

**Riikka Vanhanen
Helli Kitinoja
Jyrki Holappa
(Eds.)**

**Finnish Universities
of Applied Sciences**
on the Verge of a New Era

**Value, viability
and visibility of
international
education**



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RIIKKA VANHANEN, HELLI KITINOJA & JYRKI HOLAPPA (EDS.)

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VALUE, VIABILITY AND VISIBILITY OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION



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FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES
ON THE VERGE OF A NEW ERA
Value, Viability and Visibility of International Education

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CONTENT

| | |
|----------------|---|
| ABSTRACT | 7 |
| FOREWORD | 8 |

INTRODUCTION

| | |
|---|----|
| Riikka Vanhanen UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES ON THE VERGE OF A NEW SITUATION..... | 12 |
|---|----|

INTRODUCTION OF TUITION FEES: EXPECTATIONS AND ACTIONS

| | |
|--|----|
| Sanni Grahn-Laasonen INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMMES AT FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES AT THE HEART OF GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION ... | 20 |
|--|----|

| | |
|---|----|
| Per A. Nilsson THE SWEDISH EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY | 25 |
|---|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Riikka Vanhanen, Helli Kitinoja & Jyrki Holappa UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES' JOINT WORK GROUP ON TUITION FEES: RETHINKING THE ROLES OF STUDENTS AND HEIS..... | 32 |
|--|----|

CONSIDERING THE SELLING POINTS OF FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION

| | |
|--|----|
| Riikka Vanhanen COUNTRY IMAGE SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT | 50 |
|--|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Helli Kitinoja & Riikka Vanhanen PROMOTION OF FINNISH EDUCATION – VIEWS FROM EDUCATION EXPORTERS | 56 |
|--|----|

| | |
|---|----|
| Heikki Malinen, Aila Paloniemi & Heikki Pusa HOW TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY FOR UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES? | 67 |
|---|----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| Elina Vanhemping | |
| KAZAKHSTAN'S TRAJECTORY IN INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS OF SEINÄJOKI AND SEAMK..... | 79 |
| Marko Luoma | |
| FOREIGN STUDENTS' AND EMPLOYEES' EXPERIENCES ABOUT INTERNSHIPS AND ENTERING THE JOB MARKET IN FINLAND | 81 |
| H.E Mr. Bonny Haufiku | |
| INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND – REFLECTIONS FROM THE NAMIBIAN PERSPECTIVE..... | 85 |
| THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES ON THE EFFECTS OF TUITION FEES | |
| Riikka Vanhanen, Jyrki Holappa & Helli Kitinoja | |
| FEE-BASED EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES – GEARING UP FOR NEW SERVICES AND PROCESSES..... | 90 |
| Juha Vierola | |
| THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TUITION FEES AND SCHOLARSHIP CRITERIA AT VAASA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES..... | 103 |
| Kaisa Merilahti | |
| STUDENT-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE ON PREPARING FOR TUITION FEES..... | 108 |
| Tea Vellamo | |
| THE INTRODUCTION OF TUITION FEES PROMPTS PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS | 114 |
| Kimmo Kuortti | |
| OF TRIAL AND ERROR: TUITION FEES AND THE CHANGING FUNCTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN FINLAND | 120 |
| CONCLUSIONS | 125 |
| AUTHORS..... | 128 |

ABSTRACT

Riikka Vanhanen, Helli Kitinoja & Jyrki Holappa (Eds.)
Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences on the Verge of a New Era
Value, Viability and Visibility of International Education
(Publications of JAMK University of Applied Sciences, 236)

The introduction of tuition fees for non-EU/EEA citizens in Finnish higher education institutions' (HEI) English-taught degree programmes challenges the HEIs to plan new processes and reconsider their service provision. The charging of tuition fees also marks the HEIs' entering into global education markets with a new way, creating a need to review their competitive position and international visibility. How to ensure the smooth implementation of international student marketing and recruitment and enhance the attractiveness of Finnish higher education?

The third publication of the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) delves into these topics with a focus on universities of applied sciences' (UAS) undertakings on the verge of a new situation. The articles provide descriptions of the expectations regarding the effects of tuition fees on UASs' international education as well as serve as examples of the concrete measures taken by the Finnish HEIs in preparing for the changing policy.

The articles, written by representatives of Finnish HEIs and their various interest groups both in Finland and internationally, offer versatile views regarding the current state, future aims and further development needs of international education in Finland. The reflections generate ideas for identifying the selling points of Finnish higher education and stress the importance of national cooperation in the pursuit of effective communication of the competitive factors.

Keywords: Universities of Applied Sciences, International Degree Programmes, Tuition Fees, Education Export, International Marketing, International Student Recruitment, Country Image, Development of Education

FOREWORD

FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES DRIVING EDUCATION EXPORT

International competence and international networks are a natural part of the operations of universities of applied sciences. In recent years, the diverse role of education export and the demand for international expertise have grown increasingly stronger in the global economy – and in higher education institutions too. Globally speaking, Finnish education and competence enjoy an excellent reputation. In particular, our teacher education and expertise in the social and health care sector attract interest on the international market. In addition to this, education export also reinforces the competence of Finnish students of universities of applied sciences.

The internationalisation of Finnish higher education is constantly developing in a positive direction. In the past ten years, universities of applied sciences have learned a great deal about the international market. The staff of universities of applied sciences have been actively involved in international collaboration between higher education institutions, teacher exchange programmes and RDI cooperation. A shared goal is to make the Finnish education system and expertise within our universities of applied sciences a strong global export product. Our positive experiences have encouraged us to develop, and globally, Finnish education is perceived as a positive brand.

In order to reinforce our education export even further, several universities of applied sciences have included objectives relating to collaborative campuses in their strategies – including virtual campuses. Strong strategic partnerships ensure that the competence of Finnish universities of applied sciences will be more and more involved in the development of the entire education system. Our international partners from working and business life, global organisations and companies are also a part of the international education export networks of universities of applied sciences.

Universities of applied sciences cannot avoid international competition in the field of education export. In our globalised world, we compete for students and expertise as well as financial resources. For this reason, education export and the multicultural competence economy are significant development processes also in the world of Finnish higher education. The universities of

applied sciences have bravely accepted this challenge by introducing, in 2017, tuition fees for foreign-language degree programmes for international students from outside the EU and EEA countries.

This publication provides an extensive picture of the openings and experiences of Finnish universities of applied sciences in the development of internationalisation and education export, as well as of their cooperation with the different interest groups in this new situation. I hope that the articles, experiences and best practices in this publication encourage the management and staff of universities of applied sciences to boldly seize the opportunities provided by education export, whether it be the development of international degree programmes subject to tuition fees or other openings within the field of education export. With their operations, universities of applied sciences enhance multiculturalism, international expertise and competitiveness in Finnish society. This work requires extensive cooperation, both between the different universities of applied sciences, as well as on a wider scale, between all operators in the education sector.

Tapio Varmola

Chairman of Rector's Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences,
ARENE ry

INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES ON THE VERGE OF A NEW SITUATION

Riikka Vanhanen

Since its establishment at the end of 2009, the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) has worked hard for and succeeded in bringing universities of applied sciences (UAS) together to jointly develop and implement the recruitment process of foreign students to their English-taught degree programmes. The solid evolvement of the network from an entrance exam organiser to a wide-ranging cooperation platform for enhancing the visibility and overall internationalisation of Finnish UASs has been demonstrated in various ways in both national- and UAS-level work groups, meetings and events over the years. Furthermore, descriptions of the concrete activities regarding the development of student selection processes and international marketing, as well as the organisation of cooperation within the UASs and their numerous interest groups, have been thoroughly showcased in the two previous FINNIPS publications (Vanhanen, Kitinoja & Holappa 2013; Vanhanen, Kitinoja & Pääskylä 2015). The network's third publication continues along with the tradition by bringing out the current phenomena influencing the UAS's international education and by reflecting these phenomena in light of the development and cooperation activities carried out within FINNIPS.

In the context of this publication, the uppermost matter and topical phenomenon is the introduction of tuition fees to students coming from outside the EU/EEA to study in Finnish higher education institutions' (HEI) English-taught Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes. Though the prospect of tuition fees was already known for some years (see e.g. Vanhanen 2015, 16–17), it was the legislation (L 1601/2015) coming into force at the beginning of 2016 that ignited action in HEIs. Questions regarding the effects of tuition fees on HEIs' English-taught degree programmes and generally, the threats and possibilities revolving around the sphere of fee-based education rose into the discussion with new force and intensity.

The role of the FINNIPS network, amidst the increasing interest in finding answers to the open questions brought about with the introduction of tuition fees, has been to both follow the discussion and take actively part in it. In accordance with this, the articles of the publication will open up the tuition fee

related discussion and its premises from different standpoints. Furthermore, it will describe the role and activities of FINNIPS in seeking to support Finnish UASs on the verge of the new situation.

PREPARING FOR THE TUITION FEES

The legislation sets a framework for fee-charging education by, for example, regulating the minimum level of the tuition fee to €1500 per academic year and by obliging higher education institutions to have scholarship schemes to support the fee-paying students (*ibid.*). However, many practicalities regarding the issue are to be defined and organised by the HEIs in the name of their autonomy. Accordingly, HEIs are required to plan and outline the level of tuition fees within their different degree programmes as well as to set up a system for awarding scholarships. These actions necessitate not only the creation of payment systems to technically charge the fees but also profound consideration as to the rules and principles of the fees and scholarships.

It is obvious that the HEIs cannot do all this in isolation, but the considerations are carried out by acknowledging the operational environment both at the national and international levels. Furthermore, instead of mulling over the processes individually, it is possible for the HEIs to engage in the planning and defining of the new practices in cooperation with other HEIs.

The FINNIPS network has had an active role within the UAS sector in acquiring and spreading information about tuition fee related matters. FINNIPS played a pivotal part in summoning a work group to systematically discuss and deal with the topics jointly between the UASs. The work conducted within the tuition fee work group has contributed to the planning of the various processes regarding fee charging and scholarship granting. Within its work, the group has also sought to acknowledge and analyse the wider operational environment affecting the tuition fee related decision-making and practices of the Finnish UASs. Accordingly, the aim of the UASs' tuition fee work group has been to support the UASs in preparing for the tuition fees by providing them with up-to-date information and analysis about various topics related to the theme.

In addition to the work of the tuition fee work group and the attempts to inform the UASs about the tuition fee related issues, FINNIPS has also made systematic efforts with regard to compiling information about the UASs' views and experiences on the changing situation. In spring 2017, the FINNIPS network commissioned three Bachelor's theses to support this

work. The theses that were made by the International Business students from Oulu University of Applied Sciences were based on surveys directed to different actors within the network's UASs. The aim of the surveys was to find out how the tuition fees were experienced at the UASs, what kind of effects they would have on the measures of international marketing and how the current foreign students already studying within our UASs saw their experience thus far.

The survey conducted by Emma Mansikkamäki and Jenni Kuronen about the effects of tuition fees on UASs will be introduced later on in the opening article of the third chapter. Furthermore, the marketing-related survey conducted by Sameer Khadka as well as the survey mapping the current students' experiences of studying and living in Finland carried out by Olga Konstantinova and Patricia Virsinger have formed an important information source for many of the articles drawn up by the editors of this publication. In addition, the survey data will serve the further development work of the network.

Overall, the tuition fee work group's outputs as well as the other measures of systematic information creation and sharing will be introduced and widely discussed in this publication, with an aim of creating an account of the preparatory work conducted before the introduction of the tuition fees.

CALL FOR A NEW TOUCH TO INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

Parallel to the processes pondered within the tuition fee work group, another crucially important topic that has been acknowledged with a new intensity in the wake of tuition fees is the international marketing of Finnish higher education. Until now, the tuition-free higher education has undoubtedly been among the main attraction factors of Finnish HEIs. Along with the changing policy, the HEIs need to consider their strategies and measures regarding the international student marketing and recruitment from a new basis.

The FINNIPS network has been actively conducting international marketing of the Finnish UASs' English-taught degree programmes for over seven years, within which the measures have been constantly evaluated and further developed. The target markets and areas have been carefully considered in the selection process of the entrance exam countries. The best means and channels of marketing have been chosen for the sake of reaching the intended target groups. The effects and results of the marketing efforts have been monitored and actively analysed. Overall, the systematic and continuous marketing activities in selected countries, along with the introduction of

new tools and channels of communication, have without a doubt greatly contributed to the increased visibility of Finnish UASs and their English-taught degree programmes. Accordingly, it is important to acknowledge the role and significance of the work already conducted by FINNIPS now that the UASs are starting to pay increasingly more attention to international marketing efforts conducted also on their own.

In order to support the UASs in the planning and implementation of effective measures of international marketing and student recruitment, this publication seeks to introduce and analyse some of the core components that contribute to the creation of our competitive edge. The articles deal with the role and use of country image in international student marketing and aim at recognising the main selling points of Finnish higher education. Generally, the idea is to provide both conceptual and practical tools as well as new insights to support and develop UASs' international marketing.

TOGETHER OR NOT TOGETHER?

The introduction of tuition fees has brought about yet another central question to be answered: How is all the aforementioned work regarding the creation of new processes and intensified marketing efforts done? Are there mutual visions about the needed actions between the different HEIs, or is this the moment for the HEIs to seek to strive on their own?

Along with the fee-based education, the Finnish HEIs are competing for foreign students with a myriad of HEIs all over the world. In global markets, the competition is evident and at its best it sparks the Finnish HEIs to active development and innovation work to ensure the attractiveness of their education provision. Aside from the international competition, it is worth considering what happens between the HEIs in Finland. It can be deemed that competition between them, especially in these kinds of turning points, is natural. However, the question is, who are we -the Finnish HEIs- ultimately competing against? Instead of competition between the HEIs in Finland, it might be more fruitful to join forces to succeed in the global markets as a united team promoting Finland and Finnish education.

The grounds and benefits of cooperation between UASs and generally between all the Finnish HEIs and other national actors are touched upon in various articles of the publication. Accordingly, considerations regarding the tasks and responsibilities of the individual UASs on the one hand and the value and possibilities of cooperation on the other hand surface as central themes of the publication.

CONTENT OF THE PUBLICATION

This publication deals with the themes discussed above in three main chapters. The following overview provides short introductions to the articles and their contributors, while comprehensive information on the writers' titles and organisations is available on the list of authors (see end of publication).

The first chapter entitled "Introduction of tuition fees: expectations and actions" is opened by Ms. Sanni Grahn-Laasonen, Minister of Education, who describes the government's key targets regarding the internationalisation of education and research, and discusses both the premises and further development needs of Finnish HEIs' internationalisation and their worldwide visibility. The second article by Per A. Nilsson, Senior Adviser International Affairs, from Umeå University demonstrates aspects of the international student mobility from a Swedish higher education perspective, with a focus on describing the experiences gained from the introduction of tuition fees in Sweden in 2011. The third and last article of the chapter is written by the editors of the publication and members of the FINNIPS steering group, Helli Kitinoja, Jyrki Holappa and Riikka Vanhanen, with an aim to depict the work conducted within the UASs' tuition fee work group. Overall, the articles of the first chapter provide ideas of the current phenomena in the field of higher education both at the national and international contexts.

The second chapter "Considering the selling points of Finnish higher education" is dedicated to exploring the factors constructing the competitive edge of Finnish education expertise. Moreover, the articles seek to produce information on the ways in which the success factors are communicated within the international marketing efforts of Finnish HEIs and other actors. The first article of the chapter describes the aspects of country image work and its role and contribution to the international student marketing and recruitment. The article is based on the written interviews of Petra Theman from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and Marjo Somari and Joanna Kumpula from the Finnish National Agency for Education. The following article likewise rests upon answers collected through interviews from experts working within education export activities in four Finnish HEIs – two universities and two universities of applied sciences. The ideas and thoughts provided by Janne Hokkanen, Kirsi Kettula, Marianne Pitkälä and Kirsti Virtanen shed light on the core messages conveyed in the promotion of Finnish education expertise internationally and offer views to the content, organisation and further development targets of education export. The third article brings along a concrete example of the ways of enhancing the international visibility

of Finnish education by offering an account of JAMK University of Applied Sciences' participation in the Astana Expo 2017 in Kazakhstan. The article is drawn up by Vice Rector Heikki Malinen, and Manager, Global Education Services Heikki Pusa from JAMK and Member of Parliament and Chair of the JAMK Board, Aila Paloniemi.

While the first part of the second chapter describes the activities aiming at enhancing positive country image and the international marketing of Finnish HEIs, the last three articles of the chapter provide new viewpoints to Finnish education by revealing how it is seen by the students, customers and cooperation partners of HEIs. The fourth article of the chapter is a summary of Kazakhstani students' and academic personnels' views and experiences about Finland and Finnish education, as reported by Elina Vanhemping from the Scandinavian Institute for Academic Mobility Ltd. The next article is written by the Managing Director of Xport Ltd., Marko Luoma, who reports on foreign students' and employees' experiences about internships and entering the job market in Finland. The chapter is concluded with the article by His Excellency Bonny Haufiku, Ambassador of the Republic of Namibia to Finland, who describes the educational collaboration between Finland and Namibia.

The third and final chapter, "Thoughts and experiences on the effects of tuition fees," offers accounts on the ways in which the HEIs have experienced the introduction of tuition fees thus far. The articles describe expectations and speculations on the effects of tuition fees on HEIs as well as report on the actual measures taken in HEIs as part of their preparatory work for the fee charging. The first article of the chapter is based on the survey data reflecting the UAS actors' views on the tuition fees. It is drawn up by the editors of the publication, and builds on considerations on the threats and opportunities brought along with the introduction of tuition fees. After the wider contemplation of the first article, the four following texts enable looking at the practices conducted at the HEI level. The articles by Juha Vierola from Vaasa University of Applied Sciences, Kaisa Merilahti from Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Tea Vellamo from Tampere University of Technology and Kimmo Kuortti from Oulu University open up views to both the thought processes and concrete steps regarding the preparation for the tuition fees.

Overall, the articles of the publication seek to create a depiction of the Finnish HEIs' thoughts and undertakings on the advent of the introduction of tuition fees. In addition to the viewpoints provided by the representatives of both higher education sectors in Finland, the articles disclose valuable insights from the HEIs' important interest groups both in Finland and abroad.

It is hoped that together all these perspectives will generate new ideas for enhancing the educational cooperation nationally and internationally, as well as spark enthusiasm for the further development of the international education provision in Finnish HEIs.

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INTRODUCTION OF TUITION FEES:
EXPECTATIONS AND ACTIONS

INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMMES AT FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES AT THE HEART OF GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION

Sanni Grahn-Laasonen

Investment in knowledge and competence has long been at the core of Finland's success strategy. In 2015, the World Economic Forum's annual Global Competitiveness Report evaluated the quality of the education systems of 144 economies around the world in terms of business leaders and enrolment rates in secondary and tertiary education, and the extent of staff training. In this context, Finland emerged as the country with the higher education system that supports economic competitiveness and growth the strongest. This is naturally a good starting point and very much in line with the government's ten-year objectives for knowledge and education. The aim is to make sure Finland is a country that encourages people to continuously learn new things. Skills and education levels in Finland have risen, promoting the renewal of Finnish society and the fostering of equal opportunities. Finland is at the vanguard of education, skills and modern learning techniques.

To achieve this, the government has set out to develop and modernise higher education. One of the key targets is to make education and research more international and to remove obstacles to education export. We also need to take advantage of the new opportunities offered by digitalisation and new pedagogical approaches, and to ensure smooth and active interaction between higher education institutions and the labour market.

Our premises for the internationalisation of higher education are excellent. Broadly speaking, the Finnish higher education system works and performs well. We already have many of the necessary elements in place. However, there is always room for improvement. When compared with our key competitor countries, performance in our higher education and research system as a whole is still fairly low in terms of truly international activities. In today's globalised world, the demand for internationalism extends to all activities of higher education institutions, from education to R&D functions. So the question is: do all of our higher education institutions offer students, teachers and researchers genuinely international operating environments?

International cooperation was stepped up in the 1990s, which led to the creation of international degree programmes taught in English (or other

foreign languages) in higher education institutions in Finland. In proportion to the size of our higher education sector, I am happy to say that there are now even more international degree programmes available. A similar trend in a rapid increase in the number of Bachelor's and Master's programmes taught in English can be found throughout Europe too. This is no wonder, as higher education is seen as one of the fastest-growing service sectors in the world. Today, a higher education degree is the most common cross-border education service. The demand for higher education and international student mobility volumes go hand in hand with the growth trends in world trade. Where there is increased well-being, there is more demand for education and student mobility. In fact, in 2013, there were more than four million students worldwide studying outside their home country. The British Council's Education Intelligence division has estimated that the figure will remain high, and in the same range, at least until 2024. For countries such as Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland and the Netherlands, higher education has been and will be a significant export earner over the coming years. The top home countries for international students in 2024 are expected to be China, India, Germany, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Pakistan, to name a few. We hope that an increasing number of international students will choose Finland as their destination for educational services in the future.

A new law was introduced in Finland in 2016 so that higher education institutions may now charge certain international students tuition fees. We have not seen the effects of this new law yet. The next few years will reveal how successful Finland is in the global education markets. Right now, there is still a good deal of work to be done in our higher education institutions. We need to have a strong vision for high-level and sustainable international higher education. And that work is already under way. We intend to promote Finland as an education destination internationally. This means much more marketing and communication is needed. Higher education institutions themselves need to rethink their whole international marketing and recruitment strategies and practices. We need to set up new services to enhance student experiences. We need to have scholarship systems in place for recruiting the most talented applicants. And when they finish their studies, we hope that many of them will stay in Finland to benefit Finnish society and business life.

