 Interview Process

It was important for the applicability of the thesis to interview different kinds of international students from Saimaa University. From the unit operating in Kimpinen campus interviews were made with the new International Business students and second year Mechanical Engineering students. The students of International Business that started their studies 2009 were a group of many nationalities and interviews were made with Russian, Vietnamese, American, and British students.

The Mechanical Engineering group was a lot more homogeneous since the majority of the students there came from the African continent. Still, in the interviews there were people from Nigeria, Ghana, Nepal and Russia. Interviews were also made in the Imatra unit where students from Paper Processing and Tourism were interviewed. Chemical Engineering students were third year students and Tourism students were mostly first year students. These two groups included students from Nepal, Nigeria and Russia.

Student interviews started off with interviewing first year International Business students. All together 10 students from International Business were interviewed; this included people from Russia, United Kingdom, Vietnam, Germany and United States/Finland.

During the interviews there was a questionnaire from where questions could be asked from the students and the interviews were recorded so that time wouldn't have to be spent to writing down answers and comments. The questionnaire is attached (appendix number 1).

7.3 Interviews with International Business Students

The interviews were conducted in the premises of SUAS. The interviews with International Business students were scheduled through their law teacher by having a short briefing about of theses during his classes. After having described the thesis to the class volunteers were asked for the interviews. During this, about 10 people were selected randomly to the list of interviewees. In order to use time efficiently people were interviewed in groups of two or three people.

The limiting aspects when interviewing IB students was the fact that they had just started their studies and most of them had arrived in Finland just a couple of months earlier. They did not have much experience on the life in here or working here. Also some of the students were very young; we interviewed a few students that were only 17-18 years old who had just graduated from high school and had never worked. This influenced the answers, since e.g. their future plans were still very unclear.

Some of the older students had an extensive working background, and one student had already worked in Finland. He felt that finding a job was not that difficult, but this was probably due to his specific education. In the interviews of first year International Business students the thing that came across strongly

with almost every student interviewed, was their willingness to work while studying. A majority of the students wanted to have a part time job. A couple of students were a bit more specific and preferred a part time job that had to do with either international business or with their previous education but some were also ready to accept a part time job that would have nothing to do with their education. The students that had been in the country for longer said that it is difficult for them to find a part time job and simultaneously they admitted that they did not really try to find a job that seriously or hard.

The majority of the students seemed pleased with the city and had a positive attitude towards staying here after graduation. Still, not all of the first year international business students were pleased with the relatively small city. One student said that if he was to stay in Finland, he would probably move to Helsinki region. A few students also wished to have a more international career in the future and maybe continue studies in some other country.

All thought that help from school would be welcome; one student said that he actually expects to get help from school when searching for a job. Also other opinions emerged. One student said that help from school would be good but it would be too hard for the school to help all.

Instead of picking just a few students to help the school should rather step back and do nothing.

In this same interview a platform on the Internet was suggested as a solution that could help to link students, school and the working life together. The platform would act as a link between school, students and companies that could announce on available jobs, people searching for work, available topics for theses and such.

7.4 Interviews with Mechanical Engineering Students

Interviews with mechanical engineering students were scheduled in a more spontaneous manner, when their teacher just announced the upcoming interviews in their class room. People were interviewed in groups of two in the same manner as with international business students. The students interviewed were second year students so they had been in the country for approximately one and a half years. Almost all of them had job experience from Finland, and everyone that had had a job here had worked for Itella delivering subscribed newspapers in the mornings.

All the interviewed mechanical engineering students said that it is really hard to find a job in here. In order to get their double degree diploma (a year of their studies is completed in Horsens, Denmark) they must complete their practical training, and it is very hard for them to find placements to get the points for practical training. Only one student from Nepal mentioned racism as a reason for not getting a job easily, but he did not elaborate further on his experiences of racism.

The main problem in finding jobs here in their opinion was the language requirements.

The first thing they ask is if you speak Finnish.

It is not enough from the students that they speak fluent English, Finnish language is required for jobs where you have to interact with co-workers or customers. The Finnish language also came across as a really hard language to learn to nearly all of the students. Two of the students interviewed said that they speak a little or understand a little Finnish, others referred to their skills in Finnish as 'poor'. When asked, students said that in order to get a job here they would be motivated to study more Finnish.

One student seemed almost bitter since he felt that the international students are not even tried to integrate into the Finnish society in any way, he felt that they are left amongst each other here. One other student also felt that international students are isolated here in school since there is no interaction between Finnish students and international students.

