CULTURALLY DIVERSIFIED WORKFORCE: A BENEFIT OR A CHALLENGE?

Case: Lahti University of Applied Sciences (LAMK)

Abstract

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Abstract

Globalization has made it almost impossible to not work in a somewhat culturally diverse workplace. Organizations must adapt to the changes and embrace the benefits and challenges it brings to a workplace. This thesis focuses on examining the key benefits organizations can gain from culturally diversifying their workforce. Additionally, the research investigates the challenges, ways to increase workforce diversity, and how to effectively manage a culturally diverse workforce. The case company used for this thesis was Lahti University of Applied Sciences. The author wanted to learn if people working and studying at LAMK felt culturally diversifying the workforce would be beneficial for the organization.

The thesis applies a deductive way of research and a qualitative data collection method was used. The thesis consists of two main parts, the theoretical and empirical part. Both primary and secondary sources were used in the data collection. Primary data was gathered from the interviews conducted by the author and the secondary data was collected from relevant sources, such as books and articles. The theoretical part of the thesis introduces matters such as, the benefits and challenges of workforce diversity, how to increase it, and guidelines for managing a diversified workforce. The empirical part mainly analyses the data gathered from the interviews and gives answers to the research questions.

The main finding of this research was that a culturally diversified workforce brings many benefits and challenges to an organization. Overall, the benefits exceed the challenges, because potential challenges can be overcome with efficient diversity management. Additionally, the research provides clear suggestions for increasing and managing workforce diversity. These suggestions can and should be applied to LAMK's future strategy.

Keywords

Cultural diversity, workforce diversity, higher education, diversity management, cultural synergy

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Research Background

Globalization has made it almost impossible to not work in a somewhat culturally diverse workplace. Whether it is the local market or a multinational company, diversity can be seen in the customers or staff of establishments. (Chin & Trimble 2015, xv.) This increase in diversity can be seen as either a benefit or a challenge for organizations (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 147). The most important fact is that organizations need to adapt and embrace the new aspects that cultural diversity brings to the workplace (Chin & Trimble 2015, xv).

Theoretically, the concepts of culture and diversity have been increasingly in the spotlight. Research shows that a culturally diverse workforce can potentially benefit organizations. Culturally diverse teams are proven to thrive when the task given requires innovativeness and views from multiple perspectives. On the other hand, in many cases culturally diverse teams can lead to misunderstandings and confusion. The key to effective multicultural teams is through management. Without appropriate diversity management, disadvantages tend to over shadow the potential benefits. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 99-109.)

The thesis was done in collaboration with Lahti University of Applied Sciences Ltd, which will be referred to from now on as LAMK. The author's high interest in the researched field combined with her supervisor's recommendation lead to the idea to introduce this project to the cooperating company. LAMK is a well-known university of applied sciences in Finland and has a student base that is becoming more and more diverse every year. On the other hand, this increase in diversity cannot be seen as well in the university's workforce. Because of the high amount of research that has been collected on the benefits of diversifying an organizations workforce, it is important to see if LAMK could potentially benefit from diversifying its staff.

1.2   Thesis Objectives, Research Questions and Limitations

The main objective of this thesis is to investigate the benefits and challenges of having a culturally diverse workforce, focusing especially on what the effects would be on LAMK. The second objective is to explore how to increase workplace diversity. The third objective is to find out the best ways to manage a culturally diversified workforce. The research will begin with investigating how culturally diverse LAMK's workforce really is. The author is a student at LAMK and has observed that the teaching staff ranks low on the scale of cultural diversity. This is why it is important to find out if an increase in diversity would be

beneficial for the university and its students. Because of the facts the author has observed during her studies, the chosen research question leads the reader towards the problem.

The main research question of this study is:

- What are the key benefits LAMK would gain from culturally diversifying its workforce?

To achieve the answer to the main question, the following sub questions are used:

- What would be the benefits and challenges of a culturally diverse LAMK?

- How to increase cultural diversity at LAMK?

- How to manage a culturally diversified workforce?

There are four major limitations in this research. First, the author has limited the term of cultural diversity to only include different countries/cultures of origin, thus excluding such criteria as gender, political view or age. Second, the author has limited the range of the interview sample. The research will focus on the opinions of supervisors, teachers and students of LAMK, therefore the support staff has been excluded from the study. Third, the study focuses on LAMK, thus the results may not comply to other universities of applied sciences. Last, the aim for the empirical part of the research was to learn about the opinions on three levels: managerial, employee and student. Due to the scheduling issues with management, only one perspective was gained from the managerial level. This shifted the focus of the research to mainly concern the opinions and observations of employees and students. Overall, these limitations increase the focus of the research, thus making the results more useful and relevant for the case company.

1.3   Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of literature on cultural diversity and diversity management. The first chapter of the thesis introduces the concept of cultural diversity and the benefits and challenges it brings to an organization's workforce. It also introduces the importance of cultural diversity in higher education institutes. Chapter 1 concludes with a systems approach aimed to help organizations increase the amount of workforce diversity. The second chapter focuses on management, highlighting the concept of diversity management. Moreover, the concept of cultural synergy is presented as a goal that companies should attempt to achieve. The theoretical part concludes with guidelines that can help organizations manage a diverse workforce. These guidelines give the key to organizations for unlocking the benefits of a diversified workforce.

1.4   Research Methodology and Data Collection

There are three different research approaches: deductive, inductive and abductive. In a deductive approach research is built on the concept that theory is the base of all knowledge. This information leads the researcher to understand the issue, thus being able to determine a hypothesis for the subject. Later in the empirical part of the study the researcher is able to test this hypothesis. An inductive approach focuses on building the theory from the collected data. Solely an inductive research is not that common, but if used the research is generally of quantitative nature. An abductive approach combines both deductive and inductive approaches. This gives the researcher flexibility in finding which approach is most suitable for each part of their study. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 21-23.) This thesis applies a deductive approach and focuses on existing theory.

Similarly, there are three different research methods: quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods. These methods help the researcher collect data to support the research question. Quantitative research is often characterized as generalizations of data. This method relies mostly on numbers and statistics. Quantitative research usually starts with a hypothesis that the researcher will aim to test. It is a fixed and objective method of research that typically uses different kinds of surveys or questionnaires to gather data from the sample. On the other hand, qualitative methods tend to focus on people's behavior and their interactions with each other in different situations. This method is a more flexible and personal way of research, which aims to find solutions and outcomes after analyzing the data and generally not including a hypothesis in the beginning. (Silverman 2011, 4-7.) A mixed-method technique includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects to the study (Ayiro 2012, 489). There is no right or wrong method to use, it all depends on your research question and what you are trying to uncover (Silverman 2011, 7). This thesis applies a qualitative method of research, because the author wanted to learn and analyze the genuine opinions and reactions of the interviewees.

Data can be gathered by using two kinds of sources: primary and secondary. Primary data is new information that the researcher collects for the study. This data can be gathered from e.g. interviews or observations that the researcher performs with participants. Secondary data is gathered from already existing information. This can be textual data e.g. books and stories or visual data e.g. video broadcasts or films. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 77-78.) The primary data collected in this thesis is from interviews the author has conducted and the secondary data is gathered from literature sources such as books and articles.

The research approach, research method, and data collection methods used in this thesis are shown below in Figure 1.
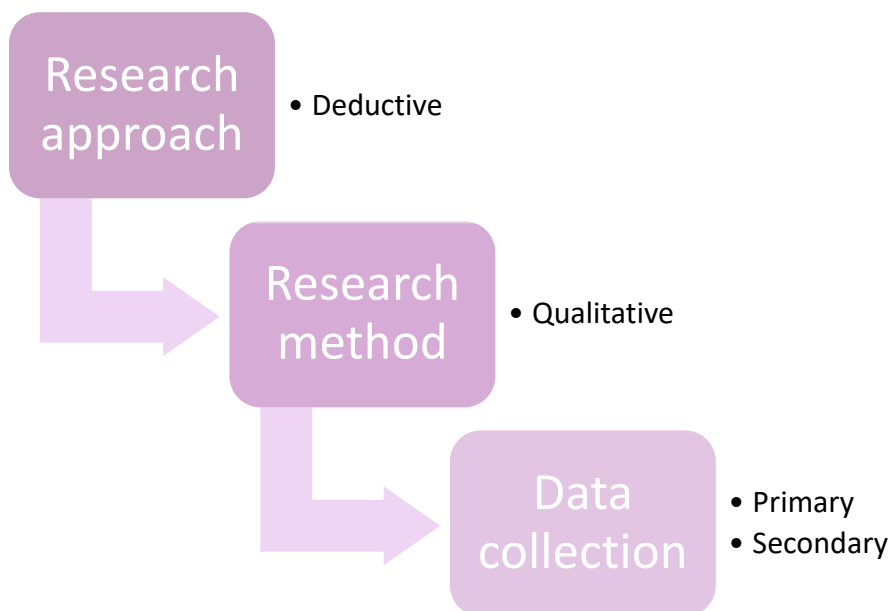
Figure 1 Research Methodology and Data Collection

1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis begins with the introduction, which sets the scene for the thesis. The body of this thesis is divided into two parts; the theoretical part and the empirical part. The theoretical part consists of two main chapters that are composed of the concepts of cultural diversity and diversity management. Following the theoretical part the author presents the case company used for the research. Next, is the empirical part, which describes the research conducted for this thesis and the analyzation of the collected data. The empirical part of the thesis concludes with the findings of the research and the validity and reliability is assessed. The thesis closes with a brief summary of the completed project. The structure of the thesis is presented below in Figure 2.