The Times Higher Education list of the world's most international universities highlights that the institutions with the strongest global connections have a tendency to think beyond borders. International

universities are typically focused on attracting the best students and scholars around the world. They also build partnerships with foreign institutions and businesses and invest in cross-border research collaboration. Equally important is that universities that are successful internationally focus on educating their students to become global citizens. These are important lessons for us to explore more.

Finnish success in this competition should be based on high quality, specialisation, and our ability to attract international interest. International visibility of higher education institutions is often based on reputation or international rankings. Most of the university ranking systems tend to place emphasis on academic research, although rankings may also use indicators such as employer reputation, international faculties and international student ratios. Recently, 'QS World University Rankings by Subject' listed the world's strongest universities in 2017 in 46 different subjects. Finnish universities scored best in subjects such as performing arts, philosophy, linguistics, art & design, and dentistry. These examples show the potential niche that can be found in various subjects and specialisation areas in Finland. It is important that the international programmes being offered are based on the strength and profile of the higher education institution itself.

It is somewhat unfortunate that universities of applied sciences (UAS) are not included in the various university rankings, as their profiles and missions differ from those of research universities. Most students discover the opportunities to study at Finnish universities of applied sciences on the internet or by word-of-mouth. The experiences of the students are vital for the reputation of the programmes. One of the recognised strengths of our universities of applied sciences is their seamless connection and interaction with working life. This should be emphasised when marketing international degree programmes. Other strong elements include scholarships programmes for top students, active participation in social media discussions, as well as engagement with and presence in various forums.

Earlier studies and evaluations provide solid evidence that both universities of applied sciences and universities should pay more attention to the integration of their international students into the academic community and Finnish society, culture and labour market. International students need special support to be able to find internships, work placements and cooperation projects in their field once they have chosen to study here.

As it happens, the working language in many Finnish enterprises nowadays is English. However, in order to find a job and be an active citizen, a certain degree of competence in Finnish or Swedish is already necessary during

the course of studies. Other critical success factors for all international programmes are ongoing quality assurance, and better support services and guidance for students. Attention must also be paid to the recruitment of teachers and customising their competencies according to the needs of the student population.

Finland's level of ambition to internationalise must be increased in the future. 'Working together for the world's best education' is an apt title for Finland's policy on international higher education and research for the next decade. This was suggested by a steering group in the Ministry of Education and Culture that drafted a policy proposal for the internationalisation of higher education in March 2017. It highlights, among other things, the importance of the quality of research and education, the development of new marketing services, and harnessing expatriate experts and alumni in the promotion of Finnish higher education institutions. Each higher education institution should also prepare clear goals for their international activities and plans of action that support the achievement of these goals by 2020.

New measures will also be taken to improve the visibility of Finnish higher education worldwide. We need 'bridgeheads' in the world that can help the Finnish higher education system utilise its potential in the global market. A 'Team Finland Knowledge Network' will be set up to represent Finnish higher education and research institutions in selected target countries. The aim is that this knowledge network can help higher education institutions in building long-lasting cooperation with selected countries and regions in order to attract talented students, improve the quality of education and research, and their overall impact. In the future, I hope to see that the knowledge network will include a truly international network of alumni and that these alumni members will become ambassadors for Finland and Finnish higher education.

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THE SWEDISH EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY

Per A. Nilsson

The internationalisation of education started in the late 1970s when the wording in the Swedish Higher Education Act was changed, emphasising that higher education institutions (HEI) should promote understanding of other countries and of international circumstances. This also opened the door for other changes in Swedish regulations, such as the study aid system, allowing more students to study abroad. However, the greatest boost to international student mobility was when Sweden entered the Erasmus Programme in 1992 (Lundgren & Nilsson 2009).

It is clear that there are political ambitions when it comes to international student mobility. Politicians set the roles for mobility through political decisions about studying in a foreign country, regulations for migration, student loans, recognition for foreign degrees, etc. There is also a global education market being developed outside Sweden. More countries have an interest in the business of international education and the commodification of education due to a decrease of public HEI funding (Knight 2012). This means that market solutions have entered the global scene, which countries around the world have to adjust to, including Sweden. The aim with this article is to highlight some of the Swedish experiences in regard to international student mobility.

INTERNATIONAL DEGREE STUDENTS

Sweden has seen a large increase in inbound international students in the last few decades. The language of instruction is a critical factor for receiving international students. The wide range of courses and programmes taught in English at Swedish HEIs makes it easier to recruit international degree students, accept incoming exchange students and cooperate with international partner universities.

| TABLE 1. Inbound students in Sweden, new enrolments for fall semester 2011–2016. | | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Fall semester | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Exchange students | 9 770 | 9 620 | 8 880 | 8 520 | 8 770 | 8 690 |
| Degree Students | 3 890 | 4 550 | 4 770 | 4 930 | 5 520 | 5 760 |
| Fee-paying Students | 910 | 1 110 | 1 360 | 2 100 | 2 220 | 2 740 |
| TOTAL | 14 570 | 15 280 | 15 010 | 15 550 | 16 510 | 17 190 |

Source: UKÄ (Swedish Higher Education Authority), Annual report 2017.

Table 1 shows 17,190 newly enrolled international students beginning their education at a Swedish HEI in the autumn semester of 2016, i.e. an increase of 4 per cent or 680 inbound students. After the introduction of tuition fees for non-European students studying in Sweden, the numbers of incoming degree students decreased by 8,660 degree students, or 40 per cent after the introduction of fees (UKÄ 2014). Thus, a sharp drop in new enrolments was observed after the introduction of tuition fees, but since then the number of non-European students has increased. The number of fee-paying students increased by 23 per cent in 2016 compared to the previous year (Table 1). Approximately 20 per cent of the fee-paying students depend on scholarships for studies in Sweden (UKÄ 2017). Inbound exchange students and students from within the EU/EEA are exempt from having to pay tuition fees. During the period 2011–2016, inbound exchange students have decreased by 12 per cent or 1,080 students, especially from countries within the EU/EEA, including Switzerland (ibid.).

It should be highlighted that the total number of international students during the academic year 2015/16 was 35,100 when adding newly enrolled students to the ones already studying in Sweden. This means that the number of international students is still higher than the number of outbound Swedish students, despite the introduction of fees. Most degree students arrive from India, Finland and China. Most exchange students come from Europe, particularly from Germany and France (ibid.).

EXPERIENCES GAINED FROM INTRODUCTION OF TUITION FEES

The Swedish higher education authority (UKÄ) received an assignment from the government to investigate the experiences gained from Swedish HEIs after the introduction of fees for third country students, i.e. inbound students from

outside the EU/EEA (UKÄ 2017). The report from UKÄ showed that students paying for tuition paid more for their education than domestic students (i.e. government-financed education). This is in accordance with the legislation stating that the mission for the HEIs is to charge fees for the system to be self-supporting, meaning that the fees can carry all the costs (including overhead cost for marketing and recruitment and support services), making the education more expensive than for the vast majority of students.

Furthermore, the report showed a need to clarify the rules for the reimbursement of tuition fees. Swedish HEIs had worked out different principals for reimbursement, which had created confusion among fee-paying students. After the introduction of fees, it was obvious that the reimbursement for students coming from Sweden's long-term partner countries had been slow. Most of the partner countries are developing countries with which Sweden has had bilateral relationships for decades. It is obvious that scholarships affect the ability to recruit fee-paying students, and it is pertinent for third country students from developing countries, especially when considering the high living costs in a Nordic country.

The report also showed that the education selection for international students had increased, with more courses and programmes now being available in English. Another observation was the large loss of students during the recruitment process between admission and registration. Furthermore, many students have had problems with receiving a visa for studying in Sweden: Some do not possess the sufficient funding to study in Sweden; the students need to prove that they receive approximately 800 euros per month into a bank account; others are judged to have insufficient study purposes to be able to enter Sweden. It appears to be clear that the fees have had a negative effect on recruitment for postgraduate education. However, in comparison with the situation before the introduction of fees, some HEIs in Sweden now report increased academic achievements among the fee-paying students.

The Swedish Institute has been commissioned by the government to promote Swedish higher education globally through digital marketing, training of education agents and branding, but it has also been tasked to develop scholarship programmes for third country students. The Swedish Institute also markets Swedish HEIs in South Korea, Indonesia and North America. Furthermore, it works closely with the foreign offices in Washington, D.C., Brasilia, New Delhi, Beijing and Tokyo in promoting higher education.

Most international students are used to paying tuition fees. However, when changing a system as was done in Sweden in 2011, going from a culture of charging no fees at all to a fee-paying system requires a lot of adjustments.

The adjustments also need time to be implemented and quality-assured. First, it is about the changes of formalities such as rules, regulations and policies. Secondly, it is about the changes of attitudes among staff and cultures within Swedish HEIs, which has proved to be a challenge.

OUTBOUND STUDENTS

Even if many students participate in international student mobility, the vast majority are staying put, despite the added value of an international experience. According to the Swedish Higher Education Authority, 14 per cent of all students receiving a degree will have had international experience during their studies (UKÄ 2017). However, there are large differences between educational programmes. The share of business students with international experience is approximately 50 per cent, and for the ones studying nursing, teacher education, etc. the share is 5 per cent or less (ibid.).

In total, Sweden has 26,440 outbound students. For many years the numbers have increased, but they dropped by 9 per cent during the academic year of 2015/2016. Less students are now participating in language courses. 70 per cent are degree students and 27 per cent are outbound exchange students. The outbound students can receive loans to finance their studies abroad by the Swedish National Board for Student Aid. More women than men were studying outside Sweden, with 58 per cent of the students being women and 42 per cent being men (UKÄ 2017).

The vast majority of outbound Swedish students studied in Europe, while more than 6,000 students opted for North America. Altogether, 82 per cent were studying in these regions. However, Asia is becoming increasingly popular. Among individual countries the USA and UK host the largest numbers. They are followed by Denmark, Australia, Poland, France and Spain in the list of the most popular study destinations (CSN 2014).

EMPLOYABILITY AND INTEGRATION

Employability and post-graduation work is pertinent for contemporary students. International experience can be an important skill for students when wanting to improve their employability. The transition from education to participating in the work force is of increasing importance for international mobile students, with employability recognised as a significant motive for studying abroad (King, Findlay & Ahrens 2010). Nowadays more emphasis is being put by different countries on recruiting talented students and skilled labour (Findlay 2010).

This should be seen as a response to an aging population in many European countries, and to a need to solve the issue of replacing people on the labour market when reaching retirement. In Sweden the legislation changed quite recently for non-European students in regard to allowing them to stay in the country after graduation for six months with a residence permit in order to apply for work or explore opportunities to start a business in Sweden.

Post-graduation work is a great challenge for educators and practitioners when trying to assist the students. Even though the value of having generic international experience is often expressed and emphasised by politicians, institutions and business as a motive force for internationalisation, having a job upon graduation is an important outcome for students. Many international students are looking for possibilities of staying and working in the country after graduation (Nilsson & Ripmeester 2016). It is obvious that Sweden needs to work more with the issue of employability and demonstrate to the students that an international experience is worthwhile for their career in Sweden as well as in other countries.

Integration is of great concern for countries receiving international students. Some students have difficulties. There are studies that indicate the extent of the problem of loneliness and/or isolation among international students (cf.; Bugay, 2007; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland & Ramia 2008). International students face common as well as unique problems. They face the same problems that confront anybody living in a foreign culture, such as racial discrimination, language problems, accommodation difficulties, dietary restrictions, financial stress, misunderstandings and loneliness. Exposure to an unfamiliar environment can create anxiety, confusion and depression (Lin & Yin, 1997). Thus, this can lead to complaints such as loneliness, insomnia and physical illness, which can interfere with their studies as well as their friendships and social life. This needs to be recognised, and some HEIs in Sweden have comprehensive programmes for the international students, such as Buddy Programmes that offer social support, activities and a possibility of integrating with peers to the students. Yet, the issue of integration needs to be addressed and dealt with in order to eliminate many of the problems that some international students are facing.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Swedish HEIs are more international now than ever before. The share of international students of the total student population is approximately 8 per cent. Among the newly enrolled students the share is 27 per cent

(including exchange students who often study for one semester), and the share of internationally recruited PhD students is 40 per cent (UKÄ 2017). These numbers show that Sweden has now entered the global education market with a lot of challenges. Some of the challenges are the use of English in academia, requiring more courses offered in English as well as information, teaching and counselling in English. The HEI campuses have become international with students and staff from many countries with multicultural and multilinguistic skills, which is an asset but also a challenge.

The Swedish government has recently launched an investigation into how HEIs are working with the internationalisation of higher education. The government has instructed the special investigator to propose new objectives and a new national strategy for the internationalisation of HEIs. The investigator will also suggest how more students can get an international perspective in their education (Dir. 2017:19). It is clear that Swedish experiences of international student mobility are embedded in political aspirations and priorities, but it is also a matter of adjusting and responding to the global development and challenges facing higher education.

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UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES' JOINT WORK GROUP ON TUITION FEES: RETHINKING THE ROLES OF STUDENTS AND HEIS

Riikka Vanhanen, Helli Kitinoja & Jyrki Holappa

As the government proposal on tuition fees was published in October 2015, and as the legislative process regarding the tuition fees progressed towards the end of the year, the steering group of the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) was actively discussing the actions that would need to be taken in the changing situation. The main objective was to ensure that the universities of applied sciences' (UAS) English-taught degree programmes would remain to attract foreign students, and by so doing, the UASs would maintain their high level of internationalisation. In order to do so, it was deemed evident that new courses of actions needed to be established at the higher education institutions (HEIs). This would require both looking at HEIs' tasks from novel perspectives and reconsidering the students' positions and needs in the admissions process and as members of the higher education learning communities.

Based on the experiences of the well-established cooperation within the FINNIPS network (see also the introduction), the steering group maintained that any such new HEI processes would be best mulled over together with all the UASs. Accordingly, the UAS sector's joint work group on tuition fees and scholarships was founded on the FINNIPS network's initiative at the beginning of 2016. This article describes the aims and outputs of the UASs' joint work group and discusses the changes inflicted by the tuition fees both from the student's and UAS's perspectives.

COOPERATION ENSURES THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The purpose of forming the tuition fee work group originated from the various discussions that had taken place not only within FINNIPS, but also more widely within the higher education sector for some time already before the confirmation of the new legislation. These discussions and speculations touched upon tuition fees from many different angles, but rather than offering solutions and answers, they pointed to the confusion and unclarities revolving around the topic. How will the tuition fees affect the number of students

coming from outside the EU/EEA? How much will be charged, when and how? What will the scholarship schemes be like? How will the tasks and duties with regard to fee charging be defined and organised within the UASs? What kind of new services are needed, and how about the ethical questions?

The broad spectrum of the open questions was a clear indication of the fact that the introduction of tuition fees would not only be a question of collecting the money but also about rethinking various processes within UASs and consequently the division of work between the different actors involved in the planning and implementation of these processes. None of the questions could be solved or the processes handled by a single office at an HEI, but finding solutions and creating operating models would require cooperation between the representatives of Degree Programmes, Student and Admissions Services, International Offices and Marketing Departments. In addition, the involvement and commitment of the management and directors would be crucially important when considering the changing role and new tasks of UASs. In order to continue the tuition fee related discussion in a fruitful way that would produce new knowledge and functional models to UASs, the FINNIPS network decided to gather a work group, within which the questions would be tackled with a multi-sectoral approach.

The UASs' tuition fee related work group was first called together by FINNIPS in February 2016. Invitations to join the group were sent to the networks of Heads of Student Services and Heads of International Offices (PINNET) within the UAS sector. Both of these networks then nominated representatives from within the groups to join the four members of the FINNIPS steering group. Eventually, the work group was formed by the following representatives:

- Nina Björn, JAMK University of Applied Sciences/ PINNET network
- Marko Borodavkin, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences/ Network of Heads of Student Services
- Jyrki Holappa, Oulu University of Applied Sciences/ FINNIPS network
- Janne Hopeela, Tampere University of Applied Sciences/ FINNIPS network
- Helli Kitinoja, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences/ FINNIPS network
- Marja Räikkönen, Häme University of Applied Sciences/ PINNET network
- Janne Santala, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences/ Network of Heads of Student Services
- Riikka Vanhanen, JAMK University of Applied Sciences/ FINNIPS network

Along with the representatives of the three networks within the UAS sector, the members of the work group bring along expertise from the admissions process, student services and management as well as from the degree programmes,

international services and international marketing and recruitment. Together, these actors would seek to find answers and create solutions for UASs to support their preparation process for fee-charging education.

Through the networks, the work group members would be able to share any findings with all the UASs. However, to ensure the acknowledgement of the matters nationally, the group also made sure to work in close cooperation with the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE) by delivering all the proposals and reports to ARENE's suitable committees. To enable the spread and exchange of information also in wider terms, the work group has been, from the very beginning, in contact with the university sector through the similar work group that they have put together. It is also noteworthy that despite not being represented in the work group, students are crucial players in the tuition fee discussion. Student unions and student union representatives are an integral part of the planning processes regarding UAS services, and therefore involving them in the further planning and follow-up phases in UASs is vital.

AIMS AND OUTPUTS: PROCESS PLANNING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2016, the work group started off by outlining its main tasks and objectives. It was agreed that the group would seek to prepare material that would widely describe the expected influences of tuition fees on the HEI's operations. The group would also propose concrete operation models to manage tuition fee related practical matters within UASs. It was also outlined that the considerations regarding the effects and actions would pay attention to the roles of students, HEIs, regions and the whole country as well as the global operational environment.

Based on these principles, the following tasks were defined for the work group:

- 1 To create an operations model to realise a smooth study path for students coming from outside the EU/EEA
- 2 To propose measures for promoting Finland to ensure its continuance as an attractive higher education provider country
- 3 To produce a description of the effects of tuition fees from international, national and regional perspectives.

The tasks were further divided into seven parts to enable concentration on the themes from specified angles. Accordingly, operation models and recommendations were agreed to be drawn up from the following topics:

- ① The schedules of the English-taught degree programmes' application and selection process
- ② The methods of the student selection
- ③ Charging the tuition fee and matters related to the payment system
- ④ The models and principles regarding the scholarship systems
- ⑤ Communication about the tuition fees, payment methods and scholarship schemes
- ⑥ Marketing of English-taught degree programmes
- ⑦ Enhancing the quality of English-taught degree programmes and acknowledging their impact on the internationalisation, development and competitiveness of higher education institutions and regions.

During 2016, the work group produced four reports and sets of recommendations put together in light of the aforementioned tasks and focuses:

- ① Recommendations on the methods of student selection and admissions process (16 March 2016)
- ② Recommendations on the principles of the scholarship system (2 May 2016)
- ③ Description of the applicant's process, higher education institution's tasks and open questions (13 June 2016)
- ④ Observations on the higher education institutions' tuition fees and scholarship practices (4 November 2016)

As can be seen from the titles, the focus in the work group's documents and outcomes has been on the burning questions of how to organise and ensure the realisation of smooth process regarding the admissions and fee charging. The tuition fees bring about new tasks that need to be not only planned and tested but also observed in relation to larger contexts and other HEI processes. The role of the tuition fee work group is to assist the UASs in seeing the big picture by actively offering analysis and considerations regarding the topic. The reception of the produced documents will be discussed at the end of the article, but to open up the content and dimensions of the work, this article will, in the following sections, concentrate on opening up one of the documents as an example of the work group's efforts.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICANT'S PROCESS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S TASKS

This article is based on the work group's document "Description of the applicant's process, higher education institution's tasks and open questions" drawn up in June 2016. Knowledge has accumulated and ideas evolved during the year, and therefore the following analysis and viewpoints discussed in relation to the applicants' and HEI's processes are proposed in the name of the writers of this article. Furthermore, the emphasis is on the practices of the joint application and the many viewpoints raised from the cooperation implemented within the FINNIPS network, which gathers the majority of the Finnish UASs.

In the following considerations, the tuition fee related processes are discussed from two different perspectives: the HEI's and student's point of view. The charts below outline the processes, and the ensuing discussions seek to describe and analyse the steps of each path in more detail. It is to be noted that the process descriptions do not reach all the aspects of the phenomenon and that it fails to point to all the actors involved in the various activities, some of which are yet to be established. Despite this, it is thought that the charts may assist HEIs to identify and acknowledge certain crucial steps in the new situation and respond to the possible new needs in an appropriate way.

The consideration will first focus on the role of the applicant/student that is entering a Finnish UAS and is obliged to pay a tuition fee. The second part will describe the process from the UAS's point of view by breaking down the tasks and duties of HEIs.

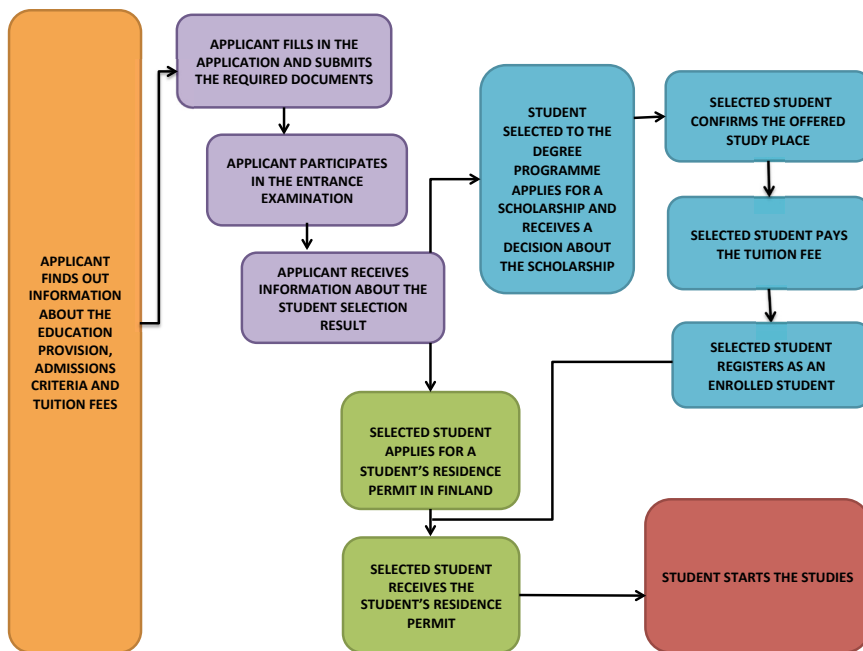


Figure 1. The process of a non-EU/EEA student to a Finnish UAS's English-taught degree programme.

