EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: CASE LAMK (OSSI 2 PROJECT)

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Abstract

More than 21,000 international students are currently studying in Finnish Universities however, the number of unemployed international students has also exceeded 11,000. This research is focussed primarily on unemployment among the international students at Lahti University of Applied Sciences (LAMK). This research study is commissioned by LAMK and Salpaus and the project name is OSSI 2.

The aim of this study is to identify and investigate the reasons for unemployment among international students of LAMK and offer recommendations on how to reduce the unemployment. All stakeholders including the university, partner companies, international students and employment service providers face challenges and the researcher has presented a model of activities for each stakeholder that can help to improve the unemployment situation.

This is a qualitative research where semi-structured interview were conducted from all stakeholders. Total 15 interviews have been conducted during this research from all concerned personnel including students, Finnish employers and employment service providers. The benchmarking approach is also utilized to map out the best practices of the organizations who have helped to reduce unemployment for immigrants in Finland. The researcher concluded that each stakeholder needs to take certain steps in order to address the unemployment problem. Finland is an excellent country and with the combined efforts of all stakeholders, the international students can be employed into the Finnish job market.

Keywords:
Unemployment, International Students, Finland
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1 INTRODUCTION

In the recent years, internationalization in the field of higher education has increased enormously. A tremendous interest has been observed among the students worldwide to pursue graduate and post/graduate studies in foreign countries. Although the number of international students (students who study abroad) was nearly 2 million in year 2000, it is expected that by year 2025, this number will exceed 8 million globally (ICEF 2019).

Globalization enables the international students to study abroad and later become international talent and apply their academic knowledge in the practical field in the form of job or entrepreneurship. During their study abroad, international students get to know the culture of their host country, experience the knowledge and international syllabus. The driving force behind the students to study abroad depends on a number of factors. For example, the field of study, the country’s reputation, the standards of living and prospects of future growth after completing the higher education (Michael, Armstrong, & King 2004, 57-66). However, due to certain reasons, some of the international students are unable find the employment opportunities. Despite being academically qualified, the reasons for unemployment may include lack of cultural knowledge, lack of local language skills, lack of the ability to integrate into the society, rigidness or biasness of some employers, lack of confidence, the disability to compete with local talent and many more. Another notable fact is that the international students are of key importance for the host countries as it can help with their economic growth but, many countries are facing challenges to retain these international students as well as the international talents (Mamiseishvili 2012, 1-17).

In Finland, there has been an influx of international students from more than a decade. Although the higher education for foreign students in Finland is not free as of 2017, yet the statistics indicate that there are nearly 20,000 international students who are getting higher education in Finland (CIMO 2018). Moreover, nearly half of these international students are from outside the European Economic Area (EEA).
Lahti University of Applied Sciences (LAMK) is located in the city of Lahti and it has nearly 5000 students including both local and international students (LAMK 2019). The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the reasons for unemployment of the international LAMK students and make suggestions on how to improve their employment conditions in the city of Lahti. This study also sheds the light on the views of international students about the existing employment services as well as the views of employers in Lahti about hiring international talents in their organizations. This thesis is commissioned by Lahti University of Applied Sciences and Salpaus; one of the biggest vocational educations provider in Finland and it serves the city of Lahti in its domain (Salpaus 2019).

1.1 Research Background

Lahti is the 8th largest city of Finland with a total population of 1,20,081 residents. The number of foreign language speakers residing in Lahti is 8,313 however this number is expected to reach 15,000 by year 2030 (Statistics Finland 2018).

![Population growth in Lahti](image)

Figure 1: Growth of foreign-language speakers in Lahti (Statistics Finland 2018)
Among these foreign language speakers, there are mostly international students and immigrants. Despite the employment services provided by the local and federal government, a substantial number of international students is unable to get a job that is relevant to their qualification. Most of the students either opt for odd jobs or they struggle with their situation after graduation. The unemployment rate in Lahti in 2017 was recorded as 16.5% (TE-palvelut 2017).

The disparity between job market requirements and the competencies of students indicate that just gaining the quality education is not adequate, the international students must also improve their soft skills as well as get professional trainings through which they can comprehend their true potential. Therefore, an ultimate solution is needed in the form of a framework or a model where different options can be explored so that the international students can be seen as aspiring job cadidates for the industry. This will, in return alleviate the inadequacy of skilled workers in the labour market and the region will flourish both economically and professionally. But all other stakeholders including the universities, TE office and job placement organizations etc., need a cohesive strategy for decreasing unemployment and facilitating international students to start their career in Finland.

The following image shows the comparison of unemployed jobseekers by different regions for June 2018-19:

Figure 2: Unemployed jobseekers from June 2018 to June 2019 (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland 2019)
1.2 Thesis Objective and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to recommend a framework that can improve the employment opportunities for the international students of LAMK in Lahti region. The objectives of this research are as follows:

- Investigate “what are the reasons for unemployment of international students in Lahti?”
- Explore “how the international students of LAMK can be integrated into the local job market in Lahti?”
- Recommend “what possible solutions can help to improve the employment situation for international students?”

The significance of this study is two-fold as it will not only help the international students with their employment opportunities, but it will also assist the local government and the job-service organizations to improve their methods. Since this thesis is part of the OSSI 2 Project, it will certainly act as a baseline for future projects like this. There has been a research gap in this particular area and this thesis aims to provide a result-oriented perspective by proposing a framework of methods that can be deployed to improve the current employment situation of international students.

It is evident from history that education and skills cannot be obtained just by graduating from the university but it also demands improving the social skills and learning how to empower oneself by realizing the true potential within. Simply put, it is transformation process which enables the graduates to become aspiring professionals by going through different stages of career building. This study will also assist all stakeholders in the Finnish employment sector in retaining the international pool of talents and lessen the shortage of skilled workforce in the industry.
1.3 Research Methodology

This study is based on a deductive research methodology because the primary objective is to investigate certain obstacles and come up with a potential solution. Moreover, this deductive research is backed by qualitative research method where interviews are conducted to get to the depth of the issue at hand. Additionally, benchmarking approach is also used to explore the existing frameworks. To summarize, the research approach is deductive, the research methods used are qualitative and benchmarking and the data collection is done by using both primary sources which are interviews as well as the secondary sources which is the review of the existing literature.

Figure 3: Methods of Research for this study
1.4 Thesis Structure and Process Flow Chart

This thesis comprises of 5 chapters and the following lines will present the synopsis of each chapter. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the problem by explaining the background of the study, the aims and objectives of this research study and the planned methods of research. In the second chapter, the literature is reviewed and the significance of international students on the global economies is enlightened. This chapter further examines different facts and figures related to international students in Finland and later the case of LAMK is discussed in detail and the purpose OSSI 2 project is described. In chapter 3, the different approaches used during this research study are explained in detail and the reasons for choosing each method and their impacts on the empirical results are elaborated. Chapter 4 analyses the data which is gathered using primary and secondary methods of data collection. The data analysis leads to the empirical results and findings which help to propose a framework to improve the unemployment situation for the international students in Lahti. The reliability and validity of the research is also discussed in this chapter. Lastly in chapter 5, the thesis is concluded and some suggestions for future research prospects are presented.

