Thao Pham

PROMOTING BUSINESS COLLABORATIONS FOR XAMK STUDENTS' THESIS.

Business Network Management and Recruitment Management Approach

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Abstract

Networking is a challenge not only for professionals but also for beginners. Networking skills has all kinds of application such as to search for supply and distribution partners, employment, B2B transactions. In this thesis, networking is focused as a necessary skill and challenges for students when finding business collaborations for theses.

When writing thesis, it is understandable that students wish to make their research outcomes more applicable and beneficial for organisations. But in reality, not every student succeed in finding business commission. In South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (XAMK), specialized personnel are assigned to manage the business network and coordinate businesses-students relationships. Therefore, when research about suggestions to improve businesses and students relationship's connectivity, XAMK business partnership coordinators is one of the main influencers, as well as students' perspective.

The thesis reviews previous research literatures about business networks, managing business network, social networks and recruitment management. It also employs quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to obtain data from chosen related research subjects, which are XAMK business partnership coordinators and XAMK students. Even though the students' survey has low response rate, students' opinions are summarised and analysed. In the end, four proposals are drawn and concluded. The proposals are an early thesis-wishes questionnaire, a controlled Linkedin group, an Internship program at XAMK and an infographic instruction. These proposals are the solution to the discovered problems such as the shortage on personnel, students' bad estimation on how to find business collaborations and students' lack of effective channels to network. Moreover, business partnership coordinating process and the roles of main research subjects are studied.

Keywords
Networking, recruitment management, thesis, business collaboration, commission, business network.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research idea's story of origin

At the beginning of August 2018, the thesis train for International Business program class of 2016 started. Following this train, the author started to participate in classes to learn the fundamental skills of writing thesis. At first, the thesis ideas are very relevant to the author's studied major – International Trade. The author was keen to collaborate with businesses in order to boost their experiences, employment chances and connections. As the search for commissioner continued, the author only managed to research online for interested managers. Then, the thesis supervisor advised the author to ask for XAMK business partnership coordinator – Mrs. Heta Vilén's help. But it was an unsuccessful attempt and the author had to choose another topic. Therefore, the fact that the author underestimated the challenges finding thesis commission makes them failed to find any interested companies.

After that, many questions surfaced in the author's mind:

Where can students find and connect with managers?
When should a student start contacting managers?
What are students' roles in a collaboration relationship?
What is the process of coordinating business partnership?
How effective is the process for students?

This leads to the idea of writing a research thesis about networking for students who are starting their thesis. To be specific, this thesis main aim is to increase the success rate of connecting businesses and students for thesis research. The thesis views the businesses-students collaboration relationships as business trading relationships. This is because the relationships involve monetary trading, specified agreements and the transfer of product or service. With that said, the thesis will also evaluate the business partnership coordinating process under the assumption that the process is currently not effective towards students' request. Therefore, the thesis will examine existed theories about recruitment management.

There are potential in this thesis topic besides boosting the capability and possibility of students finding thesis commission. Not only it creates more means and methods for students to network, the thesis topic can lead to more development in students' employment counselling program at South – Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences. As a result, the employment rate of XAMK students after graduation may increase as well. Hence, South – Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences will attract more students who want to have high employment chances after graduation.

1.2 Research objectives

As stated before, the thesis research's main aim is also the first objective which is to make suggestions and proposals to increase the number of students-businesses' collaboration for thesis. Objectively, any improvements made for this objective will target the business partnership coordinating processes and the thesis topic coordinating process. Simultaneously, these proposals also work as encouragements to students to search for thesis commission by themselves. Depends on the receivable data, the final proposals can be drastically different.

The second objective include gaining more understanding of the topic network under business network scope. As explained in chapter 1.1, the reason for this choice is because thesis collaboration is viewed as business trading process which includes trade activities such as monetary payment, continuous interactions, specified product, long-term connection. As business network focuses more on business behaviours in organisations, social interactions between individuals are still in the foundation of those behaviours. Therefore, a basic knowledge about social network and the factors that affect interpersonal behaviours are included in the thesis research.

Thirdly, the thesis is objected to gain more insight of student's opinions about the topic inclusively and the research questions exclusively. In other words, the objective is to see how many students realize their needs which related to the thesis topic or it is an underestimated subject that only get noticed at the last moment. Simultaneously, the objective also includes figuring out the perceived difficulties when it comes to networking with businesses.

1.3 Research questions

Following the main research aim, the main research question is “How to increase the success rate of connecting businesses and students for thesis collaboration?”. The determination factors of building a successful network are various and depend on different events that take place during a student’s study time. For this thesis, the focused event is students’ thesis phase at the third year of study or more. At this phase, the success rates of connecting businesses and students in thesis collaboration is measured by the number of commission applications that are successfully approved by study programs’ coordinator. Therefore, the effectivity of all suggestions made in this thesis can be measured through the total number of thesis commission applications each year.

Coming after the main research questions, there are five sub – questions this thesis want to answer. The five sub – questions are as follow:

What are the challenging factors when coordinating partnerships?

What is the partnership coordinating process?

What are the roles of XAMK students and XAMK business partnership coordinators within the network?

What are the common difficulties for XAMK students when starting a thesis collaboration?

Which Finnish characteristics can affect social networking process?

These five sub-questions are researched as the thesis writing process continues. Through different means and resources that answers are found. For the first and second questions, interview with Mrs. Heta Vilén – XAMK business partnership coordinator has brought out some answers. The third question is found by using existed theories to explain the topic’s network. The fourth question can be explained using a survey for XAMK students. From the survey, students’ opinions on various difficulties will be recorded. Finally, a review of mainstream media about Finnish characteristics leads to some general preconception to how these characteristics affect social networking.

The thesis questions need to be researched under XAMK business partnership coordinator and XAMK students' point of view. But in general, the final proposals are created under the author's view point who is a student at XAMK and have a different level of experience comparing to XAMK coordinators. Therefore, even though the coordinators' point of view is well listened, the proposal can be biased towards students' benefit more than the coordinators. As a result, it can be concluded that the research is made for students and it is made under student points of view.

1.4 Research methods

In order to answer the research questions and fulfil the research objectives, qualitative and quantitative research methods are used. The reason for this choice of research methods is that the research subjects are XAMK business partnership coordinator and XAMK students. Qualitative method is used to interview and analyse data from Mrs. Heta Vilén – Kouvola campus's business partnership coordinator. For XAMK students, quantitative research approach is the most suiting method since the data pool is greater.

With detailed explanation in the "Methodology" chapter of the thesis, the author justifies the reason why qualitative and quantitative research methods are used for each subject. In short, qualitative method is used to understand a small number of cases and quantitative method is needed when a large number of cases is studied. It is important to clarify that the two research methods are not combined to study one subject, but to be used separately for two different subjects.

In details, interview strategy will be used with Mrs. Heta Vilén for her work specialties as targeted by the objectives and research questions. On the other hand, a quantitative survey will be implemented and shared to students through different channels. At first intention, the thesis prioritizes studying the students at

South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences' Kouvola campus. But if the channels of survey distribution have access to students in different campuses, the survey result will remain focused to the topic. This is because the regional differences are not great and do not affect the outcomes at all.

2 BUSINESS NETWORK: WHAT IS IT AND HOW TO MANAGE IT?

This chapter is based on the book Managing Business Relationships by Ford et al. (2003). This book summarizes most of the IMP group's (Industrial Marketing and Purchasing group) researches on business behaviours within business network and inter-organisational business relationships. As stated in the research objectives, the thesis collaboration is considered to be a business activity. Therefore, a business network is an appropriated approach. Moreover, the business network approach help view the whole network in its basic units. This simplifies the complexity of network and allows better analysis.

2.1 Visualize business networks

2.1.1 The Nodes and Threads

Imagine a spider web in the morning, or after a rain, when droplets of water hang between threads, that combination of droplets and threads form a network of tiny water dots as they are all connected to each other through the spider threats. It is the same for business network which has hundreds of actors-nodes and relationships threat (sb. 18; Bengtsson, M. & Kock, S. 2000). The nodes in business networks represent business units, which include customers, producers, suppliers, service companies and more (sb.; Ford, D. & Mouzas, S. 2013). The threats which connected them are relationships. A network can have a minimum of two nodes, but many real-life networks have hundreds of nodes.

Within this business network, every node holds an important role to each other, and it can be tangible, intangible resources/intermediate products or human resources. The same rule is applied to the relationship threats as each node can have multiple connections with various functions and activities. Therefore, the business network doesn’t account individuality and one-way interaction. (Said book p. 18; Ford & Mouzas 2013, 3-4; Sutton-Brady et al. 2015.)

A realistic network doesn’t have only 3 or 4 nodes. It can have hundreds of nodes, and some of those nodes can be linked to a different network as well (Anderson et al. 1994). Because of this complication, it is vital to consider that some nodes that are not directly connected to a network can have affects on business interactions in the network itself. (Sb.) More firms have recognized the important of developing and managing both direct and indirect relationships within their networks (Wilkinson, I. & Young, L. 2002, 3; Thornton et al. 2012, 4). Therefore, indirect affects of other companies or other students to a potential company-student relationship are unavoidable and should be kept in mind.

2.1.2 **Businesses–XAMK coordinators–XAMK students**

The focus of this thesis is the Businesses-XAMK coordinator-XAMK students’ network. There are multiple businesses and hundred of XAMK students that are linked to this network, but it is possible to generalize and group businesses and XAMK students as two units. This leads to Figure 1 as the simplified version of the case network.

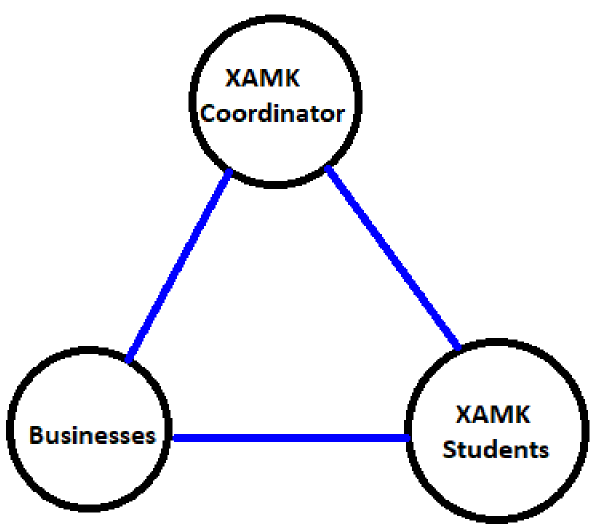

Figure 1. Businesses-XAMK coordinator-XAMK students’ network.