1. STUDENT'S PROCESS

The following considerations regarding the student's process concern the main phases that an applicant, coming from outside the EU/EEA and obliged to pay a tuition fee, will have to go through in the admission process for a Finnish UAS's English-taught Bachelor's degree programme. The idea in the process outline is to describe the central actions that the applicant takes or is expected to take at the given stage. Drawn up by the representatives of HEIs, the description might not reach all the dimensions from an applicant's perspective. Therefore, the accounts of the different phases are purposefully kept quite short, whereas the ensuing parts concerning the HEIs' tasks in the same phases allow more space for experience- and expertise-based speculations.

APPLICANT FINDS OUT INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION PROVISION, ADMISSIONS CRITERIA AND TUITION FEES

An applicant seeks and finds information about the study possibilities in Finland, Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences and English-taught degree programmes. He/she finds out information about the admissions criteria and selection methods as well as goes through the principles of joint application and learns about the cooperating degree programmes. Depending on the level of cooperation between the UASs, the applicant also seeks information about separate admissions processes arranged by some UASs individually. Furthermore, applicants from outside the EU/EEA check the information regarding tuition fees and scholarships, determined by each UAS respectively.

APPLICANT FILLS IN THE APPLICATION AND SUBMITS THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

The applicant fills in an online application at the Studyinfo portal and submits the needed documents to his/her first choice UAS (joint application). In case the applicant applies to a UAS using the entrance exam as a selection method, he/she can choose the preferred exam country in the application form. The applicant obliged to pay a tuition fee may apply for a scholarship to some UASs already on the application form.

APPLICANT PARTICIPATES IN THE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The applicant takes part in an entrance exam in the country chosen in the application form. If an entrance exam is not used as a selection method, the applicant follows the procedures of the alternative selection method.

APPLICANT RECEIVES INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENT SELECTION RESULT

The applicant is informed about the result of the student selection and receives information about the following steps based on the decision (letter of acceptance/ information about the waiting list status/ information about not being selected).

STUDENT SELECTED TO THE DEGREE PROGRAMME APPLIES FOR A SCHOLARSHIP AND RECEIVES A DECISION ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP

After being selected as a student in a Finnish UAS, the applicant obliged to pay a tuition fee can apply for a scholarship, unless this was done earlier in the application process. The applicant receives information about the status and level of scholarship and plans his/her finances to be able to cover the living costs in Finland.

SELECTED STUDENT APPLIES FOR A STUDENT'S RESIDENCE PERMIT IN FINLAND

After being selected as a student in a Finnish UAS, a student outside the EU/EEA generally has to apply for a student's residence permit to enter the country. The student seeks and finds information about the residence permit process and follows the instructions regarding the compilation of supporting documentation required in the application. The student starts the application process as soon as possible after receiving the information about the study place.

SELECTED STUDENT CONFIRMS THE OFFERED STUDY PLACE

The selected student has to confirm the offered study place in case he/she wants to accept it and start the studies in the assigned degree programme.

SELECTED STUDENT PAYS THE TUITION FEE

The student selected to a degree programme in a UAS and obliged to pay a tuition fee takes care of the payment process according to the instructions and terms of the UAS. The student is able to present the receipt of the tuition fee payment in the residence permit process, as requested.

SELECTED STUDENT REGISTERS AS AN ENROLLED STUDENT

In order to start the studies in the UAS, the student needs to register as an enrolled student according to the UAS's guidelines and within the assigned schedule. Paying the tuition fee (or a part of it) is a prerequisite for being able to register as an enrolled student.

SELECTED STUDENT RECEIVES THE STUDENT'S RESIDENCE PERMIT

The student has applied for the student's residence permit according to the instructions and has been able to prove that he/she has the sufficient income to cover the living expenses during the study year in Finland. Students that have started the application process immediately after receiving the result of the student selection, and have followed the process carefully, regularly receive the student's residence permit in time to start their studies.

STUDENT STARTS THE STUDIES

Student arrives in Finland and starts his/her studies at the UAS's English-taught degree programme.

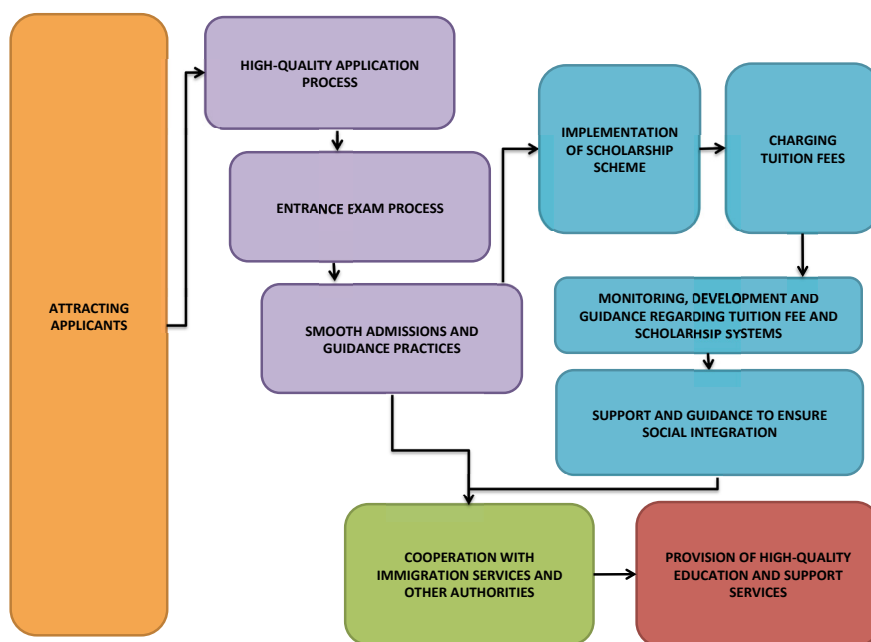


Figure 2. UAS's task in the admissions process of non-EU/EEA applicants to English-taught degree programmes.

2. LOOKING AT THE NEW TASKS FROM THE UAS'S POINT OF VIEW

The following description goes through the higher education institution's tasks in the admissions process of fee-paying students. While the student intake and related activities are well established at HEIs, the focus in the contemplation is on the new aspects that UASs are encouraged to consider in order to ensure the smooth and effective realisation of admitting fee-paying students.

ATTRACTING APPLICANTS

The starting point for being able to attract foreign students to a Finnish UAS is to make sure that the UAS and degree programme as well as the admissions criteria and methods of student selection are carefully considered and of high quality. The content and quality of education are crucial factors but along with them, it is important to pay attention to the premises of student selection: appropriate selection criteria and methods ensure that the UASs are able to recruit students that meet the requirements of their degree programmes. The attraction of the UAS is thus ensured by appropriately profiling the programmes, defining the contents and value propositions, and communicating these to the applicants effectively.

The information provided should be comprehensive, clear, easy to understand and visibly attractive – assuming the similar role of advertising in attracting potential “clients.” As the potential applicants belong to the generation of “diginatives,” they tend to have higher expectations towards the functionality of websites, and they are used to gathering information, doing comparisons between alternatives online and eventually making their (buying) decision swiftly, too. The information regarding the UAS's education offering should include, for example, facts about the degree programmes and curricula, general admission criteria, tuition fees and scholarships, timetable, language skill requirements, application procedures, entrance exams, accommodation and other services, etc.

The internet and social media are surely convenient and effective channels of information, but at the same time both are full of information and offers about chargeable higher education all over the world. Thus, finding the correct forums in which to promote Finnish higher education to capture the attention of the correct applicants is of great importance. Furthermore, it becomes important to stand out, so that a potential applicant first chooses Finland as the country of education and then finds a UAS matching his aspirations.

UASs' study provision and information about the admissions process is communicated by each UAS through the Studyinfo portal and within the marketing channels and platforms of each UAS. However, amidst the tightening competition, the UASs are urged to consider the most efficient ways of reaching stronger visibility and value for the marketing efforts, and this often requires joining forces with other actors. The importance of country image and strong country brand has increased, and cooperation with national level actors, such as the Finnish National Agency for Education's (EDUFI) Study in Finland and ministries (e.g. through embassies), should be integrated as a part of HEI's marketing schemes. The cooperation within the FINNIPS network is a way for the majority of the Finnish UASs to jointly promote their study provision, and the new requirements caused by the tuition fees have also affected the aims and activities of the marketing and recruitment of FINNIPS as well.

The level of tuition fees and scholarships are also important appeal factors influencing the applicants' decision-making. Thoughtfully constructed and reasoned tuition fees and scholarship schemes as well as the appropriate communication of them are crucial aspects of HEIs' credibility and attractiveness. While each UAS needs to take care of building their own tuition fee and scholarship systems, it should be kept in mind what the various schemes look like from the applicant's point of view. The accessibility and comparability of the tuition fee related information is crucially important and would necessitate cooperation between the UASs.

HIGH-QUALITY APPLICATION PROCESS

As pointed out in the previous section, a smooth application process is an important part of ensuring the attractiveness of the UAS and degree programme. The application process should be designed to enable an efficient and reliable selection of applicants that treats applicants with a professional but friendly and customer-oriented approach. The aim should be to avoid complicated, time-consuming and overly bureaucratic application procedures that hinder or deter any potential applicants from considering applying to a UAS. At the same token, various aspects related to schedules, legal regulations and administrative procedures should be fitted into the application process.

Along with the tuition fees, the UASs need to pay attention to the communication process very carefully and make sure that the applicants who are obliged to pay the tuition fees are sufficiently and coherently informed about the fees before and throughout the whole application process. Therefore, the UASs, together with EDUFI and Studyinfo, have been required to check e.g.

the application form and communication practices to ensure that applicants receive correct information and follow the appropriate instructions in each phase of the process. Applicant guidance in UASs has gained new dimensions and requires the Admission Services to be able to communicate the applicants about their institution's tuition fee and scholarship schemes.

ENTRANCE EXAM PROCESS

After applying to UAS through the Studyinfo service, applicants are invited into an entrance exam, which is still used as the main selection method for English-taught Bachelor's degree programmes in the majority of the Finnish UASs. The UASs arrange their entrance exams in Finland at the HEIs' premises, but through the FINNIPS network the UASs can have their exams arranged around the world. Since 2010, the entrance exams that have been arranged in 20 countries outside Finland have been the most significant channel of implementing the obligatory part of the admissions process for foreign applicants. Between 2010–2017, 14,428 applicants have taken the entrance exam abroad, facilitated by the FINNIPS network, and about 50% of these applicants have been annually selected as students in the network's HEIs.

The content of the entrance exams varies depending on the study field and the degree programme concerned. Nevertheless, the aim of an entrance exam is to ensure that admitted applicants have the kind of skills needed to begin the studies in the chosen degree programme. The quality of admitted students is of great importance for both the degree programme and students alike – at best enabling a highly capable learning and working environment benefitting the creation of competences in tandem.

The introduction of tuition fees have made UASs reconsider the target markets of international student recruitment, which also has an influence on the selection of countries where the entrance exams will be held. In order to ensure that the applicant numbers remain at the requested level, it is important for UASs to strategically map and outline the target countries so that these can be acknowledged in the marketing and recruitment activities of FINNIPS and eventually in the decision-making process regarding the exam countries.

Along with the tuition fees, the UASs have also started an active process regarding the evaluation of student selection methods of international degree programmes. As part of the need to better answer the needs of applicants and to develop the smoothness of the admissions process and the promptness of announcing the results of student selection, the UASs and HEIs in general are considering new methods for replacing the traditional paper-based

entrance exams. The FINNIPS network is an active player in seeking to find new, trustworthy and efficient ways to realise the foreign students' selection process without endangering the high standards, quality and results of the current practices.

SMOOTH ADMISSIONS AND GUIDANCE PRACTICES

After the entrance exams, it is important to keep the applicants attached to the process by after-marketing aimed at maintaining and enhancing the applicants' interest towards the UAS they have applied to. The time between the entrance exams and the announcement of the results of student selection is crucially important and needs to be used for active communication towards the applicants.

The information and communication provided should be up-to-date and delivered in a clear and detailed manner in order to avoid any misunderstandings. An emphasis should be placed on training the UAS's personnel's communication skills to support the image of UAS as a respected place of study. Overall, the UAS should make sure that its admissions and guidance practices are in line with the customer-oriented approach adapted.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME

Each UAS has its own procedures regarding the application for a scholarship. The UAS should pay attention to compiling comprehensive communication regarding their scholarship system in order to enable a fluent process of applying, but it should also consider any legal aspects that may arise from the implementation of the scholarship scheme. The scholarship scheme clearly is a major competitive tool in the education market and therefore, in addition to the carefully considered level and criteria of the scholarships, the smooth functioning of the application and granting processes are also crucially important factors to be taken care of.

CHARGING TUITION FEES

Each UAS has its own procedures regarding the charging of tuition fees. Accordingly, all the UASs need to carefully consider the charging practicalities within their own institutions by defining the steps and actors involved in the process. The applicants/selected students need to be thoroughly informed about the payment process, including the schedule and methods of the

required transactions. Thus, the UAS should pay attention to compiling comprehensive instructions regarding their tuition fee system in order to enable a fluent payment process. Exchanging information with other UASs would allow the construction of payment systems that would follow similar logics and guidelines, which again would help the applicants to understand and follow the instructions of the process.

The information about the level of tuition fees as well as the detailed requirements regarding the timing and terms of the payment process need to be communicated also to authorities such as the Finnish Immigration Service, which checks the status of the payments in the students' residence permit process.

MONITORING, DEVELOPMENT AND GUIDANCE REGARDING TUITION FEE AND SCHOLARSHIP SYSTEMS

The constant monitoring of the newly established tuition fee and scholarship systems is of the essence in order for a UAS to develop its procedures. In each UAS, it would be advisable to create an internal multidisciplinary working group to meet regularly to discuss any experiences related to the systems, and thus be able to improve the practices if needed. It is worthwhile for the UASs to also follow the work and outputs of the UAS sector's tuition fee work group and the national level follow-up group set up by the Ministry of Education and Culture (see the end of the article for further information).

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE TO ENSURE SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The UAS should consider how to enhance the social integration of its foreign degree students, as it will most likely contribute to the student's experience of getting on and adapting to the new living and learning environment, and thus to the advancement of studies and graduation of the student. The support and guidance perspectives should be incorporated in the daily activities in the school – be it learning and group working methods, tutor teacher and tutor students tasks or cooperation with a local student association or other organisations facilitating the social integration of international students (and residents) into the local municipality.

The satisfaction of the students to their learning and living environment will most likely support the UAS in its future marketing efforts, as the satisfied students can be regarded as trustworthy ambassadors providing complimentary testimonials on behalf of the UAS to potential new applicants.

COOPERATION WITH IMMIGRATION SERVICES AND OTHER AUTHORITIES

Planning, implementation, follow-up and development of tuition fee and scholarship related practices is all about work that is important to carry out in close cooperation and dialogue with UASs and various authorities, including the Finnish National Agency for Education, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish Immigration Service. Ensuring the attractiveness and appeal of education, and the smoothness and seamlessness of the admissions process, requires that the practices touching upon the foreign students' entry process to Finnish UASs are carefully constructed together with all the relevant actors already from the starting phase.

PROVISION OF HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Despite the fact that education and support services have always been at the heart of UAS functions, there should be an increased emphasis on making sure that education and support services receive the necessary resources for continuous development. Accomplishing and maintaining high quality requires constant support and commitment. Interest should be focused on the contents, competitiveness and attractiveness of the various services provided, as well as on making adequate investments in the versatility of learning environments and the relevant further education of UAS's personnel.

FEEDBACK FROM UASS

How has all the information and the work done by the tuition fee work group been received in UASs? Considering the starting point, with tonnes of open questions to be answered, the outputs of the work group have undoubtedly contributed to the acquisition of new information and produced ideas worth considering in UASs. However, the feedback and awakening of new discussions based on the work group's outputs have been surprisingly indifferent. There have not been a lot of questions, comments or counterarguments regarding the ideas proposed in the documents and no open discussion has ensued.

This, however, does not necessarily point to irrelevance of the information. It is known that some UASs have paid great attention to the tuition fee work group's outputs and that the documents have been used as a basis for the UASs' planning of new practices. Nevertheless, rather than actively seeking to develop the processes openly together with other UASs, it seems that at least at the moment the work is done by each UAS respectively.

The tuition fee work group's work itself is, unarguably, an example of functioning cooperation and exchange of information between UASs. However, the lack of open discussion and consideration of the work group's documents has led to a situation where practically all the Finnish UASs have defined different levels and principles for both the tuition fees and scholarships. This is clearly a downside from the applicant's perspective, as it makes the comparison of information tough and complicated. It is understandable that the UASs seek to differentiate and stand out also with their tuition fee and scholarship policies. However, the question remains if this is the best and most functional way to ensure the smooth realisation of the study path for students coming from outside the EU/EEA, or whether the UASs should still consider the benefits of stronger, more united national-level procedures and visibility?

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FOLLOW-UP

After the summer and in the autumn of 2017, the HEIs will have experienced the first round of intake of fee-paying students. The new processes regarding tuition fees and scholarships have been put into practical test, and many service needs, insights and lessons will be learned along the way. It has been agreed that the tuition fee work group will continue its meetings to gather, discuss and analyse the follow-up information from UASs.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has appointed an official follow-up group to monitor and evaluate the practices regarding the tuition fees and scholarships schemes as well as the effects of them on the student streams and internationalisation of HEIs. While the Ministry's work group will be able to compile and assess information concerning both HE sectors and influence the national level decision-making and development of mutual guidelines and practices, it is thought that the UAS-specific work group can continue working with the group's selected themes with an aim to compile information that is useful and beneficial especially for the UASs.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the UASs' joint work group on tuition fees and scholarships has been to ensure that the UASs' English-taught degree programmes would remain attractive for foreign students. UASs would have high-quality English-taught degree programmes and high-level international activities also in the future, and in that way the UASs would achieve the next steps in the export of education. The Finnish government and the Ministry of Education and Culture

have set high aims for global education services and education export. Truly international degree programmes conducted in English form a basis for these endeavours.

In addition to the involvement and commitment of the management and directors of the UASs, the development of processes and cooperation between different actors in the UASs are also important in finding the needs of potential applicants, degree students and other customers and to answer to these needs. Academics and other staff members need to have new knowledge and skills in customer-oriented approach and co-creation in service design.

The importance of country image and strong country brand has increased, and so UASs' cooperation with national level actors is important. The cooperation within the FINNIPS network is a way for the majority of the Finnish UASs to promote jointly the Finnish education and their own degree programmes as well as to tell about the new requirements related to tuition fees and scholarships. Through cooperation, it is possible to achieve a win-win situation in a single UAS and in the national level, too.

CONSIDERING THE SELLING POINTS
OF FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION

COUNTRY IMAGE SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT

Riikka Vanhanen

Based on written interviews of Petra Theman, Marjo Somari & Joanna Kumpula

Country image plays a crucial role in international student marketing and recruitment. When seeking international study opportunities, students not only choose a specific subject to study or a university to aspire to, but, aside from academic criteria and professional aims, they ultimately also make a decision about the country they want to live and study in. Accordingly, parallel to the study provision and the quality of education, various economic, social, cultural and political factors also affect the student's decision-making process and thus need to be acknowledged in the international student recruitment endeavours. What are the means within country image work to ensure that Finland is seen as an attractive study destination? How can Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) be active actors in promoting a positive country image?

In order for HEIs to best utilise and benefit from the country image in their own international marketing and recruitment efforts, and to understand their own role as its contributors and creators, it is important to get a grasp on the aspects and main principles of the country image work as well as its possibilities and limitations. This article sheds light on the country image work by introducing central actors involved in it at the national level, and by unravelling the building blocks and tools of the multifaceted and continuous work.

The text is based on the answers provided by the representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) and the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). Director Petra Theman from the Unit of Public Diplomacy has provided the information from the ministry, while the answers from EDUFI are drawn up by Communications Director Marjo Somari and International Marketing Manager Joanna Kumpula.

HOW IS FINLAND'S COUNTRY IMAGE BUILT BY YOUR ORGANISATION; THE MEANS, MEASURES AND ACTORS?

MFA: The country image work is essentially about advocacy, communication and marketing, which aims at influencing the knowledge, opinions and

ultimately the decisions of target groups. It is focused on describing the strengths of Finland, often in a popular and accessible manner. The range of measures and tools of country image work is wide, but it is implemented e.g. through media, events and meetings.

The whole administration of foreign affairs is involved in country image work. Above all, the Finnish embassies abroad have an important role, as the measures consist of activities that cross-cut the tasks and work of embassies. In the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Unit for Public Diplomacy and more widely the Department for Communication are central actors.

EDUFI: Administered by the Finnish National Agency for Education, Study in Finland (SiF) is the brand of Finnish higher education which aims to increase the international awareness and visibility of higher education. Study in Finland work is extensive advocacy work among different actors, communications and marketing activities in both national and international fields, and it is involved in the development of know-how and expertise within the Finnish higher education sector.

WHAT ARE THE CENTRAL AIMS OF BUILDING THE COUNTRY IMAGE?