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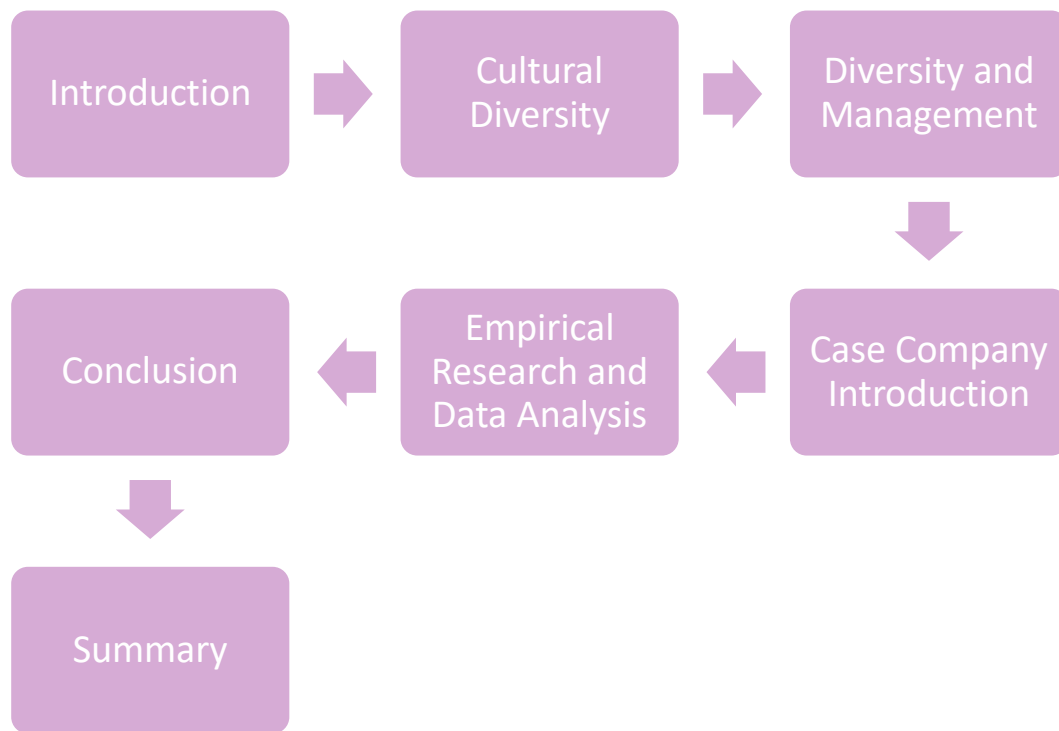
Figure 2 Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 is the introduction of the thesis. In this chapter the author introduces the background for the chosen research, explains how it was constructed and briefly outlines the case company used for this research. The author presents the research questions of the thesis and states the limitations of the research. In addition, the research approach and data collection methods are also discussed and reasons for the chosen methods are explained.

Chapter 2 is the first part of the theory used in this thesis. This chapter starts by explaining the concept of cultural diversity and later discusses matters such as culturally diverse groups and the relationship between cultural diversity and higher education. Following, the author lists the main benefits and challenges related to a culturally diverse workforce. The chapter ends with a systems approach for increasing workforce diversity in organizations.

Chapter 3 is the second part of the theoretical side of this thesis. This chapter starts with explaining management in general and then moves on to the concept of diversity management. Following, the author explains the concept of cultural synergy as a future goal for organizations. The chapter concludes with presented guidelines that organizations should follow when managing a diverse workforce.

Chapter 4 concerns the case company used for this research. The author will continue to explain the case company mentioned in Chapter 1, in more detail.

Chapter 5 discusses how the empirical research was composed and introduces the chosen data collection method in more detail. Later in the chapter all of the data gathered from the interviews is analyzed and compared with the theory explained in Chapter 2 and 3.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the thesis. In this part the author gives answers to the research questions and evaluates the reliability and validity of the research. The author concludes the chapter by giving suggestions for further research.

Chapter 7 summarizes the entire thesis. The author explains the main topics and recaps the findings and recommendations. This chapter closes the thesis.

2   CULTURAL DIVERSITY

2.1   What is Culture?

Culture is an extremely complex concept that has many varying definitions. Hellemans defines the term as: "The sum of the collective representations associated with a particular society" (Hellemans 2017, 18). In general, culture is something that makes us the people we are. It is constructed from e.g. manners, morals, and laws that form a certain social group. Our cultural heritage shapes our beliefs and behavior and often unconsciously builds our view of the world. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 18-19, 35.)

Cultural orientation forms the way people act. It consists of the values, attitudes and behaviors of a certain social group. First, values define what is important to a person or group. Our values express beliefs such as our sense of right and wrong or what is preferred or desired. These values can be conscious or unconscious. Second, our attitudes are formed from our values. These attitudes incline us to act or react to something the way we do. Attitudes are mostly formed between a person and an object. Third, behavior is the way a person acts towards something. Our behaviors are shaped by our attitudes regarding something. These three concepts can be presented as a circle, that shows the importance of their connection with culture. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 19-20.) The circle is illustrated in Figure 3 below.
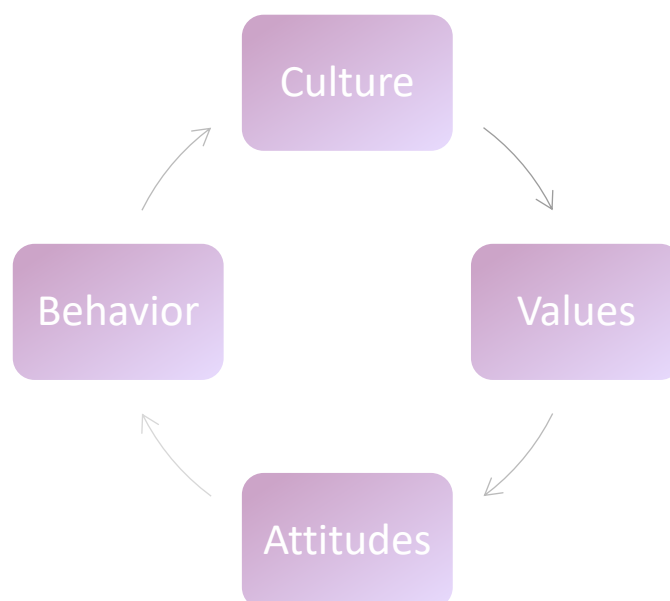

Figure 3 Cultural Orientation (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 19)

Culture is so ingrown in humans that most are unaware of the cultural traits that make us behave the way we do. These traits are mostly unconscious before we leave our group or country. After socializing with people from other cultures we begin to realize how special our own culture is and how oblivious we have been of the way we behave. The more we interact with people from different cultures the more we learn about ourselves. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 35.)

2.2 Concept of Cultural Diversity

"Cultural diversity is the variety of human societies or cultures in a specific region, or in the world as a whole" (Kerwin 2010, vii). Mor Barak divides her definitions of cultural diversity into three categories: narrow category-based, broad category-based and the ones based on a conceptual rule. The most significant differences between these distinctions is the broadness that the definition covers. Narrow category-based definitions are usually limited to a specific study. As an example this study narrows the definition of cultural diversity to only cover cultural background. Broad category-based definitions focus on all aspects of diversity that define people, such as country of origin, occupation, sexual orientation and age. Definitions based on a conceptual rule focus mostly on the theoretical definition of the term. (Mor Barak 2005 in Özbilgin, Tatli & Jonsen 2015, 3.)

Some cultural differences can be easily noticed for example language and customs. On the other hand other traits such as ones concerning morality or environment are often more difficult to see. All of these differences make cultural diversity such a vital part of society. Kerwin 2010, vii.) Especially, in this globalized world where organizations have shifted from focusing on the legal benefits of having a diversified staff to realizing it is great for business (Thomas & Ely 2002, 34). When speaking about organizations, cultural diversity can also be referred to as multiculturalism (Kerwin 2010, vii).

2.3 Multicultural Groups

Globalization has had a big effect on the world and thus countries are more connected than ever. Immigration continues to increase and more people chose to broaden their perspectives and work abroad. The increase of domestic multiculturalism is becoming more and more visible. Nowadays, you can meet people with different cultural backgrounds when for example going to a café or hopping on a train. This is the most significant reason organizations cannot ignore the importance of multiculturalism. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 129.)

The fundamental structure of organizations is made up of different groups. These groups can be temporary or permanent and consist of e.g. different departments, teams, and committees. The members of these groups can differ from each other in many ways. Members can have, for example, different cultural views or different kind of knowledge of the assigned task. These differences can affect the teams productivity. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 131-132.)

When focusing just on cultural differences, groups can be divided into four categories: homogenous groups, token groups, bicultural groups, and multicultural groups. First, homogenous groups are such groups where all members come from the same kind of cultural background. In these types of groups members usually have similar views and ideas as each other. A good example of a homogenous group would be an all-female Swedish team of sales representatives. Second, token groups are groups whereby one member comes from a different cultural background e.g. a Finnish attorney in a group of Danish lawyers. Nowadays, organizations focus more on benefitting from the group's token member. These members can usually bring new perspectives and ideas to the task at hand. Third, bicultural groups mean groups that consist of members from two different cultures. These groups work best if the cultures are represented evenly for example a fifty-fifty collaboration amongst Spanish and Italian managers. If bicultural groups have an uneven amount of representatives from either culture, the culture with more members is prone to control the group. Last, multicultural groups have members coming from three or more cultural backgrounds, for example, United Nations agencies. Nowadays, multicultural groups can be globally distanced meaning members hold meetings electronically from all over the globe. These groups have become a big asset for organizations looking for different perspectives in projects and work best if all of the members' cultures are acknowledged. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 132-133.) Figure 4 presents the different types of groups.

