

A RUSSIAN STUDENT AS AN EMPLOYEE IN FINLAND: RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

Ossi 2 Project

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Anastasiia Donchenko

Abstract

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| Title of publication A Russian student as an employee in Finland: Recruitment Challenges Ossi 2 Project | | |
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| Abstract <p>The key goal of this study is to find out the validity of the theoretical problem that the author states as the research question. This theoretical problem raises such an urgent issue as the hiring of foreign labor and the attitude of Finnish entrepreneurs to it. The Ossi 2 Project is an orderer of the research and is an organization that focuses on the integration process of people with a migrant background.</p> <p>The theoretical part covers information about living conditions of the Russian diaspora in Finland, factors affecting foreign labor as well as data that Ossi 2 Project agreed to publish in this thesis.</p> <p>The research method applied to this study was qualitative. The researcher selected semi-structured in-depth interviewing as the best way to justify the main research question and the theoretical part as well. The interviews were conducted during the period of October 2018.</p> <p>As shown by the results proved that the theoretical problem was justified and has an impact on certain aspects of Finland as a state. The main general conclusion is that Finnish companies need mobility and change, as well as openness to foreigners, given the economic situation in the country. The problems turned out to be confirmed and require a solution. The author of the study also designed a list of recommendations based on data and research findings.</p> <p>This thesis may be useful as a methodical recommendation for international students who are willing to build a career or settle down in Finland.</p> | | |
| Keywords: Russia, Finland, Intercultural interaction, Employment, Foreign labor, Immigrant | | |

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Kind Regards,

Anastasiia Donchenko

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the reader to the overview of the thesis framework. In the beginning, it describes the thesis background and subject, which is followed with clearly defined objectives, research questions and possible limitations. In addition, the chapter explains the theoretical framework, research methodology and data collection methods applied in the thesis. Finally, the introduction part ends with a short and clear description of the thesis structure.

1.1 Thesis Background

A lot of Russian students study and work in Finland nowadays. Part of them are immigrants who are willing to find a job or simply settle down in the country. However, over time, the Russian students who want to stay in Finland realize that there are many obstacles that make the job search process difficult or impossible. These obstacles are mostly connected to legalization, lack of jobs or difficulties of the national language. However, these issues are superficial as Finnish companies do not give any guidelines about what they appreciate or require from a potential immigrant candidate. Therefore, the reasons should be more profound and concrete. In this research, the author will try to figure out the reasons and give recommendations to all the Russian and international students who are planning to work in Finland.

The reason why the thesis author took Russian students specifically is that the author's homeland is the Russian Federation, and her native language is Russian. Furthermore, the researcher is a student of the Finnish high institution and therefore is a direct participant of the stated theoretical problem.

There is a good reason why this thesis will be of interest to a potential reader. This study was conducted with personal motivation, it contains unique information instead of statistical data, as well as special recommendations have been developed for international students. What is more, this thesis was commissioned by the Ossi 2 Project, which is developing projects to help immigrants to realize their potential in Finland.

1.2 Thesis Objectives, Research Questions and Limitations

The main objective of the thesis is to make a research on the expectations of Finnish employers towards Russian students as employees. Consequently, the author is trying to find out, how do Russian students best meet the given expectations, and what should be emphasized to better meet those expectations. The second goal is to create a list of the

author's personal recommendations and tips based on qualitative interviews with undisclosed Finnish recruiters.

Maxwell (2013, 229) states that research questions are the heart or core of the research that a person is doing. Briefly, this is a specific topic or question that a person wants to particularly study or understand.

Therefore, after the successful thesis subject identification, it should be narrowed down in order to make it easier to define the research question and sub-questions logically and effectively. Those research questions are extremely significant as they give answers to the established research problems.

The following research question will be analysed in terms of this study:

- *What are the actual obstacles for Russian students when entering employment but the Finnish language?*

Since it is impossible to answer the research question right away, it would be wise to come up with some sub-questions that directly lead the researcher to the key point. The role of sub-questions is to help the author orient himself in his own study (van Thiel 2014, 17). Therefore, the author of the thesis claimed the following sub-questions based on the main research question:

- *Is a Russian foreigner a competitive candidate to get employed in Finland?*
- *What are the challenges in finding a workplace for a Russian student in Finland?*
- *What do Finnish employers expect from a foreign applicant?*

There are always certain limitations to this study that impacted the implementation of the research. First of all, it is important to emphasize that the thesis is commissioned by the Ossi 2 project, which means that findings can be used only by Ossi Project members and the companies which gave their permissions to be interviewed. Other organizations may use this work for informational purposes only.

With regard to the second limitation, it is important to mention that the main research method includes interviews. This means that for natural reasons, company representatives protect the personal data of their organizations and prefer not to cover its internal affairs in details. It should be mentioned that the author's key mission was to ask as many tough questions as possible and avoid "yes-no responses". Thus, the interview part was the most challenging task of the whole study. In addition, due to the limited amount of time, a small number of interviews were undertaken. Thus, it cannot be argued that the collected and analyzed information is one hundred percent reliable. Moreover, the candidates for the

interviews had their lack of time or a limited schedule as they are important officials. It made the qualitative research challenging in some way. The last limitation is language issues: Misunderstandings and reservations were inevitable due to language obstacles, naturally. Neither the Finnish employers nor the author himself are English native speakers.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical part in this study is specifically designed so that the reader can gradually understand the topic of recruitment challenges of international and especially Russian students who live or study in Finland.

In the first theoretical chapter, the thesis author draws the reader's attention to the overall picture of the life of Russian students in Suomi. In this chapter, there are sub-chapters in which such topics as the attitude of the Russian people towards Finland and the difficulties of finding work in the country are described in more detail. Further, the author introduces the reader to the key theoretical part of the whole study, where the researcher reviews the most common factors that affect the hiring of foreign labor in Finland.

The final theoretical part includes a case organization Ossi 2 description, where its experience and problems are presented. The closing part explains the reason which became a prerequisite for writing this thesis.

To attach the theoretical part, many sources were used, including articles, printed books, journals, reports and electronic sources.

1.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection

This sub-chapter aims at covering the research methodology and data collection methods, applied in the empirical part of the thesis. In the beginning, the research approach is explained, the next part covers the data collection methods and then finishes with the sources used.