Figure 4: Process Flow Chart
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 International Students and their importance

The term international student is defined by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics’ (UIS) as:

“An internationally mobile student is an individual who has physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in a destination country, where the destination country is different from his or her country of origin.” (UNESCO 2009)

According to a forecast by (ICEF 2019), the number of international students will reach 8 million by year 2025. Following are the top 10 destinations for international students and their numbers are increasing each year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Destination Country</th>
<th>International Students 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,094,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>506,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>489,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>371,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>370,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>343,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>313,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>265,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>188,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>109,522</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Top 10 destinations for International students in 2018 (Institute of International Education 2019)
Effect on US Economy

The significance of international students on the economy of America is explained by the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA). The analysis conducted by NAFSA for the academic year 2013-2014 indicate that the international students contributed towards 340,000 jobs and interjected 26.8 billion dollars in the economy of America (McDenial 2014).

It is also notable that in the U.S, almost half of the Fortune 500 companies are founded by foreigners in America and they have created numerous jobs and contributed billions of dollars towards the U.S economy. The U.S technological innovations has grown tremendously because of diverse views of the international talents and thus the economy has had numerous developments.

![Share of fortune 500 companies founded by Immigrants or the children of immigrants, by ranking group](image)

Figure 5: Fortune 500 companies founded by immigrants (Hathaway 2017)
Effect on UK Economy

In 2018, UK had more than half a million international students enrolled in the universities. The international students spent 25.8 billion British Pounds during study year 2014-15 and contributed extensively in the economy of the United Kingdom. The tax revenue generated during the same year was 3.3 billion British Pounds and the international students supported 206,000 jobs (Universities UK 2016). The infographic below shows the spending of international students in different sectors for the study year 2014-15.

![Infographic: The Economic Impact of International Students](image)

Figure 6: International students’ spending in UK for year 2014-15 (Universities UK 2016)

The international students not only convey financial value to the UK but they also bring skills, capabilities, and investments that are vital for innovation and improvement of a society. The international students also offer the treasures of ideas and innovative answers to the issues that they had already faced in their
home countries. Their previous social and professional experiences enhance the learning curve that create an accelerating multicultural educational environment.

Just like USA, the international students are also responsible for hundreds of new businesses in the UK. Almost 380,000 jobs are supported by immigrants in the UK during 2016 and the start-ups and entrepreneurship are also one of the most innovative ways to create employment for different industries. More than 40 percent of post-graduate students are international students and it can be said without any doubt that all universities globally are of far less worth without the international students (National Union of Students 2016).

2.2 Effect on Finnish Economy

In 2016, more than 20,000 international students were enrolled in Finnish universities. This number has more than doubled from 2006 when 10,066 international students were getting education in Finland (Hudd 2018). The following figure shows the top 10 nationalities from where international students arrive in Finland in 2018.

![Top 10 nationalities of International Students](image)

Figure 7: Top 10 nationalities of international students in Finland in 2018 (Hudd 2018)
Since the international students account for nearly 12% of total students in Finland, it is estimated that the international students contribute millions of Euros per year towards the Finnish economy. The international students not only pay the university fee but they also spend on living expenditures, public transport, food and lodging, leisure and other activities and almost half of the students are working different jobs during their study, therefore adding value to the Finnish economy. An interesting fact is that these international students after completing their education, tend to do jobs or opt for creating their own business ventures and in return, the economy gains multiple benefits.

2.2.1 Finnish Job Market

The GDP of Finland increased 2.2% in 2018 to the amount of 247.02 billion Euros. The per capita income in Finland is 40,753 euros (World Bank 2019). Finland is one of the top competitive markets in the world. The renowned companies of Finland are Nokia, Kone, Rovio, and Valmet. The Finnish economy has seen boost in the recent years and different industries have groomed especially the IT industry. However, the unemployment for the international students in Finland has been an issue for quite some time. Currently, 2,56,454 unemployed job seekers are registered in Finland (Statistics Finland 2019). The Finnish government is collaborating with all city governments as well as private employment service providers to decrease unemployment in Finland. But there are still multiple issues that are hurdles in resolving the unemployment problem such as integration of immigrants and international students in Finland, lack of Finnish language skills, and according to OECD, Finland is the least flexible job market in the Nordic countries (OECD 2019).

2.2.2 Unemployed International Students in Finland

The unemployment number among the foreigners in Finland is quite high. As of December 2018, the number of foreign jobseekers is 74,779. This means that most of these people are registered as jobseekers with the government but they are either doing odd jobs or going through different phases where they are considered as jobseekers. However, the number of foreign unemployed
jobseekers by December 2018 was 29,885 which means that these many foreigners are not having any kind of job in Finland (Statistics Finland 2019). This number includes immigrants and students in different levels of education. The following figure represents the number of unemployed foreigners who have completed bachelor degree, master’s degree and doctorate.

![Figure 8: Unemployed foreigners in Finland with different education levels (Statistics Finland 2019)](image)

The figure above indicates that according to Statistics Finland 2019, the number of unemployed international students having bachelor degree are 2,935, whereas the unemployed international students with master’s degree are 2,396 and the most alarming is the number of unemployed PhD scholars which is 325.

2.3 LAMK Case

Lahti University of Applied Sciences also known as LAMK has more than 5000 students studying in it at different degree programs including both bachelors and master’s degree students. In 2016, 539 foreign students were enrolled in LAMK and their number has increased to more than twice since 2006 where just 182
foreign students were studying at LAMK (Statistics Finland 2017). This number is expected to reach more than 1000 foreign students by year 2030.

LAMK has been providing education to thousands of students each year for nearly three decades and hundreds of foreign students have graduated from it. However, as mentioned earlier, the unemployment among the international students is relatively high.

2.4 OSSI 2 Project

This research thesis is done in coordination with the OSSI 2 Project. The primary purpose of OSSI 2 project is improving the employment of immigrants in Lahti region. The project also aims to move forward in a multi-disciplinary approach where all stakeholders benefit from it; the immigrants get the recognition of their prior education and through integration in Finland improve their employment situation by learning Finnish language and other required skills and education. The project also seeks to engage with its partners to get their support and promote the companies to employ foreigners in such a way that can create cross-cultural awareness among the organizations and workplace coaches.