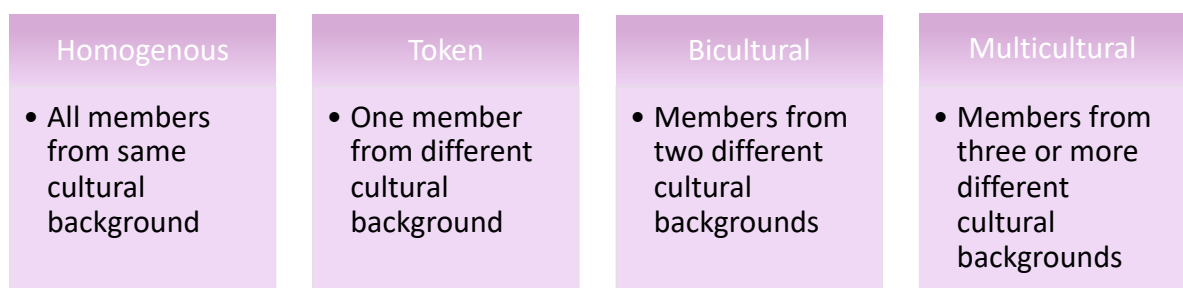| Homogenous	Token	Bicultural	Multicultural
• All members from same cultural background	• One member from different cultural background	• Members from two different cultural backgrounds	• Members from three or more different cultural backgrounds

Figure 4 Multicultural Groups

2.4 Cultural Diversity in Higher Education

Higher education students become more diverse every passing year and organizations seek to find future employees that can succeed in diverse workplaces (Vos, Çelik & Vries 2016, 254). Multicultural education has been shown to be an important part of higher education and should be increased to reflect the growth of globalization. Multicultural education should focus on the different needs and understandings of different cultures. Thus, intercepting the students and teachers perceptions towards diversity becoming biased. Increasing the amount of faculty diversity in higher education expands the amount of insight about different cultures. Moreover, with a diverse workforce more can be learned about cultures and specific traits can be acknowledged and shared. Research shows that diverse students of higher education institutes value seeing and engaging with culturally diverse teachers, especially if they are both from the same culture. (Abdul-Raheem 2016, 53-54.) If higher education institutions have not yet taken advantage of the diversity of their workforce or have not started investing in diversity, it is high time to start the process, because multiculturalism is clearly the future driver of higher education (Vos et al. 2016, 255; Lumby & Foskett 2016, 4).

2.5 Benefits of Cultural Diversity

Culturally diversifying an organization's workforce has been proven to be beneficial in most cases. These benefits concern all aspects of the organization and vary from the organizational level to the employee level. In this part the author will explain the key benefits that cultural diversity brings to an organization. The benefits have been divided into three categories: Organizational benefits, project benefits, and employee benefits.

Organizational benefits

These are benefits that mostly help the business side of an organization. It improves the image of the organization as an employer. The more diverse an organization's workforce is, the more people from different backgrounds want to be a part of it. It adds a certain trust to potential employees and partners, which creates a larger pool of candidates that the organization can choose from. Thus, helping the organization gain maximum potential from its workforce. (Leopold & Harris 2009, 129-132.) Workforce diversity also suggests that the organization is socially responsible and aims to offer equal opportunities regardless of cultural background. Nowadays, these moral obligations have become a significant reason for diversifying an organization's workforce. (Hofhuis, Zee & Otten 2013, 180.) Moreover, with a diverse workforce organizations can learn beneficial facts about different markets. By taking advantage of all the represented cultures of an organization and

implementing the advantages they suggest, an organization can potentially increase interest towards their products and services. This can lead to significant growth for organizations of all types. (Leopold & Harris 2009, 129-132.)

Project benefits

These are benefits that concern the team and the task at hand, whether it is a new marketing plan or a market entry strategy. As already noted in the introduction the most significant advantage of culturally diverse teams is when the task needs new innovative ideas. The various outlooks that diverse teams have, have increased the creativeness in projects. (Galinsky, Todd, Homan, Phillips, Apfelbaum, Sasaki, Richeson, Olayon & Maddux 2015, 742.) Therefore, diverse teams are able to think outside the box and this often helps the teams avoid groupthink (Hofhuis et al. 2013, 180). Moreover, because of the multiple perspectives of a diverse workforce, employees are more open to new ideas when working on a project. Team members learn to work better together and to thrive from each other's differences. This openness and increase in different views can improve overall problem-solving skills within a team. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 102-104.)

Overall, a diverse workforce helps groups create manifold ideas and results than homogenous teams. The potential in a diverse workforce can be enormous, it is just up to the organization to choose to take advantage of it. (Leopold & Harris 2009, 132.)

Employee benefits

This includes the benefits that employees gain from a culturally diverse workforce. It can increase the flexibility within a workplace. This is mostly because of the changes that companies must make to fulfill the needs of a diverse employee base. These changes include for example flexible work schedules because of religious beliefs of employees or possible parental obligations. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 102.)

2.6   Challenges of Cultural Diversity

As mentioned before, culture is generally hidden, but when it unveils itself it is often seen as problematic. People see foreign cultural traits as something unusual or even as something wrong. When speaking from an organizational perspective cultural diversity is hardly ever thought of as beneficial. A survey measuring the opinions of international executives revealed that most managers could only describe disadvantages of a culturally diversified workforce. Less than a third could think of even one advantage it would bring to an organization. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 101.) The question is why are cultural differences seen

in such a negative way. In this part the author will go through the most common challenges organizations face, when dealing with a culturally diverse workforce.

First, diversity can cause dislike and mistrust in a workplace. People usually tend to gravitate towards people of the same cultural background. This is mostly biological and can be seen for example during lunch breaks. The same nationalities form groups and speak in their native language. This can be easily misinterpreted as dislike of other coworkers, which can lead to mistrust within a workforce. Second, stereotypes can be useful tools when interacting with other cultures, but more commonly they tend to cause problems. People use stereotypes unconsciously or consciously to assess their colleagues potential skills. For example associates from higher-status countries such as Germany or America are approached first and workers from lower-status countries such as Morocco or India are usually approached last. These stereotypes can cause tension between colleagues, make people feel unvalued, and at the worst organizations can lose employees with exceptional skills. Third, cultural diversity can cause communication problems. The working language of a group is usually not the native language of all members. When workers language level is unequal, communication can become slower and may lead to difficulties. These difficulties include different kinds of errors and misunderstandings, such as different interpretations of certain words. Last, the stress levels of culturally diverse groups are often significantly higher than in homogenous groups. This is mostly caused by the lack of trust within the group and by the continuous communicational issues. Another important matter that causes stress in diverse groups is the expectation of politeness. Politeness is something that should be a part of every group, but when over exaggerated it becomes harmful for the environment. This, for example, decreases productivity because members' feelings are seen as more important than the project at hand. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 135-137.)

Overall, cultural diversity can be challenging for organizations and has been shown to decrease effectiveness (Hofhuis et al. 2013, 181). Studies show that culturally diverse work groups need more time to establish consistency and unity. If culturally diverse teams are not managed well, these challenges can exceed the potential benefits. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 137.)

2.7   Increasing Workforce Diversity

Organizations all around the world have increased their focus on cultural diversity and are attempting to diversify their workforce. There are many drivers for increasing the amount of cultural diversity in organizations. (O'Brien, Scheffer, Nes & Lee 2015, 1.) As mentioned before diversity can increase for example problem-solving skills and lead to more creative

ideas (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 102). These are benefits related mostly to the business side of an organization, but social and ethical motivators can also lead organizations to diversify their workforce. Generally, workforce diversity has grown during the last years. However, creating a diversified workforce can be a slow process and require a large amount of resources and patience from an organization. (O'Brien et al. 2015, 1-2.)

Based on a systems approach to the problem of low workforce diversity, three main methods can be used to regulate workforce diversity in the long-term. These methods can then be compared to the overall employee turnover rate of an organization. First, applicant diversity which means the amount of potential employees applying for work positions in the organization. This is an important factor in increasing workforce diversity, because if there are no diverse candidates applying for job positions, it is impossible to employ diverse workers. There are a few steps organizations can take to ensure diverse candidates are reached in the application stage. Organizations must create new recruiting approaches to appeal to a diverse group for example by finding new channels for job advertisements. Organizations must also focus on changing policies that might interfere with for example the religious views or scheduling issues applicants might have. These can be changed simply by offering flexible schedules and opportunities for part-time work. Additionally, pipelining through existing employees has also been shown to be an effective way of increasing applicant diversity. (O'Brien et al. 2015, 9.)

Second, appointment bias, which concerns the amount of diverse applicants that are selected for job positions. Usually in low diversity organizations not enough diverse applicants are selected. Appointment bias is usually caused by many factors that can be related to individual, organizational and communal levels. Organizations can decrease the amount of appointment bias through instructing recruiters and management on the benefits a diversified workforce brings. They should underline the importance of diversity through coaching and practices to make sure employees' values are aligned with the organizations' values. It is also important for the organization to make sure the short-list of applicants is supported by the attempt to increase diversity. Interpreting the reasons for appointment bias is vital for creating a resolution for it. (O'Brien et al. 2015, 9-10.)

Third, departure bias, which concerns the problem of diverse employees leaving the organization shortly after being employed. Actions can be taken if departure bias is a problem in organizations. Organizations must identify and tackle the causes of it and prepare incentives that best fit their company. Mentoring and education programs for culturally diverse employees can be useful tools for decreasing the amount of departure bias. Moreover, organizations must work towards creating an inclusive workplace and make sure

diverse employees feel accepted, needed, and welcome in the organization. The most important factors to successfully create workforce change is to try to minimize the amount of appointment and departure bias and ensure applicant diversity. There can be many factors effecting the causes of low diversity and it can take time for organizations to define the reasons. (O'Brien et al. 2015, 9-10.)

The key idea of diversifying a workforce relies on the amount of personnel departing the company and the amount employed. This rate determines the highest speed the organization can diversify its workforce. Usually, only a small amount of change is seen in the amount of departure and appointment in organizations every year. This leads to a very slow process of increasing diversity, even if harmful biases are non-existent. However, if faced with a phase of growth, organizations can fast increase the development of workforce diversity. This model shows how workforce diversity can be increased in the long run. It can take an extensive amount of time, but is usually useful for organizations. (O'Brien et al. 2015, 11-12.)