MFA: The Finland Promotion Board (FPB), which is responsible for setting the guidelines for Finland's country brand work, has published a country brand review for 2015–2016 in April 2017. The review titled "Building the image of Finland -review of the country image work 2015–2016" (2017) offers detailed insights as to the aims and measures of the country image work. However, the objectives of the country image work generally involve awareness-raising, opinion-shaping and decision-making:

- 1 To make Finland visible abroad
- 2 To highlight Finland's strengths
- 3 "Choose Finland"

By and large, the object of country image work is to ensure that, from Finland's perspective, positive decisions are made – when images and feelings influence the decision-making, not only facts – whether the question is about decisions at the individual, company or national level.

However, it is noteworthy that country image cannot be built. It exists of its own accord and is formed by many streams. The country image work may be used to influence certain target groups' ideas and to enhance the recognition of Finland's strengths and story, but the country image cannot be "built" in the same way as brands cannot be built.

EDUFI: The objective of Study in Finland is to create visibility for Finnish higher education institutions in international markets and to develop opportunities for the internationalisation of higher education. It is important to acknowledge that SiF itself is not a country image but a part of it. Therefore, the objectives are a little further away from the development of the more extensive country image.

HOW DO YOU PORTRAY FINLAND AS AN EDUCATION COUNTRY IN YOUR COUNTRY IMAGE WORK?

MFA: To put it briefly, Finland's very core is education. It is at the centre of country image work in many ways. We produce a lot of content about Finland as a study destination and country, including, for example, the articles at Thisisfinland.fi portal and This is Finland magazine, brochures, videos, etc. The main emphasis is on equality, know-how and creativity, as well as the renewal of the (education) system. The key message is that Finland has one of the best education systems in the world. All Finns have equal opportunities to learn and study. Thanks to our world-class education system, we find joyful solutions to both local and global challenges.

EDUFI: Creating the story of Study in Finland is one of the central tasks that are still underway at the Finnish National Agency for Education. However, important aspects of the story are the good quality of Finnish higher education, low hierarchy, independence, learning together and safety. Knowledge-based highlights on marketing are e.g. higher education ranking lists and different kinds of country rankings. It is hoped that in the future the results of the International Student Barometer (ISB) study could also be utilised in the marketing.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE ATTRACTION FACTORS OF FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION?

EDUFI: As mentioned before, the quality and good reputation of Finnish education are important factors also in the building of the reputation of higher

education, despite the fact that the ranking scores are not as strong as the PISA results, for example. In addition, Finnish pedagogy, small HEIs and study groups, excellent student services and a lifestyle close to nature appeal to many international students.

MFA: We follow, convey and support the work of EDUFI's Study in Finland, and therefore the same attraction factors are utilised in the wider country image work.

WHAT KIND OF CURRENT POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES ARE THERE IN THE COUNTRY IMAGE WORK?

MFA: These challenges and possibilities are more or less always the same regardless of time and place.

Challenges:

- ① Images of countries arise in young people and are very durable, only changing by visiting a country or getting a friend from some country.
- ② Is there enough understanding for marketing? Is it too widely accepted as a "truth" that as long as the product (Finland) is in order, marketing will happen by itself, or are resources invested in country image work and marketing as has been done e.g. in Sweden since 1945?
- ③ Coordination between different actors.

Possibilities:

- ① Now there is good momentum, mutual tools are finally ready and in order, and many actors have achieved significant results in different kinds of image surveys, award galas and rankings, to name but a few.
- ② Finland is an interesting country in many ways, and our strengths correspond to the international need regarding what is important for people globally (e.g. environmental issues, equality, democracy).

EDUFI: The current need for rapid changes creates both possibilities and challenges for the work. HEIs' increasing interest and need for capacity building in the area of international marketing and recruitment know-how are possibilities. However, the lack of essential know-how regarding e.g. the market areas or finding appropriate service providers causes challenges. Development calls for prompt and professional decision-making from all actors.

HOW CAN INDIVIDUAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS EXPLOIT YOUR WORK WITH REGARD TO THE COUNTRY IMAGE?

MFA:

- 1 By producing interesting journalistic content with good pictures and conveying the information about the material to the official country image website finland.fi. The ThisisFINLAND team can create so-called webpicks out of this kind of material.
- 2 By conveying to the ThisisFINLAND (TiF) social media team information about topics and contents that can be reposted in the TiF social media. The annual reach of TiF social media channels is 62 million, with content created in English, Russian and Chinese.
- 3 By utilising the content of the TiF website (available in eight languages) and by following the aforementioned social media channels.
- 4 By utilising the contents of the public Finland Toolbox.

Cooperation with Study in Finland is to be highlighted, as the size of the team at the MFA does not always allow us to work with individual HEIs. We are happy to receive e.g. instructions and tool tips to be conveyed to embassies to support the marketing of HEIs. However, the easiest way is to be able to send out information that concerns several HEIs mutually and not just individual institutions. We strongly hope for a mutual national scholarship scheme for foreign students. This would benefit the country image work significantly.

EDUFI: The Study in Finland website and social media channels provide information about Finnish HEIs and student life and link students straight into the HEIs' provision. Our joint development work with the Studyinfo.fi service

seeks to create yet more efficient ways for international applicants to find education options. Through its advocacy work, EDUFI also strives to offer the best possible support to HEIs' internationalisation endeavours, especially to those working within the recruitment of international students.

CONCLUSIONS

As pointed out in the above contemplations, the country image can only be constructed or controlled to a certain degree, as there are numerous factors and actors that contribute to the creation of it both in the sending and receiving ends. However, Finnish HEIs can easily contribute to the development of a systematic and congruent image of Finland as a high-quality and attractive study destination. This is enabled by active information sharing between the different actors and by utilisation of the mutual communication platforms and social media channels maintained by both the ministry and EDUFI.



Figure 1. The Finland emojis, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015, are concrete examples of the tools in country image work. The world's first country-themed emojis portray some of the cornerstones of Finnish society with humorous and insightful images regarding e.g. education, nature and various aspects of culture. Source: <https://finland.fi/emoji/>

PROMOTION OF FINNISH EDUCATION – VIEWS FROM EDUCATION EXPORTERS

Helli Kitinoja & Riikka Vanhanen

Based on the written interviews of Janne Hokkanen, Kirsi Kettula, Marianne Pitkääjärvi & Kirsti Virtanen

While charging tuition fees from degree students coming from outside the EU/EEA is a new phenomenon in Finnish higher education, the higher education institutions (HEIs) have been actively implementing different kinds of education export activities already for several years. Chargeable education services have been offered widely in the areas of teacher education, learning environment and curriculum development as well as in the form of continuing education and degree programme provision, to name a few. Consequently, many Finnish HEIs already have a lot of experience on international sales and negotiations and possess substantial knowledge on the rules and possibilities of international education marketing. This article sheds light on the current ideas and thoughts that the experts of education export have regarding the topic of promotion of Finnish education.

The text is based on the answers submitted by four experts working in the field of education export in Finnish higher education institutions. The respondents are Janne Hokkanen, Director for Study and International Affairs from Lappeenranta University of Technology, Kirsi Kettula, Head of Transnational Education from University of Helsinki Centre for Continuing Education HYplus, Marianne Pitkääjärvi, Manager of Education Export from Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and Kirsti Virtanen, Partnerships Manager, from Global Education Services at Turku University of Applied Sciences. The answers and considerations provided by the respondents are used fully or partly as quotes in the text. As the main purpose of the article is to identify and learn about the ways in which the Finnish HEIs promote their education and education expertise, the respondents or HEIs are not acknowledged individually in the answers.

WHAT KIND OF COUNTRY IMAGE ARE YOU PROMOTING WITH YOUR EDUCATION EXPORT?

- Constructing Finland's country image is a key element in marketing our higher education internationally. Finnish nature, safety, education system and high technological know-how are the

cornerstones of Finland's country image, which we promote while also advertising the education opportunities we are offering.

- Finland is a welfare state whose success is based on high-quality education and an egalitarian society. Finland's strengths lie in its high-level technological know-how and abundant innovative operations, which are also based on quality education.

We often talk about a society of trust, where everyone can count on the things that were promised to work. Our safe environment and clean food are examples of well-being that is based on trust. In education, trust is shown as appreciation towards the teachers' work. A teacher is seen as an expert of learning, whose professional skills the parents can count on.

- We are advertising the diversity of Finland's unique nature, its forests and bountiful natural waters, beauty and cleanness, and what these mean to the all-around well-being of those living here. We are highlighting our stable, peaceful living conditions and the well-organised society, illustrated by top scores in several international comparisons, whether it be the functioning of the government, citizens' trust in the judiciary and the police, low level of corruption and organised crime, or freedom of the press. All this will build trust between the customer and us, and we will always be pointing out the importance of education to Finland's success.

We often talk about the success of Finnish comprehensive education and background factors, such as equality and respect towards the teaching profession. All of our teachers receive higher education, regardless of the level they teach at, and this has become the best-selling product in the Finnish education export so far. We have also relied on these references, even though organising teacher education is not part of our responsibilities, apart from practical training. It is also natural for the instructor to introduce Finland as a leading country in R&D and innovations. Concrete examples are chosen based on the audience.

- We utilise Finland's good reputation regarding education, its social stability and security. We highlight the strong network-like operation and national cooperation. Regional collaboration between different organisations can also be seen as an asset and can be used when exporting know-how.

The answers from education export experts regarding Finland's country image are all very similar. Safety, trust, technological competence and innovations, as well as high-quality education and cooperation, are emphasised in all answers. It would also seem that the positive features in Finland's country image are being actively utilised when marketing Finnish education.

HOW CAN THE WORK THAT DIFFERENT AUTHORITIES (E.G. MINISTRIES) CONDUCT ON BUILDING THE COUNTRY IMAGE SUPPORT THE EXPORTATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION?

- We desperately need to build Finland's country image on a national level. Measures have already been taken on that level, but they are insufficient if we want to turn education into a major export product in Finland. Where I would like to see more investments is in the building of the country image in connection with education export. Currently, the message and methods are rather dull and targeted simultaneously at all/too many groups.
- The exportation is easier when the customer already has some sort of a positive notion about Finland. Marketing Finland as a top-level expert in education naturally supports the education export. Country image, in general, emphasising Finnish know-how, also supports these exportation efforts.
- This work is being done by professionals who are good at what they do. They were already focusing on education before the national Finnish education export project even began, and should continue to keep their eye on this particular ball.
- The national country image work is extremely important, because in spite of the mainly positive images that Finland evokes, the country is still rather unknown outside of Europe. Individual universities have limited chances of making Finland stand out more, so we must rely on the work that is done nationally and by the various authorities.

The answers emphasise introducing Finnish know-how as part of the country's image. For this purpose, support and actions are expected from the ministries and authorities, but also the high-quality work performed by each individual professional is seen to have an impact on creating a positive country image.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN SELLING POINTS AND ARGUMENTS THAT WOULD IMPROVE THE SALES OF FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION?

The following answers describe several things that can be utilised when exporting Finnish higher education, whether based on tuition fees or customised. A feature we view as a national weakness can also turn out to be an asset when marketing education. In addition to the strong know-how in research and education, cooperation with the customer and the other operators working in exporting this know-how is key to selling Finnish higher education. The various strengths and special features in Finnish higher education must also be taken advantage of, with working life cooperation being one example of this.

- The main selling points are those mentioned above: clean nature, safety, the education system and high technological know-how. In addition, the strong research competence and international success, as well as the entire higher education sector's strong expertise in education, are the key elements.
- Finland scores high as an innovation country. This shows in the curricula of most higher education institutions and is a national merit.
- The main arguments include the connection between education and RDI, innovative pedagogical solutions, and solid and diverse working life connections.
- Finland is a country that puts high value on education. We offer uniform, high-quality education at all educational levels. This means that Finnish universities are in possession of an excellent product that the rest of the world is already interested in. The real gem of our system is the high-quality teacher education.

We are used to saying that Finns do not know how to sell their products or praise themselves. Yet, it is paradoxical that our special strength in education export is our right kind of modesty and humility. We do not generally imagine that our model could be transferred or copied elsewhere directly, and instead accept the customer's input in the planning and development work. Tailoring our products to the individual customers' needs differs from what several other countries are doing, which is selling ready-to-use concepts.

The ability to work in cooperation is also one of the special strengths of Finnish universities. We are used to collaborating in research and development projects, and this same practice has now been introduced to education export, too. By working together, we can pursue bigger customers and bigger deals.

- As indicated by international statistics, Finnish education as a whole is a success story. This is linked with a number of structural and process-related factors.

The dual model of higher education has its strengths, as the two types of institutions clearly have profiles of their own. The traditional academic universities remain responsible for the highest level of research and education related to it, and the multidisciplinary universities of applied sciences have a close relationship with working life. Some countries are showing interest towards the practically oriented universities of applied sciences, in particular. This development is ongoing in China, for example.

The core curricula are competence-based and designed in collaboration with the stakeholders, including representation of relevant professions and employers as well as alumni. This is an effective way to ensure that the competences of the graduates match the needs of the real world. Another significant element in this is the fact that much of the education takes place in authentic circumstances, with the teacher ensuring that the learning objectives are met.

When it comes to keeping the working life competences updated, HEIs have always been active in arranging continuous education for practicing professionals. Some courses run on a regular basis for anyone to join in, while others are designed according to customer needs. This facilitates interaction between educators and practitioners. Domestic experiences of organising continuing education may be used as a reference for international markets.

WHAT ARE CURRENTLY THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN THE SALES PROMOTION OF FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION?

The respondents pondered about several topical challenges related to education export, and these challenges revolved particularly around three themes. According to the respondents, improvements are needed in

1) marketing and sales skills, 2) matters concerning legislation and bureaucracy, and 3) coordination of the efforts and cooperation between the different operators.

Marketing of education and expertise on sales

- Higher education institutions should invest in marketing and boldly create new ways of attracting students. All the necessary elements have been invented, and all we need to do is copy a model that suits Finland.
- After the sales of degrees was liberated, higher education institutions have been forced to pay more attention to their marketing and sales. Finland is known for its high level of education, but the country remains relatively unknown as a possible study location. Advertising Finland and Finnish HEIs will benefit all of the operators in education export.
- Education export, like any other type of export business, requires legwork, first and foremost. The customer needs to be met, face-to-face, on a regular basis. The contact with a potential new customer may be promising, but without legwork, the follow-up from a distance is bound to lead to failure. On-site representation is needed but seldom available.

Selling services is a tricky business. Additionally, education export, or transnational education as it is called elsewhere, is a highly competitive line of business. Generally speaking, we have too few experienced professionals with an appropriate educational background operating in education export. Many are self-learned and work for education export part-time. Neither solution is optimal.

- The biggest challenge is the insufficient knowledge of business and exporting, in particular. This is evident in how HEIs are operated, but also on the national level.

Based on the replies, we must conclude that Finnish education and know-how need to be marketed on many different levels, including the national level, municipal and regional levels, and the levels of HEIs and individuals. Identifying the needs of a student and a customer and meeting them face to face is important. A solid understanding of the Finnish higher education is needed in addition to know-how in exporting.

Legislation and bureaucratic obstacles

The following replies call for the dismantling of obstacles still present in our legislation, although improvements have already been made regarding the sales of degree-awarding education.

- Inflexible legislation (application procedures, the rule of single study place, etc.) and the universities' abilities to take risks to promote their education export pose the biggest challenges.
- Selling education should be allowed without exceptions. A grey area currently exists between customised education offered to an entire organisation and the tuition fees paid by an individual student: customised education and training, where individual students pay for their own tuition fees.

Marketing alone is not enough if actual obstacles preventing sales exist. The residence permit process for students of continuing education, who intend to stay in Finland for longer than three months, is quite strenuous. Together with the high prices and potential shortage of student housing options in Finland, such structural challenges can form an obstacle for the education export, and HEIs will have little chance of influencing this with their own sales promotion measures.

- The legislation changed, making it possible to sell degrees. This was a necessary development which now has the potential to make a difference in efforts to make education export a truly affordable business. However, the institutions are facing an unfamiliar situation and need to learn how to run these projects the hard way: they need to learn as they go. There are risks involved with such an experimental approach to do business.

Call for coordination of activities and cooperation between actors

- The biggest obstacle is the prevailing dichotomy between the players in the field of education export. On the one hand, there should be collaboration between them. On the other hand, everyone is responsible for their own survival. This is an existing dilemma, which the HEIs are trying to solve by forming alliances. Some have

managed well in education export by using this concept. But the preliminary contradiction still remains the same: the institutions fight fiercely for their place in the sun. Naturally, this shows in education export, too.

- Long-term and systematic cooperation on a national level is needed. The national support measures for education export have been insufficient and unorganised, particularly when it comes to the previous Future Learning Finland programme. We cannot take over the entire world, so instead a small country should decide on shared focal points for its education export and then systematically concentrate its marketing efforts on these locations. Not by attending an education fair in one country this autumn, and in another one next year. Our presence in a selected location must be constant and long-term in order to increase recognition and trust.

Instead of rivalry, the respondents think that cooperation and national-level coordination are more important. A systematic approach and cooperation can help achieve sustainable results in selling the Finnish higher education.

WHAT KIND OF NATIONAL-LEVEL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT OPERATORS WOULD BEST HELP THE BUILDING OF FINLAND'S COUNTRY IMAGE, LOOKING FROM THE EDUCATION EXPORT'S PERSPECTIVE?

The need for cooperation between the operators was already made evident in the previous question identifying the challenges in the education export. Next, the respondents discuss the meaning of and opportunities for cooperation, based on concrete measures and benefits.

- The Study in Finland portal is a good example, although several improvements are still needed. In addition, coordinated efforts should also be made to make Finland more visible at student fairs and similar events. In off-shore education export, examples of cooperation options include building shared training packages according to individual target groups and using shared marketing resources.

- Gaining visibility under a shared Finnish banner, instead of competing against one another, can improve the Finnish education export as a uniform entity in many ways. In order to improve cooperation, a number of education export companies and associations have been recently founded, but even the less organised joint tenders and appearances by education export operators make things easier for the customer and provide a clear image of the Finnish know-how.

In the education sector, the Finnish know-how and range of options are extensive, and entire educational reforms as well as individual courses or digital applications can fit under the same education export umbrella. Different products and operators have different needs when it comes to sales promotion. Therefore, when forming a shared country image for Finland, we should pay attention not to send the wrong message in the wrong context. Emphasising technological superiority or individual innovations might not function as selling points if the customer is seeking consultation services and solid pedagogical expertise.

- We need national conferences with expert lecturers and workshops for anyone who works in this line of business. The national language of education export can only be learned when the players are talking to each other. Such conferences could provide a forum where we could also learn from each other, not only from the expert lecturers.
- Cooperation and networking between universities is infinitely important. All unnecessary internal competition should cease and resources be combined, because the resources of individual HEIs are extremely limited.

On a national level, we need significantly closer cooperation between the different ministries and administrations. The support organisations for the education export have been constantly changing. First, there was Future Learning Finland, then Education Export Finland, and now the Finnish National Agency for Education's Education Finland programme – and all this within just a few years.

Finland should only have a single organisation: Team Finland, and within it all the operations that promote the Finnish external trade, investments into Finland, and the country's image. In

principle, this is what we have, yet another growth programme for education export is about to be launched by the Finnish National Agency for Education.

The respondents believe that one of the key elements would be a national-level network between different operators and their cooperation when building Finland's country image, making the Finnish higher-education know-how more widely known and exporting it.

CONCLUSIONS

As shown by several education export cases from around the world and the thoughts described above, Finnish HEIs know how to identify their strengths and use them effectively on international education markets. However, the analytical thoughts of education export experts on the factors that make our education successful cannot always be transformed into successful sales, and instead the operation still faces some major challenges. One of the main ones is related to the cooperation between different operators, which has room for improvement on a national level, between HEIs and among the internal operators at the HEIs.

The need for national cooperation for identifying, recognising and commercialising the high-quality Finnish educational know-how is clearly evident in the thoughts of one respondent, who points out that others can surely exploit our educational reputation if we Finns cannot successfully do it ourselves:

- Finns must be able to hold onto the brand of Finnish education. Because our education is highly valued, there already exist international entrepreneurs who are taking advantage of the reputation of Finnish education without any real connections to Finland. Some type of Finnish quality label or accreditation held by Finnish operators might be in order to stop businesses from other countries from selling Finnish know-how – without actually possessing that Finnish know-how.

The solution to this challenge is cooperation on a national level and between HEIs, in which our selling points, our know-how and our expertise are shared between the operators in order to achieve a mutual goal. The better the

various operators, in this case HEIs, play on the same side and strive to ensure together that our high level of know-how comes across as systematic and credible, both in our actions and the related communication, the stronger “the Finnish quality label” will be. Although competition is usually thought to be part of sales, the cooperation and networking between HEIs will typically be more beneficial in international export.

In order to enable this cooperation between HEIs and to utilise the resulting benefits, the HEIs must be aware of the policies and possibilities related to the education export, and the internal cooperation must also run smoothly among the different operators within the HEIs. The vision on the education export goals shared within a HEI and the understanding of a set of joint operating models make efficient commercialisation and innovative cooperation easier. The joint operation between different departments and areas of know-how produces a tremendous number of synergy benefits and opportunities for the continuous development of educational know-how, as well as its utilisation in an even wider cooperation.

Degree-awarding education and various short courses can be seen as products, which can also be used when selling education. Fee-based education at a HEI faces the same development challenges, whether it is degree-awarding education based on tuition fees, fee-based mobility programmes or degree-awarding education sold as customised training. A single group of students at a HEI can consist of both fee-based and non-fee-based students. Also the possibility of commercialising the results from research and development projects should always be identified. In order to succeed, the exportation of international higher education and research know-how, and maintaining and developing the Finnish educational reputation, require constant interaction and shared operations between the experts.

HOW TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY FOR UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES?