The key partners of this project are Lahti University of Applied Sciences and Salpaus Further Education and these two institutes cooperate with various companies and service providers to execute this project. The primary motive is to provide the companies with skilled international workforce such as graduates from LAMK, who lack adequate Finnish language skills and have difficulties in finding employment in Finland. Since the start of this project, diverse cultural awareness has been raised among different partner companies and the international students are instructed towards the importance of local language skills as well as the workplace environments so that both students and the organizations have a better understanding about each other (Salpaus 2017).
2.5 Researcher’s own experience

The researcher himself came to Finland to pursue higher education. Having lived in Finland for 6 years now, the researcher has experienced all the issues faced by other international or foreign student in Finland. The researcher learned that just like him, any international student who comes to Finland has dreams to graduate and start the career in Finland and become the part of the society. Unfortunately, most of the times the dreams are not fulfilled and the international students remain unemployed or they just keep on doing the odd jobs which is not according to their qualifications.

After graduation, the researcher got enrolled in the integration program from the Employment and Economic Development Office (TE-services), which offered Finnish language training. Although it was a really good course however, despite learning the Finnish language to a certain level, the employers are not willing to even call for the interview and most of the times there is no feedback on why he has not been moved to the next stage of candidate selection. The similar cases have been observed with numerous other international students in Finland. Moreover, communicating with other unemployed international students, it has been realized that the courses provided by the TE-services are either offered at least 3 to 6 months after the student has been registered as unemployed. The students unwillingly accept those courses just to keep themselves away from the odd jobs. This is a tough situation where the international students have to make their living by doing cleaning jobs, newspaper delivery or food delivery jobs after having bachelor or master degree from universities.

The TE-services provide career mapping services, customer training programs and language classes but unfortunately when they are offered, the situation has changed for the students and the student has to deliberately accept the course being offered, resulting in further unemployment upon completion of the program or leaving Finland ultimately. The international students feel that these courses do not enhance their skills or get them employed but rather a gimmick which becomes compulsory when they get registered as unemployed job seekers at the TE-services.
The unemployed students have the opinion that the TE-services is just an organization that takes the information of the students and not offer any beneficial programs which is according to the needs of the students except Finnish language course, which also varies from at least 6 months to 1 year and even during this time, no education related job training is provided by the TE-services. The TE-services keeps pushing the students that they need to apply for the jobs via their jobs portal which is just like any other job portal and this situation makes the students very uncomfortable. Consider an Electrical Engineer who starts the language course with TE-services and upon completion of the language course after one year, the engineering degree has been never been used and he/she has been out of the industry during this entire period.

Another issue here is that the students are also unable to explain what kind of unemployment services they actually need, they have the fear of loosing their visa status or social benefits and that is why they have to accept any kind of service is offered to them which turns out wrong for both parties in the end. This situation has caused a lot of mistrust among the unemployed international students and the employment service providers. Although some effort has been seen recently in this regard but still a lot more is required to make it more feasible for all stakeholders. One example is that the city governments in different cities in Finland are working in their own domains to integrate unemployed immigrants in the workplace and teach them the skills which are according to their previous education and work experience.
3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The purpose of this research is exploring the ways to help international students incorporate in the Finnish job market therefore, the deductive approach is used which is perfectly suited for this thesis. Hyde (2000, 82-90) explained that deductive research method explores and analyses the details and properties which are known in order to issue a claim or a statement. The deductive method involves rational analysis and abstract observations of primary and secondary data. Deductive reasoning can be concluded as starting from a general hypothesis and reaching to a particular set of answers (Rahi 2017, 1-5).

3.2 Qualitative Research Method

This study required a thorough examination of the international students’ employment experiences and their expectations for the future. Keeping this in mind, qualitative research method was used where semi-structured were conducted. Using this holistic approach, the researcher was able to get the in-depth view of the problem statement and propose potential solutions. Merriam & Tisdell (2015) characterized that qualitative data comprises of quotes from the target audience where they share their experiences feelings and opinions about a certain topic. Another benefit of using the qualitative research is that it helps to define, recognize, and investigate the social phenomena from the participants (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2017).

3.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher collected primary data by conducting semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling technique was used to chose the participants of this study. A semi-structured interview is a discussion between the researcher and the participant in a one-on-one environment. This method granted the freedom to the researcher for placing any additional questions to the participants when needed during the interview. Therefore, both the researcher and the participants were
flexible to express their opinions and thoughts about the topic. Besides, semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher to conveniently ask any situational questions from the participants concerning the topic of discussion. This flexibility makes every interview unique and discrete according to the views of each participant (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng 2014, 87).

3.3 Benchmarking

This study also used benchmarking approach to explore the successful frameworks that actually helped to reduce unemployment of international students. Benchmarking method is used mostly in the industry by companies for identifying and adopting best practices of other companies in a particular sphere. This way, organizations can imitate and improve their own process by following the key points that are beneficial for them. Moreover, benchmarking process broadens the horizon of ideas and improves the convenience of choosing the best practices to develop and progress in the areas where the companies are lacking behind the others (Kyrö 2004, 52-73).

Since this thesis has the aim of developing a framework or a model that can help to reduce unemployment for international students in Lahti, it is important to look at the successful frameworks that are being deployed in other cities of Finland and they have resulted in decreased unemployment for international students. It is crucial to study all the factors and processes that are beneficial for this study. Therefore, benchmarking is an efficient tool to improve processes. The following figure explains the benchmarking process in graphical form:

![Benchmarking Process](image)

Figure 9: Benchmarking Process (Rolstadås 2013)
3.4 Target Research Audience and Sampling

This research aims to reduce the unemployment among international students of LAMK, therefore the target research audience is also the international students which are currently studying at LAMK. The purposive sampling technique is used to get detailed synopsis from the direct stakeholders including students as well as the employers.

The thesis was commissioned in May 2019 onwards, during which Summer holidays were in effect at Lahti University of Applied Sciences. However, the research contacted the students himself and tried to conduct the interviews both over Skype and in person. After contacting the students who were willing to participate in this research, invitation letters were sent by the researcher. The interview invitation contained details such as topic of the thesis, its aims and objectives, estimated time of the interview and the confidentiality agreement (APPENDIX 1). Total 15 interview were conducted, 5 interview participants are currently enrolled as international students studying at LAMK, 3 interviews were conducted from recent LAMK international graduates. Another 5 interviews were conducted from employers in Lahti region and finally the last 2 interviews were conducted from the employment service providers in Tampere, which helped a lot in the benchmarking research.

3.5 Research Ethics

Some key steps had to be taken into account to comply with the research ethics for this study. First of all, the confidentiality of the participants’ information was ensured. The researcher drafted an invitation letter for the participants where the purpose of the interview was briefly explained and the confidentiality agreement was enclosed within the invitation letter. Moreover, the participants were explained that their participation is voluntary and that they have the full authority to withdraw from the interview process whenever they deemed necessary.

The comfort of the interview participants was also made a priority and the interviews were conducted according to the time and place of their convenience.
The researcher was also aware that he should not ask any obstructive questions from the participants or pressurize the participants in any way. Moreover, the researcher also ensured that there is no gender discrimination during the interview process and the participant selection process.