Overall, to be able to succeed in increasing diversity, organizations need to include it in their organizational goals and control the progress. Additionally, the importance of diversity must be stated clearly within the organization and acts for promoting it should be encouraged. When the organization as a whole considers diversity as a strength, goals can be met and diversity can become a part of the organizations future. (Chin & Trimble 2015, 268.)

3 DIVERSITY AND MANAGEMENT

3.1 What is Management?

Management is a fundamental part of an organization. The different management practices organizations choose to use define the profitability and success of an organization. Companies can have the same client and customer base, same environment and the same materials to work with, but success is gained with the right managerial approaches. Mary Parker (1984) describes the concept of management as: "the art of getting things done through others". This, although being a clear definition, does not describe the great complexity of the concept. (Rao & Kumar 2010, 2-3.)

The main roles of management are planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling the workforce. First, managers plan their actions and strategies according to the organizations mission. Planning in a managerial context means determining key goals before the start of a project. These goals help guide the workforce towards the wanted outcomes. Second, managers are in charge of organizing the process that leads to reaching their goals. This means, for example, assigning tasks, possible management assistants, and finding resources. This coordination plays a crucial part in the overall process of management. To be able to reach the set goals the project must be well organized. Of course, changes can and should be made later according to developments but an overall structure needs to be clear from the beginning. Third, staffing which is an important part of management, because no manager can thrive without a good team beside them. Human resources is mostly involved in staffing the right employees for a project. To recruit successfully, they need to know the set goals and what sort of talent is required for the task at hand. After defining the ideal candidates, the group can be formed and the project started. Fourth, the stage of management for implementing the plan is called directing. This is the part where the manager must lead the employees to see results. It has been shown that teams perform better when the leader motivates and takes the employees into concern. Efficient directing is needed for the team to function as best as possible. Last, the project must be constantly checked to ensure goals will be met, this stage is called controlling. It is important for managers to keep track of the groups work, because results can be useless without guidance to reach the set goals. (Rao & Kumar 2010, 6-8.) The main roles of management are shown below in Figure 5.

Planning   Organizing   Staffing   Directing   Controlling

Figure 5 Roles of Management

Management happens on all levels of an organization. This includes top level, middle level and lower level management. All levels are important, but for example tasks differ. Top level management is in charge of the management of the organization as whole. This means their responsibilities include for example keeping track of the overall performance of the organization and defining organizational goals and strategies. Top level management responsibilities also include leading middle level managers and encouraging them to perform better. Middle level managers are in charge of the various departments in the organization, for example the human resource and marketing departments. Middle level managers are mostly accountable for the effectiveness and performance of their own departments. Moreover, they are responsible of ensuring lower level management stays motivated and on track with their projects. Lower level management focuses on the coordination of employees. They mostly supervise that employees do the asked work and report to higher level management. This is why lower level managers are often called by the term supervisors. (Rao & Kumar 2010, 13.)

Overall, management is vital for a company to reach its mission. Different levels of management must communicate and gain from each other's resources in order for the organization to succeed. Additionally, embracing and learning about international management approaches has become especially important and management should adopt to the new aspects internationalization brings. (Rao & Kumar 2010, 3, 13-15.)

3.2   Diversity Management

Nowadays managers who know how to deal with people from different cultures are valuable for companies. Because of the increasing amount of internationalization within organizations, it is important to educate oneself about the new views diversity brings to

management. The aim of diversity management is to educate personnel about the different customs and etiquettes of different cultures. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 13-14.) Thus, helping managers maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges of a diversified workforce (Galinsky et al. 2015, 744).

It has been shown that multicultural groups often need more time and guidance to reach a certain goal in a project. Though, when accomplished the results can be more innovative and valuable than with a homogenous group. To work productively, multicultural groups need to focus on leveraging the benefits of diversity at the right time. They must recognize the situations where diversity can enrich their ideas and know when it may weaken their performance. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 142-144.)

3.3   Cultural Synergy

There are a few ways managers tend to acknowledge cultural diversity in an organization. The way cultural diversity is distinguished outlines the way diversity should be managed. One of the most common ways of dealing with a culturally diverse workforce is the parochial way. In this approach cultural differences are ignored and managers believe that there is only one right way to manage and it is their way. Another common approach is an ethnocentric way of thinking, which means managers acknowledge cultural differences, but see them only as problematic for the organization. They feel that their way of leading is the best way. Both of these approaches choose to minimize the effects of diversity, thus neglecting the benefits it can bring to the organization. The approach most relevant and useful nowadays, is the synergistic way of seeing diversity. Managers acknowledge that cultural diversity brings both benefits and challenges to an organization. They feel that methods are different, but neither is better than the other. In a synergistic approach managers believe that a combination of all cultures creates the best results and possible challenges are minimized in order to maximize full potential. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 107-109.)

There are three steps organizations must take to create cultural synergy: describing the situation from every culture's standpoint, culturally interpreting the situation, and creating culturally innovative solutions. First, people from different cultures have different perspectives and views about situations and when these views collide, problems may arise. Managers must acknowledge problems and consider them from all of the cultures standpoints, even though they might not see a problem from their own cultural viewpoint. This means reversing the roles in the situation and seeing the issue from the employees point of view. In this step managers should only focus on the different views and analysis of the situation should be avoided. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 110-117.)

Second, managers must interpret the problem from the other culture's point of view. They need to understand why members from different cultures feel and act the way they do. It is important to acknowledge any historical or cultural norms that might affect the way other people interpret situations. After acknowledging these differences managers should compare their own culture's assumptions to the other ones involved. Third, after being able to understand the underlying reasons for the way people act and interpret situations, managers can leverage these skills to enhance productivity. New culturally innovative solutions should be made to suit all cultures involved. This way the organization can be able to benefit from the advantages of cultural diversity and be able to respond to the challenges that might arise. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 110-117.)

3.4   Guidelines for Managing Diversity

There are some guidelines managers can rely on to guarantee efficient working in diverse work groups. The author has listed the most important ones below.

Task-Related Selection

Superiors should assign groups based on the project. When the task needs quick solutions that require fluent communication, groups should be homogenous. This is also a good solution when results are wanted that require minimum effort from management. When a large span of innovative ideas are needed, culturally diverse groups are the most beneficial for the project. This selection ensures the work group functions in a way that is most beneficial for the organization. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 145.)

Recognizing Differences

The main idea of this guideline is to avoid cultural blindness. It is important that people should be regarded as individuals, thus should not be judged by their cultural background. This belief that attention to cultural differences is insulting and the idea that superiors should avoid seeing certain qualities of employees, such as race or cultural background should be forgotten. Managers should not be afraid of being perceived as racist or narrow-minded, because this kind of culturally blind approach to management can lead to misunderstandings and negative team spirit. Eventually, the fact that people from different cultures have different views and ways of behaving and rather than ignoring or diminishing them, these perspectives should be taken advantage of. To successfully manage a culturally diverse workforce differences should be acknowledged, but at the same time managers should focus on eliminating any hidden prejudices. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 101.)

To ensure productivity, culturally diverse groups should follow the steps shown in Figure 6.
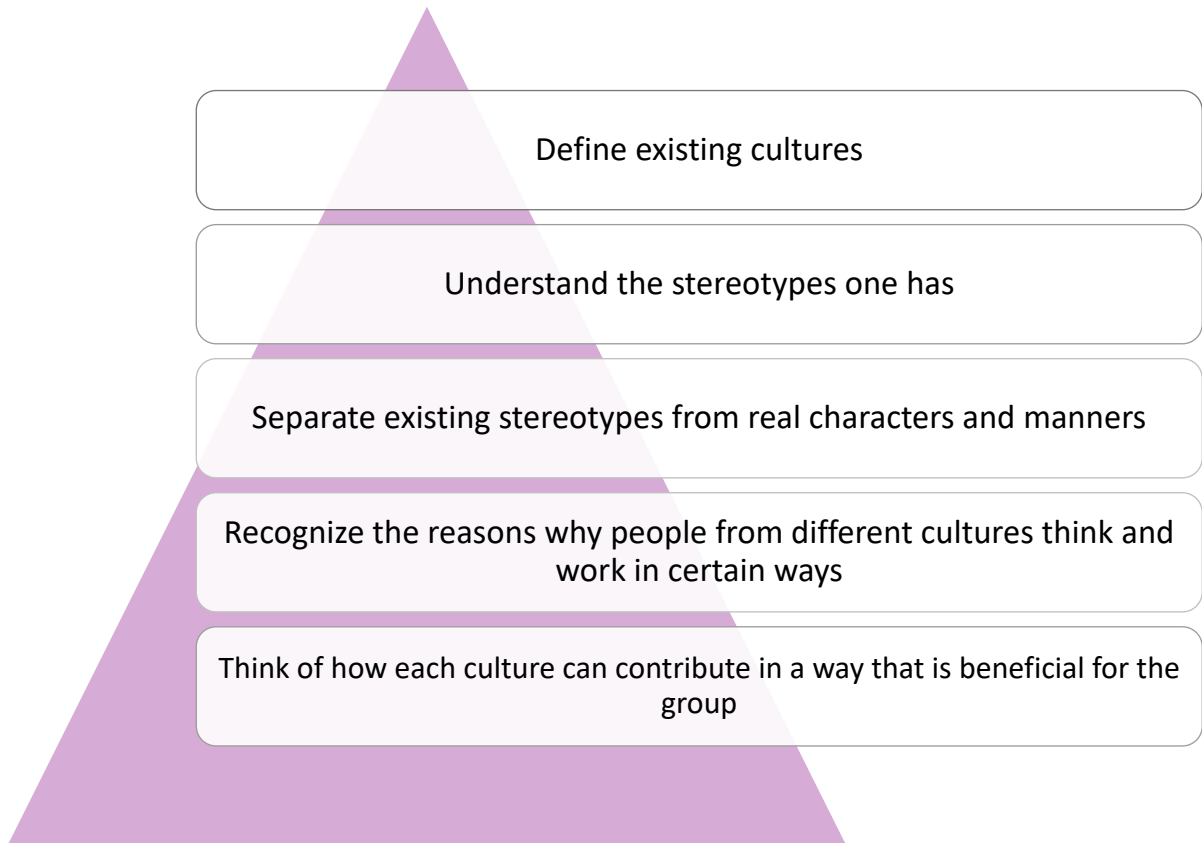
Define existing cultures

Understand the stereotypes one has

Separate existing stereotypes from real characters and manners

Recognize the reasons why people from different cultures think and work in certain ways

Think of how each culture can contribute in a way that is beneficial for the group

Figure 6 Steps for Productive Teamwork

Establishing Goals

Studies show that multicultural groups often have problems finding coherent results to the problem at hand. This can be avoided with the right kind of management approach. From the start of a project, managers should help the workers establish a main goal for the project. When clear goals are set, it is easier for the group to stay on track and misunderstandings can be avoided. To maximize productivity, goals should be broadly outlined and should involve a good amount of cooperation. This can minimize any prejudices members might have and increase respect within a work group. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 145-146.)