In Figure 1, the case network is shaped as a triangle with each node has two threads connecting the other nodes. This represents the direct interactions between all units and make it possible to study the topic network. An analysis with the ARA model is included for the understanding of researched network's interactions.

2.1.3 **Actors–Resources–Activities model**

So far, it is known that business units connect with each other through relationships, but the definition of relationships is wide and vague in B2B (business to business) context. Ford et al. (2003) suggest that under managerial points of view, business relationships are the interactions between businesses and its conditions. In other words, business relationships are defined by its patterns of behaviour and the conditions that lead to the behaviours over time. (Said book p. 38.) Therefore, managing relationships means to be able to acknowledge all the involved characters to its behaviours.

The earliest introduction of the ARA model, cited by Ford et al. (2010,13) and Lenney & Easton (2009,1), is by Håkansson & Johanson (1992). ARA stands for Actors, Resources, Activities; all of which are aspects that drives the behaviours in business relationships. To be more specific, the ARA model consists of three aspects of relationship core meaning: Actor bonds, activity links and resource ties.

"Actors bonds" means the bonds between individuals, but sometimes it can also be groups, departments, organisations. As an actor, they interact with other actors according to goals (Wilkinson, I. & Young, L. 2002, 5). These goals are mainly to transform or transfer resources in order to sustain and develop a bigger actor such as a company. (Lenney & Easton 2009, 1.) The communication between these actors is interpersonal and influenced by social network context. Therefore, with effective communication, the bonds between actors get to strengthen as well as their trust, mutual learning and commitments. (Said book p. 40.)

When two companies do business with each other, it means that there are interactions between individuals from both companies. This leads to the idea that some interactions are repetitive and specialized to fulfil companies' business requests. As these interactions occur through time, it becomes a link that connects two companies' business (sb.; Håkansson et al., 2009). As an example, a packaging company designs and produces boxes for a juice brand company. Activity links can be interpreted as the correlation between companies' business activities that gets established through time and affects their relationships.

In continuation of the previous example, the juice company requires a special bio-degradable box material for their juice box product. The packaging company must order the special material and starts producing boxes to the juice company's order. When the packaging company order the special material, they formed a resource tie with the juice company. This interaction is also referred to as adaptations, and no business relationship can develop without some adaptation (said book p. 40). These specialized resources, either tangible or intangible or human resources, tie the companies' business activities as well as their relationships (Baraldi et al., 2007; Apanasevic, T. 2014, 3). Hence, it is one of the major aspects when analysing B2B relationships. Additionally, the model is extended for an extra aspect called ideas or schema (Welch, C. & Wilkinson, I. 2002). But for this thesis research, the author only focusses in the original ARA model.

2.2 Businesses-XAMK coordinators-XAMK students' network analysed

2.2.1 Actors bonds

In the businesses-XAMK coordinator-XAMK students' network there are three basic units of actors: businesses, XAMK coordinator and XAMK students. Each of them connects to each other through bonds in different stages of relationships development. Combining the three units of actors, there are three basic relationships with different kind of bonds:

Businesses and XAMK coordinators.

XAMK coordinators and XAMK students.

Businesses and XAMK students.

In order to figure out the bonds between these relationships, the reverse engineering way of thinking is used. Chikofsky and Cross (1990), cited by Anwer and Mathieu (2016), defined reverse engineering as the process in which the subject system of components and their relationships are analysed to create a more abstract portrait or definition. Simply speaking, reverse engineering is to study the existed features to figure the causes or mechanism. In this case, it is to use their perceivable behaviours with each other to point out the crucial bonds which the relationships have.

Businesses and XAMK coordinators, interactions in this connection happens either because the companies have employment needs, or the coordinators want to advertise students to companies. Introductory actions certainly need to happen before anything else. Meeting arrangement follow the first introduction. At the meeting, two actors will have to exchange information regarding the business intentions. Then, communication is sustained during time when the coordinators trying to find the right students or the interested firms. After that, the process of connecting the student with company’s manager can happen. And finally, the coordinators keep in contact with businesses’ manager to monitor and support the students-businesses relationships. Moreover, business-coordinator relationships are maintained as the need for workers is long-term and continuous.

For XAMK coordinators and XAMK students, their connection is made when the coordinators need to find a student for the company, or the students want to find thesis collaboration or training/working placement. Similar to the previous relationship, initial contacts are made and possibly some information exchange time. Next is the process of connecting company to student. The interactions between coordinators and students are less than businesses with coordinators because most students use multiple methods to network and find collaboration, training or work placement.

Lastly, businesses and XAMK students' relationship has a lot of interaction, most of them happen after the connection has been made thanks to the coordinators. For thesis collaboration, interviews, meetings, email communications are common in the research progress. In the case of training or working position, many interactions happen within the working period as tasks, reports, assistances are performed.

With all the generic behaviours inspected, Table 1 summarises what kind of bonds these relationships have, how strong the bonds are and estimation of short-term or long-term relationships.

Table 1. The network's actor bonds.

	Businesses / XAMK coordinators	XAMK coordinators / XAMK students	XAMK students / Businesses
Type of bonds	Business to third party	Third party to employee	Employee to Employer
Bonds' strength	Medium with moderate level of interaction (only interact in some period when needed).	Low with basic level of interaction (only when needed).	High (frequent interactions).
Lasting time	Interrupted Long-term	Short-term	Long-term

From Table 1, the role of XAMK business partnership coordinators is more focused on business relationship than connection with students. And for students, the coordinators are just another networking channel or helper since most students can use more searching channels such as online websites and social media. But for businesses, the coordinators are the top option to find potential employee right at the educational institution. Therefore, they value the personal interaction with the coordinators more and maintain a long-term relationship but interrupted as their need for more human resource is not constant.

2.2.2 **Activity links**

Activity links, as stated before, are the repeated interactions that make the two actors depend on each other through creating values (Håkansson et al., 2009).

Since all of the common interactions have been listed, Table 2 is the summarisation of major business activities.

Table 2. The network's Activity links

	Activity links
Businesses – XAMK coordinators	Employ the school's students – Connect businesses and students. Collaboration with XAMK for other projects.
XAMK coordinators – XAMK students	Handle students' requests of needs.
XAMK students - Businesses	Work in specialized occupation or project. Manage workers' requests. Assess result. Pay salary to workers.

Table 2 has shown the fact that there is only one activity link between XAMK coordinators and students. With only one activity link, the bond between two actors is not strong. But the fact that the coordinators are employed by South-Eastern University of Applied Sciences to organize collaborations from businesses with either the institution itself or the students is undeniable. To put it another way, based on the job position, business partnership coordinators' tasks focus on the causes of helping students more than helping businesses.

2.2.3 Resource ties

As explained before, resource ties happen when specified resource quality or type is needed in the relationship's activities. For a relationship such as businesses – coordinators – students, human resource is the most obvious. Other resource ties are job market and investments. The human resource tie is especially strong because the "human" in this case are trained workers. For those companies' manager, the coordinators are the fastest, most assured and directed way to recruit well trained workers. Moreover, money and effort can be spent less when recruiting human resource through this network. For coordinators, they are standing between demand and supply of human resources. For students, they benefit from the job market and a more underground network channel which is exclusive to XAMK students. The underground network can greatly increase their chances of finding a job faster than others.

In conclusion, resource ties are classified in Table 3. For each relationship in the network, there are resource ties that match the relationships' characteristics.

Table 3. The network's resource ties

	Resource ties
Businesses – XAMK coordinators	Human resource, contacts from potential students. Contacts from potential businesses' manager and investors
XAMK coordinators – XAMK students	Contacts from employers. Contacts from peer students.
XAMK students - Businesses	Workforce. Monetary resource. Job makers. Project investors.

2.3 **The model of managing network**

A business network is like an iceberg, underneath the surface actors are many more indirect actors. (said book p. 175.) The model of managing in networks is constructed based on two main characteristics of network: broad and complex. As discussed before, business networks do not involve individuality and any company that put themselves in the middle of the network fails at anticipating actions and reactions from other actors. As a result, suboptimal outcomes are unavoidable for one or more actors (Valkokari et al. 2016, 3) and equally mutual benefits are extremely rare (Chowdhury et al. 2016). In addition, company's actions not only affect actors which the company work with directly, those actions also have effects on actors who are further away in the network links. Consequently, companies within networks are influenced by each indirect actor as well.

Hence, to understand how managers can handle those challenges, the following sub-chapters attempt to explain Fort et al. (2003)'s definition on "the model of managing in network". While managing network means that organisation can change, affect increase, maintain, eliminate relationships in the network (Aaboen et al. 2014, 3; Nelson, R. 2001). The model of managing in network functions as a guild line, check list, compass and warning to any attempts to manage relationships. The model does not show specific solutions or strategies. This requires managers to incorporate their own experiences and knowledge in order to make appropriate choices in the nutshell of business networks. (Sb.)

The model of managing in network helps shape any proposals of changes that are made after necessary data is collected. It is an extra theoretical foundation to support the research conclusion. Moreover, by considering the model of managing in network, negative effects toward the network are calculated in final suggestions. But as network and relationships are unique for every company, too much standardisation is inefficient (Ford, D. & Mouzas, S. 2013; Olsen et al. 2014).

The model of managing networks requires managers to consider three aspects: network pictures, networking, network outcomes and the interconnection relationship between them. Figure 2 shows how these aspects are linked to each other. Overall, Figure 2 takes the form of a triangle with each aspect located on each of the triangle's ends. These aspects are necessary for both researchers and managers when trying to understand and operate in the network.