General Data Protection Regulation (2016) requires that the data of all participants should be protected by all means (Rodrigues, Barnard-Wills, De Hert, & Papakonstantinou 2016, 248-270). Therefore, the researcher took necessary measures such as keeping the data on a secure server in an encrypted form to ensure data protection. Moreover, the unauthorized access to the data or accidental loss or mistreatment of the data was also prevented using preventive measures.

The GDPR directive explain personal data as:

“Personal data is any information concerning natural person which is identifiable.”

Whereas data processing according to GPDR is:

“The operation or set of processes upon personal data regarding collection, organizing, recording, storage retrieval, consultation, alteration or adoption, disclosure via transmission, using, making it accessible or spreading, blocking, destruction, arrangement and combination”. (European Commission 2018)

Therefore, all data collected during the interviews has been kept confidential and used only for the research purpose. The identity of the participants is not disclosed anywhere in this research to ensure their privacy is respected and they are referred to as P1, P2, P3 and so on.
4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter will analyse the data collected during the interviews and also by the benchmarking research method. The interview analysis will be discussed in detail by writing down direct quotes of the participants while keeping their identity anonymous and using “P” as an acronym for participants. Citing the exact words of the participants makes this research more valuable as it removes the ambiguity of attaching researcher’s own feelings while analysing the data.

4.1 Interview Analysis

The interviews explain the detailed understanding of the reasons for the unemployment among the international students. All unemployed participants shared some common denominators of unemployment which will be explained in the following lines. The interview analysis is done in a step-by-step manner where first of all the root causes of unemployment are discussed. Afterwards, the impact of unemployment on the international students are explained and the opinion of employers is also stated in the discussion.

After conducting interviews with the participants, the researcher concluded some common challenges which all participants mentioned during their interviews. The main hurdles in finding the employment as mentioned by the participants are; lack of Finnish language skills, absence of professional skills and need of work experience. In the following paragraphs the researcher will explain these hurdles in detail and quote the words of the participants and analyse their opinion. Some other reasons of unemployment which are discovered during the interviews are shown in the figure below:
Lack of Finnish Language Skills

One of the primary challenges pointed out by the students as well as the employers in Lahti is the lack of Finnish language skills in the job applicants. One student explained this situation in the following words:

“The university offers basic Finnish language course when we start our studies but it is just for first and second term during first year of study. After that, we are busy with studying other subjects and we only remember two words of Finnish language; kiitos and ole hyvä.” [P3]

Another participant shared the experience with the Finnish language course as stated below:

“It is really good that the university teaches us Finnish language when we start our degree but the problem is that we are taught formal Finnish language whereas the spoken language is totally different. When we go into the market for grocery or purchasing something, we are unable to understand the spoken language. It creates the psychological effect that after studying for two terms, we still don’t understand Finnish language so this language must be really hard to learn.” [P7]

When asked about how does Finnish language effect the employment situation, the participants responded in different manners. The students and recent graduates had a different take on the situation while the employers had a different perspective. A recent graduate mentioned:

“There are so many jobs posting in English but at the end it is mentioned that native level Finnish language is required. I don’t understand what is the purpose of posting the job in English language when the whole job is supposed to be in Finnish. Even if I know Finnish, the employer will say that my level of Finnish is not up to their
mark. How can a fresh graduate learn and speak native level Finnish language?” [P1]

On the other hand, the employers had their own opinion. The employers believe that the job is posted in English so it has a greater potential of finding a more suitable employee and the job also reaches to a broader audience. One employer discussed his view as:

“Since we are operating in Finland, we need the people who can communicate in Finnish language. Our customers are also Finnish, our company language is also Finnish, we have to select a candidate which is best for the company.” [P13]

This is a complicated situation; the employers are right in their own context whereas the students and the graduates have their own reservations. Even though the students are taught basic Finnish in their university studies, it is not adequate for them to find a job in the market. A potential solution is that Finnish language courses can be integrated throughout the study at the university. During every study term, the Finnish language course must be essential part of the degree program. This way, when the students graduate, they can have the language skills that they can at least communicate to a mediocre level. The employers can help in this regard as well, they can share their opinion with the university on what level of Finnish language can be acceptable for them. The university can issue Finnish language certifications for the students in addition to their degree so that after graduation, they can have a proof of their Finnish language competencies. It will help the employers as well as the students to find a match for each other.

Lack of Professional Skills

Professional skills are necessary to perform any job. Every job advertisement has mentioned that certain type of professional skills are pre-requisites for the job applicants. Professional skills may include software skills such as Microsoft Office, MATLAB, CCNA certifications etc. The professional skills may also include vocational skills like construction and architecture skills, mechanical skills and use
of certain kind of machinery depending on the field of the industry. The students mentioned that by the time they graduate, they don’t have these professional skills with them and they had to face job rejections due to these reasons:

“I saw an advertisement for job which required Bachelor of Electrical Engineering. Since I had recently graduate as an electrical engineer, I thought that this will be a suitable place for me to start my career. But during the interview, the recruiter told me that they require certain software skills as well. Unfortunately, we were not taught that particular software and that’s why I could not get through the initial phase of candidate selection.” [P5]

Another recent graduate mentioned that she had learned some software skills from online sources such as Edx.org and LinkedIn but because she only had access to the trial version of the software, she was unable to study all the features:

“I learned the basics of SAP HANNA from LinkedIn but during the first interview, the recruiter asked me if I can perform certain task on this software? I could not answer the question because I only knew the fundamentals to the software and nothing else, that’s why I was rejected for this position.” [P4]

The companies explained their point of view in this context and mentioned that it is hard to train an employee from scratch. They need a person who already has the professional skills that they need, otherwise it slows down the growth for the organization. It is notable here that the universities are constantly improving their teaching curriculum particularly in the technical fields such as engineering. But still there is not much that students can do because they only work on the assignments or the projects that they are studying and their access is also limited to training in the software as long as they are students. By the time they are completed with their students, the software access is also revoked and, in some cases, the access is taken away just after the course is completed. The universities must keep them updated with latest software is used in the industry and also design the projects and assignments in such a way that allows the
students to perform as much as they can. The students should also have the access as long as they are studying or extended access can be offered to the students if deemed necessary.

Lack of Work Experience

Another important factor that the students have complained about is the lack of work experience. The students feel that this is a sort of discrimination even if the job is an internship or a Summer job at an organization. One student clarified it in the following words:

“This year I applied for Summer jobs at different companies. I was surprised to see that every Summer job requires work experience. How a student is going to get work experience while studying? I don’t want to fake my application by showing a fabricated work experience… the companies need to understand that students need experience from them not the other way around.” [P5]

Another participant mentioned a very interesting point about getting recommendation from a teacher:

“My job application required recommendation so I asked my teacher. To my surprise, I was told that since I have only studied one course with the teacher therefore, I can not get the recommendation. Moreover, the teacher also mentioned that he has not given recommendation to anyone because then other students also bother him all the time. In comparison, another teacher who had just started teaching us, happily agreed to giving me a recommendation.” [P8]

Students consider teachers as their mentors and they always look up to their teachers for personal as well as professional grooming. It is understandable if a teacher is not comfortable giving recommendation due to disturbance but at least the teacher can refer to someone who can help the with the students’ problems. Work experience on the other hand, can also be gained during study if the
teachers design their courses where the students practice more industry-oriented projects rather than performing bookish assignment without any practical implications in the field.