There are two main types of research approach: deductive and inductive. In the deductive approach, a clear theoretical position is developed prior to the collection of data. In the inductive, the main principle is that a theoretical position can be designed after the data have been collected. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 41.) The author has decided to concentrate on the inductive research approach as the function of the study is a transition in the process of learning from private knowledge to general.

After the research approach is chosen, the researcher's next step is to decide which suitable methodology to apply. There are two major methods: qualitative and quantitative. Both of them

may be used when conducting a research. Sanders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) define those two methods simple and clearly: Quantitative research is about numeric data and a large amount of data made with help of statistics, diagrams and charts. This method is about measuring things and its concept is based on the following questions: "How many?" and "How much?". Qualitative research refers to interviews, images and case studies. The qualitative research starts with the following questions such as "How?", "Why?" and "What?". To sum up, in this thesis, data is collected with qualitative interviews so qualitative data collection methods are used.

After the right methodology is chosen, the author must take into consideration a type of data sources. The data helps to build a clear picture of the study. There are two kinds of data used in the research: primary and secondary. Primary data are preferred. Primary data - absolute new data developed or acquired for research purposes. Secondary data is collected from literature, articles and electronic sources. (Saunders et al. 2009.)

1.5 Thesis Structure

The sub-chapter represents the structure of the thesis. The key parts of the research are introduced on Figure 1.



FIGURE 1. Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into 4 sections which cover 6 main chapters. The first one, namely, the introduction chapter includes the thesis background overview, its research questions and objectives as well as limitations and research framework. The second section is based on the theoretical research. It includes chapters two, three and four: they explain the theories that are directly connected to the study questions and aims. The third section is empirical and it contains chapter 5 that presents the outcomes collected via interviews and the description data analysis process. The final conclusion section of the thesis introduces the reader to the answers to the research questions, study outcomes and to the author's recommendations and suggestions for the further research.

2 RUSSIANS IN FINLAND

The chapter covers some statistics and facts relating to the Russian students who are studying and living in Finland at the moment. Nevertheless, there is additional data on the number of Russian immigrants as a whole.

Finland hosts more than 15,000 immigrants from all over the globe. The fact is that Russians form the largest foreign nationality group inside the country. There were about 30,000 persons with Russian background (born in Russia or in USSR) living in Finland in the year 2017, which is 12,7 per cent. (Statistics Finland 2017.)

2.1 Russian Students in Finland

Russia is a strategic partner of Finland in the higher education sector. The Finnish National Agency for Education focuses on supporting communication with the department of education and science of the Russian Federation. The Finnish Ministry of Education considers Russia as a high-education country with which innovative and strategic relations should be built. National coordination is essential. Thereby, the new forms of cooperation through higher education cooperation is in the process of development. (Jänis-Isokangas 2017.)

For the period of 2015, the number of Russian higher education students who participated in the exchange program between host countries (exchange programme) in Finland was 450, whereas 322 Finnish students did their exchange semester in the Russian Federation (Jänis-Isokangas 2017).

This means that there is such intensive cooperation between the two countries, which is supported by the student exchange programmes. Many Finnish higher education institutions cooperate with Russia as a serious partner. Moreover, Russia is one of the countries in which the internalization of Finnish higher education is practised. The last but not least is that the student mobility between Russia and Finland received government support and announced as a common aim. (Jänis-Isokangas 2017.)

International Degree Students in Finland

International degree students coming to Finland mainly come from Russia (2,959), Vietnam (2,516), China (1,788), Nepal (1,166) and India (779). As can be seen from the statistics, Russian students make up the majority of international students in Finland. What is more, the total number of International students has doubled since the year 2006 from 10,000 to over than 21,000 international students. (Nyyt 2018.)

Top ten nationalities of international degree students in 2016

| To Finland | Total |
|-------------|-------|
| 1. Russia | 2959 |
| 2. Vietnam | 2516 |
| 3. China | 1788 |
| 4. Nepal | 1166 |
| 5. India | 779 |
| 6. Pakistan | 712 |
| 7. Estonia | 695 |
| 8. Iran | 624 |
| 9. Germany | 621 |
| 10. Nigeria | 570 |

FIGURE 2. Top ten nationalities of international degree students in 2016 (Nyyt 2018)

Based on statistics, about 40 per cent of the students who graduated from universities, find jobs and settle down in Finland. Approximately 5 percent of them continues studying. (Nyyt 2018.)

In the end, Russian students occupy a leading position in the fields of international students. It is also impossible not to note that a sufficiently large number of graduates are motivated to stay and continue to work or study directly in Finland.

2.2 Russian Attitude towards Suomi

Russia and Finland are literally next to each other however their cultural aspects and perception of the world are totally different. In order to understand the aspects of motivation and interest among Russian exchange students and international students, it is necessary to look at the full picture of how a Russian person perceives its northern neighbour.

A first survey that was conducted in Russia was applied by the Russian Levada Center. The total number of respondents was 1,600 people from central and remote parts of the Russian Federation. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2017.)

The result turned out to be quite positive. Nearly 70 per cent of survey participants said they have a positive or very positive attitude towards Finland. Only 10 per cent of them responded negatively. Especially young people and individuals with a high level of education had a positive attitude towards Finland. Also, the participants of the questionnaire

evaluated the relationship between Russia and Finland as “good”. In addition, considering the question would you like to move to Finland, 12 per cent of the respondents claimed they do not mind. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2017.)

Summing up in this sub-chapter, the author says that the relationship between the Russian and Finnish people seems to be stable, evolving and perspectival. There are a great potential and mutual benefit in their cooperation. One way to maintain close communication is youth mobility. Despite a long history of conflicts between these two countries, Russia and Suomi have fairly stable relations.

2.3 Difficulties of Getting Job in Finland

At present, there are serious discussions and intensive debates among government officials and politicians about recruiting foreign labor to Finland. The crucial moment is that the country suffers from a serious demographic decline and a shortage of work units. An indication was issued that employers should look for employees among immigrants. (University of Vechta 2018.)

According to the report published by the Working Group of the Finnish Advisory Board of Ethnic Relations (2003), Russians are more likely affected by discrimination and remain unemployed in Finland. The outcomes of the research show that for the period of the year 2002, Finnish society still has an unfavorable attitude towards the Russian-speaking part of its population. First of all, the report demonstrates that the government provides little support to assist in the practice of the Russian language. This means a lack of information and education based on the Russian language. Thus, Russian native speakers do not have many opportunities to practice their mother language. Secondly, because of racism and discrimination towards Russian job seekers, the position of the Russian employee on the Finnish labor market is insignificant and unstable. Furthermore, strict requirements for knowledge of the Finnish language weaken the status of a Russian potential candidate in the labor market. Thirdly, typical ideas and stereotypes that Russians are mafias and spies are spread in the media and in movies. These factors also negatively affect the job search process for a Russian person.

