

**INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES OF THE  
DEGREE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS) INTO  
PROFESSIONAL WORK LIFE IN FINLAND**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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In recent times, Finland has witnessed an influx in the number of international students. This was partly due to the country's open door policy for international students in an attempt to compensate for its declining population. The Finnish Education policy which aims at the internationalization of its higher education has widened the gates for international student's influx. To this effect therefore, many international students got enrolled in the degree program of social services. The degree program in social services remains one of the most cherished by international students. However, the high language bar set by recruiters, lack of trust by Finnish employment agents and recent economic crisis have reduced the chances of the integration of International graduate of this program into the professional work life.

This research oriented thesis is aimed at investigating the rate of integration of international graduates of the degree program in social services into professional work life. It also aims at examining the integration potentials of international graduates from this program into professional work life. The research is basically a quantitative study in which questionnaires were administered to graduates of the degree program using the cloud based survey system called Survey Monkey which allows the collection and analysis of responses. The survey was allowed online for two weeks and results collected through same system and analyzed using excel.

The findings in this research indicates that a good number of international graduates of this discipline do not find jobs in the profession for which they were trained. More so, many international graduates of this discipline found it difficult to get a place for job practice while they were studying and they hold the opinion that the Finnish professional job market is not accessible enough. This may partly be explained by the poor language skills acquired during their studies. Among the few who have gained professional jobs, many of them got it through personal efforts and none of them got it through the mentoring organizations.

**Key Words:** Integration, International graduates, Internationalization, Employment

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of International or foreign student varies from one country to the other according to the national education systems and immigration laws. For Instance the concept of International student is seen differently between Finland and Australia. In Australia an International student is one who studies on a particular category of sub class visas different from one who has a temporary visa already living in Australia. Furthermore, students on Australian funded programs and New Zealand though not of Australian nationality are not considered International students, whereas in Finland, an International student is one who holds a foreign nationality whether, studying on temporal basis or not. Most international study programs however, are offered in the English language and they seldom leads to the full integration of the International student.

International students form an important proportion of the migrant cohort of the Finnish population. Generally speaking, many international students in the Helsinki metropolitan area usually face difficulties in securing an employment opportunity upon graduation- International students in the degree program in Social services not left out. According to 2014 statistics, over 20000 international students study in Finland among which more than 60% come out of the European Union area (CIMO 2014). Due to this dire situation, some five universities of Applied Sciences in the Helsinki metropolitan area are participating in a joint project titled 'International Graduates and Work life'. The aim of this project was to enhance using concrete tools the employment possibilities of International graduates into the work life in the Helsinki metropolitan area. In the same light the long term goal of this project is that 100 international graduates have found work places and the creation of a model to enhance the possibilities of employment of international graduates through networking of the universities of applied sciences. These aims would be realized using different methods such as networking and recruitment events, workshops to help international students to understand the Finnish work culture and life. The project spans February 2016 through December 2017.

This thesis will therefore, explore the data and results of this project and collect more data from some past students of the degree program in social services as well as from the alumni services of the degree program to ascertain the present as well as the future accessibility to the professional job market integration.. The thesis will also review what

plans or support measures are there in place by the Finnish society (governmental and nongovernmental organizations) to ensure the accessibility and possible integration of international students who graduate from the degree program in social services into the professional job landscape in Finland. The literature in this research will also include a comparative analysis of the integration pathways of international graduates of Finland and other countries of the advanced developed world such as Germany and Canada. The data for this research will be gotten from the Helsinki metropolitan area. Though with a marked geographical difference from the cities of the country, however, the findings from such a projects and recommendations can as well be applied to international graduates in the degree program of social services in other parts of the country.

### 1.1 Background of studies

There has been a steady increase in the number of international students taking up degree programs in Finland in recent times. The number of international graduates from the Universities of applied sciences also follows a similar trend. According to CIMO (2014), 1517 students graduated from the Universities of Applied Sciences. It is important to note that a crushing 80% of these graduates come out of the European Union area, hence need for integration. One of the outstanding fields of studies that send of a good number of international graduates from the Universities of Applied Sciences is the field of social sciences (DIAK 2018). This field alongside the business and administration field account for over 60% of International graduates.

Many international students upon graduation choose the option of living permanently in Finland upon graduation, and different stakeholders in the field of education tend to face the challenge of retaining these international graduates upon completion of their studies. Though many international students remain in Finland, they end up not working in the professional discipline for which they are trained; hence, many of them migrate out of Finland to countries where they can be able to work with their acquired professional diplomas (Umir 2016). Considering that most of these international graduates benefited from tuition free education in Finland, It is therefore economically advantageous for Finland to consider the means and ways of integrating these international graduates in general and those from the degree program in social services into the Finnish labor market.

Though the office of employment does not keep real time statistics for international students and offers no direct plan for international students, statistics of job seekers with immigrant background is revealing and this include the international graduate cohort. The figures in 2015 for instance reveals 37,862 registered job seekers of foreign background a more than two fold increase comparatively to 2009 figures (Ministry of Employment and the economy 2015). International graduates are considered a resource to Finland's economic development; hence it is a government policy to enhance the integration of these graduates into the job market. Together with the office of labor and employment, the ministry of labor and employment has set strategic goals for international graduates so as to enhance their integration into the Finnish job market. The objectives of this goal is the internationalization of Finnish education with a target of 20000 foreign students, the enhancement of foreign students fluency and employment by higher education institutes by taking into account the various cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their curricular (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2015).

Despite the above policies by the government and other stakeholders in the educational sector, many recruitment agencies still make it quite challenging for graduates from degree program in social services to find professional job that can facilitate their integration in Finland. Besides the language skills requirements, many employers do not trust international graduates so prefer to recruit people whom they can trust and share similar cultural back ground, (CIMO 2014). The integration of international graduates into the Finnish job market has been hampered by the slow recovery of the economy of Finland from the 2008 global economic recession in which Finland was hardly hit. A long term plan is therefore required to be put in place to foster the integration of international graduates including those from the degree program in social services. This thesis therefore seeks to examine the possibilities of International graduates from the degree program in social services with emphasis on the transitional period between studies and work life.

## 1.2 Problem statement

According to OECD statistics, the retention rate of International graduates from universities and university of applied sciences is quite low, just about 25% of international students stay and work within the confines of the profession with which they are trained. Though many other international graduates decide to take up permanent residence after their

studies, they do not necessarily do so on the basis of their professional qualification. It is worth noting that this poor retention rate is for all international programs and by extension, graduates from the degree program in social services. The low retention rate can be attributed to no defined integration pathway for international graduates in general and the degree program in social services in particular into the Finnish professional job market. Moreover there is little or no synergy between the different stake holders in the degree program and the employment agencies and professional trade unions (Umir 2016). Hence many graduates from this program are unable to secure a professional job upon graduation. Many even find it difficult to get opportunities for job training while studying.

There is also an unparallel link between the skills acquired in the degree program in social services and the skills required at the job market. Many students from this field graduate without necessarily acquiring the skills which recruiters demand, especially the language skills Suraj Chand 2014. Some end up taking up jobs which do not match their training or where the Finnish language is not a requirement. This study will also explore some avenues where students from the degree program in social services can explore to harness their skills so that they can be able to access the Finnish job market and get integrated.

Most recruiting agencies in Finland do not trust graduates with immigrant background, hence they narrow the employment window to this population cohort. According to Magdalena Jaakkola's study (2005, 69), most Finnish employers prefer to recruit people who come from culturally similar background and from countries with a high living standards. According to Arja Majakulma (2011), despite all the required qualities in seeking employment including; completed degree , professional competence, completed degree, experience gained during education work, multicultural advantage and foreign language skills, networks and job seeking skills the attitude of Finnish employers remains a deterrent towards the employability of foreigners (International graduates inclusive) It is noteworthy that many international graduates from the degree program in social services do not necessarily have this socio-cultural advantage, hence are subjected to the whims and caprices of recruitment agencies or employers harboring such a feeling about immigrants.

This thesis is focused on international graduates in the degree program Social services studying in the English language. It encompasses the experience of both students who are



currently enrolled in the program and most especially the graduates who are in the labor markets as well as the student alumni service of exclusively international graduates of immigrant background. The finality of this thesis will be to trace the integration pathways of international graduates in this degree program and explore the possibilities and potentials in enhancing their skills and accessibility into the Finnish job market so as to improve their well being and ensure their complete integration in the Finnish social and cultural environment.

### 1.3 Purpose of Study

The overall goal of this thesis is to examine the integration potentials of International graduates in the degree program of social services into work life. International graduates of this degree program refer to students of this program with a foreign background. This is achievable through studying and analyzing previous research results carried out by other organizations such as results in the research project 'international graduates into work life' and reports from alumni services. It further aims at

- Investigating the accessibility of the professional job markets to International graduates from the degree program in Social services
- Investigating the importance of mentoring organizations in the integration of international graduates.
- Examining the employability of international graduates in the degree program in social services.
- Finding out the various employment possibilities for International graduates in the degree program in social services and finally,

### 1.4 Research Questions

A research question is an unanswered inquiry into a research topic forming the initial step in a research project. It guides the researcher in constructing a logical argument through out the research process and it is very important in both qualitative and quantitative research (Booth Wayne 1995). This research will be guided by the following questions;

- What is the rate of integration of international graduates from the degree program in

Social services into the professional job market?

- How accessible are the professional jobs to international graduates from the degree program in Social Services?

### 1.5. Structure of thesis

This thesis report comprises of 6 chapters. Chapter 1 covers the introduction to the research topic, back ground of the topic the purpose and aims of the study as. Chapter 2 covers the definition of concepts and theoretical frame work. In this chapter some important key concepts such as Integration and internationalization of Finnish higher education are examined. A vast literature of mentoring organizations is also explored in this chapter. Chapter 3 includes the research methodology which is Quantitative. However, some literature has been assembled from previous research carried out under the project 'International graduate and work life'. The quantitative technique is based on the administration of short questionnaires (Appendix). Chapter 4 covers a detailed description of the research process. It describes how the survey was formed, distributed and results analyzed. It also high lights some of the challenges faced in the execution of the research. Chapter 5 is made up of the result of the findings in this research based on the data collected in

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is comprised of an extensive theoretical review of relevant literature related to the topic. It also comprises the explanation of some concepts and theories related to integration of immigrants in general with particular emphasis placed on the integration of International students in the context of this study. Internationalization of the Finish higher education as well as some mentoring organizations in Helsinki metropolitan area will also be reviewed in this chapter. ey words such as Integration, internationalization, international graduates and employment were used in searching for relevant literature using renown data bases such as Diak Finna , Thesseus and some search engines such as Google as well as the web pages of some mentoring organizations based in Helsinki metropolis.