The employers explained why the need work experience from the employees. A participant from an organization mentioned:

"Most of the students who apply for the jobs are competent but when it comes to practical work experience, they know nothing about it. Work experience is not just about knowing the technical skills, but it also helps them to learn how to behave in a professional environment. Having at least a little work experience makes the candidates more suitable because they understand the corporate culture." [P11]

The point raised by the employer is certainly valid because knowing the corporate environment makes an employee a better professional. Being a student is entirely different in a university environment and it can not be compared to being a professional in an organization. However, it is also important that the students should get a chance to learn from the companies. That is why getting internships or Summer jobs are very important for them as first steps of career building. The companies must invite those students for the interview who qualify for the job. Having work experience is definitely a plus point however, it does not guarantee the success and efficiency needed for the job. Conversely, the students might not have work experience but they are full of innovation and great ideas. The students are highly motivated to do whatever is needed to succeed in the jobs and learn more to improve themselves. It is evident from history that young students are much more efficient and valuable for organizations and their success rate is relatively higher than those of the experienced professionals. Also, it creates a sense of team-work where younger generation and the students learn how to behave with the senior professionals. The researcher thinks that it is a win-win situation for both parties.
Effects of Unemployment on International Students

The researcher found that unemployment has devastating impacts on the lives of international. The responses from the interviews indicated that these effects can be categorized into three types:

- Financial Effects
- Psychological Effects
- Social Effects

The participants explained that during their studies, either they have scholarships or stipends to cover their living expenses but when they are unemployed after graduation, they do not have any financial support. The government pays the unemployment allowance but it depends on the visa category that they get after graduation. In recent years, students who are doing odd jobs get the work permit visa for 1 year or 4 years in rare cases but for those who do not have any job, they get a job search visa for 6 months to 1 year. During the tenure of job search visa, if the unemployed graduates do not get any job according to their qualifications, the students have to do odd jobs and as a result, they get the visa for whatever job they are doing. For example, if an unemployed person is doing food delivery or newspaper delivery job, he/she will only get the visa for the delivery worker and he/she can not do any other job on that visa. In case he/she finds a new job, it must be informed to the immigration authorities and they will take a new decision about the visa status.

One unemployed participant described the circumstances as follows:

“I am unemployed and I got the job search visa after completing my master degree. The only jobs available for me are working in restaurant, cleaning job or maximum food delivery. I am not hesitant to work but if I start doing any of these jobs, I will get the work permit which is only related to that job. After that it will become extremely
difficult for me to find a white-collar job because no employer will take the pain of changing my visa.” [P6]

The unemployed students also mentioned that the job situation affects them psychologically. They feel degraded and frustrated when they are unable to find a proper job according to their qualification. One participant explained:

“I feel like I am wasting my skills and my talents by doing odd jobs. I have a master degree but I am only doing food delivery with Wolt. When I visit the TE-Services they tell me that you have the job, you do not need our services. I can not leave this job otherwise I will not be able to extend my visa. I have applied for more than hundred jobs from since my graduation and no company calls even for the interview. I only for the jobs where my skills are perfectly matched with the job requirements but it feels that employers are too rigid to offer the foreigners any job.” [P8]

Another unemployed participant gave an emotional response in the following words:

“I have been unemployed for 2 years, I only cleaned toilets and bars after completing my engineering degree. I can not see myself as equal to other Finns. I do not meet people anymore because I can not tell them that I am doing cleaning job after completing my degree. All employment service providers tell me that I should not loose hope but no one understands these 2 years have made me professionally unstable.” [P7]

The unemployed international students also consider themselves as social misfits because according to them, they are treated as second class residents in Finland. The participants mentioned that they can not complain about it to anyone because they need to support their families back home with whatever money they are earning. If they complain about it, they might end up in visa troubles and they have also heard about some cases where the unemployed are deported back to their
The unemployed participants also had the opinion that the government statements saying unemployment is decreasing, is just a gimmick. The participants also explained that they are willing to work if they get the jobs according to their qualifications and also that they want to be part of the society and contribute towards the betterment of Finland because Finland is a second home to them. One participant shared his views as:

“I consider Finland as my second home. I have lived here for 4 years, I completed my degree and I want to give back to Finland by paying taxes and starting my own business when I have resources but I am unable to find a job no matter what I try. I also speak Finnish language, still my job application has never gotten the interview call from a company.” [P3]

Support during unemployment

The participants revealed that they received in three forms of support as job seekers:

- Employment and Integration Services
- Financial Support
- Social Support

Some students after their graduation, contact the TE office (Employment and integration services) and apply to start the integration program; which helps international students to study Finnish language extensively for 6 months to 1 year. This is a good initiative by the government but it has its own challenges. The students are not satisfied with the integration method that is being offered to them. Although the TE services offer a range of services starting from integration to learning field related skills yet, the respondents had the opinion that it is not enough for them to get a job in Finland.

“I completed my degree, got into the integration program via TE services. I learned Finnish language for first 6 months and then I was
told that I have to find some place on my own to start the work practice (työkokeilu). I contacted multiple companies related to my field but no one was willing to offer me work practice training. In the end, I started working in a pizzeria. It improved my Finnish language skills but I was out of my professional field for almost a year and I had never gotten to use what I had learned during my degree.” [P6]

In case of financial support, the respondents mentioned that they are paid the unemployment allowance by KELA as long as they are enrolled in the program provided by the TE services. But as soon as the students tend to do something of their own, for example start a degree or even learn Finnish language privately, the financial support is reduced and, in some cases, totally stopped.