Discrimination and racism are an inevitable issue in the world subject to the globalization process. Stereotypes or prejudice have a negative impact on any person who decides to find a job or a new home abroad of his native land. However, the world is changeable and now there are many ways to combat such trends as racial prejudice or xenophobia.

3 FACTORS AFFECTING FOREIGN LABOUR

3.1 Language

It is widely acknowledged that the linguistic integration is a crucial factor for an immigrant to become part of the host society in his or her immigration process (Kluzer, Ferrari & Centeno, 2009). This means that the linguistic integration is completed when a foreigner is capable to use one of the official languages that that are currently public (Lapierre Vincent, 2004).

The linguistic integration process does not imply knowledge of the state language at the level of a native speaker, but it means sufficient language proficiency to participate prominently in the host society. The lack of communication skills in the language of the host state leads to a slowdown and impede social and economic integration. (Cohen, 2012.)

The Role of the Finnish Language

Learning the first official language in Finland seems like the key tool for the integration process for any foreigners. When immigrants come to Finland, they are offered some language and professional job oriented courses. Both foreigners and immigrants, living in Finland, have the same opportunity to study as Finnish citizens. However, they need to know the Finnish language fluently. This circumstance can cause certain challenges since the language is very different from other languages and it has only a few international words. Nevertheless, it is assumed that learning the language and introduction to culture will provide more effective integration into the host society.

It is important to emphasize, that the popularity of English has grown considerably since the beginning of the 20th century because of the period of major social, cultural and economic change in Finland (from the 1960s to the 1980s). (University of Helsinki 2011.)

In 1992, the country officially adopted two state languages: Finnish and Swedish. On that moment, out of the 5.3 million citizens, 90.7 per cent speak Finnish and 5.4 per cent speak Swedish. (University of Helsinki 2011.)

According to the Ministry of Justice of Finland, the country is progressively becoming a multi-language human society. There are 120 languages which are spoken in the country nowadays. Moreover, Over the last twenty years, the number of foreign language speakers has increased. What is more, in the year 2009, Russian-speakers in Finland was almost 52,000 and their share of all the foreign-language speakers in the population was 25 per cent (Population Structure 2009, Statistics Finland).

Even with the fact, that there are two official languages in Finland (Finnish and Swedish), some local employers require an ability to speak both of them. Moreover, Finnish employers have a tendency to hire candidates who speak other languages than the mentioned above. Most common languages expected are English as well as Russian and German. Knowledge of any foreign languages is not generally unexpected and is therefore required from each applicant. On the other hand, fluency in foreign languages can be considered as a preference point for recruiting staff in a firm. (Kangasvieri, Miettinen, Kukkohovi, Härmälä 2011.)

However, when Finland became independent in 1917, the language issue was one of the political questions which had national and cultural influence. It turned into a thorny issue for the whole country. There were many political radical disputes until Finland was made an officially bilingual country in the year 1919. (Jussila, Hentilä, and Nevakivi 1999.)

Consequently, such a matter was a challenge to Finnish independence and identification. Thus, the Finnish language is a national treasure and is resistant to change. Despite world globalization and participation in the European Union, Finland, as a country, is prone to xenophobia and a sense of its own independence. Even taking into account the fact that English plays an important role in the country, it cannot replace the local native language since this language is in priority.

3.2 Stereotypes

According to Petkova and Lehtonen (2005), stereotypes of nations are some unique features that define a country and its inhabitants. From the observer's point of view, it is easier to consider a country as a certain collective unit that has its own combination of characteristics or qualities, its own emotional state and its acts in response to various external and internal influences. Moreover, national stereotypes typically include physical characteristics such as skin color, facial features, hair color, as well as national dresses, as well and behavioral attributes that are supposed to be shared by all inhabitants of this certain nation.

Negative Stereotypes about Russia

Typical templates that the media and film industry use to portray representatives of the Russian Federation include such images as spies, rude aggressors and fighters (Goering, 2004).

Often, due to the global film industry and little knowledge in the field of Russian history and culture, the perception of the Russian people is based on the following negative

stereotypes: Russians are harsh, rough, tricky and perhaps suspiciously clever, but only so that they could be government spies.

I even found myself believing that the most common of stereotypes for Russians (they are all alcoholics, they are constantly plotting revenge against the United States, they all smoke) were valid, though I had absolutely no solid information on which to base these thoughts. (Smith 2011.)

In addition, the influence of the Soviet Union and its collapse affected the modern cliché about the Russian nation. Until now, among other nations, there is a perception that Russia is still under the regime of communism and is not progressing in any way (Smith 2011).

Key Friction Points between Finland and Russia

In accordance with world history, Finland became an independent country in the year 1917 only. Before that, Finland was a part of Sweden for about 600 years, then a part of Tsarist Russia from 1809 onward. The country is a Nordic welfare state and a member of the European Union nowadays. However, it was these long centuries, under the leadership and pressure of other ruling countries have become a catalyst which awakened a spirit of Finnish cultural nationalism.

“Maintaining freedom from its powerful neighbour for a century has not been easy, and Finland has had to make sacrifices to survive.” (Ponniiah 2017.)

The most significant moment in the relationship between the Russian Federation and Finland is the period between 1939 and 1944. At first, it was the Winter War against the USSR, which ended in a peace treaty, then the Second World War. At the end of this period, Finland lost part of its territory and suffered great damage. (BBC News 2017.)

Eventually, neighboring countries have special relationships and often the past affects the present. Russia and Finland have a lot in common - two wars, territories, economic union, common border, and so on. All of these factors, including stereotypes and historical facts, influence the relationship between the two countries. Consequently, those factors have either a positive or negative impact on people or their decisions.

3.3 Cultural Differences – Hofstede’s 5D Model

The cultural dimension typology developed by Geert Hofstede on the basis for cross-cultural communication. The Hofstede’s 5D Model has six dimensions which are: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence. The purpose of these factors is to clarify and understand cultural differences. Using the

information obtained from factor analysis, a description is created of the influence of a society's culture on the individual values of its members, and how these values influence their behavior aspects. (Hofstede 2010.)