## 2.1 Student Immigration

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines migration as the movement of a person or group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It takes the form of movement for the purpose of work, study, forced due to push factors, or for the purpose of family reunification either permanently or temporarily. Two important components of Migration are Immigration and Emigration. According to the European Migration Network is someone who takes up a residence in another country or member country for a period of at least 12 months. Since most study programs and that of the degree program in Social services last more than 12 months, international students therefore match this definition of immigrant.

Finland being one of the welfare states with an almost stable economy has been a boiling pot of immigration of International students over the last recent decade and debates on immigration has been a topical issue in many Finnish debates. Due to its declining or ageing population, Finland had considered immigration as a panacea for revamping its man power deficiency in its economic sector as pressure keeps increasing on the welfare system. The proportion of over 65-year-old people of the population increased up to 20% in 2014, according to preliminary data released by Statistics Finland. As a result, there are currently 1.093 million people aged 65 or older in the country. (Helsinki Times January 2015). Couple with globalization and free trade, there has been a growing need for skilled workmanship in the Finnish job market.

In a bid to solve the above deficiency created from the double effects of an ageing population and globalization Finland has made recourse to filling the gaps by making optimum use of immigrants hence the rate of immigration to Finland has been raising since the year 2000 (OSF). Policy makers estimated that an annual in take of 25000 to 50000 immigrants would be necessary to write off the declining population and meet the rising demand of skilled workmanship as a result of globalization.

The number of immigrants including international students into Finland has been triggered by the open door policy in the early 2000s wherein, immigration rules in Finland were greatly relaxed. Two groups of immigrants were categorized at this moment the skilled immigrants (students and skilled workers) and the refugees and other immigrants seeking humanitarian protection and the immigration laws for studies were quite relaxed especially

since international students can be able to study and work on a temporal visa basis (Finnish Immigration Service)

## 2.2 The Concept of Internationalization of Higher education

There has been a global reduction in the barriers in the movement of goods persons and services as a result of globalization. The internationalization of education has followed a similar trend. Internationalization of education is the process of integrating an international or intercultural mix into the purpose and process of education at the post secondary state of education. At the higher education level, this policy instrument entails the commercialization of research and post secondary education, the recruitment of international students from wealthy nations in order to generate revenue and increase the international reputation of the educational system.

The main components of this policy include global competition for talents, internationalization of the curriculum to permit students from all geographical and economic back ground , recruitment of international students, and the development of international branch campuses, students, staff and scholars exchange programs, and research and education partnership between institutions regionally and internationally (Khorsandi Taskoh 2014). According to Marmolejo (2012), the following are the top five reasons for internationalizing an institution; improve student preparedness internationalize the curriculum, enhance the international profile of the institution, strengthen research and knowledge production, diversify its faculty and staff.

### 2.2.1 Goal of Internationalization Finnish higher education

A main goal of the Finnish ministry of education and culture has been the internationalization of the Finnish educational system. The aim is to make Finnish higher education internationally renowned and attractive for students, teachers and researchers and to create genuinely international communities for study and work (MoEC, 2009). In a bid to internationalize its education and compensate for its ageing population, the Finnish government has adopted policies in the educational sector that has opened a small window to allow international students to move into Finland for the express purpose of

studying (CIMO 2012).

The European funding and educational policies have been very instrumental in the internationalization of higher education in Finland. In the early 1990s, international mobility of students and staff in Finland was very low, but when Finland ascended into the EU in 1995, she now had access to EU's funding and policy programs that sharply influenced its higher educational policies and research policies. Due to these changes, Finland suddenly adopted the basic tenets of the Bologna process and institutions began to introduce the two-tier degree structure, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as well as other European-style grading scales.

### 2.2.2 Stakeholders in Internationalization of Finnish higher education

A more comprehensive internationalization strategy was introduced by the ministry of Education and culture in 2008 which adopted a more holistic approach towards the internationalization of Finnish Higher education. This document, Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions 2009-2015 (MoEC, 2009) was realized in consultation with the Finnish Higher Education Institutes, which, proposes 33 measures divided into 5 sub categories;

- Genuinely internationalize higher education community
- Increasing quality and attractiveness
- Export of expertise
- Supporting a multicultural society
- Global responsibility

The Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) is an instrument of the ministry of Education and culture that is responsible for the implementation of Internationalization programs. It arranges the Finnish funded schemes and cooperates with foreign higher education authorities to implement internationalization. It also serves as the National Agency for ERASMUS+ and Nord+ programs funded by Nordic Council of Ministers. Through the CIMO, the ministry sets various indicators and quantitative internationalization goals and monitors their progress on annual basis.

City councils and regions are also stakeholders in the internationalization program. They work

in close collaboration with the higher education institutes in their city areas in the governance of the institutions. Various city councils and regions carry out joint project with the higher education institutes in their areas of jurisdiction. Relations with the city and regional councils are more often related to dialogue and development services than funding. Many students especially from the Universities of applied sciences take up internship positions from organizations jointly arranged by the city councils and the educational authorities.

Moreover, there are many other government agencies such as the ministry of foreign affairs involved as stakeholders of the internationalization of Finnish higher education. Others include the Finnish National board of education, embassies and related cultural centers, the Finnish Fulbright office and scholarship boards, and various foundations of education offering various services towards the internationalization of the Finnish higher education.

### 2.2.3 Indicators of Internationalization of the Finnish higher education

Finland has a well organized framework of keeping track of its internationalization program and this can be seen from its indicators. The indicators of internationalization represent the different characteristics or areas of manifestation of internationalization and they include;

#### 2.2.3.1 Student mobility

Ever since Finland adopted the policy of internationalization of its higher education sector, there has been a tremendous increase in the volume of mobility of its students, staff and researchers, including international students in the degree program of Social services. In ten years (2003-2013) there has been a 35% increase in the number of students who move out of Finland due to internationalization and about 50% increase in incoming students. Generally more students participate in mobility in the University than in the UAS, approximately 25% and 16% respectively the popular mobility countries in student exchange are Germany, Spain, UK, Sweden and France while Finnish students' most

popular destinations of choice are Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Russia (CIMO 2014).

#### 2.2.2.3 Degree-seeking International students

There has been a recent growth in the number of international students seeking degree in both Universities and UAS with the internationalization program. In the last ten years, the proportion of international students to domestic students have more than doubled standing at 6.1% and 6.9 % for universities and UAS respectively with greatest number of international students coming from Asia. It is worth noting that there exist differences in terms of institution and study programs on the proportion of international students to domestic students.

#### 2.2.2.3 Researcher and teacher mobility

Through internationalization, many researchers and teaching staff can freely move from one university to the other around the world, either as visiting lecturers or researchers. This has been facilitated by common research groups sharing funding or the European research program (ERP). Generally, the trend shows an increase in out-bound staff than in coming teaching staff in Finnish higher education (CIMO 2014)

#### 2.2.2.4 International teaching staff and the use of English language

Though CIMO and many higher education institutes have not kept track of the numbers, it is clear that with internationalization, there has been an increase in the number of International teaching staff and researchers especially since many Universities and UAS offer programs taught in the English language-a widely use international language. About 20% of the teaching staff in Finnish Universities is made up of international staffs and the Universities register higher numbers of international staff than the UAS (CIMO 2014).

## 2.3 Integration of International graduates

This chapter examines the concept of integration, the legal framework of integration in Finland and the integration of international graduates in Finland. It also attempts to model the integration pathways of international graduates in Finland since they have no integration policy per se.

### 2.3.1 The Concept of Integration

Research on integration has been linked to long history of migration around the globe. In the early 20th century in the United States for example Park and Burgess laid down the famous Assimilation theory (Park and Burgess 1921). According to this theory Integration is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitude of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life. This theory was further improved upon by other authors such as Gordon who argued that integration does not only include cultural assimilation but other elements such as socio-cultural, marital, identification attitudinal, behavior reception and civic ( Tuberge 2006).

The definition of integration has become more complicated involving some political ramification due to diverse political and public opinion about immigration. Alba and Nee in 2003 came up with another plausible term in the definition of integration. They paid emphasis on the economic inequalities that exist between immigrants and citizens of the host country. Hence they came out with the term 'Economic integration which is more important in this thesis. Economic integration looks at integration on the basis of unemployment, occupational status, self employment and income. While some authors have seen integration as assimilation, others have sort to separate these terms and a third group have developed a segmented theory which explains that a person or group of migrant may choose diverse trajectories either towards an upward or downward movement on different scales, depending on their individual, contextual and structural factors (Gans 1992).

The term integration is inextricably linked to immigration, since it involves the process of economic mobility for new comers. It also involves the personal development of immigrant



aimed at participation on working life and society while preserving their own language and culture. As such integration includes all the institutions that promote the development and growth within society, including early childhood care, elementary, secondary and post secondary as well as adult education systems; health care provision, and provision of other government services. The success of integration is measured from how the immigrants are able to adapt in the society by actively participating in the socio economic life of their new country or region and how they can obtain new information and develop new skills as well.

According to the integration Barometer (indicators of integration set to monitor the integration process), the following factors are considered primordial for the integration of an immigrant, international students inclusive; language skills, safety and health, work, a suitable accommodation facility for the immigrant, accessibility to healthcare services and education to both the immigrants and his or her accompanying family members. All these components will easily harness the immigrant's conditions for adaptability to his new environment and gives him a sense of social inclusion. Migrant integration can be illustrated by the pictogram figure 1 below.



Figure 1 Components of integration

### 2.3.2 Integration; A two-way process

Integration is increasingly becoming debated in many countries across the globe, with increasing focus and pressure on the receiving countries. Some authors and policy makers

considers integration as a 'two-way process' whereby the immigrant and their host are expected to adapt to each other creating a new ,multicultural environment for mutual solidarity and identification (Hellgren, 2015). Some authors such as Penninx and Mascareñas' (2014) define integration as 'the process of becoming an accepted part of the society'. Integration in their perspective is a social change resulting from the interaction of people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They argue that the receiving countries as the main party defining the rules and norms for this interaction may facilitate or hamper the total integration process depending on the institutional framework of the receiving country and the attitude of its citizens towards immigrants and ethnic diversity.

The sense of belonging into an immigrant's new society is a compliment of the integration process. This suggests that an immigrant must be willing to give away some of his or her native cultural identities and accept some new identities in his or her new society. The concept of identity becomes primordial in this case. The national identity as a means of integration must be perceived as an inclusive measure by both the immigrant and the native population Lödén (2008). In as much as the immigrant are ready to take up their share of responsibility in the integration process, in most cases a myriad of obstacles stand on their ways. For instance in Spain, the granting of irregular and short term residence permit is common, there exist legal boundaries between different categories of citizens and legal residence all which affect the process of integration. Many immigrants face invisible boundaries of exclusion and all subtle forms of non acceptance. These are all roadblock to integration. Considering integration as a two way process therefore requires one to look at looking at the immigrant's obstacle for equal participation such as language skills, education and adaptability factors. At the side of the majority society, discriminatory practices such as non acceptance, restriction to labor may block such access to the full integration of migrants (Hellgren, 2015).