Balancing Power

To ensure multicultural work groups are productive, managers should pay attention to equal participation of members. Any sort of cultural domination should be diminished beginning from the start of a project. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 146.) It is also important to equalize the manager-employee relationship. Leaders of diversified workforces should emphasize employee collaboration, thus exerting authority. In many cases this can be the key to unleashing the benefits of diversity. Surprisingly, increasing competition in diverse workgroups has also been shown to be an effective way to make sure goals are met. Managers of diversified workforces should try to use competition as a tool whenever possible. This can result in a significant increase in cohesion and innovativeness within a group. (Chin & Trimble 2015, 268.)

Creating Respect

For a culturally diverse workplace to run most efficiently, a feeling of community should be present (Chin & Trimble 2015, 268). Employees should respect each other and avoid ethnocentric thoughts (Lozano & Escrich 2016, 680). Each work group in the organization should be equally valued and one's own group should not be believed to be the best one. Collaboration, uniformity, and mutual goals between work groups can reduce prejudices, thus maximizing workplace image and productivity. Supervisors can support this by creating groups of similar status members and making sure all members know about each other's previous achievements and talents. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 146.)

Feedback

Diversified workgroups can have problems finding mutual views or making equally satisfying decisions. This is mostly because of the many perspectives and opinions diversity brings to a group. Managers can easily avoid these challenges by providing members with positive feedback, both on a personal and group level. Positive feedback is an effective way to create cohesion, motivate workers, and help the group trust their decisions. Managers should make an effort to include feedback into the groups process right from the start. This way the group will stay focused and use its full potential the entire span of the project. (Adler & Gundersen 2008, 146-147.)

Diversity Training

Additionally, it is important for an organization's workforce to understand the benefits that cultural diversity brings to the workplace. Diversity training has been shown to be an effective way for organizations to capitalize from diversity. Efficient training of employees and

especially managers can help increase for example unity within an organization. (Lozano & Escrich 2016, 692.)

There are many approaches to diversity training, such as perspective taking, goal setting, and stereotype discrediting. The perspective taking approach utilizes the idea of participants viewing the world from the underrepresented groups perspective. This method is an effective way of creating cohesion within a workplace and limiting the amount of prejudices, through experiences from another point of view. The goal setting approach relies on setting diversity-related goals for the organization and its workforce. When employees get to be involved in setting these goals, they are generally more motivated to reach and follow them. This is an effective way of diversity training when a vast amount of resources are not available. Stereotype discrediting aims to actively alter stereotypes people have about certain groups. This does not need a lot of resources and can be done individually or in small groups. However, research shows that this may not be the most efficient way of diversity training in the long run, because stereotypes can be imbedded deep within and can be hard to modify. Overall, diversity training has been proven most successful when matters concern diversity issues in a general way. If the training concentrates on a more specific negatively branded group, results can vary significantly. (Lindsey, King, Hebl & Levine 2014, 606-608.)

4   CASE COMPANY INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the introduction, LAMK is the case company used for this thesis. LAMK is a well-known higher education institute located in Lahti, Finland. LAMK offers students bachelor's and master's education in design, business and hospitality, social and health care, and technology. Their focus is to equip students with real work life knowledge, to ensure students meet the requirements of working life. LAMK has approximately 5,000 students and around 400 employees working at the company at the moment. (LAMK Ltd 2019a.) In 2018 LAMK had altogether 12 foreign employees working at the organization. Most of them were employees working in numerous projects and four were working as teachers. (Järvinen 2019.) Figure 7 illustrates the amount of Finnish employees compared to the amount of foreign employees at LAMK.

Employees 2018

Foreign 3 %

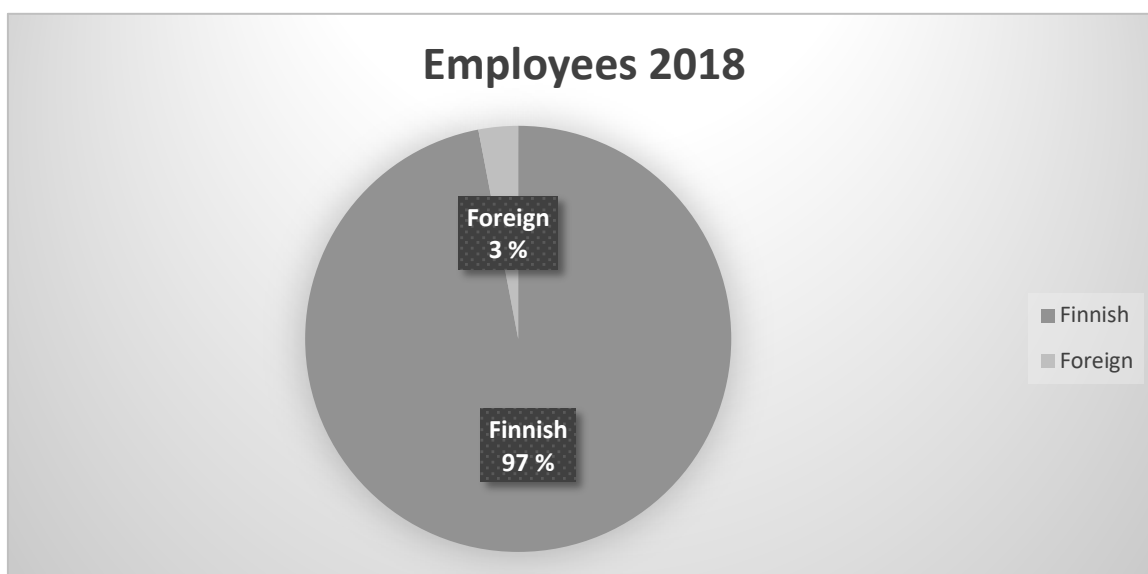Finnish 97 %

■ Finnish
■ Foreign

Figure 7 Employee Division at LAMK

In 2015 LAMK founded a corporate group with Lappeenranta University of Technology and Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, called LUT Group (LAMK Ltd 2019d). All institutions are autonomous, but Lappeenranta University of Technology serves as the parent company. The group wishes to strengthen one another through collaboration and aims to emphasize international student recruitment and education export, creating new education

paths, and impacting industries. (LAMK Ltd 2019c.) LAMK's future vision is stated as: "Insightful, exploratory and influential LAMK 2020". Their objective is to improve the services, experience, attractiveness, and wellbeing of the region by using for example education and research and development as tools. To ensure goals are reached LAMK is focusing especially on the combination of strategic management and quality work, in daily functions. (Lahti University of Applied Sciences 2018, 6.)

LAMK offers education paths in English and encourages students to participate in their student exchange programs. At the moment LAMK has 300 foreign degree students and 200 exchange students, increasing the amount of internationalization in the institution. Additionally, LAMK offers international intensive programs at partner institutions, which give the possibility for students and staff to gain international experience without having to stay abroad for a longer amount of time. Students also have the possibility to increase their cultural and language skills by tutoring an international student. (LAMK Ltd 2019b.)

5   EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter the author will introduce and explain the empirical research conducted for the thesis. The aim of this research was to gather opinions about the benefits and challenges of a culturally diverse workforce. As mentioned in the introduction a qualitative approach was used in the data collection for this research. The chapter begins with the introduction of the chosen research and data collection methods. Later, the author proceeds to analyze the results and opinions from the collected data.

5.1   Formulation of Empirical Research and Data Collection

As explained earlier qualitative research focuses more on the behavior and feelings of people in different situations. It is an efficient way for the researcher to gain personal solutions and outcomes to the problem at hand. (Silverman 2011, 4-7.) Interviews are a common way of collecting qualitative data. There are three main types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and open-ended. Structured interviews follow a certain script that the interviewer has prepared in advance. This script follows a clear order and special attention has been paid to the phrasing of each question. Thus, limiting the amount of flexibility in the interviews. Structured interviews are an effective way of gathering information about specific situations or themes. Questions are often related to e.g. how certain events took place or who were involved. Semi-structured interviews are based on a pre-determined plan of themes and problems the interviewer wants to discuss. Questions are often also prepared in advance, but the interviewer is able to modify them based on the interviewees opinions and interests. This gives the interviewer flexibility and enables the researcher to gain new and richer perspectives on the subject. Open-ended interviews often resemble more of a conversation. The interviewer can prepare some topics they want to discuss, but overall the interview relies on the opinions and thoughts the interviewee has. This type of interviewing is most useful when the researcher aims to gain a vast amount of data on the subject from the participants point of view. The downside of open-ended interviewing is that it is not organized and the interviewees' opinions can vary a lot, which makes analyzing the results more difficult. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 80-83.)