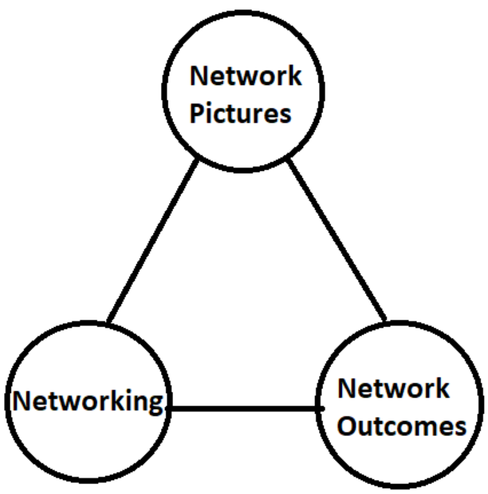

Figure 2. The model of Managing in Networks (Ford et al. 2003).

2.3.1 Network pictures

When people look at a circle in three-dimensional space, the chances are some will see a full circle, some will see different oval shapes, and some see only a straight line. This example tells us that with one matter, when viewed in different angles will give different conclusions. These conclusions are called "perspective". In other words, perspective is the way one views a matter, and this perspective is unique to everyone. Because every matter is differently viewed by everyone, business network's subjects are no exception. Within the model of managing in networks, these perspectives have another name: "network pictures".

Network pictures are the views of those who make networking decisions in businesses. According to Ford et al. (2003), these views depend on the observers' experience, perception of position within the network, relationships (Ramos et al. 2010, 4). Moreover, the observers' problems, uncertainties, abilities as well as their knowledge can affect which views are perceived. With that said, there are situations that one picture is viewed by a number of managers. In that case, the common view is the source to trigger group's actions when facing changes. (said book p. 176.)

Beside its benefit, common views are also the stereotypes about the network. Basically, these network-stereotypes are formed through only focusing in these questions "who should do what?" and "who should work with whom?". (said book p. 177.) As there is no indefinite definition of any network, there are no specific types, only networks' characteristics as perceived by companies. Then, if a company focuses its picture on the internal factors of production, the company is not flexible to changes or challenges from other network's actors. On the other hand, a company which wants to change must broaden their pictures of the network as they might have to add more actors in order to supply for the new change (Sb).

2.3.2 Networking

Networking means to manoeuvre (maneuver) relationships in a network. In order to manoeuvre these relationships, choices have to be made according to the perceived network pictures. An active business makes choices on a day-to-day basis. Explained in his book, Ford et al. (2003) listed the three types of choices can be taken as according to three aspects of business networks. Those types of choices are: choices within existing relationships, choices about positions and choices about how to network. (said book p. 179 – 183.)

The first type of choice – choices within existing relationships exams the business network aspect of how company can define its relationships, and its relationships can also shape the company. At first, companies make the decision in order to change based on what they think of the network pictures. When a company decides to make changes in its existing business, it must alter some of other existing relationships. Either positive or negative, these alterations come down to two options: to conform or confront (sb.). To conform is to be obligated to work with the demanding actors, and to confront is to challenge the demanding actors. If a company chose to confront its partner, then the partner will either turn it down or conform with the requests.

The second type of choice is choices about positions. Once again, the company's perceived network pictures help managers identify the company's positions. In other words, company's positions come from the perception of previous interactions (Gadde et al., 2010). In most cases, the company is connected to two or more businesses that work directly with each other as well. In that sense, company can use its advantages with one business to make the other one complies with the company's requests. Therefore, by identifying the position, a company is in within a close-knit network, managers can gain advantages over other actors. One other way to boost one actor's existing position is to increase business flow or market share, financially becomes the big player and create new relations. New relations are a good source for learning, developing and help as managers confront old routines (Wilkinson, I. & Young, L. 2002, 7).

Lastly, the choices about how to network deals with the level of control wanted in the outcomes. In the business network context, control level means how much power one company has over a set of relationships. One example is when the company is the only consumer of many suppliers, this company will have total control over what and how suppliers produce their goods. But total control is destructive, because if the main consumer company fails to operate, it jeopardises the business of whoever it is supplied by. For that reason, firms have the choices to coerce or concede (sb.). By definition, to coerce is to force others to one's wishes and to concede is to accept others' wishes or offers.

2.3.3 **Network outcomes**

After making decision and proceeding to action, company receives the outcomes of its choices. Alongside with the intended result of decisions, outcomes can be positive, negative or mixed towards the actors involved. There are three level of effect from outcomes as suggested by Ford et al. (2003). Arranged according to the effective scale, the three level of outcomes are single actors, single relationships and the whole network (said book p. 185 – 7). In repetition with previous statements, business networks are complex and as a result, the network outcomes are various as well. In reality, there are outcomes that are unseen, minor and immediate. To an extent, managing network outcomes is to foresee most possible outcomes for an action. This limits the negative effects as low as possible. In a way, business outcomes are also both decision makers and decision causes.

When outcomes affect single actors in the network, these actors can be those significant direct actors, or it can be view point company itself as an actor. It is because the network is complicated, each actor is exposed to many outcomes from other actors' actions and its actions as well. It is a manager's job to evaluate the outcomes towards or from direct actors and other single indirect actors.

At the level of single relationship, the effect of outcomes is classified into two types that consider its results – effectiveness and its process – efficiency. Given the point that in its basic form, relationships are made from two actors and the set of behaviours that binds them together, the single relationship is positioned in between single actors and the whole network level. Similar to the single actors' level, network outcomes not only influence the focused relationship, but also disturb other relationships surrounding the main one. It is because with each change in business relationships, these changes are studied by other actors in order to coordinate their future decision. Therefore, bad impressions can be established and spread among other single relationships.

Finally, the existence of effects of outcomes on the whole network is possible. The attempt to change or stabilize business operation can have effect on the entire network. In most cases, these changes are adaptation choices which initiate by one company and then followed by many more. In the same way natural world function, firms make adaptation choices are made to ensure survival and cast out any obsolete competitors. These changes then happen like chain reaction and gradually so common that every firms have the same feature. At that point, the new network is completely different from the old one: include new actors, lost some old actors and consist of new relationships.

2.3.4 **Interconnection**

The discussion continues as the connection between aspects of managing networks are examined. In total there are three interconnections: network pictures – networking, network pictures – network outcomes and networking – network outcomes. The three aspects of managing networks are linked in a mutual relationship where each of them affects and is affected by the others two. Upon closer inspection, there are undeniably contrasts between the interconnections.

The link between network pictures and networking is obvious. Broadly speaking, network pictures, networking, network outcomes carry the general ideas of perspectives, behaviours and results. So, when one investigates network pictures and networking, they are looking at the concept of perspectives and behaviours. To put it simply, perspectives determine behaviours and behaviours can change perspectives. Identically, company acts upon the recognition of network pictures and networking actions alter the network pictures.

The interconnection between network pictures and network outcomes is next on the list. Correspondingly, the concept behind network pictures and network outcomes are perspectives and results. When put under simpler concepts, the interconnection becomes pronounced than before. Without a doubt, perspectives and results are in a corporative relationship. It is positive that results can change perspectives, such as when one accomplished a goal, their view of life is changed forever. Nonetheless, perspectives contribute in shaping or predicting potential results. From that point, network picture shape and predict network outcomes while network outcomes reshape network pictures. This interconnection reaction happens continuously without stopping just like the other two interconnections.

Lastly, the interconnection of networking and network outcomes is explained by the concept of behaviours and results. The networking action is the direct cause that lead to network outcomes. For example, as firm decides to purchase less unit of products or use less of service, immediately, the supplier firm has to change its production level or seeks more buyers to maintain its profit. Then network outcomes also determine networking choices in the form of prediction and warning. Moreover, network outcomes can limit networking choices when the outcomes involve the decrease of network relationships.

3 SOCIAL NETWORKING: A SOCIAL SCIENCE'S APPROACH

While business network approach sees the nodes as business units (usually an organisation), social network theory sees that relationships occur between human (Valkokari et al. 2016, 4). Therefore, gaining more understanding about social networking benefits the research as the case network is in small medium scales with one of the nodes being an individual (XAMK coordinator). This chapter is mostly based on the book "Social network analysis" by McCulloh et al. (2013). Discussing the social theories that affect social network analysis, the chapter goal is to discuss why people want to connect within the research case. This will also act as a tool that creates the basic instruction for students, which is one of the main aims of the thesis.

3.1 Social networks description

McCulloh et al. (2013)'s description of social networks is very similar to business networks with the nodes and threads. But in the social science context, the nodes represent social units like individuals, families, kids, teenagers, adults etc. In other words, social network study is the study of relationships and networks between humans. Graphs are commonly used as a visual interpretation of networks in social network study. In these graphs, the nodes can also be called vertices, and the threads are called edges or links (said book p. 4).

Social network study is a branch of the social science tree, it has close connections to other social science studies such as psychology, sociology, history, linguistic, communication, business and more. Therefore, many psychology theories are considered when the human relationships forming processes are examined. The following social theories are discussed by McCulloh et at. (2013) as the dictated factors towards the initiation of relationship.

3.2 **The social dynamics behind social network formation**

3.2.1 **The social forces**

Homophily, reciprocity, proximity, prestige, transitivity, and balance are the six social forces that influence the relationships forming processes. They are also the costs and benefit when having social connections. (said book p.113.)

McCulloh et al. paraphrased Blau (1977) and McPherson et al. (2001) on what homophily is: homophily is the human tendency to connect with people who have similarity to themselves (McPherson et al. 2001). The similarity can be interests, belief, goals, race, gender or culture. Homophily promotes people self-worth by reinforcing individual characteristics. (Currarini, S. & Mengel, F. 2016, 1.) Through interaction, group of people sharing one characteristic can influence each other with more different ideas. This could create changes in network behaviour, ideology and value systems. (Sb.)

The impulse to connect with whoever initiate relationships with you is called reciprocity. In generally, reciprocity is the phenomenon in which human has the tendency to be kind towards others who are kind to them first (Dufwenberg, M. & Kirchsteiger, G. 2004; Falk, A. & Fishbacher, U. 2006). Reciprocity is easily recognized in the case of social media communication, such as Facebook and Twitter. Status plays a major role in assuring reciprocity. It is more likely that two peers with somewhat similar status will be successful in making connections. For example, student A sends student B a message, it is more likely for student B to reply and continue to communicate. But if person B is a CEO of a company, there is less likely a reply to student A. In some cases, a person's status can be overly perceived.