### 2.3.3 Legal instrument for integration in Finland

Finland has enacted several laws guiding the integration of immigrants in general in Finland. These laws has laid down detailed procedures aimed at fully integrating new arrivals in Finland, however, no specific plan has been made available for international students. Act 493/1999 on the integration of immigrants and reception of Asylum seekers

details out the procedure involved towards the full integration of these segments while chapter 3, section 6c of the Finnish constitution guides the integration and re-integration of migrants who reside in Finland and are unemployed in need of integration.

The Finnish ministry of Economic affairs and Employment is responsible for the integration of immigrants according to the Act on integration. The integration Act lays down the tasks and roles of municipalities and employment and economic development offices, ministries, centers for economic development, transport and the environment, regional state administrative agencies in the promotion of integration. In 2010, the law on the integration of immigrants was revised and the overall integration procedure of immigrants was improved upon. Various stakeholders including ministry of employment & economy; ministry of the interior; ministry social affairs and health; ministry of education and culture as well as the municipalities would now be fully be involved in the integration process at various scales. This revise law Recognizes all types of immigration, lays emphasis on the improvement of two-way integration, the early stages of integration, on vulnerable groups. It also recognizes individual elements, manages the distribution and allocation of immigrants to the various municipalities and follows up and monitors the integration programs of immigrants (Act on Immigrant integration 1386/2010). It is worth noting that integration in the context of this thesis is limited to work life and not the totality which includes the economic and socio-cultural context.

#### 2.3.4 Integration of International graduates

Though many Acts and laws have been enacted to guide the process of integration of immigrants, it is worth mentioning that there is no particular law guides the integration of international students. According to the office of labor and economic development in Finland which manages the integration program for immigrants, there is no integration plan for international graduates, hence international graduates are left to feign for themselves to get integrated into the professional work life coupled with the challenge of obtaining a valid residence permit. However, the Finnish immigration service has laid down procedures for an international graduate to continue living in Finland after graduation. While studying or upon graduation and after acquiring a permit of continues residence an international

graduate from the degree program in Social services may consult a mentoring organization for advice or procedures towards full integration into the Finnish professional job market.

## 2.4 Residence permits for International Students and Integration into the Finnish work force

As of 2014 data, there were over 20000 international students in Finland (International degree students in social services inclusive), (CIMO 2014) and over 60% of these international students come out of the European Economic area (UNESCO 2012). A reasonable proportion of international students move out of Finland after graduation in search of job opportunities abroad due to poor integration into the Finnish job markets where despite the availability of open positions these graduates find it very difficult to penetrate due to its socio-culturally inelastic character (Umair 2016). These literature findings show that despite the over 80% intention of international graduates to stay in Finland, the rate of their integration into the Finnish job market is relatively low and some of these reasons to this include, Poor mastery of the Finnish language, lack of trust for immigrants by Finnish recruiters, low information on opportunities for international students general economic meltdown in the European Union area.

The first stage of integration into the work life is to obtain of a valid residence permit. Since work permit in Finland is embedded in the residence permit, it is necessary to evaluate this process as the first stage of integration. For an international student coming out of the European Economic area, it is imperative the student possess a valid residence permit obtainable from the Finnish immigration service throughout his or her studies in Finland. Upon granted a right to study in Finland, an international student is granted a temporary residence permit (status B type) and, according to Finnish Aliens Act, Section 78 Subsection 3(4), such a student has rights to work for 25 hours per week during school periods. However, such a student may work full time during summer holidays.

Figure 2 below shows Decision of first resident permit for studies from Jan 2015-Jan 218. The Red bars represent negative decision while the blue bars represent positive decision.

It can be observed that more positive decisions have been given to international students coming to study in Finland than negative ones for the last three years. Peak decisions are taken in summer period for studies which begin at fall. The graph indicates an overall drop in the volume of international students from 2017 and this can be attributed to the introduction of tuition fees.

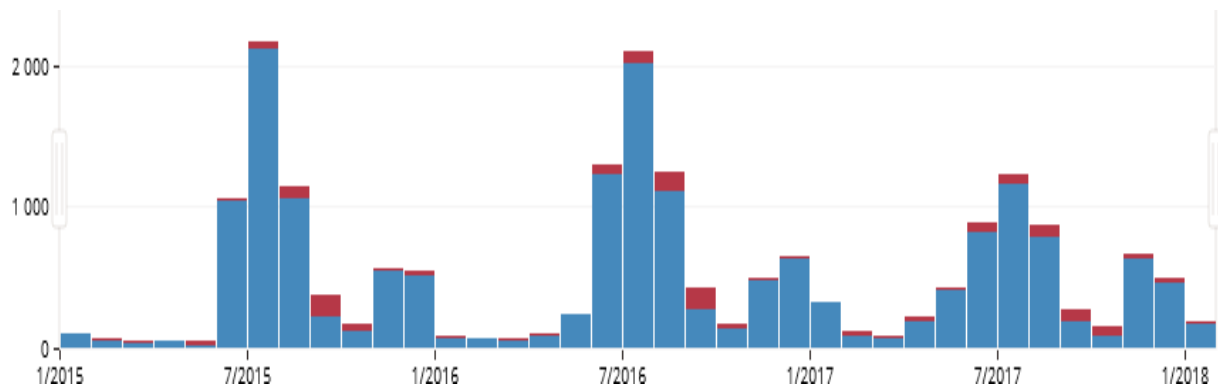


Figure 2 Decision of first resident permit for studies from Jan 2015-Jan 2018.

Source: The Finnish immigration service

Upon graduation, an international student has rights to full time job. The Finnish Alien act HE 219/2014 amended in April 2015 authorizes an international graduate to apply for a one year residence permit within which time the student can seek employment in Finland as oppose to a six months period before this amendment. This was amendment was to widen the scope for international graduates to gain access to the Finnish job market and possible integration.

Once an international student is able to secure a job and holds a permanent contract, graduates can now apply for a workers residence permit status A (Continuous residence permit). International graduates with business skills can as well gain a continuous residence permit as a self employed (entrepreneur) upon prove of a functional business in Finland (Finnish immigration service). Generally, most international graduates often face linguistic as well as other discriminatory challenges in securing jobs from the professional background.

According to the Economic and Labor office of Finland, for an immigrant to be a client, he

or she must possess a continuous residence permit. Most students often face this problem and upon graduation, their chances of benefitting from the services of this office have been exhausted since most under graduate programs last more than three years. The Finnish ministry of interior in 2013, noted that one of the difficulties faced by immigrants (including graduates from the degree program in social services) is insufficient language skills and limited opportunities, hence the future migration 2020 stresses on the importance of language skills and traineeship during studies for graduates, to facilitate their stay and employment in Finland once they complete their degree.

## 2.5 Mentoring organizations

According to management mentors (2018)- an online business blog, mentoring is defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (Mentor) assists a less experienced person (Mentoree), in developing specific skills and knowledge in order to enhance the mentoree's professional and personal growth. There are several mentoring organizations in the Helsinki metropolitan area that are ready to provide mentoring services, job training and employment to international graduates from the degree program in social services. Among many one could identify the following;

### 2.5.1 Nicehearts ry

With the use of the search Engine to find out information about this organization in English yields zero results, giving the impression that it is reserved for purely Finnish speakers, hence reducing the chances of fresh international graduates. However, searching some publications about this organization, one could get at least some information in the English language. Nice hearts is actually a Non Governmental Organization created in 2001 with national and international projects with main goal to "support the community's self-reliance, equality and promotion and production of multicultural activities for girls and women. It provides long term networks and provide for girls and women of different cultural background. The main mission of Nicehearts is to "enable women's active participation in the society, to promote gender equality and to strive towards the betterment of girls' and women's lives and living conditions in Finland. Within this organization are working groups for different projects such as 'Strong Woman', 'Girl's Space' and the 'Neighborhood Mother's project' (Kaila 2017). This therefore is an excellent place for international

graduates in the degree program of Social Services.

### 2.5.2 Miessakit

This is a Non Governmental association established to support the mental, psychological and social growth of men in Finland. It organizes men across the country into small support groups such as *Miesryhmätoiminta*, (Men's Group) which, makes use of clients potentials to support each other, *Lyömätön Linja*, (Non violence), a focus group that helps men who use violence against their partners, *Isyyden Tueksi* (Father's support group), support activities to develop fatherhood skills of clients, *Erosta Elossa* (Divorce crisis support), service that supports and guides men in dealing with divorce issues, and most important to the international graduates is the *Vieraasta Veljeksi* (Support for immigrant men), enforces the integration of immigrants by creating new forms of intercommunication and co-operation between immigrant men and native Finnish men, also integrating the incumbent population to our changed society.

### 2.5.3 Monika

This is another important mentor organization in Greater Helsinki. It is Multicultural Women's Association, Finland operating in the field of social affairs. It develops and provides specialized services for immigrant women and their children who have been subjected to violence, and acts as an expert and advocates in issues related to ethnic non-discrimination and violence. It also promotes integration by supporting civil society activities for immigrants. Individual integration assistance takes into account the individual's own goals and aspirations. Various working groups in the organization such as *MoniNaisten Tila* offers group activities and individual guidance in developing skills and knowledge of Finnish society and *Osaavat naiset*, which gives assistance to migrant women with a history of long-term unemployment so that they may regain their integration into working life, to develop their skills for the Finnish labor market and also to advocate for equal opportunities in Finnish working life.

### 2.5.4 Finnish Chamber of Commerce

This is an organization with international reputation- good window of opportunities for international graduates. As a member of the chamber, you gain access to a wide range of training courses, clubs, and professional literature and information services at a membership price. In addition you benefit from free counseling services and can take part in free networking events. The Finnish Chamber of commerce also participates in lobbying for its clients. It also helps to internationalize Finnish companies and businesses, hence creating a great opportunity for the recruitment of international graduates.

#### 2.5.5 Väestöliitto

The Family Federation of Finland is one of the oldest family welfare organizations in Finland founded in 1941 aimed supporting families, parenthood and partner relationships with members representing non-governmental non-profit organizations in the fields of family, health, children, women and youth. It is a health and social field organization focusing on families a health and social field organization focusing on families. Services are available for very young children, for young people and for the adults in the family with special attention to the immigrant families. The Multicultural department provides expertise that works on psychosocial issues concerning immigrants' family life, childrearing and parenthood and more generally on immigrant integration and inclusive society. This department supports immigrants and professionals working with immigrants and ethnic minorities from a family centered point of view. It also provides information and counseling services to immigrants, consults with service providers and lobbies for immigrant-friendly policies in social services, health and education.