The data collection method used for this research was interviewing and more specifically semi-structured interviews were used. The author felt this was the best way to learn the genuine opinions participants have about the subject, while still being able to keep the interview to some extent systematic. Interview questions were outlined beforehand, but were modified to comply with the interviewees' answers. The interviews consisted of approximately eight questions, depending on the observations of the interviewee. The author

aimed to keep the questions as simple and neutral as possible, to avoid any transference from the author's side. The interview questions varied between the interviewees, depending on their relationship with LAMK. Employees were asked more specific questions related to increasing workforce diversity and managing a diverse workforce, while students' questions focused more on how a culturally diverse workforce would have an effect on their learning. Overall, all questions were related to workforce diversity and LAMK and aimed to cover all parts of the theory collected for this thesis. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 1 and 2.

The aim of this research was to learn about the opinions concerning a culturally diverse workforce from three different levels: managerial, employee and student. The author felt that the data collected in this way would be richer and more useful for the case company. The target group of interviewees was selected somewhat randomly, keeping in mind the division of gender and cultural background. Overall, 12 individuals were able to participate in the study: 1 manager, 5 employees, and 6 students. As mentioned in the introduction, because of scheduling difficulties only one person was able to participate from the managerial level. Thus, giving the need to limit the research to concentrate more on the employee and student level. The gender division of interviewees was equal, with half being female and half male. The main criteria for the selection of participants was their relationship with LAMK. The length of their stay at the case company varied from two months to 17 years. Interviews were all conducted face-to-face, because the author felt this was the best way to gain genuine opinions and reactions of interviewees. The language used in the interviews was English. At the start of each interview the author asked if the interviewee felt comfortable answering the questions in English. All interviewees felt they could perform the interview in English, showing that interviewees are able to function in an international environment, using English as the main language. Moreover, all interviews were recorded, to ensure all opinions were taken into account in the analyzation stage. Table 1 shows the process of the interview schedule.

Table 1 Interview Timetable

05.03 – 12.03.2019	Contacting potential interviewees by email
06.03 – 10.3.2019	Designing interview
11.03 – 19.03.2019	Interviews

11.03 – 22.03.2019	Transcribing interviews
29.03 – 15.04.2019	Analyzing results

After conducting the interviews the author transcribed them. The transcription of interviews can be time consuming, but is recommended and helps the researcher acquaint themselves with the data before analysis (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 85). After transcribing the interviews the author collected the relevant information from them and compared them with the interview questions. Eventually, this information was compared with the theory collected beforehand.

5.2   Data Analysis

In this part the author will analyze the data collected from the interviews. The author started all interviews by asking the participants what was their relationship with LAMK and what they knew about the concept of cultural diversity. The author wanted to make sure all interviewees could broadly define the concept, clarifying how the concept had been narrowed in this study. After confirming participants knew enough about cultural diversity to be able to answer interview questions the author proceeded with the main part of the interview.

The first question concerned how culturally diverse the interviewees perceive LAMK's workforce. The answers complied mostly with the author's preliminary observations and the statistics, with 50 percent of the interviewees saying LAMK's staff is not culturally diverse. For example Interviewee 2 stated "We have many international students, this is really nice, but if somebody claims to be an international institution, it means it should be balanced on both sides". Thirty-three point three percent of the interviewees feel that LAMK's workforce is to some extent culturally diverse, but not significantly. Interviewee 11 pointed out "Not so much, of course, but that's the situation in most workplaces in Finland". Interviewees 8 and 10 (16,7 percent) said that they think LAMK's workforce is culturally diverse, emphasizing that the employees have international mindsets.
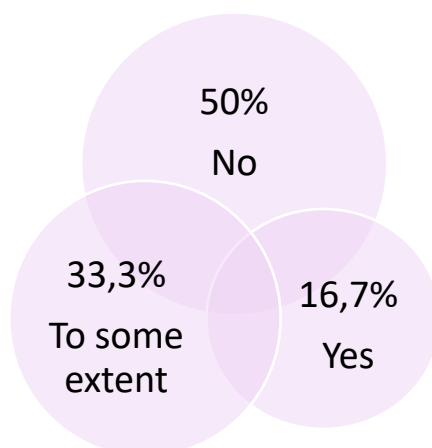
Figure 8 Is LAMK's Workforce Culturally Diverse

The next question was aimed for the employees and manager, because of their vast experience working in different organizations. The author wanted to find out what their opinion was on the importance of a culturally diverse workplace. Sixty-six point seven percent of the interviewees answered that a culturally diverse workforce is important for an organization. For example Interviewee 5 stated "I think it is, especially if we are running these kind of international degree programs, then I think it's a must". Interviewee 6 specified "I think it's important as a value structure as we accept and promote diversity and we want our people and expect our people to work in a diverse context". Interviewees 11 and 12 (33,3 percent) said that the importance depends on the organization. Interviewee 12 highlighted that the concept of diversity should not only be limited to cultural background, but concern all the different aspects of an individual "We should acknowledge that and emphasize that as a huge positive resource and possibility for companies and organizations, but not only like cultural aspects".

As mentioned in Chapter 2 increasing the amount of diverse teachers in higher education institutions expands the amount of insight about different cultures and enables students and teachers to learn more about e.g. different cultural traits. It has also been shown to support and encourage students coming from different cultures. (Abdul-Raheem 2016, 53-54.) Because of the before mentioned theory, the author wanted to learn about the students opinions on whether they would want LAMK's teachers to be more culturally diverse. Interviewees 3, 4 and 7 said they would like more culturally diverse teachers. Interviewee 4 added "I noticed that with the lecturers that come from different cultures, I mean outside of Finland, that you get a much wider picture of the world". Interviewee 9 said "Well I guess it depends on the courses that they are teaching […] I guess that there

should be more native English speaking teachers in courses taught in English". Interviewee 10 was not sure, but did think diverse teachers could introduce different ways of teaching to the school. Interviewee 8 was not presented with this question, as they felt strongly that the workforce was already diverse.

Next the author asked the students whether they would learn more about different cultures with teachers coming from different origins. Five out of six interviewees (83,3 percent) said that they would. Interviewee 7 emphasized "Definitely, since we are in an international business degree, it would definitely help, just being able to talk to somebody from a different culture. You're kind of getting a better understanding of that culture, if we have more of that". Interviewee 8 said "If I got interested in a person themselves, then it might be the case that I want to learn about their culture some more". The students opinions complied with the presented theory, since most felt they would learn and develop from having teachers from different cultural backgrounds.

Next, all of the interviewees were asked their opinion on what benefits LAMK would gain from diversifying their workforce. The most common stated benefit was the different perspectives that are gained from a diversified workforce, with 58,3 percent of interviewees highlighting this in their interviews. The second most common answers were creative solutions and the increase in problem-solving skills, with 41,7 percent of the interviewees mentioning these. Interviewees 2 and 8 said it would increase LAMK's competitiveness against other Finnish universities of applied sciences. Interviewees 4, 9 and 11 said that it would help attract new students from abroad and potentially also increase the amount of students who would stay and work in Finland after their studies. For example Interviewee 4 stated "Potentially, attracting more students from different cultures and I think it may also give the students more hope for their future in Finland, because it's quite bleak for foreign students at the moment" and Interviewee 11 stated.

> I think our major problem is that people come here from abroad for education and after that they leave. If we can somehow help make that thing better that is the main goal and I think more cultural diversity in the workplace might help that, because if there is also workforce from different cultural backgrounds they can maybe support those who are having their education here.

Interviewee 4 also felt that a culturally diverse workforce would support students coming from abroad.

> When foreign students come and they meet a culturally diverse workforce they are much more likely to have people that can sympathize with their

situation and understand their situation and help them overcome their challenges, whereas if you just come and meet just Finnish lecturers they are less likely to be able to understand where you are coming from or help you overcome your challenges.

Interviewee 6 pointed out an interesting fact from the employee point of view "We would be able to function with an international student body a lot easier". They also stated:

How does the school benefit by it, I don't think you know in advance when you benefit, you do it because it's the right thing to do and then over time the place becomes more interesting to work at, becomes more sophisticated in understanding the world, the people who are here are more interesting and interested in the world and engaged.

Interviewees 1, 5 and 12 stated that on an individual level it makes the workplace more exciting and helps them learn more about themselves and other cultures. For example Interviewee 5 said "From the personal level it brings something exciting and different and how to say, something more to the working place". Interviewee 12 highlighted the main benefit as "I would say it would be easier for us to internationalize, like get connected to the world in general". Other benefits mentioned were for example the language benefit, helps understand different markets, increases ones multiculturalism, increases flexibility, increases innovativeness and shows that an organization is socially responsible. The interviewees answers complied with the theory collected by the author in Chapter 2. The added view gained from the interviews was the fact that many felt that having a culturally diverse workforce would correlate to the amount of foreign students applying to LAMK and also support them with their studies and potentially future career in Finland.

The next question asked concerned the challenges of a culturally diversified workforce. Forty-one point seven percent of the interviewees stated that communication would be a significant problem that could result to misunderstandings. For example Interviewee 4 stated:

Miscommunication because even though the level of English competence is high there's still many situations where things are misunderstood and not just because of culture, but just can't find the right words or they use the wrong words.