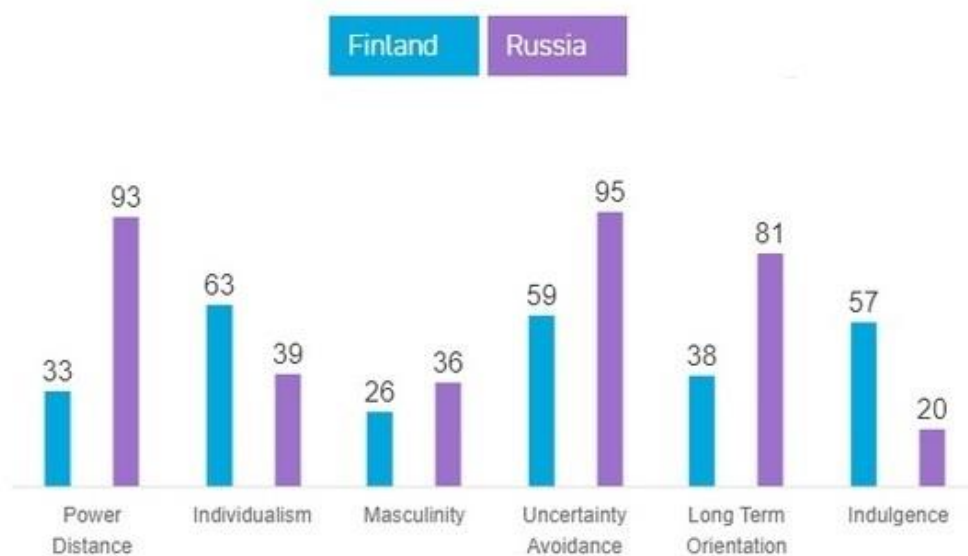


Figure 3. Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions between Russians and Finns (Hofstede 2018)

Figure 2 shows that Russian and Finnish cultures are significantly different. This discrepancy is particularly marked in the following three values: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Long Term Orientation.

The first Power Distance dimension relates to the attitude of the culture towards inequality within and between societies. Finland has a low score here, which means that Finnish culture includes the following characteristics: informal manner of speaking, a feeling of independence, equal women and men, control is not welcome. Russia has a high score on this dimension indicates, which means that government officials are very distant from the society. Because of this difference among social sectors, the role of a person's status in society is a critical aspect.

The next one is Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, it covers the matter how a nation deals with the fact that the future is unpredictable. Relying on Figure 2, Finland tends to avoid uncertainty. Laws and regulations are important within the community. The situation of Russia is just the opposite: uncertainty and risks are an integral part of the life of a typical Russian.

The last one represents Long Term Orientation dimension indicates how people are dealing with the path, present and future. A normative society is about Finland. Maintaining time honored traditions and norms is characteristic of the society. Russia is a country with a very pragmatic mindset. Persistent and active achievement of results and adaptation to traditions determines this culture.

Comparison of the cultural characteristics in this chapter proves once again that even taking into account the fact that Russia and Finland have a common border, they have practically nothing in common except this very border.

3.4 Unemployment Rate in Finland

This section briefly introduces the current unemployment rate situation in Finland.

Unemployment in Finland, as in other countries, is an important social problem. Even taking into account the fact that in October 2018, the unemployment rate dropped from 7.3 per cent to 6.3 per cent, the unemployment rate among young people aged 15 to 24 years old rose to 14.7 per cent from 12.3 per cent in the 2017 year. There are a lot of unemployed among young people. There is also a problem of age in the country, which also destabilizes the employment rating. (Finland unemployment rate 2018.)

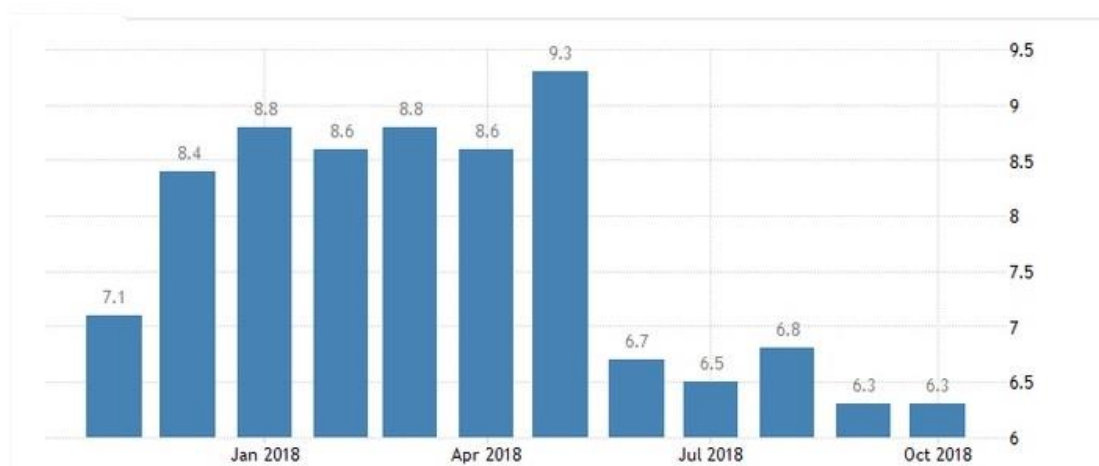


Figure 4. Unemployment rate of Finland (Finland unemployment rate 2018)

Even with the fact that the unemployment rating is quite stable in the country and little affected by critical changes, there is no guarantee for a foreigner to find a decent job and stay in the country.

4 ABOUT OTHER CHALLENGES

This sub-chapter was created to give an overview of the Ossi 2 Project. It covers the background of Ossi 2, its aims and the implementation process. Besides, the sub-chapter includes the part where the experience of immigration labor is kindly provided by the Project. The sub-chapter ends with the report of reasons for the cooperation between the author and the Ossi 2 that caused the necessity for the whole research.

Ossi 2 - Employing Immigrants

The Ossi project is aimed at improving the adaptation conditions of those people who decide to move to Finland and are identified as immigrants. The project is innovative and aims to increase the trend of globalization of Finland. The main objectives of the project are to increase the qualifications of foreigners, knowledge of culture and knowledge of working life in Finland. Ossi is also an organization that is interested in finding employment and social support for immigrants. Moreover, the project seeks support from domestic workers and all possibly approves of local companies that support the hiring of foreign labor. Thus, the project supports intercultural communication between the employer and the foreigner applicant. (Ossi2 - Osaajat töihin 2018.)