Heikki Malinen, Aila Paloniemi & Heikki Pusa

THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF FINLAND'S COUNTRY IMAGE

It is clear that Finland's country image and reputation play a major role in determining how attractive we are as a potential education partner abroad. In this, Finland has special strengths. As a small and neutral country, we enjoy a good reputation around the world. We tend to evoke positive images in others. Yet, we believe that Finland's reputation as a top-level country that invests heavily on education and succeeds in it is even more significant. Examples of our success include Finland's amazing financial development during its independence, and the results from various international comparisons on well-being, innovation and competitiveness. However, the most important indicators are the comparisons on education, such as PISA. In almost all cases, our international partners are familiar with our success in these comparisons, and they do not fail to mention this at our meetings.

A good country image is the reason that Finland receives requests for tenders and we get contacts. Submitting an actual tender and signing the deal remain the responsibility of the service provider. Which things could be further developed to ensure that tenders and won deals closed? We should take even more advantage of those international comparison results by creating national stories together, for example.

THE STRENGTHS AND ATTRACTIVE QUALITIES OF THE UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

One of the strengths of this relatively new sector of higher education is connected to its enthusiasm, agility and close working-life contacts. Combining theory and practice into education and RDI that benefits work and business life is a sought-after model out in the world. New customers have often asked for higher education that is closer to their actual needs than theory. Universities of applied sciences are useful in developing the regions where they are located and the businesses there. The professionals graduated from them, in particular, are seen as a great resource. On some markets, this is reflected in the customers'

interest towards the education we are offering. The universities of applied sciences also utilise advanced pedagogics and pedagogical solutions. All the teachers have completed their pedagogical training.

Many countries are still in the process of creating a similar system to our universities of applied sciences, or have only recently founded one, whereas we have already had our system in place for 20 years, and it has been progressively developed and offers a solid foundation for working as a development partner.

On the other hand, if we consider foreign citizens studying in Finland, a whole different set of attractive features enter the picture. Previously, when higher education leading to a degree was free for all, this factor was undoubtedly one of the biggest reasons to apply for a study place in Finland. Now, when education is no longer free, there must be other reasons to come here. Discussions have highlighted prior connections to Finland and certain university towns, in addition to which Finland's reputation as a quality educator and a safe study environment – a society where things work – has had a huge impact. Studying in Finland may continue to be affordable in the future, thanks to scholarships. More information on these will most likely be distributed, after the system of tuition fees has been in place for a few years.

HOW TO HIGHLIGHT THE STRENGTHS?

An extremely important question for the future is how Finnish education could be marketed better to achieve the objectives regarding the education export and the students coming to Finland. Many types of work have been conducted over the years, but as far as commercial activities are concerned, these efforts have been rather sporadic. Education has been marketed through activities such as promotional visits by Finnish ministers, and with printed brochures. In between these two, there has been a plethora of other activities. But what might constitute the best possible methods? That probably largely depends on the situation in each country.

One method JAMK University of Applied Sciences (thereinafter JAMK) has found effective is when opportunity arises to present a group of several potential customers with the first example of high-quality education. When successful, this could lead to a rapid expansion later. Attracting customers to Finland and the concrete examples presented here are also more convincing than travelling around the world with brochures and slideshows. With tuition fee based education, the use of the alumni and their experiences in marketing should not be overlooked, either. In this, too, the universities of

applied sciences, the education authorities and working life should create more uniform stories related to our strengths that could then be coherently used in different contexts. In 2017, we are trying out a new way of promoting Finnish education at Astana Expo 2017 held in Astana, Kazakhstan, which we will discuss more later.

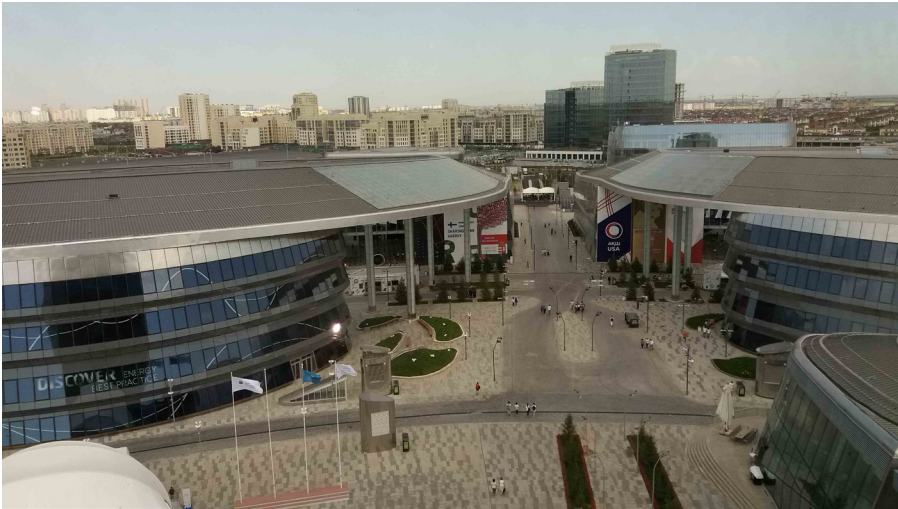
WHAT THINGS DO WE NEED TO IMPROVE?

Before moving on to Astana Expo 2017, we should consider the possible weaknesses that we are encountering when marketing Finnish education. Firstly, as a small nation we do not have huge resources to allocate to education export and sales promotion, unlike some other countries. For example Germany with its organisations holds a presence in a number of countries, and the German industry together with its large corporations has much more visibility when promoting their own exportation, as well as the German education export.

Available projects, whether funded by Finland, the EU or an international financier, should be utilised increasingly to make our education better known and to improve our opportunities in education export. Rarely is it possible to move directly to a profitable business operation. Instead, groundwork is usually needed, sometimes taking several years of cooperation in education and research. Various projects provide a good way of becoming familiar with the cultures and customs in other countries, and at its best they can also result in finding the right contacts for future use.

When talking to the customers, Finland's high prices often come up, and in education these mainly revolve around labour costs. Often, the price of Finland's high-quality education is considered very expensive. Typically this leads to discussions about developing the local know-how so that some of the responsibilities could be transferred over to a local operator under local prices.

Another problem when marketing and selling our education is the short history of our commercial operations. It was high time we started promoting Finnish education export and charging tuition fees in Finland. The operation is currently in its early stages, and will become more established in the future. The futile attempts that are currently being made will stop over time, and only the best and most viable operating models will remain. This applies to the target countries, customers, products and the Finnish operators. Hopefully, new strong businesses specialising in education export will be created alongside the universities and vocational schools that have now become active in this field.



View to Astana Expo area and to the entrance of Finnish Pavilion. Photo: Heikki Pusa

ASTANA EXPO 2017

Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) oversees the World Expositions and grants the rights to hold them. It is an intergovernmental organisation that has been in charge of monitoring and regulating the World Expos since 1931. However, World Expos have been organised since 1851, and the most famous among them are probably the Paris Exposition in 1889, for which the Eiffel Tower was constructed, the New York World's Fair in 1939, where the television was first introduced, and the following New York World's Fair in 1964, where Walt Disney built an amusement park with all its rides that were later transported to Disney's own park, Disneyland, after the exposition.

“An exposition is a global event that aims to educate the public, promote progress and foster cooperation. It is the world's largest meeting place, bringing together countries, the private sector, civil society and the general public around interactive exhibitions, live shows, workshops, conferences and much more.” (Bureau International des Exposition's website.)

During its early years, BIE used to divide World Expos into three categories: the first and second categories were general exhibitions and the third was specialised exhibitions. Since 1996, the so-called general exhibitions were changed into International Registered Exhibitions or World Expos, and the specialised exhibitions became known as Internationally Recognised Exhibitions or International Exhibitions. It should be mentioned that Finland

has hosted one specialised exhibition, the 1938 International Aeronautic Exhibition in Helsinki. (ibid.)

On 1 July 2010, at the 147th BIE General Assembly, Kazakhstan revealed its intentions of applying for the right to organise the Expo of 2017 in Astana. Only one other city applied for the same right: Liege in Belgium. BIE chose the winner on 22 November 2012 in Paris, at its 152nd General Assembly. (BIE, Quarterly Newsletter 21.)

Kazakhstan had selected Future Energy as the theme for its expo. At Astana Expo 2017, the idea is to promote renewable energy and other alternative energy sources, energy efficiency and responsible consumption, the electrification of transport, access to clean energy and energy safety, among other similar things, based on the chosen theme. (A page from Astana Expo 2017's website.)

FINLAND AT WORLD EXPOS

In 1900 in Paris, Finland took part in a World Expo for the first time with its own pavilion, even though it was still part of the Russian Empire at the time. The Finnish pavilion was designed by architects Armas Lindgren, Herman Gesellius and Eliel Saarinen, and the artist Akseli Gallén-Kallela painted his famous frescos for it, which are nowadays displayed in the foyer of the National Museum of Finland. At this expo, the artist Albert Edelfelt functioned as the Commissioner General for Finland's pavilion. Designing the pavilion should be considered an honour, especially since the pavilions for the 1937 Paris and the 1939 New York expos were designed by the most famous Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto.

Out of the World Expos organised during the last decade, Finland has participated in Shanghai Expo 2010, but not in the Milan Expo 2012. In Shanghai, the Finnish pavilion called Kirnu (Churn) was chosen as the Expo's best in its size category, based on its design and architecture.

The decision that Finland would also be taking part in Astana Expo 2017 was made at a government session held on 26 May 2016. The decision was regarded as a show of support for the Finnish energy businesses and energy efficiency, and because the expo is held during Finland's centennial, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment stated in its announcement that "taking part in the Expo will strengthen the already positive country image that Finland has in Central Asia." Lenita Toivakka, the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development at the time, said that Finland's participation at Astana Expo 2017 is an important element in continuing the Finnish export promotion in

Kazakhstan. In addition, Minister Toivakka stated that the cooperation between Finland and Kazakhstan has been rapidly developing in the energy, cleantech and education sectors.

JAMK AND KFEIG TO JOIN ASTANA EXPO

JAMK has been actively operating in Kazakhstan since 2012. Already soon after the operation there began, a cooperation consortium called the Kazakhstani Finnish Education and Innovation Group (KFEIG) was formed, and in addition to JAMK its members include Häme University of Applied Sciences (HAMK), Lahti University of Applied Sciences (LAMK), and Tampere Adult Education Centre (TAKK). The KFEIG consortium has realised several successful education development processes in Kazakhstan, funded by Kazakhstan's Ministries of Education and Health, educational institutes operating under them, and the World Bank. The consortium has been working together with Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health to develop the country's vocational education and vocational teacher training, nurse training and the pedagogical skills of teachers.

Against this background, it is only natural that JAMK and the KFEIG consortium decided to participate in Astana Expo. It was very important to send the Kazakhstani partners a signal that the consortium is in Kazakhstan to stay and takes part in a prominent manner in Astana Expo, which is a highly important project for Kazakhstan on a national level.

The decision on the form and scope of Finland's participation, i.e. the size of the investment, had to be postponed until late autumn 2016, because the consortium was waiting for the participation decisions from other Finnish organisations that conduct education export. The KFEIG consortium was concerned that the competing Finnish education export operators, receiving government funding, would enter the same markets through Astana Expo. On the other hand, at the time of the decision-making the Future Learning Finland network and the Education Export Finland programme, run under Finpro, were about to end and they could not take responsibility for promoting the Finnish educational know-how at Astana Expo.

PREPARING FOR THE EXPO

Neither JAMK nor the other members in the KFEIG consortium had prior experience in participating in World Expos. They did have plenty of experience in taking part in education fairs, but Astana Expo 2017 is not a fair and will not have stands, as the Commissioner for the Finnish pavilion Severi Keinälä instructed the participants in autumn 2016 at an information meeting organised by Finpro. So how to market the consortium's and other organisations' know-how and services, and similarly, how to create an image of a top-level country in educational know-how?

Ateljé Sotamaa, the siblings Kivi and Tuuli Sotamaa, were selected as the designers of Finland's pavilion. The design work aims to give the visitor a holistic picture of Finland and Finnish know-how, a sense of what Finland is all about. The pavilion consists of four separate, individual buildings or "mini pavilions" with different sub-themes: Pure Energy, Smart City, Clean Water and Excellent Education. The sub-theme stories focus on energy efficiency, sustainability, cleantech solutions and education.

"At the pavilion, visitors will see the famous northern lights, dive into an underwater world and listen to the sounds of Finnish forests while experiencing the possibilities of digital solutions." (Astana Expo 2017's website.)

The KFEIG consortium was given one of the walls to use at the Excellent Education building, and the theme of that wall was vocational education. An artist drew and painted the building walls to depict vocational education, and text material was produced for this purpose under the theme "What do you want to do when you grow up." The consortium produced key words and sentences under four themes, and the artist used these when creating the wall illustrations. The themes were "Innovative Teacher Education", "Excellence in Healthcare Education", "Pioneer in Cleantech" and "Our Global Presence", illustrating the consortium's references. The wall also had four iPads, one for each theme. The iPads presented pictures, videos and text material, allowing the visitors to see concretely what kind of jobs you can train for in these fields, what type of work tasks the workers in each field can do, and where you can study for these vocations.

UTILISING THE EXPO FROM JAMK AND KFEIG'S PERSPECTIVE

KFEIG's goal was to let the visitors at Finland's pavilion see and experience Finnish education and educational know-how through five layers.

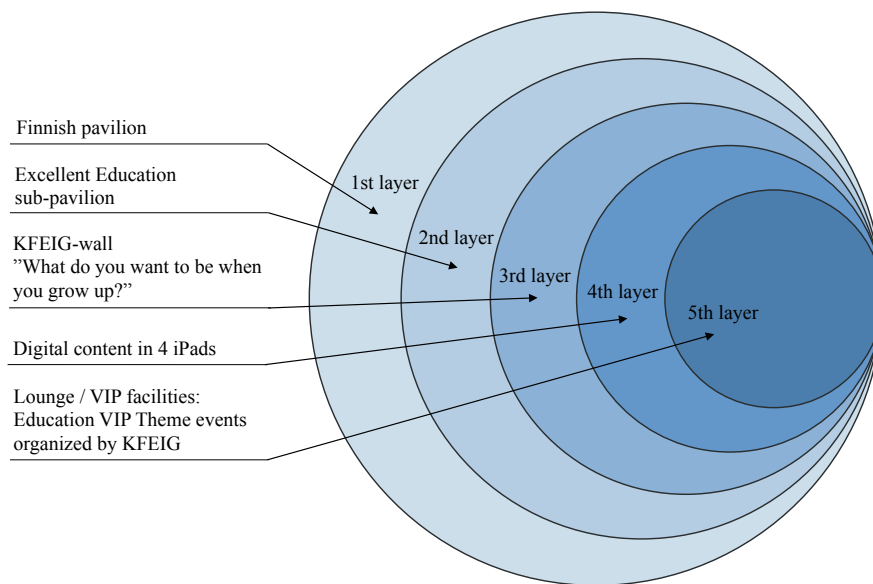


Figure 1. Five layers of Excellent Education, JAMK.

The first layer consists of the lighting, sounds and space at the pavilion, i.e. everything that sets the mood at the Finnish pavilion.

"We want to convey the feeling of, let's say, visiting Finland, providing people with a sense of what it feels like to be in Finland, to experience the Finnish welfare and its democratic society, which mostly happens in between these buildings and the space created by the buildings, while the buildings all focus on a different story." (Maksheeva 2017.)

The second layer, the Excellent Education pavilion, consists of the artist's vision, formed based on the material from the partners taking part in building the pavilion in question. The artist painted their vision on the pavilion walls as images and key words, and the pavilion also contained video material on iPads, as well as a game, and the purpose of these was to invite people to participate and to get them hooked on Finnish education.

The third layer was KFEIG's wall, with the theme "What do you want to be when you grow up." Four iPads were imbedded in this wall, presenting KFEIG's know-how and references under the themes of "Innovative Teacher Education", "Excellence in Healthcare Education", "Pioneer in Cleantech" and "Our Global Presence." The fourth layer was formed by the information, videos, pictures and texts shown on the iPads and produced by the consortium.

The VIP days at the Finnish pavilion's TIKKURI&ISKU lounge, organised by the consortium, formed the fifth layer. The idea and aim was that the story told through the means of the preceding layers, particularly the iPad videos, pictures and texts, would continue in the VIP day themes. The themes of the VIP days were focused on healthcare, teacher training and cleantech, and invitations were extended to the consortium's customers and partners, decision-makers, and experts from ministries and agencies operating under them.

As this article is being written, the VIP day arrangements are still in progress, and after they have been finished we can estimate how successfully we managed to tell our story and whether we met all of our objectives.

The consortium's students who worked at the Finnish pavilion were an integral element in KFEIG's participation and visibility at Astana Expo and the pavilion. Training the students and their final selection was done by Finpro's team that was in charge of creating the Finnish pavilion. The students' main task was to guide the visitors at the Finnish pavilion and tell them the pavilion's story. The students also played an important role in building Finland's country image, and the term Finnish education/educational know-how experience expert could be applied to them, because they all have studied at JAMK, HAMK, LAMK or TAKK for 1–3 years.

LIFE AFTER THE EXPO?

Together with KFEIG, JAMK has already managed to achieve great results in Kazakhstan through perseverance and long-term efforts, and thus influenced Finland's country image. Finnish operators are highly valued, and a change in attitudes towards the importance of quality in education is spreading. Mutual trust is the key. In the Kazakhstan 2030 strategy, education is one of the strongest main priorities. The goal of the educational reforms is to adapt the local education system to the new socio-economic environment.

Finland's participation at Astana Expo 2017 had a positive impact on our country image and its further improvement in Kazakhstan and the rest of Central Asia. Finland's excellent reputation as a top-level country in education has opened up possibilities for education export for the universities of applied sciences, but maintaining this reputation and becoming more established will require a lot of work and correctly timed presence, like at Astana Expo.

Although this was the first time our consortium took part in a World Expo, it was a success as part of Finland's focal areas. High-quality education and the operators' diverse know-how was noted and received praise. The Finnish pavilion focused on the future themes that were agreed upon, while some other

countries were merely promoting tourism. Especially the role of the experience experts, i.e. our students, proved to be a successful solution when building an image of Finland as a top-level country in education.

Concrete results, such as new education export deals, from JAMK and KFEIG's participation at Astana Expo 2017 will not become evident until some time after the Expo has finished. The Finnish education system is already a brand out there, but turning a brand and the related reputation into profit requires a wide range of measures, and taking part in an Expo can, when done the right way at the right time, be a functioning way of achieving profit. Another result, and at least equally as important, is that JAMK and the consortium remain on their current partners' and customers' "radar" when they need and search for know-how and expertise in developing their education and educational systems.

"In the factory, we make cosmetics, in the store, we sell hope" said Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon Cosmetics, once upon a time (BL Copywriting's website). What could this mean for turning the Finnish education brand into profit? What is the hope that we are selling when we sell Finnish educational know-how, and how can we convey that message to a potential foreign customer? This joyous message about the Finnish education know-how was what our consortium went to share at Astana Expo 2017.



Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland and Mrs. Aila Paloniemi, Chair of Board of JAMK and Member of the Finnish Parliament at Finland's National Day at the Astana Expo on 20 June 2017. Photo: © Saara Alhopuro/ MFA Finland

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KAZAKHSTAN'S TRAJECTORY IN INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS OF SEINÄJOKI AND SEAMK

Elina Vanhemping

There have been more than 100 visitors from Kazakhstan's higher education institutions making study visits to Seinäjoki during the academic year 2016–2017. These visitors include Master's and PhD students, civil servants and professors. The visits are a result of the public-private partnership of Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences (SeAMK) and Scandinavian Institute for Academic mobility Ltd.

The representatives from Scandinavian Institute for Academic mobility Ltd. made a sociological applied research of the main aspects of the Kazakhstani visitors' understanding of the everyday life, social well-being, social welfare and education system in Finland. This article presents a compilation of some of the answers collected from the Kazakhstani visitors – including students and staff members – about Finland and Finnish education.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF FINLAND'S COUNTRY IMAGE AS SEEN BY THE KAZAKHSTANI STUDENTS

Finland is a very innovative country with a beautiful balance of traditional and modern, in all parts of everyday life. We are very happy about meeting polite and friendly people, which seem to be typical features of the Finns. The main asset of this country is its people and their culture of order, management and great respect for the history of Finland.

The main features of Finland's country national image are life safety, the level of legal consciousness of the population, the culture of the design of houses and yards, the high level of social welfare, health care and a very strong education system that does not favour any specific group. Finland is a country where it is a pleasure to live, study and work.

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE STRENGTHS OF FINNISH EDUCATION

The Finnish education system is a result of the deeper understanding of the needs and motivations of pupils and students. Finland's universities are well-

equipped with a very strong technical base and up-to-date learning materials. In addition, the students' study culture is remarkable. Academic freedom and the level of responsibility of all the actors within universities are real and important aspects of the education system. The main purpose of education at the individual level is not only a diploma, but to also acquire knowledge and skills in order to gain an interesting job in the future.

FEATURES THAT FINLAND SHOULD EMPHASISE IN PROMOTING FINNISH EDUCATION

Respecting the student's personality and individual approach are important factors to be emphasised. In addition, the excellent infrastructure of universities, social welfare and social security, friendly and practically-oriented teachers, the summer semesters and the level of cooperation with the job market can be highlighted. Overall, it is very difficult to express the special features of Finnish education. You can only fully understand the quality of it when you are inside it – experiencing it. Thus, if you would like to understand the quality of Finnish education, you must come to Finland and take part in the education process.

WHAT COULD FINLAND AND KAZAKHSTAN DO IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION?

Kazakhstan's system of higher education is seeking new lines of development, and the modern achievements of the Finnish education system are currently seen as good examples that can support this development. There are various ways in which the educational collaboration between Kazakhstan and Finland can continue and develop in the future. First, it can take place in the form of developing double degree programmes. Secondly, collaboration can be implemented through Master's and PhD students' research visits. Thirdly, a new approach to study trips abroad could be developed for all categories of students and staff members.