#### 2.5.6 Moniheli

It is a network of multicultural associations founded in 2010 in the Helsinki metropolitan area, aimed at promoting the development of a multicultural and diverse Finnish society as well as to support the activities of its member associations in various ways. It regroups over 100 multicultural associations and promotes their activities through their program. It has a vision to having an open, cohesive and multicultural Finnish society, where cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity is understood, valued and supported, and which is



inclusive and equitable. Moniheli also promotes equality of opportunity and influences employment, housing, education, participation on all levels in Finland and for all including immigrants. It offers a great opportunity for volunteering and places for intern and job opportunities in the field of Social services.

#### 2.5.7 African Civil Society Organization

This is a sub organization under Moniheli founded in 2005 to unite African community living in the greater Helsinki area to contribute to the cultural heritage and the integration of people of African descent into the Finnish society. One of the main aims of this organization is to promote the active integration of African immigrants into the Finnish society, advocates for the full rights of African migrants in Finland, promote the image of African culture in their host country and to provide opportunities of networking for all African migrants including students in the degree program of social services in Finland with other cultural groups. It also provides a good space for internship and opportunity for international graduates to gain access to other organizations that can provide them with jobs.

#### 2.5.8 DIAK Alumni

Diak also has a strong alumni community ready to offer mentoring services to international students and builds a strong network between the university and the working life. The aim of the alumni services is to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the university and its former students. This alumni service regroups past students from all the departments of DIAK including DSS students and they offer seminar opportunities in which past students share their job experience, in this way international graduates can benefit enormously for such networks. Through alumni services, international graduates are able to take part time lectures in which they open more window of opportunities for their integration.

All these organizations provide mentoring services, training and job opportunities to international graduates with DSS international graduates having an added advantage.

Furthermore, the different city councils also provide such services; hence international graduates should always put an eye on their web pages.

#### 2.5.9 Luckan

This is a mentoring organization based in Helsinki that helps immigrants in their integration process. It also provide assistance to immigrants in finding study programs, language courses, jobs or a free time activity as well as finding the right public services. The activities of this organization are also organized in support groups according to needs. This organization also has mentoring programs for immigrants. Prominent in this is the mentor program for immigrant FIKA. In this program, immigrants are paired with a voluntary mentor according to similar backgrounds and interests (work, education, hobbies), and the mentors, who are familiar with the Finnish way of life, meet up with their immigrant mentees for 4–8 hours a month over a six month period. The resultant effect is the gradual and eventual integration of the immigrant into the Finnish society. This is a good space for international graduates.

#### 2.6 International Students Retention rate in Finland

This sub topic evaluates the rate at which international graduates stay or are willing to stay in Finland upon graduation. According to statistics Finland 67% of international graduates remain in Finland one year after graduation in 2008. This number dropped to 46% in 2011 amongst which 6% continued with their studies while 18% remained for other reasons. This statistic is in accord with the surveys carried out by student organizations which concluded that about 20% of international students who had not yet completed their studies intend to stay in Finland while 40% would like to stay upon graduation should they find a suitable place of work (SAMOK 2008). It is worthy to note that no data is readily available on how many students such as DSS students successfully found a job in their field of studies after graduation. Furthermore, this data is available for one year after graduation which does not give a good image of what prevails thereafter.

#### 2.7 International Graduates (DSS) Integration Pathway into professional Work life

The Finnish Integration policy of immigrants is based on the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seeker which was enacted in 1999 with several

amendments thereof. This act seeks to regulate the reception of asylum seekers, reception of beneficiaries of temporary protection as well as assistance for victims of trafficking. The various municipalities bear a brunt of the responsibility in ensuring the integration of immigrants in Finland under the Act on municipalities.

The Act on integration regulates the responsibility of different stake holders in the integration process of an immigrant who are expected to work in close collaboration. While the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the general development, planning, monitoring, steering and coordination of the integration of immigrants, the regional Centers for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment are responsible for coordinating the integration of immigrants. Employment and Economic Development Offices are responsible, for the provision of labor market services promoting and supporting the integration of immigrants, of instruction in reading and writing and of basic education for immigrants registered as jobseekers in the various municipalities of residence.

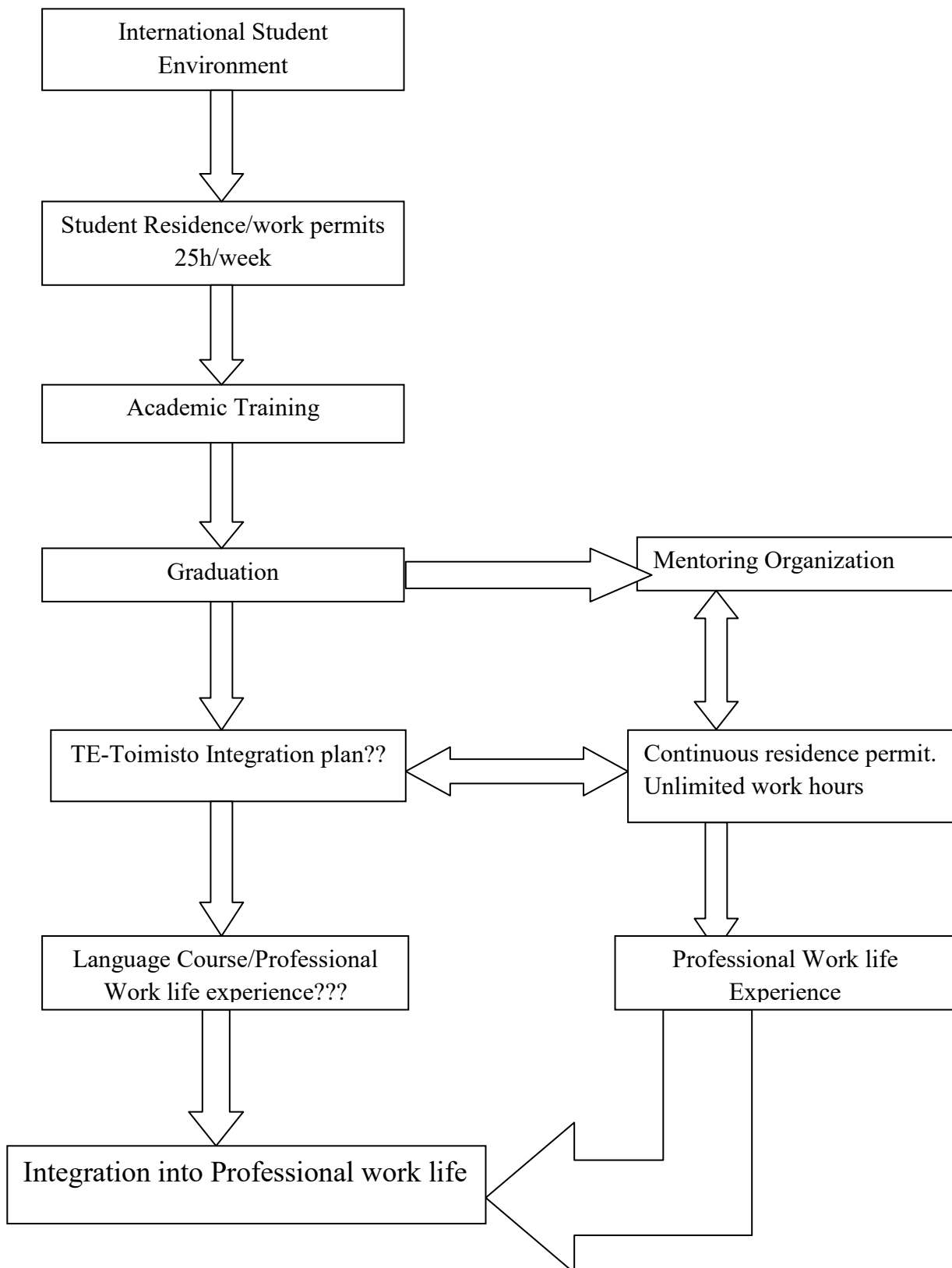
The municipalities are responsible for drawing up, implementing and developing an integration program and for monitoring its implementation and impact (Markus Seppelin 2010).

In fact the integration of immigrants in Finland has various stages where the various stake holders are active. The first stage is the initial assessment of the immigrant may include an initial interview, a test of your language skills, and an assessment of your other skills. The second stage is the establishment of an integration plan. This is a personalized plan drawn up for individual immigrants by an official in the employment and economic development office covering the measures and services to promote and support their opportunity to acquire a sufficient command of Finnish or Swedish and other knowledge and skills required in Finnish society and working life, and to promote and support their opportunity to participate in society. This plan also takes into account the integration of the service user's family. It is a joint realization of the individual, the employment and economic development office and the municipality where the immigrant takes up residence.

The end of this plan is to ensure that the immigrant is finally integrated into work and cultural life. It is important to note that despite the great concern that the Finnish government has for its immigrants, there is no provision whatsoever, reserved for the

integration of international graduates who form a greater proportion of the Finnish immigrant population. A model integration pathway for an international graduate of the degree program in Social services in this case can be presented in the figure below;

Figure 3 International Graduates (DSS) Integration Pathway model into professional Work life



The flow (Figure 3) diagram is a simplistic model of the integration pathway of an international graduate with a social service degree upon arrival as an international student. It is an adaptation of the different stages of integration as outlined by the Finnish integration policy. It is however, limited to the context of this study. The first stage of integration is obtaining of a valid residence permit. This is because it is through this permit that the registration into the Finnish population system is done, and also, the Finnish work permit is embedded in its residence permit.

An international student is permitted to work a maximum of 25h hours per week (Finnish Immigration service) to give him ample time for studies and study related activities. Upon graduation the student may have the opportunity to work with a mentoring organization or be registered as unemployed with the TE-toimisto. However, this requires a continuous residence permit according to the Finnish immigration policy. If the international graduate chooses the part of the Employment and economic development office, then he or she requires an A permit to be a client to be able to benefit from the services of this office. Language and other job related training courses can be offered by the employment office leading to full integration into work life. (Figure 3)

## 2.8 Comparative analysis of integration of International graduates

This sub chapter attempts a comparative picture of the integration of international graduates into work life for three advanced developed countries. They include Finland, Canada and Germany.

### 2.8.1 The Canadian Example

Canada can be described as a paradise for immigrants due to their many immigration possibilities ranging from the Federal immigration program, through the skilled workers program of Quebec, the provincial nominee programs and the express entry. This there means International students have a wider window of opportunity to live and work in Canada upon completion of their studies. Upon acquisition of a student residence permit, international students have rights to work 20h/week during school periods and full time

during holidays just as in Finland. According to the Foreign Worker Canada, an immigration law firm in Montreal, Canada is very much interested in retaining international students who have studied in Canada for at least two years through one of the above mentioned immigration streams. However, most of these programs vary from one province to the other. As part of the Canadian Post Graduate Work permit Program (PGWPP), International graduates avail themselves to some 36 months work permit within which time they can secure a permanent residence and subsequent integration into the Canadian work life as oppose to the one year in Finland. As soon as graduates' are able to demonstrate that they have been employed on a full time basis for the past one year and have proven their language skills, they avail themselves for a permanent residence and integration into the Canadian cultural landscape.