The project is under the guidance Lahti UAS and Salpaus Further Education in cooperation with several companies and service providers. The target audience of the project covers all immigrants who lack information about culture, language, working life and the economy. In addition, the project supports the trend of increasing the previous education of an immigrant if it is not of sufficient quality or has exhausted itself. The next expert group is organizations and companies that suffer from a shortage of manpower and need competent employees. (Ossi2 - Osaajat töihin 2018.)

The Ossi 2 Project is funded by Europe Social Fund.

Experience of Ossi

Ossi 2 - Employing Immigrants is a European Social Fund (ESF) - funded two-year project, which is executed by Lahti UAS and Salpaus Further Education in cooperation with several companies and service providers. The purpose of the project is to facilitate the employment of people with a migrant background in the Päijät-Häme area.

One of the Ossi 2 target groups is the companies that need competent employees but have found it difficult to hire someone with an immigrant background due to difficulties in the briefing. Companies are challenged to recruit and familiarize with the working place environment the people with the immigrant background. Companies need trainings and

material related to multicultural skills, which will raise the language and cross-cultural awareness among the workplace tutors.

There are many unemployed immigrants in the Päijät-Häme area. Many of them have the educational and professional skills needed in the area's labor market, but their professional language skills are not adequate or whose prior learning has not been recognized well enough and therefore have difficulties in the Finnish labor market. At the same time in many areas, there is a shortage of skilled workers.

Based on the report of the experience obtained by Ossi 2, it becomes obvious that Ossi 2 project was constantly faced with the problem that immigrants could not be recruited for the most part because of the language issues. However, the author put forward the theory that the language cannot be the only actual obstacle why many educated immigrant-jobseekers remain unemployed. Thereby, the author came to the conclusion that fluency in Finnish is only a superficial problem. To find out real obstacles, the thesis author must do a background check in order "to shed light" on such a touchy topic as immigration labor issue.

5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This chapter covers information about the empirical part of the study that was applied to the thesis. The chapter makes the reader familiar with the whole qualitative research process of the study, followed by the interview structure, design, data acquisition and analysis in the end. All the data is analyzed and presented in the following sub-chapters and next chapter.

5.1 Interview Structure

Relying on the fact that the study is conducted via qualitative method, as it was mentioned in the introduction chapter of the thesis, in-depth interviews were chosen as the most appropriate tool to collect reliable data.

Boyce and Neale (2006) define in-depth interviews as a useful data gathering tool in the case where a researcher' aim is a detailed study or exploring of some issues in depth. Compared to another data collection method such as questionnaires or surveys, in-depth interviews ensure much more detailed information.

The interview design might be divided into three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The first type is based on a certain structure and a researcher must follow a specific set of questions in strict order with a limited number of answers. The second type is the most commonly used type of interviews applied in qualitative research. It contains both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The last type is the type of interview in which the interviewer asks questions which are not prepared in advance. (Stuckey 2013.)

The author selected the semi-structured interviews were applied to this study. The reason why this type of interviews was considered as a suitable one is presented in more detail in the following sub-chapter.

5.2 Interview Design

According to Brinkmann (2013), a unique step-wise model that is good to keep in mind when considering the design of qualitative interviewing consists of the following items:

- Making clear the study question,
- Choosing the research approach,
- Finding out whether qualitative interviewing suits the given study question,
- Deciding on who should be interviewed - and how many,
- Choosing the analyzing method,

- Reporting of the results.

After a comprehensive interview design development based on the steps above, the author also took the following additional steps:

- Creating the interview template,
- Sending invitations for the interviews,
- Choosing the right location,
- Undertaking the interviews under the standards of professional etiquette,
- Ensuring respect for integrity, privacy and defense rights.

It is important to claim that everyone whom this author asked for an interview is a person from a big or small business. The task to get to the "right people" seemed rather complicated, but Ossi 2 Project provided its help to the author and thus reinforced the theoretical part with a practical one. All interview participants knew the purpose of the study initially and agreed to provide relevant information. The main criterion for the selection of companies and its representatives was the presence in their organizations of the experience of hiring foreign students or employees, especially Russian.

With regard to the interview mode, the author selected semi-structured in-depth interviewing with a list of specific questions. The objective was to make the potential respondent talk about the specific area of interest in details. The interviews were customized for each interview member. Moreover, avoiding "no-yes questions" was in priority. The last but not least is that all the answers were considered as "subjective". There were no strict requirements for the order or formulation of questions.

In total, 9 main complex questions followed with the sub-questions were designed for the structured in-depth interviewing by the author of the thesis. The basic interview questions can be found in Appendix.

5.3 Data Acquisition

In order to obtain relevant data for the research analysis, the author of the thesis has designed a schedule of interviews. The basic principle was to undertake all the interviews in the period of October 2018. The interview results had been achieved in accordance with the plan. The language of communication with interview participants was English. The length of all the interviews varied and could last from one hour to two and a half.

Before starting the interview, the author informed that the interview is confidential therefore it's not possible to identify the interviewees from the analysis done in the thesis. All interviews were recorded before the author began the analysis process.

The author of the thesis made every effort to create a comfortable environment for the representatives of the companies so that the atmosphere of the interview was relaxed and natural. The interviewees gave their answers in free form so that they were not limited by anything. The whole procession was more like a dialogue, where people are willing to exchange information and listen to each other.

Face-to-face interviews turned out to be an excellent choice since the author could follow the respondent's emotions and navigate in the dialogue. This type of interview allowed the researcher to collect many details.

Additionally, before starting the interview, the author has explained the objectives of the thesis, personal experience and his personal motivation to help both students and companies.

There were no online conversations.

5.4 Interview Analysis

This part of the chapter provides and describe the data received from the in-depth interviews, conducted by the researcher. Here the author leads the reader to the part of the empirical result of the study which is based on open conclusions from the interviews. In other words, the sub-chapter opens the empirical outcomes and presents details of the answers received from the face-to-face interview participants. All the basic questions are listed in Appendix.