Using the Russian-speaking support for study and communications processes can also be seen as a new design and development form of academic mobility. Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences and Scandinavian Institute for Academic Mobility have begun communicating with the Center for International Programs of Kazakhstan BOLASHAK about the next step of international internships for Kazakhstani and Finnish students and staff members. We are sure that this step will be very useful in the future for Finland and Kazakhstan.

FOREIGN STUDENTS' AND EMPLOYEES' EXPERIENCES ABOUT INTERNSHIPS AND ENTERING THE JOB MARKET IN FINLAND

Marko Luoma

For companies that want to enter new export markets but need more resources, Xport provides a range of services that will help our customers approach export markets in small manageable steps. Ultimately, we want to grow export sales for our customers and be the first choice when companies are looking for help to export.

We are not consultants. We carry out the tasks and work as the company's own Export Manager would. Market research, partner searches, attending and visiting international trade shows and Export Manager service – the focus in everything we do is to gain more overseas sales for our customers. With Xport as the Sales Manager, a company also has access to our Xport Associates network. These international talents, based in South Ostrobothnia, currently include 23 nationalities and 30 languages.

Besides supporting Finnish companies in their internationalisation, Xport itself is an international organisation. We have had 16 international interns since we started in 2014, and half of our staff are from outside of Finland. For the purpose of this article, I asked for our foreign interns' and staff members' opinions on education, internship and employment in Finland. Asking from the people that have recent, first-hand experience of education and employment in Finland, we can learn about the areas where we need to improve and identify the strengths that we can highlight when marketing Finland and its education system.

I have now worked three and a half years as a Managing Director of Xport. During that time, I have seen the benefits of having an international intern or employee and the difference it can make in the internationalisation process of a company. Accordingly, in addition to reflecting the thoughts of foreign interns and employees, this article also provides views and ideas from the employer's point of view by considering solutions to some of the experienced challenges.

WHAT ARE THE PROS AND CONS OF THE FINNISH EDUCATION SYSTEM COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES, AND HOW COULD IT BE IMPROVED?

Finland has a good, effective and high-quality education system with experienced teachers, structured learning and fine facilities. Students are given a lot of freedom, which is considered to be really good for students who are strict and equipped with high work ethics. For other students, it may cause problems.

The course system in Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs), with exams, presentations and projects, is more extensive. Through that system the students will gain deeper knowledge. Another advantage is the block system. Having courses for a couple of weeks with a variation of testing methods lessens the workload at the end of the semester immensely.

The challenges for Finnish school systems internationally are the language barriers. It is also very difficult for foreign students to get a job after graduation, which makes Finland a lot less interesting of an option when looking for a place to study.

WHAT WERE YOUR EXPERIENCES WHEN APPLYING FOR AN INTERNSHIP IN FINLAND? BOTH GOOD EXPERIENCES AS WELL AS CHALLENGES?

According to many foreign students, it is extremely difficult to find an internship from Finland. All those who have been lucky enough to receive an internship have been recommended by someone with a good local network. Alternatively, the HEIs in two different countries might be in close cooperation with each other. In addition, the Erasmus programme is structured in a way that helps the students, HEIs and companies go through the internship process in a much smoother fashion.

For some reason, Finnish companies in general are not interested in having a foreign student as an intern. According to the foreign students, the companies do not reply to applications and messages sent to them. Based on their experiences, unless you speak and write the application in Finnish you don't have a very good chance of getting an internship in Finland.

A solution for this problem might be that the HEIs could offer a very structured system to the companies, one that would be almost like making a package of the service that the companies would get for free. This plan should include the rights and responsibilities of HEIs, students and companies. This

way all parties would know what it includes and how they could benefit from this three-way cooperation. The HEIs would have to prepare to sell these packages to the companies as a way for them to improve their international operations. At the same time the students' chances for post-graduation employment would be improved. With better employment, it would be easier to market the Finnish HEIs internationally. At its best it would be a positive cycle where all parties benefit.

WHAT WERE YOUR EXPERIENCES IN YOUR INTERNSHIP IN FINLAND?

There are some good examples as well as some bad examples of how international students have experienced their internship in Finland. Usually when students have had a bad experience, it is because they haven't been given any responsibilities or projects that they could plan and be in charge of. They have been disappointed that they have only received simple tasks, and they have felt that they have been used as free labour. On the other hand, the good experiences have included team work where the intern has felt like an equal and trusted member of the team with responsibilities.

Based on my personal experiences, I know that when the interns feel welcome and are given responsibilities they step up and perform at their best. We have had 16 international interns since we started in 2014, and we have created a system for working with interns. Our goal is to always give the interns a variation of the different kinds of tasks and educate and help them in each one of them. In return, we expect them to give their opinions and ideas. We usually end up improving our services after we get good questions from the interns and they challenge us in doing things differently than we are used to. One other thing that we also mention to our interns is that if they have found a few things that they enjoy doing and a few things that they don't enjoy, they have had a good internship and this information will help them in the future.

WHAT WERE YOUR EXPERIENCES WHEN LOOKING FOR A JOB AS A NEW GRADUATE IN FINLAND? BOTH GOOD EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES?

The experiences are very similar to the experiences when looking for an internship. There are examples where a native German speaker was not invited to an interview for a position that required German skills. Too often the language barrier seems to be a reason why foreign job seekers are unsuccessful when looking for a job in Finland. I strongly believe that if the

internship placement were more systematic and sold in the right way to the companies it would improve the employment of international job seekers in the long run. Furthermore, such a thing would only improve Finland's export sales. Once again, this would be a positive cycle that benefit all parties.

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCES WHILE WORKING IN FINLAND? BOTH GOOD EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES?

The international students that have stayed in Finland after graduation and found a job have ended up doing general type of work as cleaners or mail delivery persons, which is not ideal for someone who has graduated from university. Others have worked hard networking with the local business community and followed through all the applications that they have sent. According to them, it has not been easy but has paid off in the end.

SUMMARY

In order to improve the international degree programmes in Finnish HEIs, a very structured programme for internship opportunities needs to be developed. It needs to be very easy for the companies to adapt, and HEIs need to plan how they can help the companies. Students need to be prepared and aware of what is expected from them during the internship and how they can do their part for a successful internship. The best end result of this programme would benefit everyone involved.

Companies would realise the benefits of having students doing internships at their companies and see the benefits of international employees for their export sales. For some companies, an international intern could be the first step towards export sales and internationalisation. Students would gain better experiences in Finnish schools and businesses. By doing a good job during their internship they would also be able to improve the chances of post-graduation employment for themselves and other students in the future. HEIs would be able to offer better experiences for their international students, and this would help them market and sell the international programmes. A positive cycle helps everyone!

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND – REFLECTIONS FROM THE NAMIBIAN PERSPECTIVE

H.E Mr. Bonny Haufiku

Having gained its independence in 1990, Namibia inherited a society characterised by deep inequality and disparity in the quality of education, which was segregated along ethnic and racial lines. These issues hindered the progress of development of Namibia. The long-standing friendship between Finland and Namibia provides a strong foundation for collaboration in education, which both nations have recognised and prioritised in their development policies. Namibia recognised the fact that Finland is one of the leading countries when it comes to education in the world. Everyone has access to free and equal education opportunities. The teacher's profession in Finland is greatly respected. One outstanding fact also is the respect/trust element for social cohesion in general.

The vocational training opportunities in Finland are also very well-developed, which is beneficial for students who are not very academically strong. Students can also study in their mother tongue. One outstanding fact is the autonomy that teachers have over the implementation of the school curriculum. The fact that the system focuses more on encouraging personal inquisitiveness rather than being centered on exams is even more encouraging.

COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION

The Government of the Republic of Namibia opened its Embassy in Helsinki in 2014. The establishment of the Embassy opened the doors to deepening collaboration between Finland and Namibia. While focusing on trade relations, the Embassy of Namibia is also committed to advancing collaboration in education. Ambassador Bonny Haufiku made contact with several Finnish higher education institutions in order to identify potential areas of collaboration.

Simultaneously, Namibian legislation has been amended so that all teacher trainers are now required to hold an academic master's degree. A pilot was developed between the University of Eastern Finland (UEF) and the University of Namibia (UNAM) on master-level training for teacher trainers in the field of primary education in 2014. Six Namibian teachers completed their training in 2016 through a blended learning programme, focusing on international

educational policy, pedagogic approaches and primary-level teaching (UEF Bulletin 2016). The programme was so successful that UEF adopted the programme as one of the tracks within its Philosophical Faculty, open to all students.

Ambassador Haufiku led the visit of the Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation of Namibia, the Hon. Dr. Itah Kandjii-Murangi, in 2016. During the visit the Minister outlined that Namibia needed to focus on the training of teachers and on the health care sector.

In 2015, the Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) commissioned two programmes from Finland University for training of teachers. The first programme is implemented at the Rauma Unit of the University of Turku and focuses on the training of 24 students for a bachelor-level degree in education, while the second programme is implemented at the Joensuu Campus of the University of Eastern Finland and focuses on the training of 25 students for a master-level degree in education.

Both programmes commenced at the beginning of 2017. Already, both programmes are proving to be dynamic by collaborating with not only university schools but also local municipality schools as well as local communities and parishes in Finland. Knowledge of Namibian culture and tourism are being spread to different stakeholder groups and communities as the students interact with other people. The arrival of the Namibian students in Joensuu, for example, has impelled other African students to unite in different activities, and the University of Eastern Finland now has an official African Students' Association. Multiculturalism at its best.

Collaboration in education in the healthcare sector is also developing. The University of Turku is supporting the developing School of Dentistry at UNAM, while UEF and UNAM are also starting collaboration related to social pharmacy and capacity building at the School of Pharmacy at UNAM (UEF 2017).

FUTURE COOPERATION

While Finland and Namibia share a long history in education cooperation, it is fair to say that the journey ahead is a long one. Namibia still struggles with the need for a trained and skilled workforce and trained teachers, even though her economy has grown and overtaken many other African nations. The higher education sector in Namibia is also growing and developing, as private higher education institutions have sprung up in the country in addition to the developing UNAM and Namibia University of Sciences and Technology (NUST).

Collaboration with Finnish higher education can be a foundation for developing further education and research, while Namibians need to be in the driver's seat, leading change and innovation that is necessary for the country's development. The role of higher education, both Namibian and Finnish, is also a pivot for the development of bilateral business and economic relations. Business and entrepreneurship may be intertwined into the curricula, training and mobility activities by the higher education institutions, which should also be the case in research and innovation.

We take note of the fact that the successes that Finland gained through their education system did not come overnight. They also faced challenges, and we want to learn from these in order to help with Namibia's development.

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THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES ON THE
EFFECTS OF TUITION FEES

FEE-BASED EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES – GEARING UP FOR NEW SERVICES AND PROCESSES

Riikka Vanhanen, Jyrki Holappa & Helli Kitinoja

As part of the all-round preparation process regarding the introduction of tuition fees at the English-taught degree programmes in Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs), the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) wanted to map out the universities of applied sciences' (UAS) thoughts and expectations about the imminent change. The aim was to find out how the network's UASs saw the tuition fees and their effects when considering them in light of their current activities and future prospects. The views of UASs were charted in a survey conducted as a part of a thesis commissioned by the network (see also the introduction). This article looks into the results of the survey by analysing the central themes through the answers provided by the respondents.

TUITION FEES AS A WATERSHED: WHAT IS EXPECTED TO CHANGE AND HOW IS THE CHANGE PERCEIVED?

The introduction of tuition fees is thought to be a significant changemaker in Finnish UASs. Predictions about the effects of tuition fees on the numbers of foreign students in the English-taught degree programmes have often been made based on the reported experiences in Sweden (see also Per Nilsson's article in this publication). Along with the concern regarding the decrease of student numbers, the UASs seem to have awoken to the realisation that new approaches and initiatives are needed to ensure the attractiveness of Finnish UAS education. How will the fee-charging affect the UASs, and what will actually change? What are the threats and possibilities from the HEIs' perspective, and how will these be addressed?

The FINNIPS network has had an active role in seeking to acquire and analyse information to support UASs in their processes of planning and preparing for the fee charging. Amidst all the speculations and discussions about the possible effects of the tuition fees on Finnish UASs, FINNIPS decided to compile information systematically by asking the UASs about their thoughts and ideas regarding the matter.

At the beginning of 2017, FINNIPS commissioned students from Oulu University of Applied Sciences to conduct surveys about topics related to tuition fees and UASs' international education. International Business students Emma Mansikkamäki and Jenni Kuronen were responsible for conducting a survey that was designed to find out the kind of changes that the UASs had either already experienced or were anticipating, and if they had somehow prepared for them. The idea was to also figure out how the UASs would see the upcoming changes by asking them to consider the threats and possibilities surrounding the topic of fee-charging education.

The survey questionnaire was formulated jointly by the students and the representatives of FINNIPS and submitted to the network's member UASs in April 2017. The questionnaire was sent to the Heads of International Services who were asked to coordinate the answering process within their institutions. It was assumed that, due to the differences in organisations and their division of work, the respondents might be different depending on the UAS. However, it was suggested that the respondents could include rectors, vice-rectors and heads of student and international services or other actors significantly engaged in activities related to the topic. Within the two-week answering period, answers were submitted by 10 UASs out of the network's 17¹ member institutions.

Most of the respondents of the survey were heads of International Services. The second biggest group consisted of heads of Student Services, while the other respondents were representatives of Admissions and Student Services or worked as study counsellors, team leaders and development managers/directors. The respondents did not include rectors or vice-rectors from any of the UASs.

The following sections will first point to the main findings of the survey by describing the ways in which the UASs reported to be preparing for the tuition fees from the perspectives of service provision and division of work. After that, the second part of the article offers analysis of the possible effects of the tuition fees on UASs. The topics discussed in the latter part are derived from the survey, but the discussion is based on the writers' own speculations on the themes.

¹ Number of member UASs in 2016–2017.

UASS ARE READY TO DEVELOP AND RECONSIDER THEIR SERVICES AND EDUCATION PROVISION

The survey was conducted in April 2017, when the UASSs had initial information on the levels of applicant numbers from the spring's application period but none about the numbers of applicants taking part in the entrance exams or being accepted to the UASSs. All ten UASSs reported that the number of applicants from outside the EU/EEA had changed in spring 2017 compared to the previous years. A majority of the respondents stated that the numbers of applicants from outside the EU/EEA had decreased. However, most of these respondents described the decrease as being moderate, while some degree programmes had experienced a growth in the number of applicants. Overall, at the time of answering, the UASSs had already noticed changes in the numbers of applicants to international degree programmes while pointing out that the applicants had also come from different countries than in previous years.

Since the effects of the tuition fees on the number of students coming from outside the EU/EEA will not be available before the start of the academic year in autumn 2017, the survey questions urged the respondents to reflect the situation based on their current thoughts and expectations. In light of the initial applicant numbers and the UASSs' anticipations regarding the trend, many of the respondents pointed out that there might be a risk of not receiving enough international students to English-taught degree programmes. Concerns about the future and existence of the UASSs' international degree programmes were expressed along with the fear of the diminishing of HEIs' internationalisation in case the student numbers would go significantly down because of the tuition fees.

While describing the concerns and possible threats regarding the dropping student numbers, the UASSs also reported about the measures they had taken or were planning to take as a reaction to the changes in the number of international students. Various respondents stated that the content and quality of education would need to be developed and stronger specialisation considered in degree programmes. The marketing and visibility of English-taught programmes was also pointed as an area of development, along with the systematic communication regarding information related to tuition fees and scholarships.

Almost all the respondents described how they had already planned and constructed the policies and practices for charging tuition fees and granting scholarships. In addition to ensuring the functioning of the fee-charging process, various respondents referred to the need of developing

new services to meet the possibly new needs and expectations of students. The answers did not specify the nature of these new services, but numerous respondents mentioned that the student and support services should generally be reconsidered and strengthened.

Parallel to considering the effects of tuition fees on UASs' degree programmes, the respondents also mentioned the new possibilities regarding the enhancement of education export. The fee-charging process and the possible new services to be developed to support students were seen as "good practice" for education export. Appropriate profiling of programmes, high-quality education and services, together with effective marketing, are matters which, along with the tuition fees, need to be considered in UASs' English-taught degree programmes more actively than before. This practice can then be utilised also in the wider education export activities, where services and solutions are productised and sold not only to individual degree students but also to other kinds of customer groups.

DIVISION OF WORK RETHOUGHT AND NEW COOPERATION ESTABLISHED

As the UASs reported about the processes and services that had been established or would be developed because of the tuition fees, they were also asked to evaluate which actors and services would be primarily affected by the needed developments. At the time of answering, the majority of respondents stated that the tuition fees and related processes had mostly influenced the work of Admission Services, and that was also the anticipation regarding the future.

Marketing was another area within which the UASs were considered to have already experienced the effect of tuition fees, and its role in the future was also seen as important. The effects of tuition fees on the work of Financial Services, Student Services and International Services were considered moderate, while library and other services were not seen to be that affected by the work required by the preparation and implementation of tuition fee related processes.

When asking the UASs about the actors involved in the planning and implementation of tuition fee related activities, all the respondents pointed to various support services and actors from within different departments of UASs. The respondents listed the following actors, which in different UASs would address the tuition fee processes in different phases and in varying combinations:

| TABLE 1. Actors involved in the planning and implementation of tuition fee related activities in UASs. | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Management | Degree Programmes | Support Services | Financial Services | Students |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rector • Vice-Rector • International Director • School Director • Board of UAS • Management Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Department • Lecturers of International Degree Programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Services • International Services • Admission Services • Marketing and Communication • ICT Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Services • Financial Secretary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International students • Student Union |

Overall, the UASs pointed out that planning the tuition fee and scholarship-related matters had been an extensive process involving various actors and influencing their work. It was seen that the new processes brought along new workloads, especially for those handling the payment procedures. Moreover, the need to develop new processes had also led to the establishment of new work groups that crosscut the work of different actors within the UASs. Planning groups and scholarship committees have been set up, bringing together representatives ranging from top management to students.

CONSIDERING THE EFFECTS OF TUITION FEES ON UASS

The above accounts regarding the thoughts about the service provision, actors and the new tasks and workload ensuing from the introduction of tuition fees reflect the main themes that emerged from the survey. However, the respondents evaluated the possible effects of tuition fees on the UASs' functions also from several other viewpoints. Despite the fact that the ideas and concerns may vary from one UAS and respondent to another, these reported aspects are worth considering in more detail.

The table on the following page presents a list of the threats and opportunities that were clearly identified from the respondents' answers. As pointed out, different UASs reported different types of concerns and praised varying kinds of possibilities. Nevertheless, these viewpoints offer an extensive picture about the current ideas and expectations regarding the effects of tuition fees.

The following section of the article comprises five topics, which, according to the writer's interpretation, encapsulate some of the central themes and development targets occurring in UASs as a consequence

of the tuition fees. The topics that centre around the questions of quality, degree-programme profiling and development, strategy building and the development of service provision and international marketing will be discussed in light of the threats and opportunities reported by the UASs' respondents. The aim of the contemplation is to show possible ways in which the threats and opportunities can manifest in the practices of UASs and suggest how some of the perceived challenges could be turned into possibilities.

| TABLE 2. Tuition fee related threats and opportunities reported by UASs. | |
|---|---|
| Threats | Opportunities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition between HEIs • Various different admissions processes and timings that are confusing from the applicant's point of view • Decrease of the applicant numbers • Not enough students in the group • Less cultural diversity in student groups • Decline of students from outside the EU/EEA • Reduction of financing and resources • Processing tuition fee payments and granting scholarships bring about extra work • The revenue of tuition fees in relation to the workload • Decrease in the number of English-taught degree programmes • Impact on HEI's internationality • The deterioration in the internationalisation of HEIs • Anticipation becomes even more challenging | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of made-to-order education and education export • Possibility for a new source of income • Development of the application and selection process • Fee-paying students' stronger commitment to accepting the study place and completing the degree • Development of new services for (fee-paying) students and considering the service provision • Increased visibility of English-taught degree programmes • Stronger investments in marketing • Ensuring the quality of the education provision • Development of English-taught degree programmes and profiling them • Development of expertise regarding e.g. teachers' language skills and know-how • Scholarship schemes are a possible way to attract applicants/students • Processing of the tuition fee topic in national-level HEI cooperation |

ENSURING THE QUALITY OF THE EDUCATION PROVISION

The introduction of tuition fees for non-EU/EEA applicants creates a new situation for Finnish HEIs, as they are now in competition with other countries and HEIs offering chargeable education. As clearly indicated in the survey results, the UASs consider the decrease of foreign students to be a real threat. Therefore, the burning question is how can the Finnish HEIs stand out from the foreign HEIs and succeed in attracting students to their English-taught degree programmes?

Finnish education generally carries a worldwide reputation of high quality. The success in the OECD's PISA results tends to shine also on Finnish higher education, thereby giving the Finnish UASs a positive image benefit. However, one should note that the positive image is indeed realistic as the Finnish UASs are committed to continuous and comprehensive quality work in terms of developing education and its processes. Accordingly, the emphasis on quality management and continuous development should be actively acknowledged as building blocks contributing to Finnish UASs' competitive factors.

The UASs in Finland are regularly audited by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC), which is an independent government agency responsible for the national evaluation of education (www.karvi.fi). Furthermore, each UAS has developed its own policies and processes to ensure the quality of their education provision. These incorporate various aspects, such as the UAS's strategy, regional development and cooperation, with working life in creating relevant curriculum contents for the degree programmes. Additionally, degree programme teams, quality meetings and regular quality surveys can be applied to ensure continuous quality work. In practice, competent and trained professional teaching staff are responsible for executing the daily quality of the education provision.