Proximity is the theory that relationship forming processes is affected by organizational level and psychological distance between individuals. For example, people in the shipping and warehousing department work closely to each other than with the marketing or sale department. As well as kids that live closely to each other tends to become friends easier that with kids that do not. The higher the level distance is, the harder it is to maintain interactions and social links. With that said, the proximity force also contributes to the formation of groups and social circles, hence forming the social norms. (Sb.)

Prestige individuals in a group are those who excel in following the social norms and rules of the group. When practicing the social norms and rules, these individuals are not only promoting their own self-value but also functioning as a validation of beliefs for others in the group. In other words, they become a living proof for believers. As a result, their value is perceived to be greater than others and can strengthen others' self-value as well. Some of the outcome of this phenomenon are the prestige nodes pay less effort forming new social links and all other nodes want to connect w the prestige ones. (Sb.) Prestige is paired with proximity to express the relationships which is determined by level of direct or indirect in friend nomination through mutual friends (Zhang et al. 2014, 513).

The transitivity (clustering) dynamic represents the case of closely connected social links. In a close-knitted network, people have the tendency to connect with those who they already have a mutual connection with (Block, P. 2015, 164). (Sb.) Simply speaking, If A is B and C friends, there is a great chance that B and C will become acquaintance. Transitivity appears frequently in the business world as managers and partners connect after business hour to strengthen their personal trust.

Delamater et al. (2015) have reported that the balance theory was first proposed by Heider, F. (1958), and then got further developed by Rosenberg, M. & Abelson, R. (1960). Basically, the social balance theory takes place between three actors with at least one person. In this collection of connections, two of the actors have an existed relationship. If these two actors perceive the third actor in the same way, either positive or negative attitude, the triangle of relationships is balance. If they don’t then a change in perception is needed to maintain the connection.

3.2.2 **Social exchange theory**

McCulloh et al. (2013) introduced social exchange as a theory in their book, but Delamater et al. have claimed that social exchange is a framework that supports other theories (2015, 14). In any cases, as suggested by McCulloh et al. (2013, 148), the social exchange perspective is first introduced by Homans, G. (1958). This theory suggests that exchanging is a fundamental activity in any human relationships (McCulloh et al. 2013) and the resources for exchanging can be both tangible or intangible (Delamater et al. 2015, 14).

The social exchange perspective examines human behaviours in the context that everyone has freedom of choice (Delamater et al. 2015). Through the conditional learning evolutionary process, human unconsciously makes choices to maximize the profits and minimize any costs (Mazur 1998; Skinner 1953; as cited by Delamater et al. 2015). Therefore, the same principle also applies to human relationships. With that said, if in a relationship, the costs to maintain the relationships outweigh the benefits, it will soon be disconnected (McCulloh et al. 2013).

In continuation of the previous idea, it is clear that the social exchange theory has affects on why people initiate connections to each other. To put it another way, people form relationships because they think that relationship benefits them. This phenomenon can sometime happen regardless of social norms. (Blau 1994; cited by McCulloh et al. 2013.) Other theories that are supported by the social exchange framework are equity concepts, power concepts, affect theory etc. The reciprocity force is also assisted by the social exchange theory. (McCulloh et al. 2013.)

3.2.3 **The individual actors**

In 1902, Charles Horton Cooley presented the “looking-glass self” concept, as referenced by Delamater et al. (2015, 122) and McCulloh et al. (2013, 110), which focuses on the human tendency to evaluate themselves through others’ perception. At the earlier stages of human development, children reflect themselves through the responds of their parents, family members, playmates. When one gets older, the amount of connections they have increase, at this point the mirror become the social circle a person is in. (Delamater et al. 2015, 122.)

As the human need to define and maintain self-worth exists in almost all sociology research. It is clear that as a human being, we need to be in a social group to achieve the certainty in self’s value. (McCulloh et al. 2013, 110.) Hence, the choice one makes to join a network is also highly influenced by the characteristics that they perceive about themselves.

3.3 **The Finnish social context**

3.3.1 **Finnish perspectives**

Finnish people have some very distinctive characteristics which are derived from their cultural values and social norms. Some of the straightforward traits are expressionless, solitude or silence, and stubbornness. These traits can greatly affect the relationship forming cycle.

Richard Wilkins (2005) explains the Finnish social practice called “asiallinen” as a nonverbal way to express high levels of respect and social appropriateness (Chen, L. 2017, 133). Even though when following asiallinen, a person must show no emotion or feelings. Asiallinen is quite common in Finnish daily social situation. It is very rare to see a Finn expressing extreme emotions in public as they perceive that action to be impolite and immature, but exception can happen when Finns are drunk.

A BBC news article by Laura Studarus (2018) expressed her fascination on the Finnish culture of no small talk. In this article, Studarus suggested that Finnish treasures the nature of the conversation rather than the frequency. In most Finnish people's opinion, if there is no good topic to talk about then they would rather not to talk at all. Combining with the English language incompetency as Swedish and Finnish are the national language, Finnish people tend to avoid communicating with English-speaking foreigner.

Sisu is a meaningful Finnish word which shows the Finnish never-give-up spirit. Emilia Lahti, a researcher of sisu from Aalto University, said that "You could say that sisu is energy, determination in the face of adversities that are more demanding than usual." (Smirnova, O. 2018). Sisu has become one of the main values for Finnish people, the pride of being fierce and brave when facing hardships. But too much sisu can change the story. Veikka Gustafsson, Finnish national symbol of sisu as he climbed Mount Everest in 1993, apprehended that sisu also portraits some aspect of stubbornness (Smirnova, O. 2018). It is true that to reach high levels of determination, a person can ignore many boundaries, including physical, emotional and moral. None the less, it is possible to assume that stubbornness exists, at some level, in Finnish cultural values (Finland career guide 2011, 107).

As these traits get reflected on the majority of Finnish, it changes the application of social dynamics on how a Finn initiates new connections. The no-small-talk (or silence) practice demotes the reciprocity theory of wanting to connect to people who initiate conversation first. Moreover, the stubbornness characteristic posts challenge to whoever wish to maintain the relationship with a Finn. Luckily, in the modern world, Finnish people has gradually familiarized themselves with more universal social practice. But respectively speaking, the differences are what make a culture unique and inspiring.

3.3.2 Finns professional life

In the professional world, Finnish people also promotes the simplicity that already existed in their aesthetic. There is no contrast in the level of formality in Finnish daily life or professional life (Finland career guide 2011, 107). But the practice of trust and respect are so commonly performed that Finns, without any saying, will expect that from others. To put it simply, Finnish culture is rather informal and favours simplicity, but it is also expected great respect and trust between one and another, especially in the working world.

From the fact that Finns respect their works, professional social events are seriously engaged by Finns. Therefore, connections making during these events is an exception to the common rule of no small talk.

4 RECRUITING MANAGEMENT

Recruitment procedures have a major role in maintaining organizational activities. Recruitment strategies belong to human resource management studies as companies can not function without its manpower. (Phillips, M. & Gully, M. 2015). Therefore, recruiting management is an important task, and it requires extensive planning and monitoring as not only managers have to find available employees, they also have to make sure that the employees are suitable for the jobs (Rashmi, T. 2010, 11).

4.1 Recruitment theories and methods

In recruiting management, there are a few key points that the recruiters must remember. According to Mamoria, C. and Gankar, S. (2008), a recruiter must understand that recruitment is a two-way street; objective and subjective factors of the organisation are important; organisational behaviours in managing applications are noticeable. The theory of mutual interactions in recruitment explains that recruiter and recruitee are equally important in recruitment processes. While a recruiter tries to choose suitable recruitees, a recruitee is also capable of choosing which firm to work for.

In order to decide, the recruitees usually pay attention to objective and subjective factors of the organisation, as well as how job applications are processed. Objective factors are the characteristic of the employment offers such as salary, benefits, location, promotion chances, work nature and educational opportunities. Subjective factors involve emotional and personal perceptions from the recruitees towards the company's image. (Acikgoz, Y. 2019, 4.) Lastly, recruitees' decisions are affected by how long the recruitment cycle lasts in the organisation. When the recruitment process takes a lot of time, the recruitees are going to accept other companies' offer as based on their personal need. (Mamoria & Gankar 2008, 113)

4.1.1 XAMK students as an external source of recruitment

Previous books about recruitment strategies explained that there are two main sources of manpower for recruiters: internal source and external source (Mamoria & Gankar 2008, 118-119; Sarma 2008, 89-90). Internal sources include current employees that can be trained, promoted, demoted, upgraded or transferred based on the organisational need. External sources cover potential workers that are outside the company's current employees' group. External sources consist of individuals who are currently in the labour market such as undergraduate and graduate students, unemployed skilled workers, retirees and others who are not in the labour market. (Rashmi, T. 2010, 25.)

XAMK undergraduates and graduates fall into the second category as external source for employers. While University students are trained with knowledge on different fields and topics (Weinstein, R. 2018, 283), most of them are young and inexperienced as they are at entry level in the labour market. Therefore, most XAMK students are intended to work on entry level jobs by companies. Other cases involve students with master's degree or previous working experiences. Then the campus is an ideal place to recruit personnel for managerial, professional positions before other competitors.

4.1.2 XAMK business partnership coordinators as a recruiting method

In Copenhagen Business School, the important of establishing close relationships with the business community is valued as their students have more practice opportunities in master theses or research projects (Geersbro, J. & Hedaa, L. 2001, 5). With proper recruiting strategies or approaches, XAMK students and businesses can connect better as well. Sarma (2008) and Mamoria & Gankar (2008) explained two methods of recruiting that involve educational institution in its process: direct method and third-party method. The method of hiring personnel through a contact can be classified as informal hiring (Franzen & Hangartner 2006, cited in McDonald, S. 2013, 9). It is known that XAMK business partnership coordinators' tasks are to receive requests from both companies and students. Then the coordinators will try to match suitable candidates to suitable employers. With that said, theoretically the coordinating process can be classified as either the direct method or the third-party method of recruitment.

When using direct method, travelling recruiters initiate contact with the placement official of the educational institution. The placement official will attract students and if needed will arrange interviews in the school space and provide students' resumes. The requirements for firm when using this method are to prepare good descriptions about the organisation and the job offers. These descriptions will then be informed to students by the placement official. Beside the placement official, professors and lecturers are also involved in this method. (Weinstein, R. 2018, 284.) It is because they can recommend students with good records and skills directly to the recruiters. (Sarma 2008, 91; Mamoria & Gankar 2008, 120.) This method puts more focus on recruiters as recruiters are the most active actors.