### 2.8.2 The German example

Germany and the Netherlands have similar policies integrating international graduates into work life. International students benefit from an 18 months residence permit to search for work upon graduation in Germany (refer Table 1). This is often referred to as the orientation year. However, graduates must demonstrate that they earn more than a minimum threshold income within their field of studies (Section 16[4], Residence Act) to be granted a workers residence permit (Hailbronner 2014: 162–163). This income is lower for students who graduated from German schools than those coming from other International institutions of learning. It is also varies with age. Generally Germany provides graduates with a wide range of opportunities of integrating foreigners into the job market. Besides Germany also have compulsory German language course for international students in the Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences which prepares them for their subsequent integration into the German work life, (Expert council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration 2015).

Table 1 International graduates integration, a comparative analysis.

	Finland	Canada	Germany
Legal Title		Post Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP)	Section 16 (4), Residence Act
Maximum period of residence	12 months	Up to 36 months (depending on length of course study)	18 months
Target Group	All international graduates of Finnish Higher Education Institutions	All international graduates of Canadian Higher Education Institutions	All international graduates of German Higher Education Institutions
Application period	Before student residence permit expires	Within 90 days of the completion of Course	At least Four weeks before the expiry of the Student residence permit.
Maximum permitted working hours whilst searching for Employment	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Additional privileges for International Graduates	No restrictions as regards field of employment, this makes the receipt of a permanent residence easier.	No restrictions as regards field of employment, this makes the receipt of a permanent residence easier.	Reduced waiting time of obtaining a permanent residence permit, simplified conditions for the self employed.
Stay Rate (%)	22.5	33.0	26.3

Source: Adapted from SVR. Research and compilation

### 3) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter seeks to explain how the research was carried out how data was collected and analyzed. As maybe the case in any research three approaches are taken into consideration including the inductive approach, the deductive approach and the hybrid or mixed approach i.e. a combination of both the inductive and the deductive approach. The inductive approach is a research approach that starts with observation and along the line theories are tested at the end based on the results of the observation. From inductive reasoning, a pattern can be drawn and explanations developed (Goddard & Melville 2004). This approach aims at generating meanings from the data collected and to establish patterns and relationships in a bid to develop theories and it is often associated to qualitative methods (Lodico et al, 2010). A deductive approach is based on formulation new hypothesis based on existing pattern or theory, hence it is reasoning from a particular to general. It begins with a preconceived pattern that is to be tested against observations Babbie 2010). In this research method, phenomena are explained through the collection of numerical data and analyzed using mathematical methods (Muijs 2004). Generally, in this research, a quantitative method is applied. This method places emphasis on objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computerized and other motor generated techniques.

I chose a quantitative method in this research oriented thesis because it suits the overall purpose of this research which is to investigate the rate at which International graduates from the degree program in social services get employed into the professional jobs. Moreover, there is a preconceived pattern of international students not employed in professional jobs; hence I sought to investigate these using graduates for the degree program in social Services as a case in point. A deductive reasoning is therefore required here based on the pre existing situation. Numerical data will be collected and analyzed through the online survey. Mathematical tools are employed and the results are reported in a statistical fashion. All these are features of a quantitative research.



## 4. THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This chapter describes succinctly how the research was carried out from inception till the reporting of the results. This process involves the initial gathering of background information during my work with the project 'International Graduates and Work life', formulation of questionnaire, data analysis as well as a description of the problems faced in the course of the research.

### 4.1 Literature survey

This thesis involves several processes in its realization. The first step was the collection of existing literature related to the integration of international students and DSS students in Finland. This part of the thesis was realized in other parts of my studies 'project management' carried out under the project 'International graduates and work life'-a joint project carried out by some Universities of Applied Sciences in the Helsinki metropolis. Relevant literature related to this topic was explored and analyzed (Mbah Ndam 2017.)

This is a qualitative approach and they are usually inductive. In this part of the research literature related to integration, internationalization and the process of integration were all reviewed from journals and text books. WebPages of mentoring organizations were also explored. This part of the research applied some qualitative methods such as visits to organization where some personal observations were made and oral questions asked. The review of literature gave good background information of the situation of international graduates in Finland and explores the avenues or windows of opportunities for their subsequent integration into the Finnish employment landscape in the project International graduates and work life (Mbah Ndam 2017.)

### 4.2 Formulation of questionnaire

The second phase consists of a survey administered to some international graduates from the degree program in Social Services (DSS) only. The questionnaire which included close-ended questions require the respondent (target) to select among alternatives answers to questions. In most of these questions the respondent is required to answer

‘Yes’ or ‘No’. The second phase would use a deductive approach in collecting and analyzing data.

The questionnaire was formulated in a standardized manner containing 10 questions (See Appendix), which covers topics included in the purpose and aims of this research. It was administered to respondents through an electronic form in a random manner. The questionnaire was sent to the target group via various social media organs such as facebook groups of alumni organizations including DIAK alumni, emails to graduates of this discipline as well as through text messages carrying the link to the survey and the responses collected through the Survey Monkey online collector. The respondents completed the survey at their discretion and return the questionnaire via the collector, in this case the web link. The target population was exclusively international graduates from the degree program in Social services from any university or university of applied sciences in Finland with an immigrant background. A cover letter accompanied the questionnaire carrying clear instructions that this survey was meant for international graduates of DSS with an immigrant background.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis

This research seeks to investigate the integration rates of international graduates of DSS into the Finnish professional work life. The data analysis is an interpretation of the results and comparison with previous literature. The mean figures of international students with professional job after graduation will be reported as opposed to figures without professional job, or unemployed will be reported. Once the questionnaires were returned they were analyzed using basic statistical tool such as the spreadsheet. The results are reported in the next chapter using statistical figures such as bar chart and pie chart followed by brief interpretation of the figures. An interpretation of results based on statistical characteristics such as mode and frequency of items on the questionnaire will be reported as well.

#### 4.4 Research Ethics

In this research all ethical issues are observed according to the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity set up by the ministry of education and culture. In this thesis, the work

of others will be respected and fully acknowledged at every step. Since, accessing individual international graduates may be difficult, questionnaires will be sent to alumni groups and other social platforms where graduates interact as well as in individual email accounts of the target group. Their express permission is sort and respondents must not respond under compulsion. Identity of respondents is not necessary on the questionnaire so as not to raise any prejudice and the results will be used purposely for this research.

Since only international graduates of the degree program in social services form the target group, it will not be necessary to obtain a research permit for this research, hence research ethics is not breeched. However, the respondents were informed in the cover letter and accompanying text messages of the purpose of this research and what the data will be used for. Furthermore, this thesis will be a reflection hopefully only, of the true situation of the responses received. The author is obliged not to trade academic integrity for personal or self sentiments or attainment. Also the author upholds more ethical issues by working closely with his supervisor and the Diak community. In this way, the result remains closely linked to the objective of the research and academia.

#### 4.5 Challenges

This research process did not go without some short coming and challenges. One of the biggest challenges was to map out the target group. This is because there are many Finnish students who have studied social services in English and feels that they are international graduates. However, they do not have an immigrant background hence will not face same prejudice in the job market as an international graduate with an immigrant background. Moreover, there are foreigners in Finland pursuing similar studies in the Finnish language who may as well not be subjected to similar problems in the job market as an immigrant international graduate. It was all the more necessary to precise that for the purpose of this study, the target population should be an international graduate of the degree program in social services with an immigrant background who studied in the English language.

Furthermore, the indifferent attitude of the target population towards responding to a questionnaire cannot be overemphasized. Many of the respondents needed more than

one reminder for them to complete the questionnaire. This made the data collection process tedious, slow and laborious. Besides sharing the questionnaire on facebook groups of some graduates, at times the researcher would have to make personal contacts to get the questionnaire completed. This may have a direct consequence on the sample size. However, the results from this size can be extrapolated to a higher population sample. This therefore means that, though, the sample size in this research is small it represents a likely result if this research would be done with a larger sample size.

The lack of funding in this research was another challenged faced. Generating an online survey using SurveyMonkey requires at least the purchase of an additional online service should the number of questions on the questionnaire be more than 10. To this effect therefore, the researcher was bound to compress the questionnaire to a maximum of 10 questions, hence reducing the number of variables initially previewed in this research. However, the main questions relating to the objectives were retained. Furthermore, since the researcher had to reach most people in the target population personally, he was faced with the temptation of reaching out to friends of the similar culture or racial background as his, though they fit squarely into the research objectives.

## 5. RESULTS

This chapter gives a summary of the basic information and data collection process and a detail description of the results obtained in writing and in figures according to the variables on the questionnaire. The total number of respondents for each question on the questionnaire is marked as (n).

### 5.1 Basic Information and data collection process

In this chapter the data collected through survey sent out to respondents will be reported and analyzed. Many people in the target group were served with questionnaires. The target group as defined in chapter three is exclusively international graduates from the degree program in Social services with an immigrant background. For simplicity and the sake of these studies, this research did not exclude international graduates from other European Union areas though they do not face same integration problems such as international graduates from other economic areas or regions of the world such as Africa and Asia. This is because European Union citizens are not considered clients to the integration program. According to the Finnish immigration service, they are allowed to live and work in Finland without a residence permit. It was difficult to get the actual number because questionnaires were served in Facebook groups wherein not every individual in that group fell within the target; however, the message sent out alongside the questionnaire was clear to the target population.

The survey was designed and distributed to respondents using an online survey creation system called SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is an online cloud-based survey system developed in 1999. It provides free and paid features in collecting and analyzing data in real time with opportunities for reporting results in several accepted international language (Symonds Emily 2011). More sophisticated features of data analysis in this system are paid for hence basic reporting of the results will be done which are free of charge. It however gives the latitude to distribute questionnaire through several social network links including email, linkedIn, face book, etc and results can as well be collected via several means. It is a free and easy to handle tool for academic and business purposes. The questionnaire was meant to serve only graduates of the degree program in social services

and it stayed online for two weeks. These graduates could come from any of the universities of applied sciences in Finland. Individual reminders were sent to the respondents to ensure they respond to the questionnaire within this time. The questionnaire was made up of 10 clear questions including multiple choice and opened questions and these questions were clearly related to the objectives of this research. In all the survey could be completed within an average of 5 minutes by the respondent and the responses were automatically collected and analyzed by the cloud based system and readily available for extraction and reporting.

There were just ten questions on the questionnaire because any number exceeding that limit will attract paid features. However, some basic information for identification such as age, sex, etc were irrelevant to the research since the underlying factor was International graduates regardless of those identities. The questionnaire was however structured in a way that the questions increase with increasing level of importance to the topic. Important components of International graduates integration to work life such as, motivation to take up a degree program in social services, year of graduation, intention to live permanently in Finland, ease of securing a job practice position while studying, present state of employment and ease of acquiring a professional job as well as accessibility of the professional job markets to international graduate.