In Finland, there is no separate accreditation system for education institutions, which is why the national quality labels granted by FINEEC and the Ministry of Education and Culture are important for HEIs. However, it is to be noted that in global markets different kinds of accreditations and international quality labels are needed and valued. Thus, parallel to ensuring the continuous development according to the national quality criteria, it becomes increasingly important for the HEIs to acquire recognitions for their degree programmes by also participating in international accreditation processes. Ensuring the high quality of education provision and demonstrating it with quality labels and accreditations is important for HEIs to function effectively and be credible actors advancing their education export initiatives in global education markets.

PROFILING OF DEGREE PROGRAMMES AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH-TAUGHT DEGREE PROGRAMMES

In the survey answers, it was widely acknowledged that the introduction of tuition fees would create a need to develop the English-taught degree programmes and strengthen the profiling of them. What can this mean in practice?

The curriculum is the manifestation of the skills and competences that a student is expected to acquire within the studies. Thus, the role of a curriculum as a method of attracting potential applicants has to be acknowledged. Typically, in the construction process of a curriculum a number of concerns are taken into consideration. The aim is to be able to anticipate the needs regarding both the current and future skills and competences. The views and needs of various stakeholders are fitted into this entity. These considerations may arise, for example, from the UAS's strategy, staff and students, multidisciplinary cooperation, relevant industries and businesses, entrepreneurs, as well as from global, national, regional and local development prospects and available assets. Overall, one of the main objectives in the curriculum design is to carry out the UAS's task of effecting regional development by operating in a high-quality and efficient manner.

Despite the fact that degree programmes may share identical programme names in the current application system for applicants, the reality among those degree programmes displays a great variety of curricula. Thus, degree programmes are actively profiling their study contents in accordance with the aforementioned stakeholder considerations and the degree programmes' own aspirations in the curriculum development in order to provide a consistent study entity originating in working life. Furthermore, it should be noted that specialisation is not only about the contents of a curriculum but rather about the "total study experience": what, where and how studying is taking place. Thus, a wider-scale profiling of the degree programmes, UASs and both learning and living environments (place and location) is advisable.

On the one hand, the curriculum serves the needs of Finnish degree-seeking students, but on the other hand, it should be able to attract the attention of foreign degree-seeking applicants, too. Nevertheless, these two objectives are not mutually exclusive, as the study contents deemed "usual or typical" in the Finnish context may actually be of great interest and novelty when observed from abroad. However, English-taught degree programmes should also be truly international so that they can be competitive and attractive

for international applicants and other customers that seek study contents and degrees that are relevant and recognised in international contexts. The shared intention in the curriculum development for all students is to provide an entity that ensures the delivery of the necessary generic and degree-specific competences to produce highly capable graduates. Furthermore, the Finnish HEI system allows for students to have personalised study plans, which in turn also enables individual choices in studies and consequently personal profiling in a student's know-how.

In addition to the curriculum development and questions regarding the profiling of the programmes, it is noteworthy that the learning environments, methods and modes of education delivery also can and need to be constantly developed. While the Finnish UASs' approach in combining theoretical studies with a working life emphasis generally seems to be fruitful based on the feedback from foreign students, it is important to keep up with developing and experimenting novel methods for teaching and learning. Comprehensive online studies, multimode or blended learning methods, or studying in various kinds of lab environments are examples of new learning methods, offering ways to add flexibility to the studies. All these pedagogical and learning environment innovations can also offer possibilities for the Finnish HEIs in their education export activities, both as products and as modes of education delivery to international customers.

STRATEGY GUIDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND EDUCATION EXPORT

The introduction of tuition fees brought about various new phenomena to be considered and processes to be constructed at the UASs (see also the article about the tuition fee work group). Amidst all the changes and new, constantly occurring needs, the answers of the survey respondents reveal that anticipation has become even more difficult than it has been thus far. Not being able to plan ahead is seen as a threat and an aspect that could negatively affect the systematic development of international education. What could be done to ease the pain?

It seems that enhancement of strategic planning regarding the UAS's international education would be an answer to many of the challenges and assumed threats reported within the survey. Open discussion and systematic planning leaning on strategic views shared at different levels would enable the creation of policies and practices that would be considered functional both from the students' and HEIs' point of view.

Based on the survey results and the respondents' experiences of the preparation process regarding the tuition fees, more strategic and above all shared visions would have been needed in defining the levels of tuition fees and scholarships, for example. At the moment, not only do the levels of tuition fees and criteria of scholarships differ from UAS to UAS, but also different views and practices are in use in the admissions process of foreign degree students. This may be confusing from the applicants' point of view; at the same time, it is contrasting the ideas regarding mutual benefits of joint practices in the marketing and recruitment process. Despite the lack of mutually shared clear visions at the moment, it is interesting to ponder whether we should have a national or at least more comprehensive tuition fee and scholarship framework in Finland. Furthermore, a valid question is which of the strategic choices will be more profitable for the UASs in the long run: increasing competition and diverting admissions practices between the UASs, or well-thought-out cooperation in these areas?

Strategic views and understanding are also needed more generally when the UASs pursue to develop the attractiveness of tuition fee based education. With the introduction of the tuition fees, it becomes important to understand that the potential students actually assume – at least to some degree – the role of a client in their relation to the UAS. Thus, a simulation of consumer buying behaviour in conjunction with the principles of sales and marketing is worth exploiting in each UAS. Namely, the client (student selected into a degree programme) buys himself a broader entity (components of a purchasing decision). This entity consists not only of the actual education product (study field, degree programme) but also of various services (for example a UAS's admissions services, student services, international services, buddy and tutoring services, etc.) supporting the education product and, furthermore, of other image factors related to the UAS itself, Finland as a country and the city of the UAS. Thus, a strategic understanding captures the various elements of the international degree programmes' operational environment and acknowledges these in the planning and decision-making.

One of the worries expressed in the survey was the decrease of the number of English-taught degree programmes. This again would have tremendous effects on the overall internationalisation of HEIs. In order to avoid this, the UASs should identify the need for outlining and developing their own strategic approach to tuition fees, education export and the relevant processes supporting them. Each UAS needs to determine its own objectives in regard to international education and internationalisation. When doing so, each UAS should determine the role and purpose of having

international programmes and fee-paying degree students in the UAS's learning environment. For example, is the purpose to gain revenue, support home internationalisation and multicultural learning environments at the UAS, provide added value to local and regional cooperation between businesses and the UAS, or develop competences for education export projects – or all of these combined?

PLANNING OF NEW SERVICES

As pointed out in the summary of the survey results, various UASs were planning to establish new services as a response to the presumably increasing service expectations of the fee-paying students. This is in line with the development where education is seen as a product and HEIs seek to adapt a customer-oriented approach in all their activities. However, what are these services actually, and why are they created?

The considerations do not end there but the questions of the grounds and aims of the new service provision are many: Should the fee-paying degree students or other paying customers be serviced differently, or are all students – whether fee-paying or not – in an equal position as to the access of various services of the UAS? This is also an ethical question. What kind of services are included in the tuition fee, and how can these services be packaged into the education product marketed? Will these new services provide added value to the tuition fees paid? Does the creation of new services provide a competitive edge in attracting fee-paying students and other customers to a UAS? Are there similar needs for service provision in education export that could be developed simultaneously? Is there a risk of non-fee-paying degree students feeling discriminated against if some of the services are directed at fee-paying students only? Should these additional services aimed at fee-paying students be combined into specific service packages and priced separately on top of the actual tuition fee? Will the UAS provide those services itself, or is there a need for external service providers? If so, how then to ensure the quality, reliability and safety of those externally produced services in order to safeguard the image of the UAS?

Overall, the service provision becomes a matter of strategic nature to UASs. The tuition fee system forces the UASs to evaluate and develop their current services, and to consider various alternatives not only in terms of the economic and organisational standpoints, extent and quality of services offered but also to contemplate the more philosophical and legal aspects related to students' equal treatment in the Finnish HEI system. Academic and

other staff members also need new skills in service design, and as service providers they have to be educated in this. As an outcome, it may be that all students will benefit, as services are seen as a part of a student's "total study experience" at the UAS. Thus, the service design will create various possibilities for cooperation among a number of actors (e.g. student health care, student union, municipality, housing organisations, banking, insurance, leisure time activities, sports and physical education, transportation, etc.) to create desirable and appropriate service provision as strategically outlined by the UAS concerned.

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

The final topic regarding the marketing of Finnish UASs and their international study provision was seen by the survey respondents as an area of development but moreover as a positive challenge and an opportunity. The UASs all seem to have grasped a solid understanding of the need to intensify the marketing efforts along with the increasing international competition. How is this done in a systematic way?

As many respondents pointed out in their answers, the introduction of tuition fees has resulted in increased interest towards UASs' international degree programmes. This was seen as a positive phenomenon and it was assumed that they would gain more visibility in the new situation. The expected and longed-for visibility does not, however, emerge spontaneously, but requires consistent steps in internal and external marketing. Indeed, in order to be able to market the education outwards, it is important that the product, namely the UASs' English-taught study provision and related services, is well-known within the UASs. The actors need to understand not only the contents of the programmes and services but also the UAS's aims and strategic objectives regarding the international education.

The increased interest within the UASs towards the international education provision is the first step, which needs to be followed by strategically planned and carefully implemented processes including the development of the content and quality of the education and services. The well-functioning and constantly developed education is the basis for marketing, which is ideally supported by clear strategic views regarding the targets: To whom is the programme aimed at? What kind of students and customers are we looking for? Where are our target audiences located? Generally, in order to know how to market the international education, it is crucially important to know who we are trying to reach in the first place.

As to the main messages to be used in the marketing of Finnish UASs' international education to desired target groups, the topics discussed above – quality, content, investment in systematic development of innovative learning methods and environments together with customer-friendly services – can be seen to comprise the core competitive factors for efficient communication. Moreover, parallel to the content of education, the strengths of Finland are also important aspects to be highlighted in convincing the customers to choose Finnish education.

Yet another question, largely discussed also in the other articles of the publication, is whether these messages are best conveyed in cooperation between the Finnish HEIs and other national-level actors, or whether each HEI and UAS wants to reach their target audiences by going solo. As highlighted consistently by the FINNIPS network in all its activities, it is the cooperation that is strongly believed to produce the best visibility for Finland and all the Finnish education providers.

CONCLUSIONS

The above considerations regarding the potential effects of the tuition fees on UASs are an attempt to continue discussion on the interesting and important topics that emerged in the survey. As stated earlier, the speculations lean on the views and interpretations of the writers, and while all the possible aspects of these multifaceted phenomena cannot be reached in this context, it is hoped that the provided angles will generate new ideas in UASs and perhaps contribute to the strategic development of their international education.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TUITION FEES AND SCHOLARSHIP CRITERIA AT VAASA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Juha Vierola

For the first time in the history of education in Finland and after a long debate, tuition fees were introduced for students coming from outside the European Union and the European Economic Area (EU/EEA) in 2017. This was preceded by a tuition fee pilot between 2010 and 2014, which only concerned a few Master's degree programmes in selected higher education institutions (HEIs). In addition, an interesting experiment was carried out in 2016 when application handling fees were introduced. However, application handling fees were also short-lived and were only implemented once in 2016. As opposed to tuition fees, application handling fees were charged from all applicants despite their nationality if their background education was completed outside the EU/EEA education system. Another main difference was that the application handling fee was actually collected by the National Board of Education, not by the HEIs themselves. (Studyinfo.fi website.)

Currently, tuition fees in Finland vary from EUR 4000 to 20 000 per academic year, depending on the programme and the institution. The minimum fee set by the Finnish government is EUR 1500 per academic year, but beyond this HEIs can use their own discretion to determine the level of the fee. A tuition fee is collected from non-EU/EAA students on the degree programmes conducted in English. Therefore, studying on degree programmes taught in Finnish and Swedish are still free of charge for all students regardless of their nationality. In addition, on the degree programmes conducted in English, non-EU/EEA applicants can be exempt from the fee in certain circumstances. (Studyinfinland.fi website.)

There is also a great variety in scholarship criteria between different institutions. In most higher education institutions, the level of scholarship is affected by the student's academic performance. (ibid.)

SETTING UP TUITION FEES AT VAASA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Finland has enjoyed a reputation as a high-quality education provider throughout the years, and positive PISA scores have helped pave the way to

success. Therefore, it is no wonder that the stakes were high and tuition fees aroused lots of debate nationwide, bringing up both positive and negative aspects to the topic. Critics suggested that we would face a significant drop in applications to our international degree programmes, signalling an end to the internationalisation that had skyrocketed over in recent years. On the other side of the debate, there were optimists who said that we could finally profit from our higher education through education export. (OECD/PISA website.)

At Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (UAS), the debate largely reflected the nationwide debate on a miniature scale. Vaasa UAS currently offers three degree programmes conducted in English, of which two are at Bachelor's level and one at Master's. For a relatively small organisation, the impact of such a tremendous change can be devastating – or it can create new ways of thinking. Creative thinking is becoming more and more important as resources in higher education are being cut. Vaasa UAS tends to take a practical approach, and it can be flexible when it needs to be. Therefore, we started to create possible outcome scenarios and considered how we could affect them.

The first step was to determine the level of tuition fee for non-EU/EEA students. As mentioned earlier, there was a great variety in tuition fees depending on the programme and institution. This, combined with the fact that we had no prior experience of collecting fees, did not make the decision any easier.

Previous studies also showed that the introduction of tuition fees had reduced the number of international students in Sweden and Denmark, both of which are good benchmarks when comparing the Finnish education structure. In Sweden, for example, the number of applicants to Master's degree programmes decreased by 73 per cent in 2011, compared to autumn 2010. The Danish experience was rather similar. In 2005, non-EU students made up more than 36 per cent of the total number of international students, while in 2011 they comprised only 15 per cent of the total number. In both Sweden and Denmark the numbers have slightly increased after the first shock but are still significantly lower than they were before the introduction of tuition fees. (Sweden.se/blogs; West 2013.)

Bearing this in mind, we considered that it would initially be more important to have our international degree programmes full in the autumn than trying to achieve more profit at the expense of having fewer students. Another aim of competitive pricing was to ensure that in the future we would still produce skilled experts in the Vaasa region for the needs of the labour market. Demand in the Vaasa region is especially high due to the energy cluster, which consists of 140 companies that employ around 10,000 people. The board eventually

decided to set an affordable price tag – EUR 4000 for Bachelor’s degrees and EUR 5000 for Master’s degree programmes. (Vaasaregion.fi website.)

DETERMINING SCHOLARSHIPS

When the tuition fee for the international degree programmes was decided, it was time to focus on the scholarship criteria. By taking a quick look at HEI websites in Finland, it is easy to see that there are two bottom lines in setting the scholarship criteria: the first is the type of the scholarship, which can be a fee waiver or a full grant, and the second is that in most HEIs, academic performance affects the level of scholarship. When talking about academic performance, 55 ECTS credits per academic year is usually set as the minimum requirement. This is due to the reason that a large share of government funding for HEIs is granted on the basis of students achieving at least 55 credits per year.

This brings us to the conclusion that in order to stand out from the majority of higher education providers with largely similar scholarship criteria, you have to make unique and innovative decisions. Thus, the Vaasa UAS board decided to grant a scholarship of EUR 5000 for all non-EU/EEA students who have to pay tuition fees and who reach the milestone of 55 ECTS per academic year. The same amount applies to both Bachelor’s and Master’s degree students.

At Vaasa UAS, the board only set a framework for the scholarship criteria. Therefore, free rein was given to the design of the scholarship criteria and it was eventually made at the grassroots level in cooperation between the study services unit, the international office and the directors of the education units. The whole process took approximately six months, and after a few meetings and a few drafts, the final product was introduced to the management board and was agreed as such.

First-year students can receive the scholarship in two instalments of EUR 2500; the first one after the autumn semester and the second one after the spring semester. For second- and third-year students, the scholarship is paid in full after the academic year, provided that the student has completed the required number of credits. Fourth-year students can apply for a scholarship upon graduation. The scholarship covers 100 to 125 per cent of the tuition costs, making it the most generous offer for international degree students in Finland at present. Additionally, in accordance with the Aliens Act, non-EU/EEA students have to cover all living costs in Finland during their studies.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT – A ROAD TO SUCCESS

The student recruitment process plays a key role in the success of the admission process. In addition to FINNIPS marketing, which mainly promotes the whole network, it was obvious that we would need to conduct marketing of our own. Marketing aimed at students already residing in Finland was well planned, but the problem was how to reach potential candidates outside Finland and inform them about our offer.

With the help of skilful and dedicated teachers, international students already studying at Vaasa UAS were engaged in the marketing campaign. Marketing efforts were targeted in particular at China, Russia and Vietnam. Students visited their own home institutions and made presentations about Vaasa UAS. Social media channels were also widely used; some of the marketing pages were even translated into Chinese, Russian and Vietnamese languages.

We also made sure that information on the scholarship criteria and the tuition fee was available for applicants well before the start of the next application period on our website and on the studyinfo.fi website. This made it easier for an applicant to compare criteria between different UASs.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the marketing campaign did really well and together with the reasonable tuition fee and generous scholarship offer, the number of non-EU/EEA applicants increased significantly in spring 2017 when compared to the previous application period in 2016. On the International Business Programme, the increase was 72.7 per cent, while the Information Technology programme saw a 10.8 per cent increase. (Education Statistics Finland website.)

After the 2017/18 academic year, we will have more information and experience. We will be more capable of evaluating whether the decisions made were right or if something needs to be changed. We believe that we are now in a good position to continue our work towards better solutions in the future, which we see as being full of potential.

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STUDENT-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE ON PREPARING FOR TUITION FEES

Kaisa Merilahti

At Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KAMK), students are at the centre of operations. KAMK has received recognition for good student guidance, which is also appreciated by the students themselves, as indicated by feedback surveys. KAMK is a small, one-campus multidisciplinary university with approximately 2,000 students. The students are supported in finding their own strengths and developing into working professionals. Student-centred education is an established mode of operation, and it is also a natural way to approach the changes brought to our English-language education by the implementation of tuition fees for students from non-EU/EEA countries. At Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, education is based on phenomenon-based learning, in which the role of individual students is emphasised. Tuition fees have also motivated us to develop our student recruitment, application system and applicant communication to make it increasingly customer-oriented. This article gives consideration to one Finnish university's preparations for tuition fees from a student-centred perspective.

PHENOMENON-BASED LEARNING AND LEARNING CONCEPT

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process (ESG 2015, 12). At KAMK, the concept of student-centred learning is applied and widely benefited from. Furthermore, learning at KAMK is conceptualised by a phenomenon-based approach. Phenomenon-based learning and teaching is based on comprehensive, real phenomena that are examined in genuine contexts by way of work-based orders and commissions. Knowledge, skills and attitudes are acquired by crossing boundaries and disciplines. (Pedagogical Model 2016: expertise with smart attitude and joy 2016, 6.)

Phenomenon-oriented learning is based on the socio-constructivist learning concept. According to this concept, knowledge is constructed when individuals solve jointly assigned problems and assignments together in teams. Knowledge is not just the internal element of an individual – instead, it is formed in social contexts. The monitoring of individual learning is moving towards emphasising context-based social interaction. The basis of learning

is the students' active engagement and construction of meaning. The students take responsibility for their own learning and actively strive to acquire target skills and knowledge. They apply knowledge during their studies, reinforcing the skills needed in working life. (Pedagogical Model 2016: expertise with smart attitude and joy2016, 6.)

When the teacher plays an increasingly significant role as a learning expert and guidance provider, the student's role as a central operator is emphasised. At KAMK, studying is carried out in small groups, and there is good interaction between the teachers and the students. It is our hope that KAMK's strengths, i.e. a warm atmosphere and support from teachers and student services, are also communicated to potential applicants considering different education alternatives.

TUITION FEES CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK

In Finland, higher education has been free for everyone, and the central value of the entire education system has been that education is available to everyone up to university level. When the Finnish parliament decided to implement tuition fees for students from outside EU/EEA countries in English-language programmes starting from 2017, universities began thinking about and discussing the amount and effects of the fees and how to prepare for them.

The whole idea of fee-based education leading to a degree is new in Finland. Furthermore, defining the price of education and selling education were new tasks for universities. In addition to challenges and uncertainty, the implementation of tuition fees has made universities adopt a new perspective when thinking about the quality of their education, as well as profiling and positioning in the global education market.

The fees also force Finnish universities to meet the demands of paying customers in the application phase. Thus, universities collaborate to develop the application system to make it more applicant-friendly and to make the application process smoother and faster. The Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS), which represents the English-language education programmes of Finnish universities of applied sciences, has developed practical procedures for increasing applicant-friendliness. The FINNIPS website compiled information about the tuition fees and scholarship systems of the education programmes within the network, which made comparisons easier. The arrangements and communication regarding joint entrance exams have also undergone improvements that make it easier for applicants to participate in the exams.

At the same time, the Finnish National Agency for Education is carrying out long-term work regarding the joint application system and developing electronic services. In 2017, new features that make the application process for international programmes smoother include electronic acceptance of a place at an educational institution, which was expanded to also cover students without a Finnish personal identification number, and adding electronic attachments to applications, which reduces the applicants' need to send attachments in separate messages or by mail. In the coming years, the entire university sector is preparing for larger changes in order to make student selection easier. One important shared goal is to make the application process faster in order for applicants to be notified of being accepted sooner, which helps them make decisions and prepare for the start of their studies.

At KAMK, it was natural to use the applicants' and students' perspective as a starting point when considering the changes. In the application phase, we aim to change our thinking regarding applicant communication from conventional information distribution to better-targeted and easier-to-approach communication. We have implemented new channels and cooperation partners in our student recruitment system. We utilise digital marketing without forgetting the importance of personal customer service.