Every student interviewed said that they would be happy to receive some kind of help from the school since it is so difficult to find the compulsory placements for practical training. Students felt that they had not received any help from school; some said that teachers had informed them that they could apply for jobs but without further information or explanations.

Some students said that they were interested in staying in the country after graduation, but since the future regarding finding a job here did not look so bright to any of the interviewees they did not have plans of staying yet.

If after graduation I find myself doing nothing, I will leave.

7.5 Interview with Chemical Engineering Students

Interviews with paper processing students were held in Imatra in the same manner as the interviews made in Lappeenranta. Four people of Nigerian and Nepali nationality were selected to be interviewed. The students had been in the country for approximately two and a half years. Three out of four of the students interviewed had been working in Finland, for Itella delivering newspapers and also doing cleaning work. In their own evaluating only 10% of International students in their degree program are working. All of the students interviewed had been looking for jobs, and had similar experiences especially when it came to companies turning down their applications.

Everybody say the same thing like: 'puhutteko te suomea' like smooth Finnish. And when we speak broken Finnish they say it won't work.

One interviewed student said that companies tend to say that security problems are the reasons why they cannot hire foreigners; also a driver's license was requested often. Also it was common to further the student from one person to another and delay the process of finding a job this way.

Somehow I think it is a little bit annoying, you want to clean, you don't need Finnish. So I just think it is (demanding skills in the Finnish language) a diplomatic way to not give us the jobs.

One student told about a disappointing experience that he had, when he contacted a cleaning company in Lappeenranta. The person who he called refused to speak English but the student was able to speak a bit of Finnish and understood that the person from the cleaning company asked, if he had Finnish nationality. When the answer was no, the conversation was through.

Nearly all of the students interviewed were going to return to their home country since it is impossible for them to find a practice period placement and do their compulsory practice in order to graduate. The students also wondered why the university promotes their good connections to the business world and to the local paper companies especially if there is no cooperation in practice.

Yeah we have lots of contacts but they don't wanna hire us. They are telling us we need a Finnish worker, you need to speak Finnish.

They told they have cooperation with the companies but in a year we go there just for a coffee.

It's not impossible from the school to talk to some of these the people offering jobs outside the school.

I am kind of sure and optimistic that the school will do something about this.

The Chemical Engineering students also told that some of the students have had to leave school in order to find a job. The social life needs improvement in their opinion. Imatra is a very quiet city for them, and amongst the students they see a friction when it comes to Finnish people. The international students feel isolated from Finnish students. It is difficult to become a friend to a Finnish student, and they seem to be unwilling to talk to international students.

Everybody should try to relax.

The atmosphere...the students...it would be just fine if we would try mix up and do things together.

7.6 Interviews with Tourism Students

Interviews with Tourism students were also held in Imatra as well as the Mechanical Student interviews mentioned earlier. Arranging the interviews with tourism students took some time. At first the idea was to reach the degree students that had experienced living in Finland for at least two years. After many e-mails and arranging the timetables that would match the students schedule the only chance was to interview the first year students.

However, the first year students were happy to be in part of this thesis and hoped it will also give some aspect for them in the future. Three of the interviewed first year students were from Russia and one student was from Nepal. The first year students were sharing their opinions and ideas by the fact that they had a little experience on working and living in Finland. They

perceived the future regarding employment brighter than students in the previous interviews, possibly due to their limited experience of job seeking. They also expressed their willingness to get more international experiences by for example doing their practical training abroad.

In addition, these first year students we were able to give an e-mail contact of a third year tourism student from Russia who had very positive experiences on finding a place to work in Finland. Currently she works in a hotel and told that the job was not hard to find but she felt very lucky for finding the job. She also told that she feels very welcome among her coworkers. When asking if she felt that she was maybe discriminated in some way when applying for her current job she replied:

No, I have never felt discriminated anyhow there! Even when applying for this job, I was welcomed and all of my colleagues were very nice to me.

7.7 Summary of the Student Interviews

It is especially tough for international students to find a job, even for the summer period or for the mandatory training. At the moment even native Finnish speakers are not hired easily for the jobs because of the layoffs and other difficulties caused by the recession. Therefore it is not surprising that foreigners are having even harder times in finding a job.

Some of the students interviewed seemed contents with the situation; some were clearly disappointed of the lack of jobs. One interviewed paper processing student made a great remark when he pointed out, that the international students are here to study, not to work. He continued by adding that since Finland is such an expensive country, a part time job might be the only way to stay in the country and to stay in school.