Related to communication Interviewees 4 and 6 mentioned that the Finnish language might be a challenge, since most of the workforce is Finnish and the infrastructure still remains in Finnish. Interviewees 1 and 11 stated that Finland's business oriented working

culture might differ a lot from what foreign people are used to, thus creating challenges. For example Interviewee 11 stated:

> *We have a certain kind of working culture in Finland and it might be for some people who come from different cultures a bit difficult at first, so that's maybe the most important thing concerning this.*

Interviewees 1, 2, 3 and 5 (33,3 percent) stated that cultural differences such as the concept of time and the ability to say no, could be challenging. For example Interviewee 2 stated:

> *In some nations, they would never say no. So, you know you shouldn't be asking a yes/no question, but an open question or for example when can you deliver it, not can you deliver it, because they will always say yes.*

Interviewees 4, 6, 7 and 8 stated that the level of conflict can rise within a culturally diverse workforce. For example Interviewee 7 stated:

> *People from different cultures have different ways of doing things, which may not be always appropriate for the students or the other teachers, the coworkers. So, I could see some people maybe bumping heads if they don't agree with this method or the students don't really understand that method of teaching.*

Interviewees 4 and 9 stated that the overall availability of skilled and willing diverse teachers might be a challenge for recruitment. Interviewee 12 pointed out:

> *The challenge might be that it's not that efficient, but the quality might actually rise so that we might reach higher standards thinking about the decision making and thinking about the outcomes if we would have more diversity, but it seems much more efficient if we are all coming from the same background and then we can kind of forget all about this kind of fuss considering cultural background. We can neglect some of the viewpoints actually in that discussion and at the same time it makes our decisions of lower quality.*

Overall, several interviewees (50 percent) mentioned that most of these challenges can be overcome with proper orientation and communication between employees. Most of the challenges stated by the interviewees complied with the ones the author had collected in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2 the author introduces a systems approach to increasing the amount of workforce diversity in an organization. Therefore, the author wanted to know how the

interviewees suggested increasing the amount of workforce diversity in LAMK. This question was aimed for the employees and manager working at LAMK, since they had more experience about LAMK's structure and recruitment practices. Interviewees 2, 5, 6 and 12 (66,7 percent) said the most obvious way would be to open up the recruiting pool and actively seek more foreign teachers. Interviewees 1 and 2 said that the easiest and cheapest way would be to increase the amount of teacher exchange, by taking advantage of LAMK's partner institutions. For example Interviewee 2 stated:

> *You increase the mobility of the teachers because this is one of the kind of sign of the internationalization of the institution. So of course then it's much easier to send somebody for a semester somewhere as an exchange, not student, but a teacher. I think this would be quite easy and this way we could have more diverse cultures here.*

Interviewee 1 added that the school could even try develop an electronical way of doing the teacher exchange, if the teacher does not have the time or resources to go abroad for a certain period of time. Interviewee 6 suggested "We look at post-graduate programs, post-doctoral programs as training grounds to attract young people who we could then use in classrooms". They highlighted that giving the interested students opportunities to for example do project work for LAMK after their bachelor's studies and then have them continue with their masters and possibly have them stay as lecturers, could increase the amount of competent and culturally diverse teachers. Related to the previous answer, Interviewee 11 also stated "We need to give graduate students opportunities to stay in Finland, because many of them want to stay, but there are no opportunities". Interviewee 6 added in their interview.

> *I'm quite sure if you could create a branding space where some of the foreign teachers were feeling quite positive about their experience and the school made it clear that we are looking to hire those foreigners that are coming to Finland and want to be involved in education, we want to attract those people, we understand the value of their contribution. I think that you would find a lot more of an application pool of people simply soliciting can I work there, because you know I need a job and a place to work and you guys want the kind of people like me.*

Interviewees 12 and 6 suggested shifting the official language of LAMK to English. For example Interviewee 12 stated:

> *One thing might be actually that we could, even though it's a huge step to take, but actually state that our official working language is English at LAMK.*

> *This might be one concrete way to do it. I know that not all the teachers are ready for that […] but it would kind of be a statement that would point out that okay we are international and we want to be that.*

Similarly Interviewee 6 stated:

> *The simplest thing we could do in order to "diversify" would be to shift the language of the building, the entire LUT all the way down through, to English and say we are the only English language university in Finland and if you want to study in Finland and you want to study in English, then that's where you go and you build the brand around it being a globally appreciated accessible university in the Finnish environment, that is totally accessible by anybody, if you speak English, and that simple change could put us on the map.*

Interviewee 11 pointed out that education in Finland has faced difficulties with funding and that means universities often go with the safe choice of recruiting Finnish lecturers. If the economic state shifts they think it's possible to focus more on the recruitment of foreign employees. Before that, increasing cultural diversity in the workforce can be a challenge. The suggestions interviewees made about opening up the recruiting pool and seeking for diverse applicants complied with the systems approach introduced in Chapter 2. They did not mention the importance of reducing appointment bias and departure bias, which were important aspects of the theory collected in Chapter 2. However, the interviewees presented new perspectives on increasing the amount of workforce diversity that were not included in the theory collected for this thesis. These new ideas were for example changing LAMK's working language from Finnish to English and increasing the amount of teacher exchange.

As teacher exchange was mentioned by several interviewees as a way to increase workforce diversity at LAMK, the author added it to their list of topics to ask. Eleven of the interviewees were asked if they felt this would be beneficial for LAMK and all of the asked interviewees (100 percent) said it would be a good idea. The author specified when asking the question that personal issues, such as parental obligations of teachers, should not be taken into account in their answers, because the point was to learn if increasing teacher exchange would work as a concept. Interviewees 4 and 5 said it would increase diversity on different levels. For example Interviewee 5 stated:

> *That could be a great idea as well, so sort of like it would be increasing the diversity in two ways. You might have people here who haven't worked abroad earlier and they would really get a benefit out of that and even the ones who have an international background that would be really beneficial*

for them to go to a new system as well and not only from this diversity point of view, but also bringing new ideas into the campus and the other way around, getting new people over here.

Interviewee 11 pointed out that it is a good idea, but there can also be some challenges.

The challenge might be that if we for example compare a Finnish university of applied sciences to some science university in Europe, the work is really different and that can be the challenge in those kind of changes for example if at the partner university the teacher has also done research work and we don't have that kind of research work here, only teaching and projects.

In Chapter 3 the author introduces the concept of diversity management and gathers some guidelines to help with managing a culturally diverse workforce. Therefore, the author wanted to learn about what the interviewees felt should be taken into consideration when dealing with a diverse workforce or could managerial approaches stay the same. This question was presented to only the interviewed employees and manager, since they had better knowledge of LAMK's managerial approaches and management in general. Interviewees 1, 5 and 6 (50 percent) stated that it is especially important to create a welcoming environment for new employees and make sure nobody feels like an outsider. Interviewee 1 highlighted that it is especially important to have management explain how the Finnish education system works and explain that for example the teacher-student relationship in Finland is on the same level, ensuring students feel comfortable approaching teachers with any problems they might be facing. They should also be informed on how working life plays a big part in Finnish universities of applied sciences. Related to creating a welcoming environment Interviewee 5 stated:

Maybe the best way is that you have some kind of like peer teacher, if you are coming to be a teacher, who is short of like available for you and the one who is working here already is allocated some hours to do that.

Interviewee 11 also stated "I would think the best solution would be some kind of system where you get help from other teachers or who are not your superior, but the same level, that's maybe the key". They also noted that the schools resources play a big part in being able to develop this kind of peer mentoring. Interviewee 2 suggested having LAMK's employees participate in a diversity training program.

We are kind of giving some courses to students about different cultures, but we've never given any training to the staff and it doesn't come just from

heaven or you are born with it. No, you have to really get some kind of train-ing or self-studying, but it doesn't happen.

Interviewee 12 stated:

We are an expert organization and as in many organizations in Finland we are acting like we are some machinery production based organization, where we are thinking that all the processes, all the people are kind of parts of that small machine and we are thinking that it's all mechanistic […] The manage-rial staff should be more interested in people, how experts are working to-gether. They should pay more attention to people, less to the not that im-portant stuff as structures. [...] The leaders could decide how to prioritize and create possibilities for us as experts to choose and act and that would proba-bly create more diversity in many respects.

Overall, many topics concerning diversity management that were discussed in Chapter 3 did not come up in the interviews. That said, the importance of communication, community belonging, and diversity training were mentioned both in the theory and interviews, stating that it is especially important to take these facts into concern when dealing with a diversi-fied workforce. Guidelines such as task-related selection, recognizing differences, balanc-ing power, and the importance of feedback were not supported by the interview data. The author feels that this could be due to the limited amount of managers participating in the research. It could also be a result from the lack of diversity in LAMK's workforce. If there would be more workforce diversity, interviewees could have made more observations con-cerning issues that should be taken into consideration when dealing with a diversified workforce.

6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings of the conducted research are gathered and analyzed. The chapter consists of three parts. First, the author will answer the research questions that were introduced in Chapter 1. Second, the author will proceed with evaluating the validity and reliability of the research and last, they will propose suggestions for further research.

6.1 Answers to Research Questions

The aim of this research was to explore the benefits and challenges of a culturally diverse workforce. Additionally, the author wanted to learn how people working and studying at LAMK felt would be the best way to increase and manage a culturally diverse workforce. In order to reach the goal of this research, the author created research questions to guide the research. In this part the research questions will be answered in logical order, first the three sub questions and following the main question.

- What would be the benefits and challenges of a culturally diverse LAMK?

Many benefits and challenges were stated in the theory and the empirical part of this thesis. The most common benefits of a culturally diverse LAMK would be the different perspectives, creative solutions and the increase in problem-solving skills that could be ascribed to a culturally diverse environment. From the students perspective studying could become more interesting and they could learn about different cultures and customs from the foreign teachers. Moreover, it would make it easier for LAMK to internationalize and support their aim of becoming an internationally renowned university of applied sciences. The potential challenges of a culturally diverse LAMK include for example miscommunications and potential conflict between employees. Additionally, it can be challenging to introduce the foreign employees to LAMK's organizational culture and the Finnish educational system, because LAMK's infrastructure remains in Finnish. Another challenge could be that the new recruited foreign employees can be left feeling like outsiders in the organization because most of the employees are Finnish. These challenges can seem vast, but with proper planning and communication they can be overcome.