The third-party method, stated by Mamoria & Gankar (2008, 121-123), refers to educational institutions as an active party. This is because educational institutions want to provide their students with after graduation opportunities. The placement official then act as a data coordinator to provide firms available data about the students and their skills. The employers maintain contact with the placement officials and the teachers of suitable fields of study. It is possible for a company to collaborate with the school's placement staffs to create a work study program or summer jobs to enhance students' interest in the company's operation. Therefore, this method focuses on the role of the placement staffs and students in the educational institution.

Other respectable method is through the internet. Sarma (2008, 91) stated: "The internet is playing a more important role in recruitment. It advertises jobs and serves as a place to locate job applicants". When doing recruitment via the internet, the turnaround time is reduced exponentially. All electronic transferred tasks can be done within minutes or even seconds such as electronic mails and online forms. Job advertisement costs are also reduced since newspaper advertisements are not necessary. Moreover, online job advertisements can reach a wider section of labour market, providing the recruiters with more options of skilled workers. (Sarma 2008, 91.) Besides that, social media can act as an online profile or resume for employers to assess other criteria such as online behaviours, perceptions on different topics. Not only social media is beneficial for individuals, social media are also an important channel for business exercise (Valkokari et al. 2016, 4; Bondarouk et al. 2013, 25). As beneficial as it is, social media networking platforms depend on level of interactions between different users to be successful (Berezan, O., Raab, C., Tanford, S., & Kim, Y. S. 2015; Rosenbaum, M. S., Ostrom, A. L., & Kuntze, R. 2005).

4.2 Managing applicant pool

Currently, there are 9300 students studying at South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences with around 1700 students graduated every year as according to XAMK official website. This means that there are at least 1700 students in XAMK applicant pool. In order to find the suitable future employees among 1700 students, methods and strategies are employed. As a result, different application methods are created to shorten the applicants searching processes.

Application is a way for students to present themselves to employers. On the employers' perspectives, application helps firms understand more about the students and make the hiring decision. Application methods can also be the self-sabotage weapon if the student does not prepare it properly, and it can be the filter tools for companies as well. Screening strategies are used in the second stage of selecting applications.

4.2.1 **Application methods**

Kandola et al. (2001, 57-65) explained the common methods used by companies to receive applications from job seekers as there are three main types of application: applicants' forms, CVs and speculative applications, the internet. To put it simply, applicants' forms are the forms that companies prepare and hand out to interested job seekers. The forms then will be filled, recollected and analysed to sort out the best candidates. Different types of form can measure different criteria. Speculative applications are submissions from job seekers who predict a yet-existed position. Internet applications are for those who can use internet.

As the book by Kandola et al. is written in 2001, time has made the internet more reachable to many job seekers, including students (Plummer, M., Hiltz, S.R. & Llotnick, L. 2011). In current time, most job applications are sent online through the internet. There are three main ways to send job applications: managers' email, companies' website, online websites. Moreover, the types and contents of job applications have become more diverse to match different working fields' demand. In a job application, there can be CVs/resumes, introduction videos, motivation letters, portfolio etc. All of those are in electronic format and can be shared easily through the internet.

For managers' email and companies' website, the applications are usually answering a job advertisement or advertising themselves as a stand out applicants for speculation of work positions. It is more direct and suitable for entry-level positions as the selection process is not complicated. Online websites consist of many types of website. The websites can be non-profit, created and monitored by the government; belong to an agency that specialized in finding executives, managerial positions; or it is a social media website. Either ways, the basic principles are that applicants can view job offers, submit their application or create a worker profile for potential companies to search. The function that applicants can create an online profile is more beneficial to managerial positions as the application pool is smaller, and firms are willing to invest time in searching for such important position. But if the application pool only includes one educational institution, the online profile method is still a good way for students to present themselves better towards recruiters who contact the school.

5 METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter discusses the usage of research methods regarding the purpose of the research topic. Focusing on answering the main research questions and the four sub-questions, as well as fulfilling the research objectives, suitable research methods are selected and applied during the research process. This chapter includes four parts that explain the research methods and processes in detail: research methods, data collection, data analysis and reliability, validity and limitation.

In research methods, the choices of research procedures are explained with the justification of the thesis purposes. A detail description of how all the research data were collected is presented in the data collection part. For the data analysis part, some of the analytical methods is included as they are used to draw conclusions in the next chapters. Reliability, validity and limitation part explains the researcher’s effort in gathering realistic relevant data as well as the variables that are not accounted.

5.1 Research methods

In reminiscences of the thesis purposes, the main research question is how to increase the number of theses collaborations between businesses and students of South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences? Moreover, the four sub-questions are as followed: what challenging factors when coordinating partnerships at XAMK are; what partnership coordinating processes is; what common difficulties for XAMK students when starting a thesis collaboration are; how Finnish social context affects the business – XAMK students' partnership. As there are two main research subjects that the thesis considers, XAMK business partnership coordinator and XAMK students, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are applied.

Ragin (1994), cited by Have (2004, 14), explained that qualitative research strategy is practiced when a smaller amount of examinees is involved in the context of the study, or in other word, case study focused. Therefore, qualitative research strategy often requires extensive investigation and literature review in order to draw conclusions that theoritically supported. To put qualitative strategy in comparison with quantitative strategy, qualitative research's result requires comprehensive amount of verbal explaination and little to non numeral clarification (Have 2004,15). Some of the common styles or means for qualitative researchers are interview, documents' review, ethnography, focus groups, etc.

As the scope of qualitative research focus on case study, it is possible to claim that qualitative research strategy is suitable for XAMK business partnership coordinator as a individual case. The purpose of involving Mrs. Heta Vilén in this thesis is to understand her role and her perception on the thesis research questions. Therefore, interview with Mrs. Vilén are a qualitative way to obtain her opinions and view point. The interview help indentify challenging factors when coordinating partnerships at XAMK, the partnership coordinating processes and confirm some Finnish social contexts which affect the business – XAMK students' partnership.

Beside using qualitative research strategy, quantitative strategy is used for the other research subject - XAMK students. Quantitative research strategy, as stated by Have (2004,14), is used to exam an extensive set of data and summarize a few of the common elements. The idea is to investigate a considerable amount of variables and distinguish general patterns which are proven by mathematical equations. Most of the time, quantitative results come in the form of tables, charts, percentages, numerical data. With quantitative research methods, the conclusion is usually straight-forward with definite claims. (Have 2004,15.) Therefore, many researchers in natural sciences study apply quantitative strategy in their papers.

Consequently, quantitative research strategy is needed to collect and analysis data from a big group of XAMK students as they are the other perspectives that this thesis wants to gain understanding on. Keith F. Punch (2003, 15) stated that in quantitative thinking as well as our daily life, most variables relate to each other with ‘cause’ and ‘outcome’ relationship. Punch explained that variables are the features which belong to each unit of analysis. These ‘cause’ and ‘outcome’ variables are preferred to in imperical research as ‘independent’ and ‘dependent’ variables. (Punch 2003, 15.) Take the thesis’s main research question as an example: “how to increase the number of theses collaborations between businesses and students of South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences?". From the research question, ‘increase the number of theses collaboration’ is the independent variable, and the methods to do it is the dependent variable.

With the estimation of a big sample size, the survey method is employed in order to collect XAMK students’ opinion. All of the survey questions are designed to gain the insight view from XAMK’s students to the business collaboration idea. In general, the survey first distinguishes at what percentage does the sample group actually want to do collaboration with businesses, and then tries to clarify what are the challenges. But since the sample size includes third year students who are mostly on the thesis journey already and the second year students who are at the very beginning of thesis writing, the responds for ‘what are the challenges’ can come from both past experiences and future prediction. Therefore, proper clarification questions will be added to increase the logical foundation when analyzing the collected data.

5.2 Data collection

The interview is semi-constructed, open-ended with the main questions given to the interviewee before hands. The interview is in Discourse Units format which according to Houtkoop & Mazeland (1985), cited by Have (2004, 68), is when one party is the expert and their opinions are the main focus of the conversation, while the other party act as a listener. In this thesis's case, Mrs. Heta Vilén is the expert who tell their opinion, and the researcher is the listener. With the use of technology, the interviews are conducted via Office Teams, a Microsoft Office 365 application for working in projects with multiple individuals.

After the interview, conversations are transcribed into text format and used within the permission agreed among parties. A list of interview questions is included in Appendix 1. The recording files are kept by the researcher and can only be disclosed if the interviewees agree to. It is the researcher's responsibility to assure the interview process is ethical and properly executed. The method for analyzing these interview data is inductive with grounded theory and is explained in the data analysis part of this chapter.

Keith F. Punch (2003, 33) proposed that there are different levels of data or concepts in survey research methods, the collected data are simple and 'raw' but the end conclusions are more abstracts. The hierarchy of concepts from general to specific are research area, research topic, objectives, general research question, specific research questions, data collection questions (Punch 2003, 34). For this thesis survey, as the units of analysis are XAMK students, the 'specific research questions' level includes these questions:

How many XAMK students want to do thesis collaboration with businesses?
What are the common difficulties for XAMK students when starting a thesis collaboration?
What are XAMK students' opinion on some possible solution?
What are the common networking channels that XAMK students use?

With the ‘specific research questions’ level figured, the final survey’s content is well crafted and capable of solving the research questions. A detailed list of the survey’s questions used is listed in Appendix 2. The survey sample size includes XAMK students in Kouvola, Mikkeli, Kotka and Savonlinna, but the targeted groups consist of second and third year students since they are currently writing or entering the thesis writing process. The survey platform used is Office Forms, a Microsoft Office 365 application for surveys or questionaires research method.

The survey distribution instrument is a combination of email invitations/notifications and facebook-group posts. For the email-invitations instrument, an email is sent to the thesis train Moodle course with the help of Mrs. Ulla Puustelli as she frequently sends out recruitment news to XAMK students. With the facebook-group posts instrument, the idea is to post the survey in the “Opiskeljan infotaulu/Infoboard XAMK” facebook group which has 2,097 members as recorded on 21st December 2018. Therefore, the estimated sample size is from 100 to 500 respondents depends on the margin of error.