Even if the students might manage to live here for the time it takes to complete their degree program, the difficulties start when the compulsory training should be completed in order to graduate. Students told in the interviews that it is not uncommon to return to their native countries to get these points necessary to complete the training.

The students that started their studies this fall seemed more optimistic about the employment situation where as the students that had been seeking for jobs for a longer time were on more realistic grounds. The students expressed their unwillingness to stay in the country unless they find a job that appeal as meaningful to them.

The thing that was mentioned in every interview was the fact that skills in the Finnish language were demanded for almost every job available, even for cleaning work. Also other reasons not to hire international degree students given by companies were related to the language barrier. For example they had been told that working as a non-Finnish speaker at the operator level of a certain factory might be a security threat and cause alarming situations. This also came up in the company interviews. The language barrier seems to be the biggest issue that affects employment of international students, as the article by Iltalehti that was referred to in the introduction part stated.

8 SUMMARY

The purpose of the thesis was to find out why international students have difficulties in applying and finding a work in South Karelia. The research made showed that the employment situation of international students is quite poor and causes frustration for the students. International students have a good image of the Finnish education. International students are highly educated in the system and almost forced after graduation to return to their home countries because of

unemployment. Many of them also found it hard to find a working place that matches with their education.

The previous studies and theses made on similar topics reinforced the results from the interviews. International students are difficult to employ and skills in Finnish language are extremely important especially when it comes to interacting with customers and working in a service sector (Karadag & Kokko Haaga-Helia 2008).

At the same time businesses are maybe too easily prone to making explanations of the employment situation. Companies have expectations of making their business successful. That need is to be fulfilled and necessarily foreign workers do not meet their expectations. Employing an international student takes more time and money than educating a Finnish student into the working life. Lack in language skills, different cultural background etc could cause inconvenient situations.

Most of the businesses around the world are struggling in the economical situation, but interviewed students sometimes felt that the recession was used as an explanation so that businesses do not have to explain why they are not employing foreigners. The recession is hitting the businesses hard and it must be difficult even keeping the operations running at the present level, not to even speak of expanding. Keeping the old employees is surely a priority when it comes to recruitment and human resources instead of seeking new employees. Rising up of the recession takes effort from businesses. Every situation, order, exporting and other business procedures needs to be considered and usage of resources counted carefully. But in order to get back in the business and stay competitive, companies cannot lie down and wait for the better days. Also a group of people that started working in the rising times of industrial sector in 1940's are retiring in couple of years. This so called Pension Bomb is predicted to be exploding around 2010. Young people are those who are needed to fulfill

the empty spots, and also they are the ones with newest education and market knowledge (Wikipedia 2009b).

International know-how could support the businesses in their international activities and offer something new into the working environment. Some of the companies have already noticed the value that international employees can bring with them, but some still cannot find the diversity in their staff as useful and use foreigners' knowledge received from the Finnish education as an additional aspect to the businesses. Obviously companies that operate entirely domestically do not even have that special need for that additional cultural experience; however some businesses would benefit of that greatly. For example the market knowledge of the international person's home country would certainly be beneficial if the company wished to cooperate with other companies of that country in any way.

All in all, many companies were interested in the topic and interviews were conducted in a positive spirit. Good suggestions and feedback was also received from the businesses side. Students were mostly complaining about the situation, but even all of the companies were not aware of the different possibilities they could have done with the international student either. Both interviewed students and companies gave suggestions on how to improve the situation.

During the interviews of companies some issues noticed by them came up. One thing was that school had been in touch with some of them before, but not too many students have contacted them in reality. Misunderstanding from both sides could have happened. Students were saddened by the situation. They mentioned that they sometimes even thought before applying for a job that they were not going to get employed and did not even try to apply for work. Those who tried received the answer mentioned already before, the language skill requirements.

Another thing was that companies wanted students to understand that hiring a non-Finnish speaking person takes time and money because the person needs to have someone training them for the work. Companies still hoped students keep on trying to find work. The recession will not last forever and things may change in a while.

Companies were not sure how well the students are helped by the university in order to find work, but they mentioned that school should, unless they do not do yet, help students to send applications for example for summer jobs in certain times of the year. Application for summer jobs should be handed in already in the beginning of the spring semester, not after Easter. Therefore companies will have more time to choose the people they need and consider also of hiring international people. Seminars should be also held, so that companies have an image what international students can do. Seminars would be useful for both parties in getting information of the whole employment process. Maybe students could even meet the personnel managers and leave their CV's for them.