- How to increase cultural diversity at LAMK?

Based on the interviewees opinions the easiest way for LAMK to increase the amount of workforce diversity would be to actively seek for foreign employees and to raise the amount of teacher exchange. LAMK should collaborate more with their many partner universities around the world and focus on increasing teacher mobility. The concept of teacher exchange would increase diversity in many aspects. First, teachers going abroad

from our institution would gain international knowledge while being abroad and potentially learn new and improved teaching styles. Second, LAMK's students and employees would benefit from interacting with foreign teachers coming to teach at the university for a period of time. It would also create new perspectives and ways of teaching that could potentially make working and studying at LAMK more interesting. Giving students opportunities to contribute in for example project work at LAMK after their studies, could increase the amount of potential diverse employee applicants. The students would already be familiar with the educational system and the institution in general, which would make integration to the workforce much easier. Moreover, a concrete and, in the author's opinion, the best way to increase cultural diversity at LAMK would be to change the working language to English. This would be a big undertaking, but it would be a positive investment for LAMK's future. It would give LAMK the opportunity to create an international brand and potentially attract more foreign employees and students to the organization.

Based on the theory, LAMK should pay attention to the amount of personnel departing the company and the amount employed. By making sure efficient recruiting activities are used to reach a diverse applicant base, more potential applicants can be hired. Special attention must also be given to the amount of diverse employees leaving the company. By controlling the employment process and promoting diversity, LAMK could work towards creating a culturally diverse workforce.

- How to manage a culturally diversified workforce?

Based on the interviewees opinions the most important fact to take into concern when managing a diverse workforce is creating a welcoming environment. Managers should make sure the new employees feel appreciated and make sure nobody feels like an outsider. It is also important to clearly explain the Finnish educational system and customs to the foreign employees, who might not be aware of it. This can be easily accomplished with peer tutoring. All new employees would be assigned a tutor from the existing employees who would help introduce them to the Finnish working environment and help with anything else they feel is problematic. These tutors would be allocated hours and training from management to ensure the tutoring is performed correctly. Based on the theory and interviews diversity training is an important aspect of managing a diverse workforce. Appropriate training can be used as a tool to reduce any underlying prejudices in the workforce. To ensure an efficient working environment, it is especially important that the staff educates themselves about different cultures and the different customs related to them.

- What are the key benefits LAMK would gain from culturally diversifying its workforce?

Based on the interviews there are four key benefits LAMK would gain from culturally diversifying its workforce. First, it would increase the organizations competitiveness in Finland and internationally. LAMK could create an international brand using its diverse workforce and student base as a sales advantage. Additionally, it would make LAMK stand out from the many universities of applied sciences in Finland. Second, a diversified workforce could increase the amount of foreign applicants. Students want to come and study in Finland and experience the Finnish environment, but they also want teachers that they can relate to. The foreign teachers would be able to give the students more support in their studies and in life in Finland in general, in comparison to Finnish teachers. Third, related to the previously stated benefit, it could potentially increase the amount of foreign students staying in Finland after their studies. If foreign students are able to interact and get support from foreign teachers, they might see staying and working in Finland as more of a possibility. Last, a diverse workforce would make the workplace more interesting and potentially improve the morale. Teachers could exchange thoughts and learn more about different cultures and teaching styles.

The author has summarized the answers to the research questions in Table 2 located below.

Table 2 Answers to Research Questions

Research Questions	Answers
What would be the benefits and challenges of a culturally diverse LAMK?	Benefits: - Different perspectives - Creative solutions - Increase in problem-solving skills - More interesting to study - Cultural knowledge - Easier to internationalize. Challenges: - Miscommunications

	- Potential conflict between employees - On boarding of employees - Infrastructure is in Finnish - Foreign employees feeling left out
How to increase cultural diversity at LAMK?	- Actively seeking for foreign employees - Increasing amount of teacher exchange - Consider graduate students as potential applicants - Changing official working language to English - Controlling employment process and promoting diversity
How to manage a culturally diversified workforce?	- Creating a welcoming environment - Explaining Finnish organizational culture and education with peer tutoring - Diversity training
What are the key benefits LAMK would gain from culturally diversifying its workforce?	- Competitive advantage - Increase the amount of foreign applicants - Increase the amount of foreign students staying in Finland after their studies - Making the workplace more interesting

6.2 Reliability and Validity

In this part the author will assess the reliability and validity of the research. Reliability measures if the research would result in the same outcomes, even if performed by different researchers. Reliability is easier to measure in quantitative research, but it can also be ensured in qualitative research. The researcher must describe the research process as transparently as possible. All used data analysis methods must be stated clearly so that the reader can easily understand them and the research strategy must be well-defined. Moreover, if using a data collection method such as interviewing, the researcher must ensure that all of the interviews are recorded and transcribed properly. It is also important to keep interview questions clear and specific to maximize reliability. (Silverman 2011, 360, 364-365.) In Chapter 1 of this thesis the author explains the research strategy clearly, making it transparent for the reader. Additionally, the author has described the data collection and analysis process in detail in Chapter 5. The author made sure the interview questions were clear and all interviewees understood the questions. The conducted interviews were recorded and transcribed carefully to ensure reliability. Overall, the author feels the research could be repeated, with similar results.

Validity can also be referred to as truth. Generally, it means that the researcher has included all findings in the report and has not excluded anything that in their opinion is trivial. Additionally, to ensure validity the author should keep interview data available for observation for a certain period of time. (Silverman 2010, 290.) The author has ensured the validity of this research by explaining clearly why and how the interviewees were chosen. The interview questions are also included in the thesis so the reader can view the exact questions used. Moreover, large extracts of data have been included in Chapter 5, where the author analyzes the data collected from the interviews. The author remained unbiased, during the interviews and while analyzing the data to ensure validity and included the relevant opinions in the data analysis. The interview data, both recordings and transcripts, are secured by the author for a certain period of time.

Overall, if the author of a research project cannot prove the research is reliable and valid, the project, especially the collected data, is unusable (Silverman 2011, 393). This research has been proven to be both reliable and valid.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

As previously mentioned, the aim of this research was to explore the benefits and challenges of a culturally diverse workforce. The aim of the research was achieved, but as stated the opinions gathered from the managerial level were limited. Further research

could be conducted focusing on the opinions LAMK's managerial level has about cultural diversity and if they feel that increasing workforce diversity would be beneficial for LAMK. Further research focusing solely on increasing workforce diversity at LAMK, would also be beneficial in the author's opinion. The study could focus on one of the ways of increasing workforce diversity that was recommended in this thesis and potentially test it in the field.

Concerning the concept of diversity management, if LAMK chooses to increase the amount of workforce diversity, further research on the management issues could be conducted. This way employees and managers could have more opinions about the potential changes management needs to take when dealing with a diversified workforce. Another recommendation for further research would be conducting this research using a quantitative method. It would be interesting to see if the results would change, using a different research method.

Overall, the subjects of workforce diversity and diversity management are very interesting and relevant, concerning any organization. The author suggests further research on the subject in general and even conducting a similar research project, with another case company, such as another university of applied sciences in Finland.

7   SUMMARY

The main goal of this research was to examine the benefits and challenges of a culturally diverse workforce. Moreover, the author wanted to learn how people working and studying at LAMK felt would be the best way to increase and manage a culturally diverse workforce. To reach these goals the author formed the main thesis question and three sub questions to support it. Answers to the research questions were provided in Chapter 6.

The thesis applies a deductive way of research and a qualitative data collection method was used. The first part of the thesis introduced the research background. The concept of cultural diversity and matters related to it, such as multicultural groups were discussed in Chapter 2. The author also explains the main benefits and challenges of a culturally diverse workforce and introduces a systems approach for increasing workforce diversity. The next chapter focuses on diversity management and the author introduces specific guidelines to help manage a culturally diverse workforce. The empirical part of the thesis analyzed the results of the research conducted by the author. Moreover, the author concludes the thesis by answering the research questions set in the beginning, evaluating the reliability and validity of the research, and by offering suggestions for further research.

Interviews were used as the primary source of data for this research. Twelve people, either working or studying at LAMK participated in the interviews. The results of the interviews were used to show the different opinions people had about a culturally diverse workforce. The interviewees' opinions complied mostly with the theory collected for this thesis.

The objectives of the research were met, and the findings are useful for the case company. The main finding of this research was that a culturally diversified workforce brings many benefits and challenges to an organization. Overall, the benefits surpassed the challenges, because the theory proved that potential challenges of a culturally diversified workforce can be overcome with efficient diversity management. Additionally, the research provides clear suggestions for increasing workforce diversity, that LAMK can potentially use. Concerning LAMK's future success, it is especially important for them to see cultural diversity as a competitive advantage and as a way to attract more foreign students to the university.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Interview Questions for Employees

1. What is your relationship with LAMK?

2. What do you know about the concept of cultural diversity?

   o Could you define it?

3. Do you feel that LAMK's workforce is culturally diverse?

4. Is a culturally diverse workforce important for an organization? Why?

5. What would be the key benefits LAMK would gain from culturally diversifying its workforce?

6. What would be the challenges?

7. How could LAMK increase the amount of workforce diversity?

8. Should managerial approaches be modified when dealing with a more diverse workforce? How?

Extra question concerning if the interviewees felt teacher exchange would be a good way to increase workforce diversity at LAMK.

Appendix 2 Interview Questions for Students

1. What is your relationship with LAMK?

2. What do you know about the concept of cultural diversity?

    o Could you define it?

3. Do you feel that LAMK's workforce is culturally diverse?

4. Would you want LAMK's teachers to be more diverse?

5. Do you think it would help you learn about different cultures? How? Why?

6. What would be the key benefits LAMK would gain from culturally diversifying its workforce?

7. What about the challenges?

Extra question concerning if the interviewees felt teacher exchange would be a good way to increase workforce diversity at LAMK.