## 5.2 Main results

The questionnaire was made available online for two weeks. A total of 23 (N) responses were received through the online collector SurveyMonkey. This number is quite small and therefore a 50% response shows that just about 12 international graduates from the degree program in Social services responded to that question. The number of respondents for each question on the questionnaire is marked as (n). The main results are presented according to the questions on the questionnaire

### 5.2.1 Key motivation to study Social services

This question was intended to rate the motivating factor that drove many students to choosing this degree program. 50% of the respondents indicated that they were attracted to this program by the availability of employment opportunities upon graduation whereas,

fewer than 10% just pursued it for the sake of academics since they had no better option. Motivation from friends was also reported as a good factor for the choice of this program by about 32% of the respondents while other reasons such as passion to help those who need assistance and the multicultural nature of the degree program were a driving force to approximately 23% of respondents. Figure 1 below gives a true picture of the motivation to study social services.

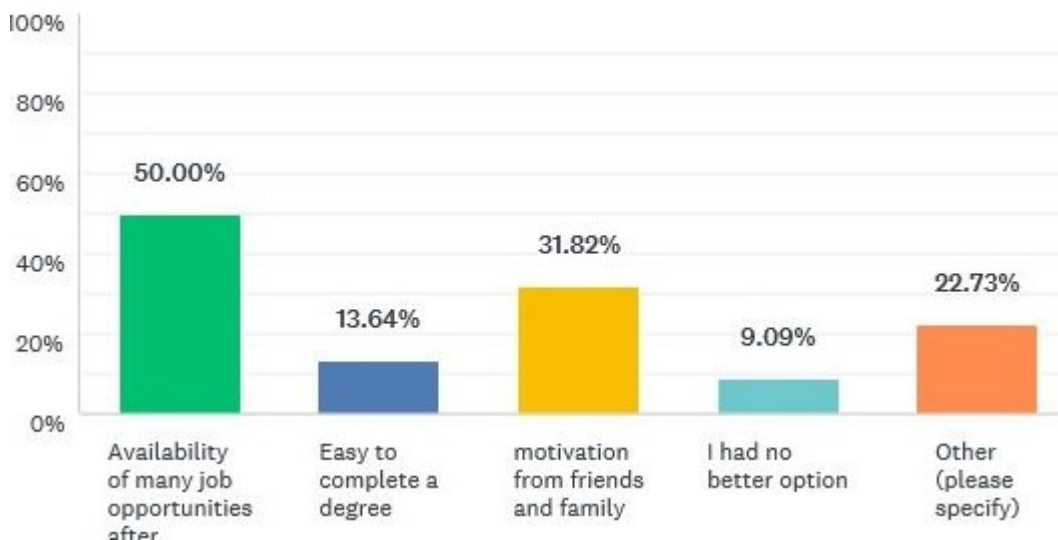


Figure 1 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: Motivation to study DSS (n=23)

### 5.2.2 Year of graduation

The year of graduation is a variable factor in one's integration into work life. While some gain employment while studying, others require sometime to pass through all other societal and family entanglements before getting integrated into work life. Figure 2 shows the proportion of respondents according to their year of graduation. More than half of those who responded to this survey (52%) are recent graduates (2017). Some of the respondents (about 5%) had graduated long time ago (since 2011) out of the range of the proposed year of graduation in the questionnaire. Generally most of the respondents in this questionnaire graduated in the degree program in social services within the last 4 years.

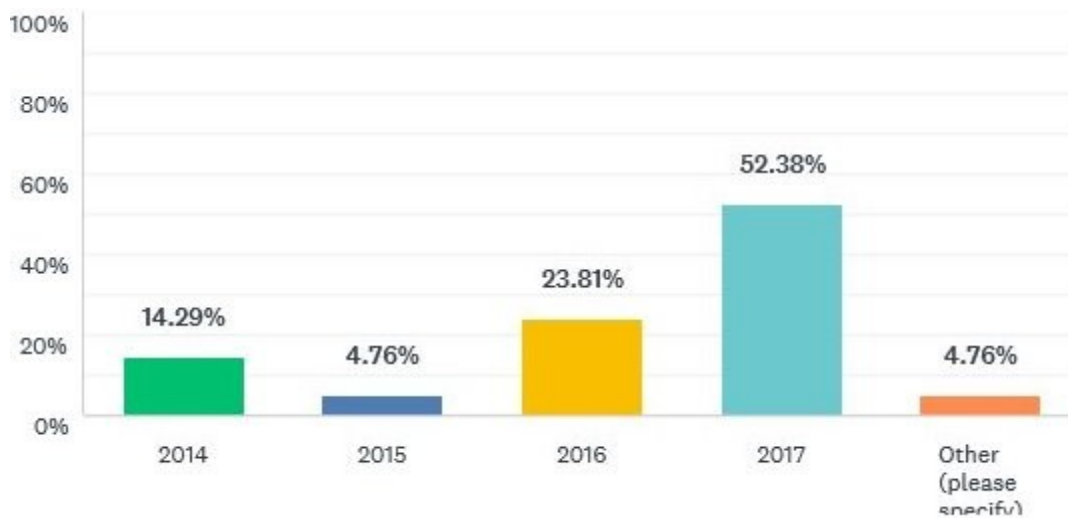


Figure 2 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: Year of graduation (n=23)

### 5.2.3 Satisfaction with studies

The questionnaire sought to know if international graduates were satisfied with their studies. Satisfaction in this context is relative to individual motive of choosing the degree program in Social Services. More than 27% of these graduates were fully satisfied with their studies whereas a crushing 73% were satisfied only to an extent. No international graduates seem unsatisfied with their studies, Figure 3

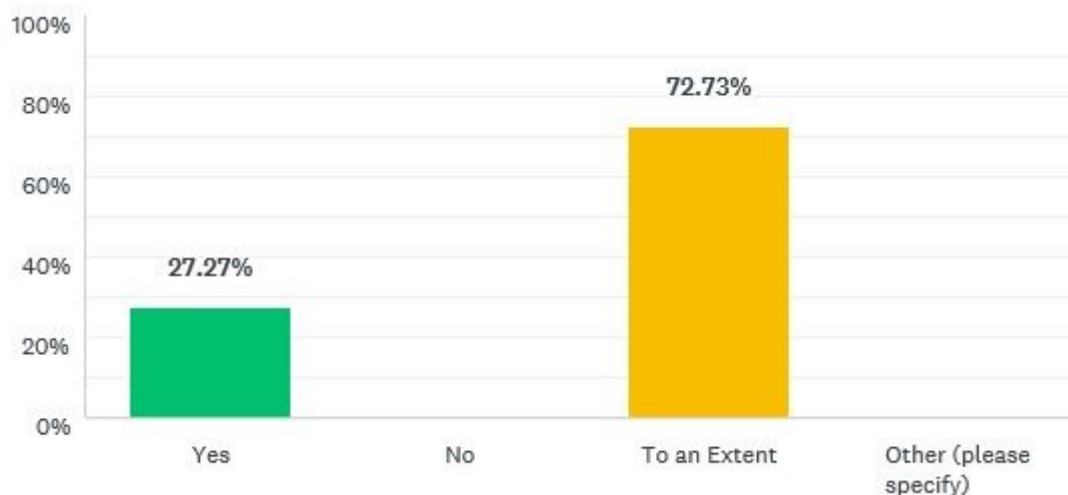


Figure 3 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: Satisfaction in studies (n=23)



#### 5.2.4 Ease in securing a place for job practice

The first step towards integration into work life is gaining work experience while studying and this is achievable through job training while studying. About 41% of the respondents found it hard to get a place for job practice another 41% approximately found it extremely difficult to get job practice place while only a small proportion fewer than 23% found it easy to get a place for job practice. Figure 4 below shows the ease at which international graduates were able to find a place to carry out their job practice while studying.

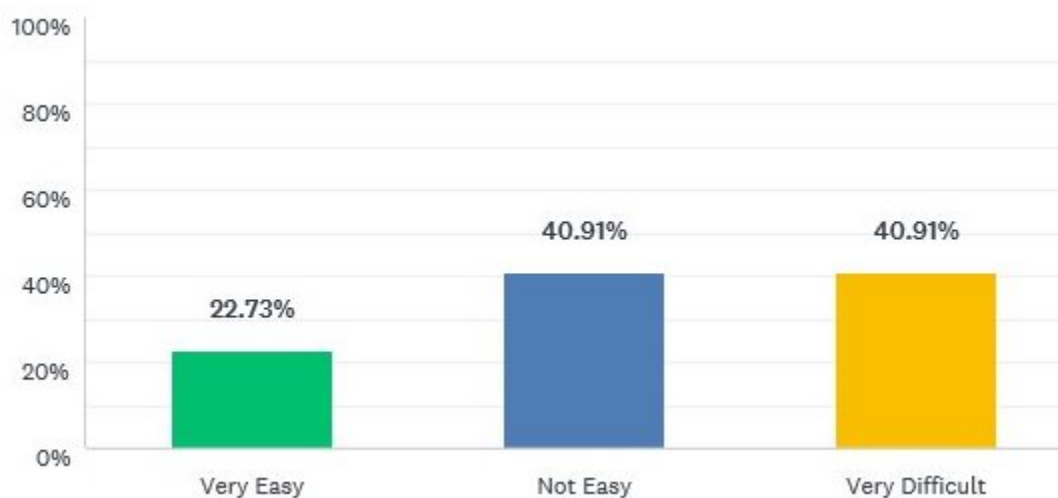


Figure 4 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: Ease of Finding a place for job practice (n=23)

#### 5.2.5 Intention to take up a permanent residence in Finland

The intention to live permanently in Finland is one of the variables to get integrated into the Finnish professional work life. Many international graduates who do not intend to live permanently in Finland may not be eager to get integrated into professional work life. This research is also limited to those graduates who are still in Finland. Figure 5 below shows that more than 45% of the respondents intend to live and work in Finland permanently while about 23% do not intend to live permanently in Finland. About 32% are undecided whether to live in Finland or not.