“I waited for 3 months but TE services offered me nothing. I again started my studies to improve my skills. KELA immediately reduced my unemployment allowance and gave the reason that my further education is not a valid reason for being unemployed. TE services offered me a course without consulting me and when I refused to accept it, they told me that my integration program has been cancelled because I am no longer considered as an unemployed person.” [P5]

The only support with which the students are satisfied is the social support, where universities and private employment services providers coach and guide the unemployed students about their future. There are regular events and meetings with career counsellors and each case is individually handled with care. The respondents think that social support is the only thing that keeps them motivated and hopeful about a positive future. The respondents hope that the career counsellors might be able to connect them with some companies where they can improve their skills. The unemployed students are willing to work on minimum wage and even for free just to gain the work market experience.
The Employers’ Perspective

The researcher interviewed multiple employers and discussed the views of unemployed international students. The employers explained what kind of potential employees they look out for and what kind of soft skills are needed in addition to the job description. As one respondent described his opinion in the following words:

“Our company is always looking for a talented person who understands the Finnish market very well. Finnish language is not mandatory but it is needed to communicate with our clients. We also look for the applicants who are highly motivated, they show the ability to learning more and who are good team players.” [P12]

When asked that there have been articles in the news where employers are not willing to accept foreign workforce even though they are perfect match according to the job requirements, another respondent answered:

“We have read in the news and some articles have been published about the biasness of employers. It is true that there are companies who are not accepting foreign workforce but there is not much that can be done about it. Almost 80% of the jobs are hidden jobs which means that internal hiring is done and then the job is posted just as a formality. The reason for internal hiring is unknown but my theory is that either the company doesn’t have enough resources to go through the whole recruitment process or the company can not trust a new person who they don’t know at all. I think this should change otherwise the unemployment will not decrease.” [P15]

Lastly, one company’s representative mentioned that they had troubles in the start to accommodate international talents because their working language is Finnish. But with the passage of time, they realized that having foreign workforce in the company is a huge plus and it makes the corporate culture more diversified. A
sense of competition and internationalization is very important for the company to grow.

“We are a multicultural organization and we have people working with us from different nationalities. When we get together, we learn new things from each other as an organization. It is a very productive way of understanding how things work in other parts of the world. These international talents also represent Finland when they travel to other countries and I think that every organization should hire international people if the company wants to sustain in the industry for longer time.” [P14]

4.2 Benchmarking Analysis

The researcher benchmarked different platforms which offer their services in reducing unemployment among international students in Finland. Each platform has its own system and the researched tried to map down the structures and find the magnitude of work performed by them. Some of these platforms are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Demola

Demola is a platform that connects companies and university students together through innovative challenges. Today, Demola has connected more than 7,50,000 with world-class companies around the globe and contributed extensively towards the betterment of future.

Demola offers an eight-week workshop where students are given real world challenges that the companies are facing. Students from diversified educational backgrounds and ethnicities come together to create service solutions for the given problems. The experts from the companies also work in coordination with the students and together they create a progressive environment to work on the given challenges (Demola 2019).
The Demola workshop is designed according to international standards and professionalism. The complex challenges at Demola enable the team members to find a spectrum of potential solutions and enhance their skills in doing so. The students get an opportunity to participate in real-world work tasks and learn how to become better professionals. The figure below demonstrates some of the on-going Demola projects.

The Shortcut

The Shortcut is an organization where people from diverse backgrounds meet and work together on networking, socializing, co-creation and problem-solving tasks. The Shortcut encourages its participants to use their skills and form start-up, create new businesses, work on enhancing their skills with different kinds of seminars and workshops. The Shortcut also provides different kinds of training for the participants to polish their skills and helps international people with integration in the Finnish culture. People share their ideas and their knowledge and explore new talents in themselves which is necessary for the start-up life. Their vision statement is:
“The main criterion for participating is ATTITUDE: if you are curious about technology and entrepreneurship, you are welcome to join us. This is your starting point to take an active role in (re)building your future. The Shortcut is a non-profit organization owned by Startup Foundation.” (TheShortcut 2019)

**GrowthBuilders**

Growthbuilders is a unique platform where international students are provided with the opportunities to utilize their foreign education and working experience and get a job. The candidates are paired into teams with emerging start-ups and companies and they are required to offer solutions to different kind of problems which the companies are facing. Growthbuilders program is a one-month bootcamp where the participants are offered coaching and trainings in personal branding with latest tools and techniques. Co-creation and team work skills are enhanced and clear goals are set to get realistic results.

According to Growthbuilders:
“New immigrants in Finland find it really hard to get a job according to their qualifications because Finland is a homogeneous country. For Finnish employers, hiring a newcomer is often seen as a risk as foreign certificates and qualifications are less known and it takes time to check capabilities and create mutual trust. Hiring an international talent forces employer to leave their comfort zone and deal with issues of culture, language, and diversity. Unfortunately, many Finnish employers prefer to avoid taking that risk and end up hiring a Finn.” (Growthbuilders 2019)

Due to the aforementioned reasons, Growthbuilders collaborate with different start-ups and companies in Tampere and train the international students in hacking the Finnish job market. Some prominent trainings offered by Growthbuilders are LinkedIn training, Personal Branding, Start-up training etc. Upon completion of the one-month workshop, most of the companies tend to move forward with the international talents they have worked with. This platform also helps to reduce unemployment from Tampere and it also familiarizes the companies with the benefits of having international employees. The following figure shows the summary of project at Growthbuilders.

**TURN YOUR FOREIGN BACKGROUND INTO AN ASSET**

We assemble teams of international talents and partner them with local companies that target international markets. We coach the talents on growth marketing and facilitate the collaboration between each team and the partner company.

**LEARN NEW SKILLS**
Acquire knowledge on growth marketing from coaches and expert mentors

**PARTNER WITH A FINNISH COMPANY**
Put your skills to practice, collaborate with other talents and help local companies achieve their growth goals.

**BUILD YOUR NETWORK**
Grow your network with other international talents, partner companies, coaches and expert mentors.

Figure 13: Growthbuilders (Growthbuilders 2019)
4.3 Key Findings

After reviewing the existing literature, analysing the interviews and evaluating the benchmarking organizations, the researcher concluded the key findings. The interview analysis indicated that the international students face difficulties to find jobs during their studies and after graduation. Although the official reports imply that the Finnish integration policies are producing positive results, also that the policies are well-planned and yielding the objectives. However, the researcher found that international students are unable to gain the intended benefits of these policies. The primary hurdles for international students to get jobs are lack of Finnish language, bureaucracy while applying for residents permits, lack of training opportunities during study and afterwards.

Finland has one of the best education systems of the world and it can be leveraged in training the international students to become the future work-force of Finland. Finland has been recognized as one of the most innovative countries of the world and there is tremendous development happening in all sectors. But due to the lack of opportunities for international students, the economy is having shortage of skilled workforce. Rather than getting employees from other countries, the existing international talents must be employed in the job market. This will assist the economy and create more value for other stakeholders to make investments in Finland.

Different contributors such as the TE Office, universities and employment service organizations are working on different projects to improve the employment situation for international students. The efforts by these stakeholders are not producing desired results because of lack of coordination among them. The efforts of these institutions are project based and less focussed towards individual issues that the international students are facing. The TE Office provides training without the consent or knowing the needs for its customers and the students or graduates feel compelled to take part in these trainings otherwise they are afraid to face visa problems. The university is trying to collaborate with different companies in Lahti region however there are less internship opportunities for international students because most of the companies require Finnish language. The private
employment service providers are confined in their activities due to lack of funds which they need to promote their services.