As it was already mentioned in the introductory, the main objective of the interviews was not only to get relevant answers to complex questions but also to get possible solutions to the issues covered by the researcher during the dialogue. Based on this point, all the interviews contained the main topic of conversation, key questions and sub-questions. Though, absolutely all the interviews could be adapted to the participant, which gave more opportunities for discussion. Those main topics and questions included to the interviews were developed based on the experience and data of the Ossi 2 Project, as well as on the basis of the personal experience of the author as a potential immigrant. Besides, new topics and questions were raised during the dialogue between the author and Finnish employers. This factor is important, as it allowed to collect more details and facts. The interviews were conducted with representatives of Finnish enterprises who either have had experience in

hiring foreigners or who are supporting immigrant labor force at the moment. The status of the participants in their companies were either the HR manager or the manager of the company itself.

The first question from the most important ones in the interview was the following: "Do you have many foreign employees in your company? Do you have any Russians? Why do you need these Russian employees?" This question was intended to highlight the international nature of the companies that the participant represented. Absolutely all the representatives of the Finnish companies directly stated that they have experience in hiring foreign employees or students. The number of foreign workers depended directly on the department, where this labour was needed. For example, one Finnish entrepreneur claimed that about 50-60 people work at their factory, 20 per cent of which are non-citizens of Finland. Among this 20 per cent, 6 people are representatives of the Russian Federation. Another person responsible for HR department said that in their marketing department almost half of the staff is regular and international students. Students also have an opportunity to do an internship in this company. All respondents explained that there are many nationalities among their international employees, but most of them are dominated by Russians and Estonians.

For the sub-question "why do you need those Russians", some entrepreneurs noted that they have no preference in nationalities, while others said that they need Russian professionals, as their companies support integration with Russian enterprises, factories or companies.

Considering answers of the participants concerning the second question "In your company or organization, what kind of expectations do you have when you hire an employee in general?" the majority of the responders agreed that the language is a major component in hiring. However, since the purpose of the entire study is to clarify real challenges when hiring an immigrant, in addition to language, the author had to take a crucial approach. As a result of long discussions, it turned out that for the most part, all companies are looking for persons with:

Good attitude to work and other employees, flexibility, a good mindset and at least a medium knowledge of English. (A Representative from the Finnish company.)

What is important, if a Finnish company is not looking for a professional, the majority of Finnish companies do not require more than basic knowledge in the field where the candidate is applying:

You don't have to be an expert, as we teach people how to run different things and operate already during their work process. (A Representative from the Finnish company.)

The next question was about the Finnish language and how much the company determines its significance. The question is a key issue, so much attention was paid to it. Almost all the representatives of Finnish companies emphasized the importance of knowledge of the Finnish language. It was noted that the higher the language level, the more likely it is to find a job, obviously. However, a representative of the company which head office is located in Helsinki stated:

Finnish can no longer be an obstacle for a foreigner to get a job. (A Representative from the Finnish company.)

This opinion was conditioned by the fact that the entrepreneur supports the hiring of foreigners in his company and by the fact that he is not satisfied with the economic situation of the country. He also stated that English should be on the same level of importance with Finnish:

You can take a job with English, and you can become familiar with the Finnish language in the process of the job. (A Representative from the Finnish company.)

Talking about well-educated but not Finnish speaking persons, opinions of the entrepreneurs were quite varied. Exactly half of the respondents confirmed the fact that everything depends on the matter to which position an employee is required. If this is a "rare expert position", then the ability to communicate in foreign languages is welcome, but not required. If this is the case when a company is looking for a candidate for a regular position, Finnish will play a decisive role. Especially it concerns work in the field of marketing and customer service. The other half of the interview participants stated that the decisive factor is the attitude to work and not the level of education.

Regarding the cultural aspects, almost all of the respondents did not attach great importance to these aspects i.e., did not consider them as key factors, but identified them as "a quite good addition" The author clarified the question and asked whether it would be important to emphasize the knowledge of the Finnish cultural aspects in the dialogue with an employer. Absolutely all the representatives of Finnish enterprises found the moment to be "definitely useful", as this will positively underline the applicant's Finnish background. Also, the interview participants stated that they usually do not ask any candidate for knowledge of cultural aspects, but if he or she decides to mention it, it will be considered as an advantage.

The next significant question “What subjects do you think Russian students have to take into consideration while they are studying? What would express you?” was considered ambiguous since:

It is not the usual practice for companies to ask about the subjects that were studied at school or university. Often, even evaluating of grades does not play a serious role when applying for a job. (A Representative from the Finnish company.)

However, certain interview participants reported that, in addition to cultural and language courses, they would prefer to see courses related to competition or management in the list of subjects. Confirmation of participation in projects and school activities is also welcome.

The last question turned out to be controversial for all participants in the interview. The fact is that for the Finnish entrepreneurs a theoretical situation was proposed in which a Russian candidate and a Finnish one are absolutely equal: in the level of Finnish language and in the level of knowledge. This question is considered critical, since not all respondents decided to share their answer. Only a few respondents said that for them, first of all, the working and personal qualities of the candidate play a critical role, not their nationality, so their decision would depend on these factors. The decisive answer was the opinions of the other participants in the interviews, who agreed that they would like:

To keep jobs for local people in order to save jobs in Finland. (The Representatives from the Finnish company.)

These honest answers, confirming the reality of some of the difficulties and obstacles in hiring in Finland, were quite reasonable. The reason for this view is that it is easier to find a common language with a Finnish person than with a foreigner:

Hiring a foreigner in a Finnish office means making everyone work in inconvenient conditions. (A Representative from the Finnish company.)

The fact is that in many Finnish companies the managing department rarely contains a foreigner who does not speak Finnish. Thus, the integration of a foreign student is determined by the language and its status in the company. Moreover, some of the entrepreneurs explained that it is better for an international student to look for a job or internship “where a student can use two languages, not one”.

Some conclusions drawn from these in-depth interviews are outlined and discussed in the next chapter.

5.5 Data Analysis

The analysis process of the interviews is mentioned in this part. Taking into account the fact that the author provides information protection to the interview participants, the details of the analysis performed are not included in this sub-chapter. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher made paper copies of the questions he shared with the interview members. This facilitated the dialogue process. Moreover, the author permanently made personal notes and asked specific questions.

The main purpose of the interview was to make the interlocutors talk, share personal opinions and offer their solutions to the problem. The questions that the author has posed are not standard and to a large extent touched on sensitive topics. In order for the dialogue between the researcher and a questioned person to be professional and ethical, the author began the conversation with general questions, asked to tell about himself or share personal experience. The questions were specially designed so that it was impossible to give a simple or incomplete response. In addition to the main research question, new questions and extra topics for discussion appeared during the talk, since the interview was rather long. This made it possible to collect the details and make the answers more accurate.