5.3 **Data analysis**

For the qualitative interview data, the grounded theory approach is employed which consists of two phases. According to Have (2004, 134), the first phase of the grounded theory approach includes dividing and comparing pieces of collected data, then arranging those data into concepts’ categories. This process is named ‘the constant comparative method’. At the end of this phase, when all the data pieces are sorted in to one or multiple concepts, these fragments become the illustrator for the concepts they are in. In other words, these data fragments suit the concepts and act as examples for the concepts as well. The first phase can also be called ‘open coding’. (Have 2004, 134.)

After the first phase, the second phase requires two analytical methods, one is to connect the codes (sorted data fragments) using existed theories under suitable conditions, the other is to generalize the codes and the phenomenon they express into a more abstract concept. It is called ‘theoretical sampling’ as the entire process requires guidance from background theories. This grounded theory method got its name because not only new hypothesises can emerge from it, but also the existed theories are tested with various recent data. (Have 2004, 134.)

In the survey data case, similar to the interviews first phase, the data first needs to be checked and filtered out any flaws or unsuitable answers. Punch (2003, 48) explained that for survey research method, the analysing process usually goes through three steps. In their logical order, as quoted from Punch's book, the three steps are:

> "Summarising and reducing data – creating the variables;
> Descriptive level analysis – the distribution of variables across the sample;
> Relationship analysis – relationships between the variables – first bivariately, then (as appropriate) jointly."

With summarising and reducing data, the researcher aim is to transcript the data into statistical forms, the most common form is numerical. To put it another way, instead of using the full answer such as "I shop online twice a month", the data that is used for analytical will become "twice" or "2". Then in the second step, researchers will take a general view of the data as the idea is to gather the surface, most prominent data. Common questions at this step are such as 'How common is this variable?', 'How many percentages?' and 'What is the frequency?'. With the third and last step, the variables will be compared with each other for the purpose of finding their relationships. For example, the variable in the categories 'how many times do you shop online per month?' and 'How old are you?' have variables that are in a positive correlation relationship. This indicates that the older the respondents are, the more they do online shopping.

By following those three steps, and the detailed instruction from Chapter 4.5 in the book 'Survey Research: The Basics' by Punch (2003, 64-65). The survey data analysing process is certain to be logical, appropriated and referenceable. Moreover, with the help of the analytical programme by IBM called SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), the calculation and numerical formulation process is precise and convenience. Therefore, the result statements are conclusive and practical.

5.4 Reliability, Validity and Limitation

In the process of discussing the reliability, validity and limitation of this research, the first step is to understand what those terms mean. Leung (2015) has explained reliability and validity in qualitative research in terms of definition and measuring tools.

Reliability in qualitative research suggests the ability to replicate exactly the process and get similar results. Therefore, consistency is in the focus when assessing reliability in a research. (Leung 2015.) Simply speaking, reliability is the trustworthiness that is determined by the structural research process and the conclusive results of that research. A reliable research is the research that the logical process when re-test can yield similar results. Validity prefers to the means, processes and data used and whether they are suitable or trustworthy to be used for the specific research questions or not (Leung 2015). The fact that one matter can have multiple points of view can greatly affect the outcome of the research.

For this research, the qualitative interview method is used to gather data from Mrs. Heta Vilén about the research questions. It is certain that the research reliability will change through the course of time. Because even though the process is repeated, Mrs. Vilén as the main subject of the research will respond slightly different every time. The more time passed away, the more environmental factors that the researcher tries to understand through interviewing Mrs. Vilén will change as well. Optimistically speaking, the research reliability can last 4-5 years before the gathered data is so different the result changes completely. Therefore, it is important to consider applying the research results before they become out-dated.

In the case of validity, the research is designed to investigate the problem under specific points of view. The interview method is chosen after consideration of its function and suitability for the desired type of outcome data. All literatures reviewed are from legitimate sources as well as are written by recognized researchers. Nevertheless, the data analysis process can be missing as the researcher is in-experience. Therefore, the results might not solve the research problem fully. With that in mind, second and third opinions are crucial in the application of the thesis's proposals.

For the limitation of this research, it must be stressed that time frame limitation is crucial. Since the research paper is a bachelor thesis, certain schedules must be followed. This leads to hardship of timing the interview and the survey to gather data. As the processes involve the help of the University faculties, and they are busy with works, delay and forgetfulness are common. The second limitation is that the research does not consider the third point of view within the network – business managers' point of view. Therefore, variables from the business managers' point of view are not considered in the proposals drawing process. Even though the proposals made in this research are mainly for XAMK students, the lack of the business managers' point of view can cause some surprises in the future when those proposals are implemented.

6 INTERVIEW RESULT

6.1 The business partnership coordinators' role

As explained by the interviewee, the role of XAMK business partnership coordinator is a middle person who connects businesses and students. Moreover, the coordinator also monitors the partnership process for the cooperation that is connected by them. This makes sure that the students can work, and the firms can use the work without any disputes or legal issues. Moreover, there is only one business partnership coordinator who works for South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences. This affects the work load, coordinating process as well as the focused objectives of XAMK business partnership coordinator.

In combination with the previous discussion on XAMK business partnership coordinator’s role in Chapter 2.3.1 and 4.1.2, it is confirmed that the coordinator mostly acts as a direct recruitment channel. Chapter 2.3.1’s analysis stated that since there are more activity links between businesses and the coordinator, the actors’ bond in this relationship is stronger. Then Chapter 4.1.2 applied recruitment management approach and introduced the inactive and active role of “placement official”. With that said, the coordinator also occasionally works as a third-party recruitment official. When working as a third-party recruitment official, the coordinator takes students’ profile to actively advertise them to businesses.

While there are assumptions that coordinator is supposed to focus more on students’ requests, a new discovery is made which might explain the change of roles. Teachers, lecturers are discovered to be participating in connecting students and businesses. It is uncertain that under which roles lecturers perform networking activities. But when subjectively perceived, lecturers possibly play the role of third-parties who present students’ profile to managers. This prediction makes sense in a way that the roles of both coordinators and lecturers are supporting each other while maintaining effectiveness and efficiency.

6.2 Stages in coordinating a business-student collaboration

For Xamk coordinator, the business partnership coordinating processes contains four main stages: initiating contacts, information communicating, coordinating personnel and monitoring.

From the interview with Mrs. Heta Vilén-XAMK Kouvola campus’s business partnership coordinator, in the initiating contacts stage, either a company or a student contacts the coordinator asking for help. In the case of businesses, managers can contact the coordinator directly through the work email at XAMK or submit information onto the online platform “XAMK-duuni-tiitus”. On the other hand, when a student has some sort of need for either a training place or thesis collaboration, the requests are sent through direct email and managed by the coordinator.

Within this first stage of initiating contacts, there are some criteria which differentiate businesses' and students' coordinating process. For businesses, the determined factor is how urgent they need the person. There are two common routes for businesses. If the need is urgent, the contact is direct through XAMK coordinators' work email. On the other hands, if it is not urgent, managers can send request onto the university private online platforms such as "XAMK-duuni-tiitus". XAMK-duuni is a private server of "tiitus.fi" website on which students can use the search engine to find opening positions, project partnership's request and part-time jobs. Students can find results among different databases such as XAMK, mol.fi and tiitus database itself. For students, when needs are realized, they can send direct requests to the coordinators or their lecturers besides from searching online. As a result, the time pressure is not as strong, and these requests will be handled slower.

At the second stage, information communicating, drastic differences are found. After receiving a request from firms' manager, it is the coordinators' job to perform a personal meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to understand the managers' request better, discuss any possible legal matters and inform them of facts about the university's students. This stage benefits greatly from the partnership coordinator's communicating skills and experiences. For students, the process is rather slow and depends greatly on timing. If the student sends a request to Mrs. Heta, they will have to wait either days or months until their needs are met. Unfortunately, it is impossible for the coordinator to reply to all requests from students as the priority is on the need of businesses.

The third stage is to assign the right student to the right position – coordinating personnel. This is the most important stage as it requires coordinating skills and experiences. Within this stage, the coordinator figures out which student has the required skills and study field that fit the position. As stated by Mrs. Heta Vilén, requests are redirected to suitable study programmes' lecturers for recommendation of students. By doing this matching process properly, all parties are satisfied and the university reputation on teaching quality, employment chances will improve as well. For the students, if there are no matching firms, the coordinators will try to present the students' request to potential companies.

After the collaboration between business and student is established, the coordinator's final job is to follow up with the collaborated project. Some other tasks that business partnership coordinator does are keeping contacts with managers from companies, communicating with lecturers. As estimated by Mrs. Heta, there are on average about five businesses that contact her everyday to inform an open position. That is at 100 open positions or projects every month. To put it in comparison, only 100 to 200 students make direct requests per year, or 8 to 16 per month. This leads to the fact that the number of positions is greater than the number of students. With the heavy workload and the special job attributes, it is required that the coordinator works fast and manages time efficiently. Currently, customer receipt software is used to help managing the employers' request. However, Mrs. Heta stated that there is a shortage on University personnel that work on these partnership tasks. This leads to the longevity of processing time and some drawbacks on the ability to try out new methods.

6.3 **The challenges in coordinating business partnership**

When asked in the interview, Mrs. Heta stressed the timing factor as the biggest challenge in her work. She also revealed a shortage on personnel working on business partnership with XAMK students. But so far, the drawbacks of this shortage are manageable, and she enjoys working in her position. With that said, the challenges coordinating business partnership can be divided into internal challenges and external challenges.

6.3.1 **Internal challenges**

The term internal means things that come from within. Internal challenges are the challenges that come from within the corporation, in this context is XAMK university. South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (XAMK) comes from the union of Mikkeli, Kotka, Savonlinna and Kouvola University of Applied

Sciences. Since the union process is complicated and difficult, the organization needs time to balance the internal factors. The shortage of personnel is unavoidable in the adjusting period.

The shortage of personnel can affect business partnership coordinating processes in various ways. One of them is the longevity of processing time, both for businesses' and students' request. It is estimated that the minimum amount of time needed to process a student's request is three months. The recommended amount of time is five months before hand for students to send their requests. It is rather unexpected for students to plan five months before working on the project or wanted positions, especially a thesis project.