Interviewed companies had all an important meaning for the area's economy no matter of the size or branch of the company. Some of them were large corporations, some exporting widely and some having a huge impact on the area itself. Their help and answers with positive feedback was important for building up a research of the employment situation. Most of the companies interviewed had no experience or very little experience of international students as employees and therefore the future aspect was taken in account when interviewing them. It seems that not all of the companies knew of all the possibilities of utilizing international students as work force. Practical training and writing theses for companies are known methods of cooperating with students, but for example case works are randomly recognized ways of working and gaining experience of working with companies.

SUAS is willing to help students, but the effort made towards helping international students in this issue is quite minor at the moment according to the students interviewed. Students expressed in the interviews that they have not noticed significant help from the school when trying to get employed. Teachers have told students to eagerly look for places to work, but as non-Finnish speakers students may not even know the cultural manners of applying a job in the country. Some students told in the interviews that they had send CV's but had not received any answers afterwards. Finnish students have learned that the person applying for a job needs to call the company afterwards in many cases. Ways for applying jobs vary from one culture to another and therefore more information should be systematically given to the students.

The students wished that the university would be more active on the matter of employment and that it would act more as a link between students and the companies. Companies also wanted the school to be active, but the thing they especially wanted the school to do was to educate the international students to know about the Finnish culture, Finnish working life and work ethics and so on. The companies also expressed their willingness to employ students that have skills in the Finnish language or are able to show some special talent that stands out of the crowd.

Suggestions for Improvement on the Employment Situation

SUAS was the party that noticed this topic needs to be studied in the South Karelia area. The issue with unemployment is not a simple issue to be fixed in a short time. Any fast changes are obviously not expected, however things happening around the international students' employment need to be improved. By making the situation better in the future, South Karelia and SUAS will be able to maintain the students and make sure they keep on coming to study in the area.

The international students said in the interviews that they feel isolated and that they were not integrated into the Finnish way of life in any way. SUAS could start making improvements by making changes on their web pages that are targeted for international students. The web pages leave out the habits and way of living in Finland. Characteristics and habits that Finnish people, especially the Finnish students have could be mentioned for the international students. Humorous way of writing could be used so that the international students could face the facts but in a positive way.

What some of the interviewed students had noticed was the fact that getting to know Finnish students was complicated. The usual stereotype of Finns is that they behave in a proper way in any circumstance and expect courteous behavior. People are also said to be quiet and talk in moderate way. Friends are important but people are satisfied with having only few of them. No wonder international students feel isolated sometimes; getting friends from Finnish students was in their experience difficult (Kwintessential 2009).

On the website for the upcoming international students provided by the SUAS, is some information of things to consider before arriving in the country and the SUAS. The page covers well the basic weather condition information, gives feedback on how to dress up especially for the winter, helps with visa questions and healthcare, has a guidance to convenience stores and so on, but does not describe for example the cultural manners, how people behave in Finland and gives no information on the working situations (Saimaa University of Applied Sciences 2009b).

Students also felt that they had difficulties in adapting the culture because no help was received from the Finnish students. International students usually stay on their own, because Finnish students rather spend time with their own friends at the school and on their spare time. Therefore the help received from the school is emphasized. As a feedback from the students, during the orientation

week organized for the freshmen, seminars regarding to the Finnish culture should be organized. Description of the native students' habits, way of living and how to integrate into the culture was the information that international students wanted to hear.

Other thing international students were wondering, was that why SUAS is not able to offer exact connections to the business world. People from different companies have seminars at school, but as the students put it in words, only coffee is offered, no work. Students did not expect to have a place organized for them exactly, but for example help in making the job application in a Finnish style was desired. International students may expect getting response and receive no answer. Frustration is the word many interviewed international students used when they were describing the application process. To help in this issue, the seminars mentioned above might be helpful. In the interviews the students wished that there would be a platform in the Internet acting as a link between students, the university and the companies.

How the Objectives Were Met in This Thesis

The thesis presents well how the companies and students feel about the issue of employment of international students as well as how the students themselves perceive their employment situation. For the SUAS it is certainly important to get information on how the international students feel about the help coming from the university, how they feel they have been treated and how isolated they feel from the rest of the students. These issues that came up in the interviews give much to think about and to improve on for SUAS.