The integration process is a two-way street where foreigners are supposed to integrate with the culture and the society. Similarly, Finnish society needs to show flexibility towards the foreigners and show acceptability for international students. Finland has an excellent social system and a wonderful country to live in. But both the foreigners and the Finns need to work together and grow simultaneously for the betterment of society.

The researcher believes that all stakeholders including Lahti University of Applied Sciences, the TE Office, the companies and the employment service providers should work together and combine their resources and efforts. On the other hand, each institute should also work on its own to do what they can in its own specific domain. For example, the university can offer more language courses for the student so that when they graduate, the know enough Finnish language that they can easily communicate in the society. In addition, the university can arrange job fairs, internship seminars, career building workshops, entrepreneurship projects and allow international students to work on projects that can help them gain practical work experience during their studies. The university curriculum can be redesigned in such a way that all students gain not just knowledge but also get practical training which can help them start their careers in the industry. The university can also conduct events for business networking where companies can present themselves and their projects and the students can work with them and a match-making can help both companies and the international students.

In the recent years, Finland has promoted start-ups generously but many international students after graduation do not know how to start their own enterprise in Finland. Moreover, due to limited Visa, the international students can not get funding or even loans from the banks after graduation because their residence permits are only for one year and they get extended when certain criteria are met. The higher authorities can ease the situation by adopting flexible policies where international students can easily start their own business and create employment for others as well. Lahti region is considered to be the most
sustainable green region by 2023, therefore there is an urgent need to promote employment for the international students. The examples of neighbouring countries such as Estonia and Sweden can be followed where international students are contributing equally for the economy.

The TE office can play a major role to improve the situation because it is a government institute and it has higher authority and resources than any other private institute. When an international student is registered as unemployed with the TE Office, it should evaluate the individual cases with more scrutiny. At the moment, the case officers or customer managers deal with the customers at TE Office. They can revolutionize their services by offering trainings and workshops that are suitable for the individual needs. It doesn’t necessarily have to be done by the TE office itself, it can collaborate with the private employment service providers. There benchmarking analysis disclosed that private employment services offer much better career building opportunities. It is also worth noting that a higher number of international students get recruited after participating in trainings, workshops and projects offered by private employment service providers than the number of international students who get jobs through TE office.

The researcher proposes a framework for Lahti University of Applied Sciences and Salpaus and hopes that the international students will get better employment opportunities from it. The figure below displays the framework in graphical form:
In the recommended model, the researcher has taken into consideration all stakeholders. The explanation about the activities for each stakeholder is discussed in the following lines.
Since LAMK is the primary entity of the research, therefore it is necessary to start the change in-house first. The researcher discovered that Finnish language is the main problem for international students in getting a job after their graduation. The Finnish language courses offered by LAMK are just basics, whereas the job requires higher level of Finnish language. Therefore, the researcher has recommended that LAMK introduces more Finnish language courses for international students and these should not be the electives. During graduation, the students must be able to learn enough language skills that they can professionally communicate with others.

The researcher further recommends that in addition to bookish knowledge, LAMK must improve the curriculum in such a way that the students learn more practical things and get to work on case studies and other projects that can be helpful. In this context, LAMK can collaborate with its partner companies and Chamber of Commerce so that the students can get the insight of market conditions while they are studying. LAMK can also invite previous alumni who are working in different places to come and address the students, have discussion sessions and motivate the international students about career aspects.

The university can arrange match-making events between the companies and the students. Also, entrepreneurship can be promoted through LAMK by inviting all concerned personnel and the students can increase their professional networking by meeting new people. LAMK can create these sessions not just for its students but for the whole Lahti region and portray itself as a central hub where students, companies, recruiters, government organizations and other concerned parties can visit and conduct their events.

**Partner Companies**

The partner companies can take advantage of the situation and present their work challenges at LAMK. This way the companies can not only get solutions for their problems but also gain new ideas from the international students. Demola works
on a similar concept and the companies have observed improvements in their business situations (Demola, 2019).

The partner companies can offer unpaid or paid internships for international students for 3 months in Summer so that they can understand working culture of the job market. Hanken SSE Business Lead is one of such examples where Hanken Business School is collaborating with different companies and enhancing the talents of its students (Hankensse 2019). The companies can also increase their goodwill by arranging “Question and Answer” sessions with international students once in a while and recruitment events can also be arranged at LAMK by these partner organizations.

**TE Office**

The office of Employment and Economic activities is the central place where all unemployed get registered and it can play a really important role to reduce unemployment among the international students in particular. The TE office has the resources and the authority to provide trainings to international students when they are unemployed.

Unfortunately, at the moment these trainings are not according to the qualifications of the international students and the students also feel compelled to adopt them unwillingly to keep their living support. The interviews revealed that the international students are not satisfied with the services offered by the TE office. The researcher recommends that the TE office can handle these cases more carefully and with more detail. For example, a social science graduate should not be pushed to go to software trainings only because he/she is unemployed. The TE office can work together with the companies. It is quite unfortunate that there is no support from TE office to find even an unpaid internship. If the students can get unpaid placements for a few months in organizations, it will increase their ability to become better professionals.

The international students also want to initiate start-ups but due to visa renewal issues, they can not get any loans or funding. The TE office can step in and create
ease of starting an enterprise for international students. The TE office can also collaborate directly with LAMK and engage with the international students before they graduate. This way, the students can get the job placement directly after getting their degree certificates. The TE office can offer so much more than it already is and help to improve the situation in an amazing manner. Another example is that in Tampere, the City Government (Tampereen Kaupunki) is working on its own platform to decrease unemployment for immigrants and the TE office is using the same old platform and not collaborating with the local municipality to improve the situation and as a result, only the immigrants are suffering. The TE office can learn from the example of other employment services and adopt the methods that are helping international students to gain skills and find professional jobs.

Employment Service Providers

The private employment service providers are making valuable efforts and their efforts and generating sizeable results too. However, they are also confined in their projects due to certain reasons such as lack of funds. The researcher recommends that these private organizations take the next step to engage more unemployed students.

LAMK is the central entity in the whole scenario therefore the private employment service providers should join forces with LAMK. The organizations can assist LAMK with sessions while the students are in the final stages of their education completion. Different activities such as interview trainings, LinkedIn trainings, pitching and self branding sessions can be arranged at LAMK and students can learn how to improve their personality and their professional knowledge.