On the other hand, to prolong in time searching for personnel means possible lost of profits. Commonly, old employees must inform the ending of working relationships to employers one month before quitting. Hence, the employers have one month to find a replacement. If the employers can not find a replacement, they will have empty jobs with no worker. The results are delay in production, lost in profits. Moreover, it can also affect the trust between businesses and XAMK University as an educational institution that trains future workforces.

Another internal challenge is that there is no readily available database of students who are interested in working opportunities. Currently, the method of finding suitable students is through the recommendation of lecturers. Not only this method requires time, it is also unfairly selected. Mainly focus on managing their assigned classes, lecturers do not have much time to work on these requests. Therefore, it takes time to identify suitable students. Moreover, lecturers, as an unaccounted actor in this thesis research, have different characteristics and values. These differences affect their choices of recommendation as grades is the only criteria rather than skills or characteristics.

By having a database of students who are interested in working opportunities, the processing time will be shorten. Nonetheless, the coordinating process will also be simplified. With this database, coordinator, after receiving requests from companies, can search for interested students under some general criteria, forward their profile to companies' manager for further evaluation.

6.3.2 External challenges

The opposite of internal is external, things that are outside. Being outside of the organization control, external challenges are greatly varied and difficult to handle. The businesses' awareness of partnership coordinator processing time is one of the external factors. Besides that, students' awareness of the processing time is important if students decide to send requests to coordinator. These two factors are uncontrollable because of various stimulants in needs realization and information gathering.

For companies, the decision of sending a request to the coordinator comes from multiple events. Usually, it either can be because of a previous employee who quit the job, or the company is planning to expand business. Turnover can happen when employee is too old to work, or they want to change jobs because of many personal reasons. Simultaneously, when expanding business, the companies might need seasonal workers only, or want to increase business when all of the proper conditions are met. When at least one of these events takes place, a realization of human resource need appears. Then comes the process of choosing recruitment objectives, methods and channels. Upon deciding which channel to recruit, managers' perception is various as the process of gathering information is flexible. In most cases that Mrs. Heta Vilén has encountered, managers think the coordinating process only takes one to two weeks. Consequently, these managers are not flexible in the recruitment time as they plan their business activities based on this assumption.

On the other side of the story, when does a student realize that they need job positions or collaboration? Ultimately, there are also a lot of variables in the point of time when students send their requests to the coordinators. Some common elements such as mentality, study efficiency, time managing skills and personal life effects. But because the student title is only for those who study in an educational institution, it is prearranged for them that they can work on their thesis, find training places or graduate on a study plan or schedule. Moreover, the information network and courses within the institution can be moderated. Therefore, the student within the school can be early inform of what they need to do in order to fulfil their wishes.

6.4 **Finnish courtesy assessment**

The interview also gathered Mrs. Heta Vilén opinion regarding what have been collected in this thesis about Finnish courtesies. As discussed in chapter 3 section 3, the most common traits that Finns have which can affect the networking process are expressionless, solitude or silence and stubbornness. Once again, these traits are not applied to every Finns. Finland has become more and more international since the economy gets more developed. Therefore, the country has been exposed to different cultures and races. This is slowly but surely changing Finnish perspectives and social culture.

Mrs. Heta agreed that the three discussed traits can be found in many Finns at different levels. But it is necessary to note that younger Finnish adults have less of these traits thanks to the developed economy, which has exposed Finns to work with other cultures. The phenomenon is not only beneficial for foreign students but also for native students in many daily relationships. It is also approved by Mrs. Heta that Finns respect their work and will network properly without being shy.

When thinking about the professional working life, most companies' managers are at least above 27 years old as that is the minimum working experience needed before any promotion, the exception is entrepreneurs and small business owners. Assumingly, most managers who have the capability to decide on human resources are of older age and can be more difficult about hiring and working with foreigners. This difficulty can only be altered slowly through time and hard work from foreign employees. While other cities remain slow in adapting to the new culture wave, the capital of Finland-Helsinki is holding the leader position in having international workplace with many opportunities for foreigners.

7 SURVEY RESULT

7.1 Survey status and general view

The student survey started on the 11th of December 2018. It is posted on the facebook group “Opiskelijan infotaulu/ infoboard XAMK” and XAMK students’ intranet’s discussion forum. Then it is shared from the first post in “infoboard XAMK” group to three more groups “XAMK GameLab”, “Kirppis/second hand store XAMK” and “IB XAMK’17”. Moreover, with the help of Mrs. Ulla Puustelli, the survey is posted on the discussion forum of “Bachelor’s Thesis train IB16, autumn 2018, IB16S1, IB16S2” ‘s moodle course page. Generally speaking, the survey was exposed to XAMK students in all four campuses, as well as some alumni and exchange students.

Despite being posted with attraction strategy (click-baiting strategy), the survey only collected 32 responds, with 1 false respond. In comparison to the wanted sample size, which is from 100 to 150 responds, the survey is statistically invalid. However, it is common for survey conducted by individual to have low response rate. Therefore, the analysed data acts suggestively towards the research outcomes. All data collected is anonymous and only used within the scope of this thesis research.

Within the 31 responds, there are 22 Finnish (70.97%), 2 Russian (6.45%), 6 Vietnamese (19.35%) and 1 Iranian (3.23%). Most of the respondents are third year or more students (12 third year and 12 others). There is one alumnus and 7 second year students. 13 students claim that they have a thesis topic, 13 other students do not have a topic and 5 students have finished their thesis already.

The survey is no longer active but is saved as additional documents to support the originality of this thesis. The survey is planned with questions to answer the specific research questions as suggested before:

How many XAMK students want to do thesis collaboration with businesses?

What are the common difficulties for XAMK students when starting a thesis collaboration?

What are XAMK students' opinion on some possible solution?

What are the common networking channels that XAMK students use?

Besides that, questions about nationalities, year of study are included as part of the population classification process. All of the actual survey's questions are listed in Appendix 2.

7.2 Detailed view

With the low response rate, the sub-questions for students can not be fully answered and require more research. As a result, the detail view part is written more broadly and is not greatly focus considering the expected analytical writing requirement of a thesis report. Suggestions on finding thesis collaboration are included with simple analysis.

Firstly, when asked whether the respondents want to collaborate with business for their thesis, there are 12 yes answers and 12 students said that they already have or had a commission. Unsurprisingly, all seven second-year students are in the group of 12 persons who said yes, and those who answered that they have or had collaborated for their thesis are third year or more students. In contrast to that, there are seven students who said they do not want to do collaboration with business. For this group of students, when asked why they do not want the collaboration, the answer is that they do not know how to find commission. This comes as a surprise because five out of seven not-want-to-do-collaboration students choose this answer. Therefore, the phenomenon suggests that almost all students want to do business collaboration, but some must give up because of many difficulties.

Figure 3 shows, in form of a pie chart, the percentages of each reason why the respondents want to have commission for thesis in which 100% is the percentage of all answers of every option presented.

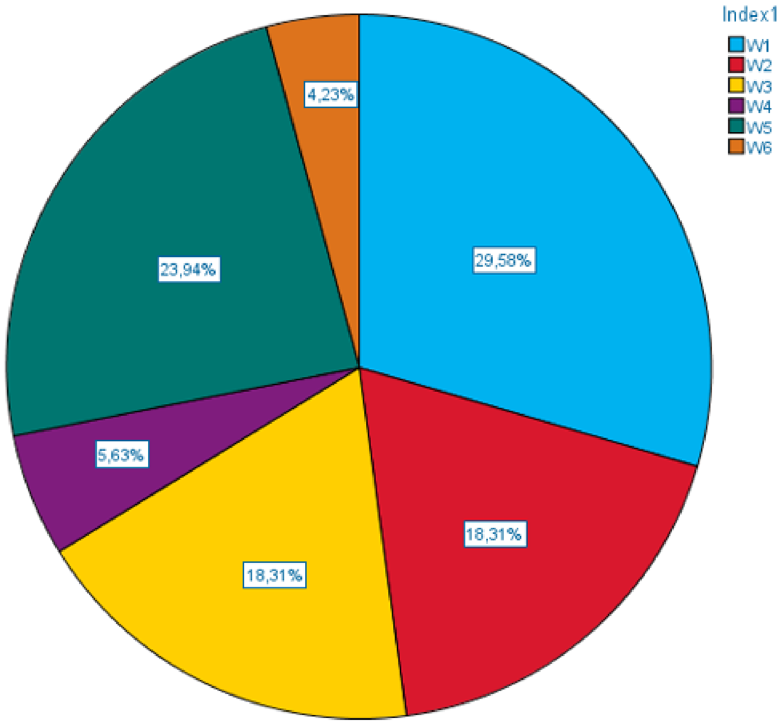

Figure 3. Percentages of answers for why students want to collaborate with business.

In Figure 3, the answers, as in the order shown, are:

I want my thesis result to be practical and beneficial for a specific organization. (W1)

I want to have experiences in working with businesses/professionals. (W2)

I want to network with companies' managers. (W3)

I think it would be fun. (W4)

I want to increase my employment chances. (W5)

Others. (W6)

As sectioned in Figure 3, answer W1 has 29.58% at first place and at the second place is W5 with 23.94% in the total of all chosen answers. W2 and W3 are both in third place with 18.31% each. Answer W4 and W6 come at last point with 5.63% and 4.23%. Concluded from those data, perhaps the main purpose of students when doing business collaboration is to make sure their efforts are anything but useless and a waste of time. Nonetheless, increasing employment chances is a good reason to motivate yourself. In continuation of the possibility, when all of those chosen answer got grouped together with the 'have/had commission' condition, there seems to be not much different in the ratio of choices in the answers. Considering students who have had a commission, they have more realistic experiences, hence their judgement on reasons to do collaboration is more realistic as well. Moreover, the differences are only in the ratio numbers while the ranking of options remains the same.