There were some challenges for the thesis author during the interview. There were moments sometimes when some employers preferred to skip certain questions or give an incomplete, unclear answer, which is also considered as a result and an indicator. Moreover, some participants in the research interview were not ready to share their personal opinions on a particular issue related to the hiring of foreign labor. The reason for this reaction is the protection of their own interests and policies of their company. However, due to the fact that the main mission of this study was to help cooperation between Finnish enterprises and foreign students, the interview participants nevertheless put forward their personal decisions and solutions.

Before the start of data gathering, the researcher has drawn up an analysis plan, which consisted of four stages:

- Definition of the main research question,
- Raw data collection,
- Analytical analysis of the collected information,
- Definition of clear and logical conclusions.

This plan was drawn up after the author reviewed the literature and some sources about the data analysis process. Accordance with the book Silverman (2013), the strategic

analysis plan was developed based on the reviewing the publication this as the main resource.

All the findings of data analysis are covered in the next part and in the part of author recommendations as well.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter concludes the whole thesis and gathers together the information collected during the research as well as gives a brief overview of thesis outcomes. The answers to the research main and sub-questions are presented. Also, the reliability and validity of this study are analyzed, followed by a suggestion for further research. At the end of the chapter, the personal recommendations designed by the thesis author will close the chapter.

6.1 Answers to Research Questions

Before answering the main research question, the author would like to provide clear answers to the research sub-questions stated in the introduction part. Thus, the responses to additional sub-questions will help the reader to better understand the concept of the main study question and the final answer to it:

Is a Russian foreigner a competitive candidate to get employed in Finland?

The answer to this sub-question, the researcher could get only after a detailed study of literature and information resources. Russian students have priority, as there is cooperation between the educational systems of Russia and Finland. Should not forget the important existence that Russia is a neighbor on the border with Finland and stable relations between these two countries are important for both governments. There is a constant student exchange process between these two countries, supported by the state and the ministries of education in both countries. Ultimately, this information confirms the claim that Russian students are the most competitive in the Finnish education market. This provides a catalyst for reinforcing students' motivation to stay and look for work. A Russian student has an equal chance of finding a job in Finland, like any other foreign student, but the conditions of support and growth are comparatively better.

Based on statistical data mentioned in the theory part, Russian students take a leading position, so some kind of competition among them may arise.

What are the challenges in finding a workplace for a Russian student in Finland?

The answer to this sub-question is completely based on the results of the analysis of the theoretical part by the author. The issue of hiring foreign employees cannot be limited to just a few points since this topic is quite extensive and is subject to many changes permanently. In order to sensibly analyze the key factors affecting the hiring of foreign labor in Finland, the author of the study decided to include the most significant and common challenges in the review. To be precise, the author of the thesis found that the following

factors are the main problems for finding a job for a Russian student in Finland: local language, stereotypes and their negative impact, cultural differences and unemployment in Finland.

The author also argues that relying on the analysis of the interviews and the experience of Ossi 2 Project, language and the ability to communicate are the most common problem among immigrants and students, including Russian students. For the same reason, many Finnish companies refuse to hire foreigners. However, taking into account the cause, the Finnish company put in a priority of Finnish-speaking local people, or a foreigner, thus ignoring a potentially workable candidates.

What do Finnish employers expect from a foreign applicant?

Basing on the analysis of the qualitative interviews, the author can confidently identify some of the most named expectations: Uniqueness, mobility, as well as flexibility and an ability to communicate. Those are key factors from any employer. There are no grounds for stating that there is a difference between expectations for local candidates and foreign ones. Competition among the domestic and foreign labor market is negligible.

Clearly, all companies are uniquely different, but they all have one thing in common: They are all operating in Finland. There is no question that local businesses have their policy on their own terms. Moreover, there are certain demands conditions that any Finnish enterprises want to see in potential candidates when they are interested in hiring foreign labor force. Such criteria contain the following set of characteristics: language proficiency (the level of knowledge varies), confidence in the future (an employer must make sure that there is minimal risk when considering an application for work), attitude to work and knowledge of the cultural aspects of a given country. The author also noted that Finnish employers are quite open and patient, “ready for a dialogue” with a potential candidate.

After the research sub-questions are observed are answered, the author is able to give an adequate answer to the main research question:

- ***What are the actual obstacles for Russian students when entering employment but the Finnish language?***

The answer begins with the fact that the author explains the reason why so much attention is around the Finnish language. An irrefutable fact is that most Finnish employers still believe that Finnish is very important in 2018. It is needed for communication, exchange of

information and explanation. Otherwise, it will cause complications. Even if a person simply works in a factory with machines, he or she may face certain obstacles, as the person must take part in society and cooperate with the personnel and people around. In the alternative, it might bring up such issues as misunderstanding, miscommunication and confusion.

The most interesting part of the answer contains information about the real obstacles, if excluding the language. The author of the thesis decided to include two obstacles that seemed to him the most critical.

The first one is based on the quote of the Finnish entrepreneur. It contains the following:

If I choose between two applicants who are absolutely equal in education and qualification and one of them is a foreigner, I would choose a local one in order to keep a job in Finland. (A Representative from the Finnish company.)

It is extremely important to say that this quote does not contain hints of discrimination, but a simple fact that the employer kindly decided to share. Proceeding from this obstacle, it is necessary to recognize the fact that any employer supports the politics and economy of the country he is operating in. There is nothing surprising in the fact that local employers pay more attention to those people with whom it is easier for them to cooperate.

On the other hand, this quotation suggests that for the most part there is no equality in the hiring of labor in Finland and there is a tendency in prioritizing between candidates.

The next one is a statement that the majority of Finnish companies and organizations do not understand or are inclined to overlook the situation that is occurring in the country. The situation implies a high unemployment rate in the country, the problem of ageing and a demographic decline, which causes dangerous difficulties with the workforce in Finland. This circumstance affects the country's economy and can lead to a catastrophe.

The thesis author sincerely believes that the answers to the established questions will benefit not only students but also domestic companies and will help their further cooperation.