These sessions can also be done online where different tasks can be given to the students so that they learn team work, group building, remote working skills, collaborations and above all, being a good employee. Since these organizations work closely with new start-ups, this experience can be shared with international students and they can be integrated into the start-up ecosystem right from the university doors.
The researcher believes that the recommended model can solve the problem of unemployment among international students at LAMK. This model is not limited to the written activities, however in the researcher’s observation, these activities are vital for each stakeholder to sustain and grow in the industry.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are very important. Its significance can be understood by the following quote:

“Reliability and validity are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology.” (Winter 2000, 7)

Reliability validates that the methods of data collection and the analysis of data will produce consistent results. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p. 290) describe reliability as “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” Moreover, researchers have indicated that reliability is necessary for any qualitative research because:

“Trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability.” (Seale 1999)

On the other hand, validity is concerned with whether the research actually solves the problem it was supposed to and it also measures the level of accuracy of the findings (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers 2002). Validity can be explained in research terms as:

“Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit “the bull’s eye” of your research object?” (Joppe 2000, 1)

To ensure the validity and reliability of a research, triangulation is believed to be one of the best ways to evaluate that the research is up to the mark. Triangulation means data collection on the same topic but using more than one methodology. It
assures the validity of research because multiple methods are used to collect data from different kinds of sources on the same topic. It also helps to control the unfairness as explained by one scholar below:

“Triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology.” (Mathison 1988, 13)

The primary purpose of this research is to explore the reasons of unemployment among international students of LAMK and offer potential solutions to alleviate the unemployment situation. This research achieved its goals by answering all research questions and presenting a framework as a potential problem-solver. The data was gathered from different sources. Primary data was collected using interviews from multiple participants in having different stake in the research. A total of 15 interviews were conducted during Summer 2019 and Text-to-Speech software was used to transcribe the interviews. This helped the researcher to state exact words of the participants.

The secondary data was gathered from books, journal articles, reports, publications and citations. The existing literature helped to understand and clearly define the problem statement. Therefore, the validity of the research is ensured by using different data collection methods and it also tallies with triangulation method.

The researcher also presented the research methodology in detail. Benchmarking analysis was also used in addition to analysing the data gathered during the interviews. This indicates that the results of the research are consistent. During the semi-structured interviews, all questions were open-ended to make sure that the risk of bias and subjectivity is limited. Considering all the factors discussed above, the researcher is confident that the project complies with reliability and validity in all manners.
5 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify the root causes of unemployment among international students of LAMK and finding ways how to improve the unemployment situation for international students. The researcher used the existing literature to collect data from books, journal articles, published reports and online sources. This helped the researcher to establish a baseline for the project and move step by step towards the final goal. The researcher conducted interviews from students, recent graduates of LAMK, companies in Lahti region and also from employment service providers. The benchmarking approach was also utilized by the researcher to further strengthen this research.

The qualitative approach was best suited to get the thorough understanding of the problem. Therefore, the analysis of interviews helped the researcher to find out the root causes of unemployment among international students. The benchmarking analysis also helped to map out the potential solutions and present a model. In the presented model, the researcher considered all primary stakeholders and recommended activities and certain measures that can decrease the unemployment among international students at LAMK. The findings of this research can be used as a ‘point of reference’ in any city of Finland and it will surely help reduce unemployment for international students.

5.1 Suggestions for Future Research

Since this research is limited to the scope of just Lahti University of Applied Sciences, further research can be done about other universities. Moreover, it can also be studied how much improvement has been observed by the recommended activities. Another aspect of future research may include the comparison of Finnish students and international students in terms of employment and its effects on overall society.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Interview Invitation Letter

Hello Sir/Madam,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the research project. This invitation letter will answer some mandatory queries in advance about your role as a participant of this study.

**Purpose of Research:** The main purpose of this research is to learn and investigate the reasons of unemployment among international students of Lahti University of Applied Sciences.

**Benefits of Research:** This research will help to decrease unemployment from the Lahti region and it can be used by other authorities in Finland as well.

**Participant Role:** As a participant, a personal interview will be conducted with you on the research topic. The duration of the interview will last from half hour to 1 hour long and no prior preparation is needed.

**Confidentiality:** The interview will be recorded with your consent however, the contents of the interview will only be used for this research project. The personal details of the participants will be kept confidential will not be disclosed in the research. The researcher will use fictitious names to state the answers provided during the interviews.

Looking forward to meeting you and I trust that your participation will be helpful for the betterment of Finnish economy.

Regards,

Basit Tufail
Lahti University of Applied Sciences
Finland
APPENDIX 2. Interview Questionnaire

- Appreciation for participation in the interview
- Short introduction of the researcher to create a professional relationship
- Interview details:
  ✓ The interview will help to understand the reasons for unemployment of international students and how to improve this scenario.
  ✓ The duration of the interview will be from 30 minutes to 60 minutes.
  ✓ The participant is free NOT to answer any question(s), if he/she wants.
  ✓ Reassurance of previously agreed anonymity and confidentiality of the participant.
  ✓ Asking the permission of the participant to record the interview.

Questions

For International Students

1. Please tell me about yourself and your employment situation?
2. How long have you lived in Finland?
3. What are your expectations about getting a job related to your qualification?
4. Do you have any prior work experience?
5. What kind of work you are doing at the moment?
6. How will you describe your job search experience?
7. What kind of problems you face when you don't have a job?
8. In your opinion, what are the main reasons for unemployment among international students?
9. Did you receive any job support? If yes, please describe the details?
10. How is your experience with the TE office?
11. What do you think about your degree program at LAMK? Does it give you enough skills and knowledge that you can find a job?
12. How would you describe the employment structure of Finland according to your experience?
13. As a foreigner, what steps can be taken to improve the employment condition?
14. Have you ever faced discrimination during the interview or job search?
15. How do you feel about doing odd jobs during your study and after completing the degree?
16. How does unemployment effect your life?
17. What do you expect from Finnish employers?

**For Finnish Employers**

1. Please describe your designation at this company and how long have you worked here?
2. Do you have international employees at your organization?
3. What is your opinion about hiring international talents or recent graduates who are foreigners but living in Finland?
4. What is an ideal job candidate in your opinion?
5. How important is Finnish language to get a job at your organization?
6. Does your organization offer internships or free work opportunities?
7. Do you think that Finnish employers are biased when it comes to hiring international students?
8. Why are the companies doing internal hiring and not allowing international talents to enter their organizations?
9. Does your organization collaborate with any university for its projects?
10. What steps can the companies take to decrease unemployment among the international students?
11. What advice you would like to give to international students when they apply for a job at any Finnish organization?

**For Employment Service Companies**

1. Can you explain what is the project that Tampere city is working on?
2. Why do you think investing in foreigner students and workforce is important?
3. How was this idea born? What was the thinking behind it?
4. How has been the response so far? Do you have numbers to share with me, what percentage of unemployed got jobs after going through this process?
5. What kind of difficulties did you face or currently facing for your project?
6. How are the trainings session and workshops designed for international students?
7. Are companies willing to hire a foreign-employees who have less knowledge of Finnish language?
8. You work in collaboration with NewFactory, Growthbuilders, do you have any other partners? If yes, what kind of work help they are offering?
9. What is the future for this project and how does Tampere city want to do it in future?
10. What advice would you like to give for OSSI 2 project?
11. Can universities integrate themselves with this kind of projects? How?