CLEAR MESSAGE TO APPLICANTS REGARDING THE PROFILE AND CONTENTS OF EDUCATION

Starting from 2018, KAMK will have four English-language Bachelor-level education programmes: International Business, eSports Business, Sports and Leisure Management, and Tourism. In addition, KAMK will offer Master's degree in International Business. These programmes have their own strengths and profiles. We wish to have applicants who are motivated and interested in this particular special know-how and approach to study. For example, our Tourism programme focuses on Adventure Tourism and Wellbeing Tourism, which differ from conventional tourism education programmes in terms of both approach and content. The new eSports Business programme will focus on the expanding business sector of Electronic Sports, also called eSports. It is a specialised sector for which we hope to attract students who have a particular interest in and knowledge of the sector in question.

KAMK has small student groups, so the primary goal is not necessarily a huge number of applicants. Instead, it is more important that we receive applications from students who are inspired, motivated and committed. It is important to have customer-oriented thinking in student recruitment in order

for the most suitable applicants to find the education programmes provided by KAMK.

In practice, the goal is to improve our communication to make it more applicant-friendly, by targeting it more effectively and revising it into a clearer and easier-to-understand form. Due to this need, we have opened a new applicant page at www.applykamk.fi and edited the e-mails used in communicating to applicants, among other things. However, it is important when communicating to applicants that they understand all instructions and requirements. Applicants from different countries have varying expectations and assumptions, and our descriptions and instructions must therefore be unambiguous.

In addition to the application phase, KAMK has given thought to the services provided to students paying tuition fees over the course of their studies. Will we face more demanding requirements regarding our education programmes or services? We find ourselves in a new situation: are we to provide special services to paying customers, or do we develop our services to all students? After all, universities are committed to rules regarding equality.

KAMK has introduced a new additional service called the Welcome Kit, which is provided to new students paying a tuition fee. It contains practical supplies to help students settle into their new student apartments, but it also contains services that other students have to pay for, such as sport services and student union membership for the entire course of their studies. The purpose of the Welcome Kit is to give the students a positive start, value for their tuition fee and a feeling of being welcomed. The kit is also designed to encourage students to use sport services.

The greatest value of a degree lies in the opportunities and capacities it provides after graduation. KAMK has also developed postgraduate study opportunities equally to those who pay a tuition fee and those who are exempt from the fee. The English-language Master's-level programme in International Business that starts in 2018 provides a natural path for postgraduate studies. Furthermore, KAMK has signed a cooperation agreement with Coventry University's London campus (CULC). The agreement provides all KAMK students with an opportunity to obtain a double degree (top-up programme) in London, i.e. to obtain another Bachelor's degree alongside their studies, or to continue their studies at CULC after the Bachelor of Business Administration degree and obtain a Master's degree in one year. These opportunities provide those graduating from KAMK with options for finding their own path.

STUDENTS AS DEVELOPERS

At KAMK, students are an integral part of developing and implementing services for international students through the KAMO student union. An important part of the services for international students is the reception, orientation and social free-time programme arranged by KAMO. The student union has representatives in central working groups, and the union maintains close contact with student services in other ways as well. With good cooperation, any issues with student support and services can be resolved quickly, and the modes of operation can be developed further.

The planning and targeting of marketing procedures for the English-language education programmes also utilise our international students, who are our best experts regarding experience. Their views help us find the right channels and bring up matters that are key to applicants in our communication.

Furthermore, we have created new co-operation models with our alumni. Our alumni who have returned to their native countries are our best ambassadors and an important asset. It is easy for applicants who are interested in our education programmes to approach the alumni, their first-hand information is trusted, and they have useful networks for student recruitment.

KAMK's strengths lie in communality, which we are able to utilise in developing our education programmes, student services and applicant services alike.

SUMMARY

The payment of a tuition fee is still a new phenomenon to us, and it requires not only new processes and even higher-quality services, but a change in our way of thinking as well. Our education programmes are now products on sale, in which our customer, the student, plays a more central role than before. Networking, the use of various consultation services and targeted marketing will increase in our student recruitment and the marketing of our education programmes. The new operation models require practice, but we are gradually beginning to understand our new field of operation and we are able to start utilising the new opportunities it gives us.

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THE INTRODUCTION OF TUITION FEES PROMPTS PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Tea Vellamo

The introduction of tuition fees to Finnish higher education may have been anticipated, as higher education institutions experimented with charging fees between 2010–2014 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2014:16) and the example has been set by our neighbouring country Sweden since 2011. Despite this, implementing fees at the institutional level was in no way an easy task and higher education institutions faced the challenge of strategically developing and profiling degree programmes, targeting marketing efforts, utilising international networks, and setting up scholarship systems in an unprecedented way. In the changing operating environment, Tampere University of Technology (TUT), like many other Finnish higher education institutions, has had to rethink and reformulate the above-mentioned strategic approaches to its international degree programmes.

Even prior to tuition fees, the numbers of international degree students at Finnish higher education institutions has been moderate. Preliminary results reported by Finnish universities show that there has been a decline in the number of applicants to international degree programmes of around 30–60%, depending on the field of education. As a result, the number of international degree students will be significantly smaller and only a relatively small proportion of these international students will actually pay fees. In this light, higher education institutions will have to reconsider whether their international degree programmes are truly viable. Strong development efforts are needed to drive the numbers of international students upwards.

BENCHMARKING IN THE SETTING OF FEES AND SCHOLARSHIPS

In Finland, higher education institutions define the amount of tuition within the set legislative framework, and the rationale for the level of fees for programmes is based on benchmarking against national and international levels. The fees set in Sweden are defined according to actual implementation costs, as set by the Swedish decree on tuition fees (Eurydice 2016). However, in Finland it seems we have very few reliable calculations on the actual cost of

degree education and, in addition, per unit cost is difficult to evaluate, as the projected estimates of student numbers remain uncertain. Thus, the setting of fees has been guided on a general level by actual costs or international fee levels, as they were not comparable due to differences in living costs and the market position. At TUT, the fees were mostly based on national comparison, particularly in the technical university education sector. Fees at Finnish universities range from EUR 8000 to 20,000 per annum and from EUR 4300 to 10 000 at universities of applied sciences. Overall, none of the Finnish higher education institutions opted to compete on price; relatively high fees were considered as a sign of high quality.

However, in terms of scholarship systems, the approach by universities and universities of applied sciences differs more. Universities award both partial and full waivers upon student selection, whereas universities of applied sciences expect all students to pay at least part of the tuition for the first year of study and award scholarships based on study results for subsequent years. Both universities and universities of applied sciences award scholarships based on study progression (usually 55–60 ECT per academic year), but some universities and universities of applied sciences also have GPA requirements. At TUT we chose to award scholarships upon student selection in order to ensure that applicants accept their study place and start their studies. The requirement for receiving a fee waiver at TUT for the second year is obtaining at least 55 ECTS during the first study year. Many Finnish universities have also opted for offering living cost scholarships based on the academic excellence of a selected few students, whereas universities of applied sciences do not offer living cost scholarships. Living cost scholarships are expected to increase the attractiveness of a university generally among potential applicants and to ensure the best applicants take up their study place. Despite the scholarship systems, higher education institutions need to commit themselves to increasing the number of fee-paying students through other efforts as well.

STRATEGIC PROFILING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMMES

The internationalisation of Finnish higher education has mainly been based on offering tuition fee-free education to international students and Finnish students alike. In an evaluation of the international degree programmes, the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council has concluded that the international programmes do not “differ significantly from regular degree

programmes with regard to their structure, management, quality assurance, marketing and recruitment of students” (Välilmaa, Fonteyn, Garam, van den Heuvel, Linza, Söderqvist, Wolff & Kolhinen 2013). With the introduction of tuition fees, international students’ expectations are changing, and more than scholarships are needed to attract students.

Each international degree programme should already have a profile, although it may be similar to that of the corresponding national programme profile. During the last year or so all international and national programmes at TUT have had to strengthen and clarify their profile. The positioning of the programmes can be based on the following axes: a focused and research-oriented programme, or an industry-oriented programme developed with strong stakeholder cooperation. In addition, the programmes have had to define their relationship to the research profile of TUT, the use of new teaching methods and pedagogical approaches, and a coherent offering of major and minor subjects. Particularly related to the curriculum development and course offering, the programmes have had to clearly define the major and possible minor subjects of study, and reduce the course offering and optional courses students can select. For international programmes this is particularly important for two reasons: firstly, a more focused offering of subjects based on the core competencies of the programme is desirable from a marketing perspective, and secondly, it enables the planning of the curriculum schedule according to the timely progress of studies. Although this may be seen as regular programme development, the need is even more urgent with international programmes.

MORE FOCUSED RECRUITING AND MARKETING EFFORTS TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The marketing efforts in international education have not been specifically targeted, and as a result TUT has attracted applicants mostly from developing and non-EU/EEA countries. In the past, relatively untargeted and small-scale marketing activity has yielded a reasonably good result in student selection in international programmes. However, some programmes have attracted relatively few applicants compared to international competitors. The small numbers of international students in these programmes have been to some extent compensated with international exchange students and integrated teaching with Finnish degree students. Marketing efforts are now being reconsidered from the point of view of defining the programme focus more clearly, and communicating the selected focus in the marketing

material in a way that attracts applicants. Marketing efforts also need a more geographically-focused approach to defining where the marketing should be targeted: selecting particular geographical areas or countries, and preferably utilising the existing cooperation networks with international strategic partner universities.

At TUT, marketing strategies have to be re-evaluated and planned at programme, institutional, regional and national levels, and also in relation to the ongoing Tampere3 cooperation. In addition, the establishment of the Tampere New University in 2019 needs to be incorporated in the current marketing, but this will offer completely new opportunities and challenges in the future. The institutional reputation and prestige of the new university needs to be developed concurrently with efforts in increasing programme level and field-specific positive acclaim.

NETWORKING STRATEGIES WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS TO ENHANCE ATTRACTIVENESS AND RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Networking with strategic partner universities globally can help programmes enhance their global attractiveness and attract suitable applicants to international degree programmes. The cooperation may include both attracting potential students and developing joint programmes. The choice of partners depends on what kinds of aims there are. Some programmes at TUT have chosen to focus on increasing the number of European degree students by developing joint and double degree programmes with European partner universities. One example of this is the recently established double degree with Universidad Polytechnico de Madrid in the field of material sciences. The European cooperation dimension is enhanced as TUT has joined the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) network, through which potential cooperation can be developed on a larger scale. In addition, there is institutional-level cooperation and student exchange with strategic non-European partner universities, where we could attract potential applicants to Master's degree studies at TUT. However, these networking strategies cannot be adopted quickly, and they require strong connections with suitable partners with appropriate and complementary curricula. When successful, these efforts will yield more good applicants with suitable education backgrounds.

CONCLUSIONS

In the changing operating environment, the need for continuously developing international degree programmes is even more pressing than before. We face the risk of dwindling student numbers and loss of viability of programmes unless strategic development measures are taken. There are several approaches that have been identified as potential development measures for international programmes, and suitable ones need to be chosen from institutional and programme perspectives. At the same time, we also need to realise that one option for programme development is also in discontinuing the programme; refocusing it or developing a completely new programme. Although the development need is continuous, the changes should not be made hastily. There should be a long-term aim in the internationalisation of degree education and for the whole institution. In addition, evaluative knowledge on the effects of development changes is needed, as well as national-level comparative information on how the introduction of tuition fees has affected international programmes. Higher education institutions and programmes have chosen different strategic approaches to developing attractive education, marketing and tuition fee and scholarship programmes. It remains to be seen which choices will yield the best results.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has set up a follow-up group (OKM004:00/2017) to evaluate and monitor the effects of tuition fees in Finland. In addition, we also need discussions and sharing of information between higher education institutions in order to share best practices, define educational profiles and enhance the country-level appeal of Finland as a study destination.

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OF TRIAL AND ERROR: TUITION FEES AND THE CHANGING FUNCTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Kimmo Kuortti

The University of Oulu took part in the Finnish Ministry of Education's tuition fee trial between 2010 and 2014. Our reason for participating was to gain experience of how to market, price and organise education that is not free. The temporary government decree allowed us to charge tuition fees of non-EU/EEA students. As a result of this trial, the University of Oulu had two fee-paying students, but the experiment's benefits were to be reaped not in euros but in learning valuable lessons in recruitment and marketing. The trial was not considered a particularly great success due to the small number of universities participating in it. (Saarinen 2015.) In addition, the financial benefits of the fees trial were meagre.

CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE

Finland charged tuition fees for all students until the 1970s. Fees were abolished as the nation built a Nordic-style welfare state. Equal access to education – including to higher education – was defined as one of the cornerstones for the social and economic success of the country and its citizens. Interestingly, similar arguments were used when introducing tuition fees and the tuition fee trial. However, in the 1970s it was the social democrats and the civil servants, but in the 2010s it has been the industry and the employer lobby who demanded the change. (cf. Zieman 2017.) In addition, the ideological perspective and focus of the welfare state seems to have moved from citizens' rights and social justice towards cost efficiency and social affordability.

THE COST OF EDUCATION

The main positive impact of the tuition fees for university programme is the gradual increase in the awareness of the costs of education. At the moment however, discussions about programme fees are stagnating, and they have not proceeded to a dialogue about the cost of education more broadly, let alone from the perspective of social and societal costs. We are still very far

from issues such as gainful employment (cf. Federal Student Aid) in defining suitable tuition fee levels and matching supply with demand.

Nevertheless, the prospect of earning extra has caused the deans to think about what could be a suitable fee level for their programmes and whether scholarships are needed. In addition, it has been debated whether the tuition fees collected belong entirely to the programmes or whether some part of them should be used for financing services, scholarships and student recruitment.

A NEED FOR SCHOLARSHIPS AND MARKETING

The issue that connects the cost awareness discussed above and the marketing and recruitment, which will be discussed below, is the scholarship system. This is possibly the most neglected and misunderstood part of the tuition fee/cost of education puzzle in Finland.

A university's scholarship system is one of the key elements in student recruitment. It should be geared to guarantee both graduation potential and intended classroom cohort composition. A scholarship system is indeed one part of the strategic enrolment management which steers that university's efforts to successfully recruit, retain and graduate students as well as to engage the alumni.

Thirdly, during the tuition fee trial the importance of marketing and student recruitment gained more attention than before. This has continued. The need for a thorough market analysis as a basis for student recruitment has been recognised, and more refined action plans for how to attract fee-paying students have been made. At the same time, compensation strategies have been drafted for combating diminishing applicant numbers from non-EU/EEA countries. Many universities are aiming to increase the number of foreign students from other EU countries as they do not have to pay tuition fees in Finland. The marketing and recruitment dimension of tuition fees is the dimension where the universities have made most progress and where the discussion has been most professionally oriented. This is no surprise, as marketing and recruitment has been recognised as pivotal for universities in those countries where tuition fees have been an issue for much longer, thus providing a source of professionals who can be sought for help and advice. Competence and professionalism have developed, as have the availability of services to this effect.

WHY CHARGE FEES?

The fourth theme in relation to tuition fees is not an effect, but rather a problematic feature. The greatest hindrance for tuition fees to have their full effect in Finnish higher education is the fact that the degrees achieved by non-EU/EEA students are still included in the universities' results-based financing from the Ministry of Education. Universities do not have a real incentive to start charging full fees. For some reason the prospect of receiving double income – both from the Ministry's budget and from tuition fees – has not interested the universities. This is possibly due to the fear that charging full fees will result in a lack of applicants and as a result a lack of graduates. This in part may be the result of lack of trust in our own educational products and poor understanding of the education market.

The prospect of tuition fees has also raised the question of service levels at universities. Student satisfaction surveys have been conducted in order to identify potential areas for development and to better understand students' expectations. The discussion has often ignored the fact that we have always had fee-paying students in the same classroom as non-fee-paying students, such as those in Open University courses. Furthermore, the cost per student of additional services for fee-paying students would easily become very high, and possibly require more resources to produce them than the programmes are willing to pay for. The financing of these additional services would have to come from tuition fees.

THE UNIVERSITY OF OULU CASE, CONTINUED

At the University of Oulu we have also experienced all of the above-mentioned issues and have debated them. The take on tuition fees and scholarships has been cautious. For the first student intake with tuition fees, the Board decided that a minimum of 50% of accepted students must be given full tuition fee scholarships. Other scholarships were left for the schools to decide. So far, no living cost scholarships have been granted, but a new scholarship programme is being planned and will provide a modest number of partial living cost scholarships. Service provision has also gone through a major restructuring and students will be receiving more school- and programme-specific guidance and counselling. A gradual increase in the number of fee-paying students is the goal of the university. The marketing and recruitment plans are now based on a more thorough market analysis, and recruitment focuses on attracting the right mix of both fee-paying and scholarship-funded

students. The scholarships do not necessarily have to be University of Oulu scholarships; they can be from the student's home country or from another sponsor, for instance.

THE COST OF NOT HARNESSING ACADEMIC POTENTIAL

Tuition fees in the Nordic countries reflect the change in the role of higher education in society. On one hand, the discussion has centred on higher education as a producer of innovations and increasingly the kind of innovations which have a shorter idea-to-market cycle. This has been seen as an instrumentalisation and a banalisation of higher education. In addition, the right-wing conservative political parties have raised questions about elitism in higher education and have also questioned the idea of tuition-fee-free, tax-financed higher education. The complexity and various effects of tuition fees have not been very thoroughly analysed. (cf. Atherton, Jones & Hall 2015.)

From the side of academia, loud voices have been heard emphasising the importance of basic research and the need for exploratory science, which does not aim primarily for a marketable product, but to push the boundaries of knowledge (Kivimäki 2016).

The issue of tuition fees and the provision of higher education is also an issue of globalised economies. Nationally-oriented education systems have relic features, which are only slowly changing. Ultimately, it is about offering people pathways to fulfil their academic potential – wherever they are from. This does not mean that higher education institutions would not have regional and national roles in the globalised world. However, it does mean that full global human potential must be more efficiently harnessed for both the advancement of science and the advancement of global peace and prosperity. The cost structure and financing of education must be rethought and reimagined. The cost of not doing this does not bear thinking about.

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CONCLUSIONS

The Editors

The introduction of tuition fees and other openings within the area of education export have brought Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) onto the verge of a new situation. The legislation regarding the fee-charging education affects the international student flux to the HEIs' English-taught degree programmes. In addition to the changing processes at the recruitment of individual students, the education export initiatives, within which Finnish education expertise is sold to various customer groups, crosscut all the activities of HEIs. Accordingly, in order to succeed both in attracting foreign students to study in Finland and in making our education provision appear interesting to potential customers around the world, the Finnish HEIs need to reconsider their activities from new perspectives.

The new situation can be seen to bring along a lot of new possibilities for the development of English-taught education provision in Finnish HEIs and its invocation in the field of education export. At the same time, ensuring the attractiveness and competitive edge of education requires consistent work and strategic views from HEIs.

The introduction of tuition fees is an excellent moment for all HEIs to evaluate their current services and processes, and, even more importantly, to develop them further with a customer-oriented approach. This is enabled by HEIs' systematic internal work that incorporates actors extensively from the whole organisation: input and commitment is needed from top management to all the employees engaged in the planning and implementation of education and support services. Creating a shared understanding of the aims regarding international education makes it possible to follow mutual processes and implement high-quality services leading to a desired level of customer satisfaction.

Parallel to taking care of the quality of education and service provision, the Finnish HEIs need to actively seek ways to stand out in global education markets. In order to be able to create, communicate and deliver propositions of interest to potential applicants and other customer groups, expertise on sales and marketing is needed. Indeed, the marketing of Finnish HEIs needs to adapt to the changing markets, understand the apparent international scope, and utilise similar concepts and methods as successfully applied in commercial marketing of goods and services to consumers. Being able to

identify the customer needs and apply educational service design are also important aspects in ensuring the effectiveness of the marketing measures.

Fee-based education is a common practice internationally. Therefore, the new situation of introducing tuition fees to English-taught degree programmes in Finnish HEIs should be seen more as a window of new opportunities, rather than pessimistically let those opportunities pass by. Grasping new opportunities, however, requires determination, commitment and resources to facilitate the constant development that is needed to ensure that the international education offered by Finnish UASs maintains its attractiveness.

We can learn from our international competitors, their experiences and their diverse supply of education, but equally we must make sure to build on Finland's strengths and our own expertise. When considering the profiling of international education provision, it is important to make sure that it serves the needs of Finnish working life and industries, as well as those of Finnish degree students interested in pursuing an international career. At the same token, we should be able to attract those students of foreign origin that are interested in receiving high quality education by studying in a multicultural learning environment and living as a part of our society.

For a small nation such as Finland, international education is clearly one of the key factors contributing to the country's current position in the global economy and ensuring its future success. Isolation from the international community would simply be counter-productive and detrimental for a small nation. Therefore, it should be a collaborative endeavour of the HEIs, Finnish authorities, decision-makers and other stakeholders to cherish the value, viability and visibility of international education offered in Finland.

Finally, as editors of the publication, we would like to express our gratitude to all the writers who have contributed to this volume and, by so doing, participated in the continuous development of international education. A big thank you for providing your knowledge and expertise for the joint effort.

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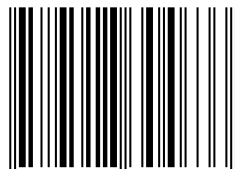
TEACHER EDUCATION COLLEGE



The introduction of tuition fees for non-EU/EEA citizens in Finnish higher education institutions' (HEI) English-taught degree programmes challenges the HEIs to plan new processes and reconsider their service provision. The charging of tuition fees also marks the HEIs' entering into global education markets with a new way, creating a need to review their competitive position and international visibility. How to ensure the smooth implementation of international student marketing and recruitment and enhance the attractiveness of Finnish higher education?

The third publication of the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) delves into these topics with a focus on Universities of Applied Sciences' (UAS) undertakings on the verge of a new situation. The articles provide descriptions of the expectations regarding the effects of tuition fees on UASs' international education as well as serve as examples of the concrete measures taken by the Finnish HEIs in preparing for the changing policy.

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