6.2 Validity and Reliability

Silverman (2013, 290) defines validity and reliability as concepts which aim is to prove a truth status of a study. There are certain guarantees which a researcher might use to ensure that the study methods are reliable and conclusions are secure. Validity is equal to the word "truth". Validity matters more evaluate the accuracy of the empirical part of a study, its

methods of collecting information and interpretation of gathered data. Reliability means how much a qualitative research can be compared with already attracted by published examples.

To avoid doubts about the validity of the collected data, it is necessary to take into account the accuracy of the data collection. The author claims that he was incredibly attentive to the process of obtaining data in the empirical part of his research. As for the reliability of the in-depth interviews with the Finnish employers, it should be noted that the author's attitude to the interview participants did not affect the result. Also, the interview model was built in such a way that it excluded any inaccuracies that could occur during the collection of information. In addition, the people interviewed are professionals with a long history of work and practice. Thus, the experience and knowledge shared by the respondents have no reason to be insecure. Furthermore, the material for the study was collected both from primary and secondary sources. For this purpose, printed books, journals, articles and internet sources were applied to this thesis.

So, taking into account all the statements above, this thesis can be considered valid and reliable.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Like every author who conducts his research competently and wisely, the author kept notes and diaries with him, where possible proposals for further research were indicated, based on this thesis.

Since this study only identified and established the problem, this topic has enormous potential, the first suggestion and the most logical suggestion would be to conduct a more detailed and large-scale research to not only to back up this problem but to propose solutions to it.

Also, to continue research on the issue of hiring foreign forces, the author proposes a broader study of the issue, which sounds in a question form: Why should Finnish enterprises pay close attention to Russian students?

Moreover, the author is sure that it would be a great idea to learn more about Russian students and their reasons to settle down in Finland. The main research question could sound like: Why should a Russian student stay after graduation?

The last suggestion is linked to cultural aspects. The author came to the conclusion that this following topic can be opened and investigated in great detail and thoroughly: How come Russian and Finnish cultures might compensate each other?

6.4 Author's Recommendations

This sub-chapter was personally designed by the thesis author for international students' interests. All data and conclusions were formulated based on the personal experience of the researcher, data collected and analyzed from the theoretical part, as well as from the part of the qualitative interview. The recommendations include seven short and well-defined statements. More detailed explanation of recommendations ends the sub-chapter.

1. A Russian student must take into consideration studies about Finnish working environment, culture, language as well participate in projects and talent development events to become a competitive job applicant in Finland,
2. A medium or large size companies is the right choice, especially international oriented,
3. Demonstration and pointing your Finnish background is a student's strength,
4. Knowledge of Finnish is still crucial, especially in customer service,
5. A student should take into account all the political, economic and cultural aspects of the country where he or she is going to work,
6. Taxation is not always an issue, some companies know how to deal with it,
7. By some standards, it takes about a year to get inside a foreign cultural environment.

Explanation and Clarification

1. This point is clear enough. Learning certain subjects such as the Finnish language and cultural working environment is almost the most important idea. Thus, you emphasize your attitude towards the employer and the country.
2. The best choice for job search would be large or medium international companies. Companies that are less immobile and less prone to the working flow. Territorially, the most suitable places to start a career are the most populated areas of Finland. These cities are the capital, Tampere, Vantaa, etc.
3. Those students who want to get hired in Finnish companies should talk more and openly about their FINNISH background. Even if a student understands the language very little, but he or she took part in projects related to improving the regional economy, city or local situation and the student proved himself being directly in the Finnish environment - this is the best demonstration that the student

is very motivated. An important fact is that often Finnish employers themselves do not look at the achievements during students' studies or simply do not ask about them. For a student who is willing to get a job, it is necessary to prove himself and independently emphasize the fact of his own achievements and success gained during your studies, practice, and work and so on.

4. Knowledge of Finnish is still an advantage, especially in the service sector. It all depends on the department in which a student will work. If, for example, this is marketing or communication with a client, knowledge of Finnish should be fluent. If a student must work with a computer or technical equipment, high language skills are not required. Since the Finnish language is still an advantage, it will be reasonable to provide a certificate of acquisition of language skills to the employer. Otherwise, the ability to communicate in Finnish will be tested during the interview.
5. A student needs to take many aspects into account when looking for work in Finland. For instance, a large role in the country is played by the lack of manpower or narrow specialists. Such a factor can be decisive when applying for a job. Some companies are even willing to teach employees from scratch or do not require knowledge of Finnish at all.
6. With regard to the taxation, this is not always the main cause of failure, contrary to popular belief among foreigners. For many Finnish companies there is no significant difference between taxes on a local candidate and a foreign one.
7. A student's attention should be paid to the detail that orientation and adaptation in a new cultural or working environment is often a long process. Relying on the opinion of the employers who took part in the qualitative interview, the adaptation period takes from six months to a year.

7 SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis was to conduct a study based on real problems and challenges occurring in the field of hiring foreign labor in Finland. The main mission was to find out if there really was any problem, reason, and what real circumstances could be. Also, one of the main tasks of the author was the creation of recommendations for international students, the formation period of which took about six months.

Theoretically, the thesis announces such concepts as the immigration issue, cultural friction, cultural communications and factual experience of a case organization Ossi 2 Project, so a reader could get to know the Ossi 2's policy and actions. This was necessary to confirm the reliability of the empirical part and for the study itself as a whole.

Empirically, a qualitative research method answers a given research question and even gives a clearer picture.

The research was conducted, data has been collected, and the results are published. Answers to research questions and sub-questions are also received. Suggestions for the further research are presented. The thesis author ensured that the methods are reliable and conclusions are valid.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX: Basic questions for interview with the Finnish employers and company representatives. Additional questions omitted to keep answers secure.

1. What top thoughts come to your mind when talking about multicultural workforce?
2. Do you have many foreign employees in your company? Do you have any Russians? Why do you need these Russian employees?
3. In your company/organization, what kind of expectations do you have when you hire an employee in general?
4. In most cases, here in Finland, the language plays a significant role when an employee is hiring a foreigner. Do you think it is possible to get an employee without the Finnish language knowledge?
5. Would you hire a person, who speaks a little Finnish but is high educated?
6. What is your opinion about cultural aspects?
7. What subjects do you think Russian students have to take into consideration while they are studying? What would express you?
8. If a Russian student apply to a position, what do you really expect from the foreigner?
9. Do you have any law obstacles that make your foreign employment process more difficult?
10. If you pick between russian and finnish candidates, who would you choose?