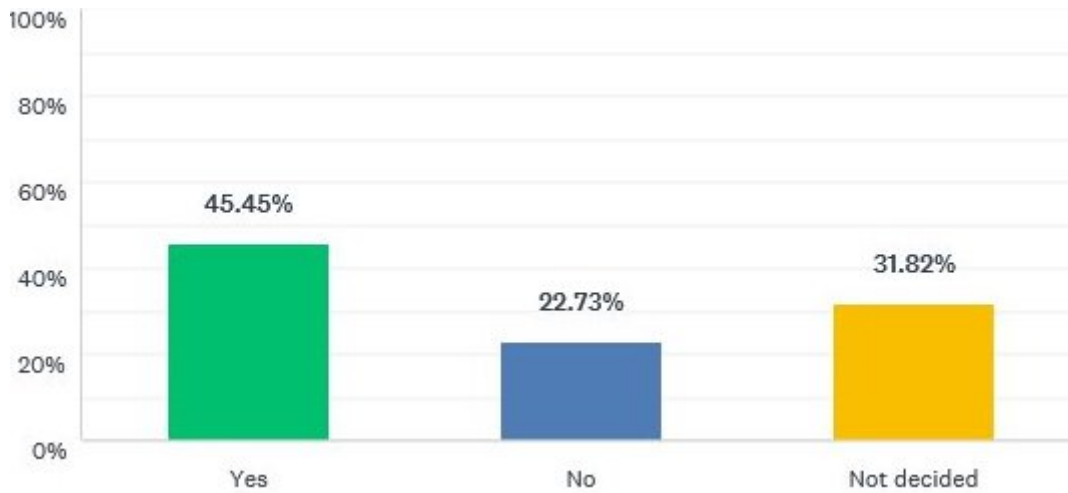


Figure 5 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: Satisfaction in studies (n=23)

#### 5.2.6 Employment in field of studies

The focus of this research was to ascertain the rate of integration of international graduates into the professional work life and the main index of this measure is the number of graduates who are currently employed in the profession of social services. Figure 6 shows about 64% of the graduates are not employed in the profession for which they were trained while 27.3% are professionally employed and some 4.5% are to some extent employed in social services related jobs. A little over 18% remain totally unemployed.

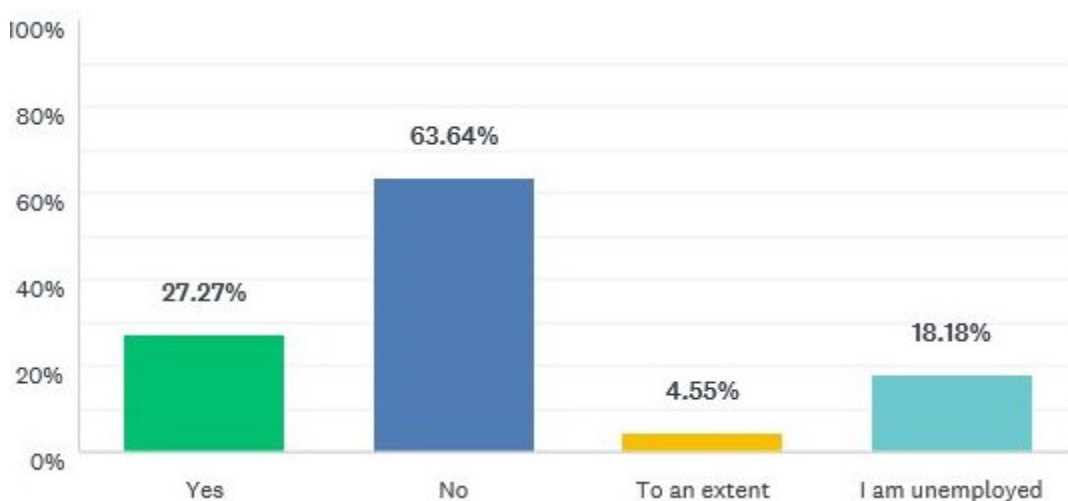


Figure 6 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: Ease of Finding placement place (n=23)

### 5.2.7 How a professional job was secured

Among the 27% who are professionally employed, approximately 29.5% got their jobs through personal search. Almost 12% through the university career services. About 59% of this segment got professional jobs through other means such as Professional contact while volunteering at placement-related training, the use of personal and natural talents, and none from internship places and mentoring organizations Figure 7. Seemingly many international graduates are not making good use of the mentor organizations or perhaps are not too informed about these organizations. Many of the respondents who do not have professional jobs answered this question with the option 'other, please specify' hence n=17 larger than the number who have professional jobs.

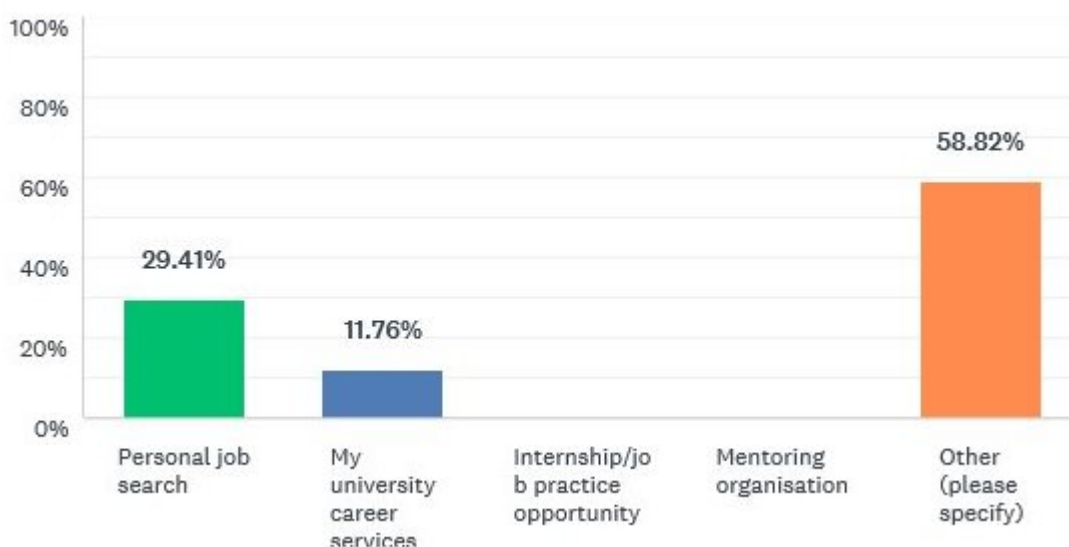


Figure 7 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: How professional job was gotten (n=17)

### 5.2.8 How accessible is the professional job market

The survey also sought to examine the accessibility of the professional job market to international graduates of the degree program in social services. Hence they were asked if the professional job market is open to DSS graduates. A little over 59% of the respondents

disagree with the fact that the professional job market is opened to international graduates of this degree program while approximately 14% agree that the job market is opened to international graduates. Some 31.8% were not sure if the professional job market is opened to graduates or not. Perhaps this segment of unsure respondents is graduates who have not attempted job search. Figure 8 below gives a picture of the responses from the accessibility to the professional job market by graduates from the DS program.

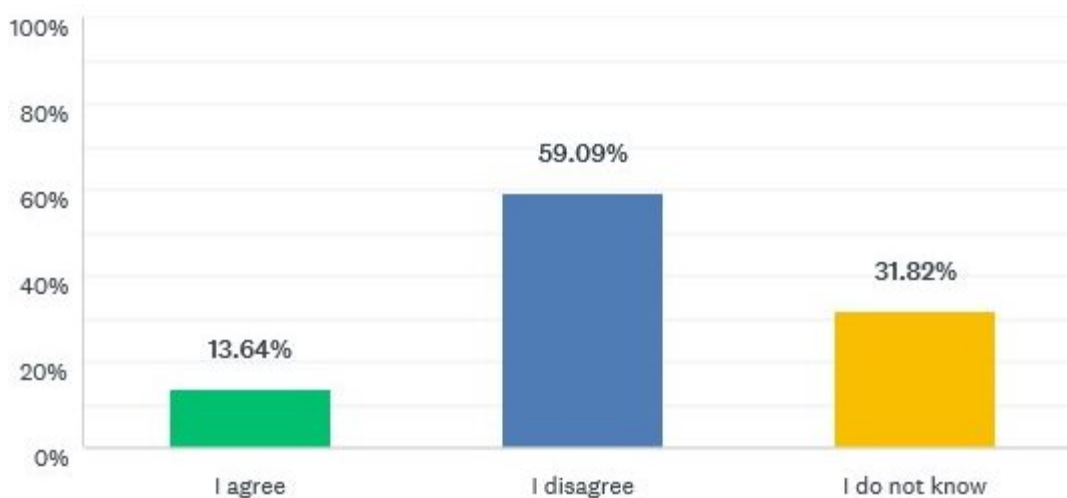


Figure 8 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: Accessibility to professional jobs (n=23)

#### 5.2.9 Why is it hard to secure a professional job?

In responding to why it is difficult for international graduates from the degree program in social services to have a job in their field of studies, approximately 456.5% of respondents think it is a result of the resentment by Finnish employers to offer a job to international graduates, perhaps due to lack of trust. 33.3% blame it on their very poor Finnish language skills; approximately 28% of the respondents attributed it to other reasons such as family reasons, inaccessibility to subsidiary and on the job training, self defeat by most international graduates who feel inferior. Some 5.5% think that there is lack of job opportunities in the field of social services in Finland. Figure 9 below shows some of the reasons why it is difficult to find a professional job in the field of social services.



Figure 9 Survey of international graduates of DSS into work life: Why is it difficult to have a professional job? (n=18)

## **6 CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

In this chapter the results of the main findings are summarized with respect to the aims of this research. The main findings of this research will be assessed with relation to other research in the discussion section. This chapter also considers a full assessment of the results; the effectiveness and general importance of the results.

### **6.1 Conclusion**

The background of this research is based on the high influx of international students into Finland in recent times and the low retention rate of international students in general including international graduates from the degree program in social services. There is a well established integration policy for immigrants but none is available for international students who form part of the immigrant population. This is compounded by the fact that the degree program in social services is highly attractive and competitive among the various undergraduate programs in Finland, yet most of the international graduates do not end up working in the fields for which they were trained.

The main aim of this thesis was to investigate the rate of integration of international graduates from the degree program in social services into the professional work life in Finland. This aim would be realized through an online survey presented to exclusively to international graduates of this program from any institution of higher learning in Finland. Generally the rate of integration of international graduates from social services is low due to the limited accessibility of the professional job market to international graduates of this discipline according to the results of this research. The degree program in social services remains a very attractive one to international graduates as most of them aspire to have a professional job. This maybe partly driven by the fact that Finland is a socialist state, hence many international students are convinced that they will find it very easy to have jobs upon graduation. However, the results of this research show that many of the international graduates of this program do not get integrated into the professional jobs in which they acquired training.

Despite the high language bar set by most recruiters, some international graduates have found professional jobs and work in the fields for which they were trained albeit these jobs were gotten through personal efforts. Many international graduates might not have

followed the right procedures in job search and may be required to do more job search. Most of the participants in this research were recent international graduates who may not have enough experience to get professional jobs. Many international students do not make use of the mentoring organizations.

Generally the economic crises that swept across the globe in 2008 did not bypass Finland, since then Finland has adopted a stricter stands on immigration including international students. Between 2011 and 2015 the economy has been hit hard by many problems as a result of the decline in manufacturing with the shutdown of some important companies such as Nokia and the forestry industry coupled with the effects of sanctions from Russia. This has led to the adoption of austerity measures that has reduced the budgetary allocations for social services. This may partly account for the limited opportunities for employment of professionals in this domain.