The SUAS can through this thesis see the situation through both students' and employees' points of view. Little steps can be taken in order to integrate the students more in to the Finnish way of life, and way of job seeking. The students according to interviews would be more than happy to participate in

extracurricular activities that would educate them about how to look for jobs and similar topics.

The thesis also shows that the cooperation's between companies and SUAS isn't tangible from the students' perspective. Companies and the SUAS may be able to work on these issues and broaden the cooperation between the Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, students and local companies.

The thesis was made to serve the SUAS students and the SUAS itself. However this study could be taken further in order to serve the Lappeenranta University of Technology. The universities are located in the same county and the that makes the employment situation almost identical for the students of these two universities. The students are in this sense at least partly competing for the same jobs.

The thesis could be useful in other universities too, especially to universities of applied sciences. There are 27 universities of applied sciences in Finland, and also one in Åland (Wikipedia 2009b). Same issues are faced especially in smaller cities and universities as well. The study made by Karadag and Kokko (2008) also showed that the situation is not that much different in the capital city area.

Some positive changes according to employment of international students will hopefully be seen in the future. Economical situation must be heading towards better times sooner or later, also attitudes change overtime. Due to these inevitable changes, the employment of international students will improve in the future.

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QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR BUSINESSES (FUTURE APPROACH)

Background information for the interviewer

Yrityksen toimiala
(What is the field of your business)

Yrityksen koko
(Size of the company)

Haastateltava henkilö
(The interviewee)

Saako käyttää yrityksen nimeä valmiissa työssä?
(Is it possible to use the name of the business in the finished thesis?)

1. Onko tiellä ollut viimeisen viiden vuoden aikana kv-opiskelijaa työntekijänä?
For the past five years, have you had an international student as an employee?
2. Miksi ei ole ollut? *Why haven't you had international students as employees?*
3. Onko teihin otettu yhteyttä koskaan aiemmin tämän asian tiimoilta? Opiskelijoiden tai kouluuyhteisön taholta?
Have you been contacted by students or by the school regarding this matter?
4. Voisitko harkita työllistävänne KV-opiskelijoita?
Would you consider employing international students?
5. Oletteko tietoinen eri työhönottomahdollisuuksista, Esim. työharjoittelu (palkaton/palkallinen), harjoitustyöt, opinnäytetyöt? Oletteko millään tavalla hyödyntäneet näitä/harkinneet hyödyntävänne näitä? *Are you aware of the different possibilities of employing a student, practical training, thesis etc?*
6. Mitä haasteita koette kv-opiskelijan palkkaamisessa olevan?
What challenges do you experience in employing foreign students?

7. Mitä hyötyjä näkisitte kv-opiskelijan palkkaamisessa?
Pro's?

8. Haluaisitteko saada tietoa/apua opiskelijoiden palkkaamisesta/
työharjoittelusta tulevaisuudessa? Lisätietoa koulun taholta?
*Would you like to receive more information of employing students in the future?
additional information regarding these matters directly from the school?*

Thank you!

QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Type of study:

- Open interview
- Questions made in advance, easier for both the interviewer and student to follow
- Purpose is to get basic information of the foreign student, find out opinions, ideas, attitudes etc.
- Oral interview in order to save persons time, our time when not writing, chances to hear something interesting

Questions:

1. Where are you from?
2. Age?
3. What languages do you speak?
4. How long have you lived here?
5. What is your major?
6. Are you working (while studying) or in work practice?
 - a) If yes..
 - Where?
work?
 - For how long?
place to work?
 - Where did you find the
a job interview?
Place to work at?
 - Was the place difficult to
find?
 - b) If not working..
 - Why not? Would you like to
work?
 - Have you been looking for a
 - Have you been able to enter
 - Has the school been
involved? Helped you?

- Did you get any salary?
 - Did they offer you employment at the end of the practice?
 - Did you accept the job they offered?
7. Would you like to work in a local company?
 8. What kind of job would you be ready to do?
 9. Would you be ready to study Finnish in order to get a job?
 10. Would you like to get some help from school in order to get a job?
 11. Any comments or something to tell?

Thank you for your time!

INTERVIEWED BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

10.11.2009	Ylämaa Granite
12.11.2009	Prisma
	Etelä-Karjalan Yrittäjät (South Karelia Entrepreneurs)
19.11.2009	Lappeenranta Spa
20.11.2009	Larox
26.11.2009	Stora Enso