## 6.2 Discussion

This chapter involves the interpreting the results in chapter four in the present dispensation and examining these results with respect to other researches, countries and literature. The purpose of this chapter in effect is to interpret and to describe the significance of the results in chapter four with respect to what is already known, and to explain any new understanding of this research. In this chapter, I will establish the three dimensional relationship between my findings, existing literature and the literature review of chapter three.

There is no gainsay that Finland has witnessed a steady growth in the number of international students in recent times and this has a direct impact as well in the number of graduates from the degree program in Social services. This has been due to Fenland's policy of internationalizing its higher education sector. To further enhance this policy, Finland has been offering many higher education programs taught in the English as the main foreign language in most of its higher educational programs (Garam 2012 cited in Suraj Chand 2014). Such level of internationalization is also common among several Nordic countries and countries of the European Union. According to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education 2005, there has been a significant increase in the number of international students at higher education institutions and this has been accompanied by

the development of courses and programs taught in English, with over 300 masters program offered in the English language.

This study laid emphasis on the integration of international graduates from the degree program in social services with immigrant background because they form a crushing majority of the international graduates cohort in Finland and needs integration into the Finnish professional work force. International students from non EU/EEA countries form more than 60% of all foreign students in Finland (Umair Malik 2016). This number include students in the degree program in social services, most of who as of now benefited from tuition free education. A cost-benefit analysis shows that an international student may cost the Finnish government over 7000 Euros per year besides other social benefits and these include education provision, from the physical infrastructure of HEI's to facilities, education material and personnel costs in terms of hiring of faculty (Umair Malik 2016). Currently the average cost of taking undergraduate studies in most Nordic countries is approximately around 30000 Euros excluding other costs. Considering such an investment by the state on international graduates, it will be economically beneficial for the state to put in place structures for the retention of international graduates. Benefits from these students after graduation may include added value to public economy through employment and production tax revenue by employment or entrepreneurship and replacement of the ageing population of Finland.

The degree program of social services offered in the English language is one of the main programs that admit international students with an immigrant back ground in Finland and DIAK being Finland's largest provider of the University of Applied Sciences level education in Social work (DIAK 2018). Though the reasons for this is not all together clear, however, one can inextricably linked this to the high demand of workers in the Social service department, Finland being a welfare state. The results in this research corroborates this fact as over 50% of the respondents took up studies in this field motivated by the availability of job opportunities after graduation. The results of this research also show that, despite being trained in the domain of social services, many international graduates end up working in some other fields not related to their fields off studies.

The main finding of this research reveals that only 27% of the respondents are employed in their field of studies. Most of the international graduates who are even employed approximate 64 % do not work in their profession receiving salaries not commensurate to



their level of education. While some work as care assistants in some nursing homes, others work in the fields of cleaning and catering. Such high level of underemployment may only lead to redundancy and professional exclusion. This result is also with agreement with the research carried out by Shumilova Yulia et al., (2012) in the VALOA project on the employment of graduates in their professional fields. The authors of this project reported that only about 5% of international graduates from Social services found professional jobs. However, it is worth noting that this report was in relation to the total number of international graduates whereas this thesis is limited to graduates in the degree program in social services.

There is a very positive correlation between the very low rate of integration of international graduates from DSS and the general employment picture of international graduates in Finland as the number of international students coming to Finland keeps increasing. Suraj Chand (2014) in his literature review studies on the Internationalization of the Finnish Higher Education found out that the employability of international student is one of the main challenges in the internationalization process. This also has a direct impact on the integration of international graduates of the degree program into the professional work life.

The results reported an overall satisfaction of the international graduates of this program while they were studying which implies they were happy with their training. Most graduates of this program have a high potential of working in the profession for which they were trained but end up not deriving satisfaction from their present state of employment. The findings from this research shows that, though there is a high potential of these international graduates to gain professional jobs through the training they got and the availability of mentoring organization, none of the respondents who are actually working in their rightful profession found jobs through the mentoring organization. This implies many international graduates are not aware or do not make use of the mentoring organizations as an instrument to gaining full and professional employment. On the other hand these mentoring organizations may as well be cosmetic in their publicity, giving the impression that they offer such services whereas not.

Accessibility to the professional job market according to this research is quite narrow and challenging. About 60% of the respondent says it is difficult to get a professional job in their field of studies. Many international graduates from this field of studies according to this research have continuously been practicing other professions where they derive very

little satisfaction contrary to the satisfaction they obtained from their studies. Studies by CIMO (2011), also found out that securing employment and professional career are quite weak in Finnish higher education system.

Many (about 64%) also face difficulties finding even placement opportunities while studying. Ciulinaru (2010) also reported that many international students find it hard in securing placement opportunities for job practice, thereby confirming the results from this research. Some reasons attributed to difficulties in securing professional jobs and job practice includes poor language skills, narrow job opportunities and general resentment by Finnish employers towards foreigners, bureaucracy in issuance of residence permit etc. (Shumilova Yulia et al., 2012).

This research seeks to investigate the rate of integration of international graduates of the degree program in social services. The results reveal a poor rate of integration of international graduates of this program into the professional job landscape. However, the reasons for the low level of integration was not a main part of this research, hence it is a subject of future research. Furthermore, there is no model for the integration of international graduates of this program. Hence modeling the integration pathways for international graduates as a whole is an important part for further research.

### 6.3 Limitations of the study

One of the main findings of this research is that most of the respondents recently graduated from the university. The results show that more than 50% of the respondents graduated in 2017. This may not give a true picture of the employment rate of international graduates of this program. Since they recently graduated, they might not have had ample time for job search or perhaps are still in the job hunt position. The implication is therefore that should this research be conducted with same respondents in the near future, the results may not be necessarily the same.

Furthermore, only 23 responses were received from the questionnaire distributed. This number though not too small may not be enough to make certain generalizations. The limitation in the number of response received does not give room for a rigorous analysis of the situation of international graduates of this program. A number of over 100 may give a more credible picture of the situation of international graduates in this program. The results

and conclusions made in this research however, give some light into the situation of international graduates of social services in Finland.

This research was limited to international graduates of the degree program at bachelor's level. It is unclear if the results will be the same if the research is carried out with international graduates of social services with master's degree. Moreover, it is not also very clear if some of the respondents have gotten masters degree in this same field after graduation and now use them to work in professional fields or not.

## 6.4 Recommendations

As a way of conclusion, I will make the following recommendations to the international students in the degree program of social services, to the training institutions, and to the authorities and stake holders of immigrant integration based on the results from this research.

### 6.4.1 Recommendations to International students

There are many mentoring organizations related to the field of social services that are ready to mentor international students in the degree program of social services. Many international graduates from this program seem not to be making optimum use of the mentoring organizations. While some may be ignorant of their existence, others may be negligent. While studying, international students are recommended to establish a strong links with these organizations, some of which are detailed in chapter two of this research. In this way they can be able to have the necessary professional competence and job skills required in the professional work life.

### 6.4.2 Recommendations to the training institutions

Even though many job providers sometimes visit the training institutions to talk about their companies in open conferences, there seem to be weak link between these institutions

and the recruiters of international graduates. It is therefore recommended the training institutions establish a stronger link with the job providers. This can be done through recommendations upon graduation to these professional job providers for direct hiring.

Furthermore, many international graduates from this degree program do not have the necessary skills required on the job market especially the language requirements. This may be as a result of the internal policy of the training institutions or a national education policy. Moreover, some international graduates who seek jobs in places such as day care centers are required to do additional 60 ECTS in early childhood education which they do not have. The training institutions are recommended to include these 60 credits in the student's training.

#### 6.4.3 Recommendation to authorities concerned with Integration

The Finnish integration Act clearly outlines the procedure for integration of immigrants but fails to make provisions for international graduates who form an important fraction of the immigrant population. More often, the graduates are faced with the double problem of regularizing their residence permit and getting integrated into a professional job- either being a requirement of the other. It is therefore recommended that the authorities that be, should make provision for a special integration plan that gives the latitude for international graduates to gain experience into the Finnish working life subsidized by the state upon graduation. This will obviously ease the integration of international graduates from the degree program in Social services into professional work life.

## 6.5 Professional development

The pursuit of this thesis has greatly developed my ability in searching and gathering literature for academic purposes. During this entire research I was able to scan through over 100 academic articles and several books to gather material for the literature review and discussions chapters. It has therefore improved my ability in exploring large data base independently using very smart search criteria. It has in a nutshell improved my research skills in work place.

This research gave me the first opportunity in building and conducting an online research. The first stage of building the questionnaire presented to me a greater challenge with respect to the aims of this study. In a bid to get a wider and quick response, I was able to discover and use the cloud based survey system SurveyMonkey. It has enhanced my skills in data collection and analysis.

The overall thesis process is self educative. From the conception of this thesis throughout the various presentations, I have developed my ability to research and communicate my results independently during the various stages of this thesis including idea paper presentation, thesis plan, part of thesis and the publication. This step by step approach with strict deadlines has helped me develop my ability to report with efficiency and accuracy. I am able to manage the time allocated me during presentations better than before.

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## APPENDIX

Questionnaire: Integration of International graduates of DSS into the professional job  
market.

- 1) Why did you choose the degree program of Social Services
  - a) Availability of job opportunities after graduation
  - b) Easy to complete a degree in
  - c) Motivation from friends and family members
  - d) I had no better option
  - e) Other (please specify).
- 2) When did you graduate
  - a) 2014
  - b) 2015
  - c) 2016

- d) 2017
  - e) Other, please specify.
- 3) Were you satisfied with your studies?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) To an extent
  - d) Other (Please specify)
- 4) How easy did you find it in getting a job practice position?
- a) Very easy
  - b) Not easy
  - c) Very difficult
- 5) Do you plan to live permanently in Finland after graduation?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Not decided
- 6) If your answer in (5) is NO, tell us why
- a) I have to return and serve my country
  - b) Few Integration possibilities in my field of studies
  - c) better opportunities elsewhere
  - d) I wish to continue my studies abroad
  - e) Other (please specify)
- 7) Are you employed in your field of studies?
- a) yes
  - b) No
  - c) To an extent
  - d) I am unemployed
- 8) If your answer to Q7 is YES, how did you get the job?
- a) Personal job search
  - b) my University career services
  - c) Internship/job practice opportunity
  - d) mentoring Organization
  - e) Other (Please specify)

9) If your answer in Q7 is NO, tell us why?

- a) Lack of job opportunities in my field of studies
- b) My Finnish language skill is poor
- c) I lack the job skills
- d) Finnish employers do not offer me job
- e) Other (please specify).

10) The professional job market is open to international graduates

- a) I agree
- b) I disagree
- c) I don't know.