The next aspect of this thesis survey is the type of channels which students find the most effective when networking or finding people to network with. The respondents were asked to rate 7 channels from 1 to 5 with 1 is possible and 5 is impossible. Those 7 channels are Social Media, Networking Events, Previous/Current Employers, XAMK UAS's business partnership coordinators, Friends and Families' network, Online Website, Lecturers' network. The most selected rating for each channel is listed below:

Social media at 2 (quite possible) with 29% (9 students in the total of 31).
Networking events at 2 (quite possible) with 41.9% (13 students).
Previous/current employers at 1 (possible) with 45.2% (14 students).
XAMK coordinators at 3 (average) with 45.2% (14 students).
Friends and families' network at 1 (possible) with 29% (9 students).
Online websites at 3 (average) with 45.2% (14 students).
Lecturers' network at 3 (average) with 35.5% (11 students).

This suggests that most students think Employers and Friend-Families' network are very effective when networking the first time. But, once again with the selective grouping of those who have or had commissions, the number shows slightly different trend of opinions. The medium score for the 'employers' channel is 2,09 for those who have or had commissions, and for those who don't or didn't have commission the medium score is 2,40. The meaning of this is for those who have had the collaboration experiences, the possible networking channels are Employers, Networking events and Lecturers (medium score 2,82 for both networking events and lecturers).

Then the survey continues with the question: What difficulties do you meet when searching for commission company? Figure 4 shows the percentages of each difficulty chosen in the total amount recorded.

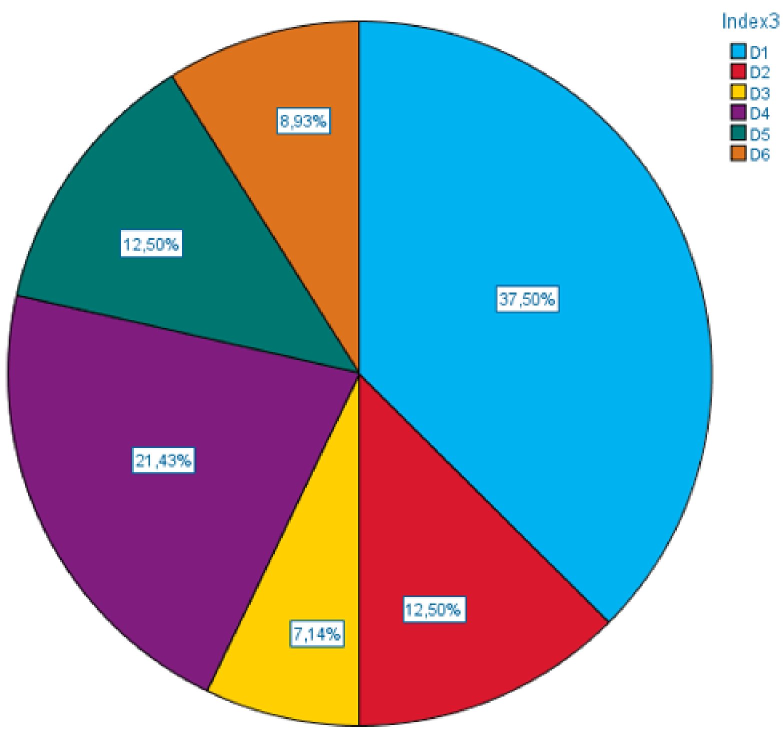

Figure 4. Percentages of difficulties in finding commission company.

In Figure 4, D1 means difficulty number one and D2 is difficulty number two and so on. As reported from the survey, those suggested difficulty answers are:

Ineffective networking channel with 37.50%.

Incompetent communication skills with 12.5%.

Incompetent language skills with 7.14%.

Psychological factors with 21.43%.

Environmental factors with 12.50%.

Other answers with 8.93%.

From that note, it seems like most students have trouble with ineffective networking channel and psychological factors. It is very surprising that many students have trouble with their anxiety and scares, especially when looked in further, most of these students are Finnish. But the argument is different when combining the ‘have commissions’ grouping method upon the ‘difficulties’ data. It shows that 55% of students who have business collaborations choose psychological factors as the most common difficulty. That data can be interpreted multiple ways. One way is that those who managed to find commission think the only difficulty is oneself, implying that students should have courage to try harder. Another way to interpret the data is that the level of stress and anxiety involving the process of finding business collaboration is recognizably high. While there can be more predictions, in the end, the survey data is suggestive as the predictions require more focused study.

After that comes the question to explore how many students know about XAMK Duuni website. Over half of the survey participants said that they never heard of the website before (54.8%), and the rest said that they tried using XAMK Duuni but couldn’t find something suitable (45.2%). This could indicate that the spreading range, popularity of the website is still limited, as well as limitation in the variety of open offers.

Students are also asked about how soon they need to find a commissioner before starting to write the thesis. The result is 61.3% (19 students) said they will find a commissioner right when they have their topic, 10 students said they find commissioners five months ahead (32.3%) and 2 students gave other answers (6.5%). What this data suggests is that students are under-prepared when managing the thesis time frame. From the interview with XAMK coordinator, it is understood that the process of coordinating business with students can take up to five months or more because processing students’ request is not the coordinator’s priority. Consequently, students should consider the coordinator as the “life vest” to find commission.

The last question in the survey is whether students are interested in joining a LinkedIn group. 74.2% of respondents said yes, 12.9% said no and 12.9% said others. The other answers are generally in doubt of how the LinkedIn group will be curated but express interests if the group can work nicely.

Lastly, some of the respondents made advices on what a student should have or know to find commission. Some of the opinions are similar, but there are four main ideas towards the question:

Students should be active and brave.

Students should understand their topic, as well as the companies they want to work with.

Students should do internship before writing their thesis.

Students need good skills, a bit of luck and recommendation from others.

To conclude the chapter, it is quite unfortunate that the survey couldn't gather more data. The questions, as commented by the respondents, are quite realistic and target the situation straightforwardly. If time is not constrained, the survey could provide interesting ideas and suggestions. But as far as the result goes, it is still provided a practical exercise, both in conducting survey and analysing it for the thesis's author.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 SOLUTION PROPOSALS

The solutions proposed here are based on the problems revealed by Mrs. Heta Vilén, in great consideration of the model of managing in networks. Despite the effort of drawing the conclusions from realistic problems, the conclusions are still partly generated from the author's common logic and personal level of experience. Nonetheless, the ideas are written with many considerations in mind, as well as all the notations from the network managing model by Fort et al.

8.1.1 An improved thesis topic form for students

Even before the students' survey, the problem of preparing time for students have exists in the form of personal experience. Students are more or less unmindful about planning ahead in thesis preparing stages. The perception is that when one has a topic that they are interested in, they will be able to find and convince managers to support their interests. In reality, most students' ideal topics can be unrealistic, uncommon or simply unsuitable for most businesses. The only exception is when the student has worked in the company before, and they realised there is problem to be research then solve. The consequences of this unmindful perception are constricted time, stress which lead to unfulfilled expectations.

Commonly, business managers are restricted by their normal workload already, they pay little or no attention to a student with ideas. The process of convincing business managers also requires a lot of determination and will power, which increase the amount of stress that the student faces. Therefore, a small questionnaire that contains 2-3 questions can help the coordinators be prepared and match the student with business easier.

Currently, XAMK UAS's Kouvola campus's thesis train has a specific process in which the thesis is initiated by students submitting their interested research field. The form is called "Indication of interest of thesis topic" and it is located in the course "Bachelor's thesis train" in ever academic year. This form is required at the beginning of the thesis process, which can be 4-5 months before the real writing process. The main purpose of the form is to assign students to suitable supervisors as according to the field of interests. The idea is to incorporate questions such as "Are you interested in doing business collaboration?" and "Are you flexible with your topic or want to stay within your interested fields?". These questions will help categorize students' wishes and make it easier to search for the right student for the right company. Moreover, it helps students be aware of their own needs and work on it earlier. With that said, students should also be aware that they must try to find commission by themselves as well because it is not guaranteed that the coordinators can find an interested company.

To help readers visualize the extra questionnaire part, this following paragraph is an example of what can be add into "Indication of interest of thesis topic" form.
"If you wish to have extra helps in finding business collaboration, fill in the blank spots below.

I ………….. work with company in my thesis research.

I …………flexible when it comes to my thesis topic.

(examples: I <u>want to</u> work with company in my thesis research.)

XAMK business partnership coordinators will try to find company that interests in your topic. But you are encouraged to try and find one on your own as well."

After receiving students' wishes, this data can be shared within XAMK coordinators and lecturers. As stated in the model of managing in networks, the changes in the networking aspect can be through increasing the network scale itself. By sharing students' wishes data, more companies will be able to connect with the potential students as well as students can connect with more businesses. Table 4 listed some of the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal.

Table 4. Pros and Cons of Improved thesis topic form.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Immediate implementation. - Convenient for students. - Easy distribution. - Reminder of students' personal wishes. - Improve business collaboration rate.	- Create Data input task. - Limited to thesis/research collaboration.

One convenience method of arranging and storing these data is the currently used customer receipt management program. Other than the program, a simple system could be created to categorize and collect students' wishes in the future, when the coordinating process has reached sustainable levels of efficient. For the time being, an excel file can work as a storage place as well but it is very hard to search for students in the whole lists. Conclusively, as great as the idea can sound, more work is still needed to bring it to reality.

8.1.2 Controlled LinkedIn networking group

When trying to find thesis commission on their own, a lot of students meet the problem of not having existed connections and means to establish new contacts. It can be because they are shy, introvert, want to write thesis before practical training and more. All of which reduce their choices of networking channels to online websites, social media and coordinators. LinkedIn is an online networking cite which is designated for professionals and experts, thus it is favoured by firms to recruit competence workers (Jobvite 2016). Therefore, by creating a LinkedIn networking group, the students will have an additional platform to connect with business by themselves. Moreover, businesses can also view the students LinkedIn profile and contact them directly.

Consequently, multilateral exposure is the best advantage in having a LinkedIn group. Besides having multilateral exposure, other advantages having a LinkedIn group are to encourage students to connect and use LinkedIn more often; to increase the success rate of not only finding thesis commission but also future employments. In recollection of the social forces mentioned in Chapter 3 – Social Networking, by using an internet platform, most social forces that are needed for interactions to happen matter less. For example, the proximity force will be eliminated as there are no distance boundaries on the internet.

Currently, there are one XAMK company profile on LinkedIn. This profile is made by the marketing department of South-Eastern University of Applied Sciences. The content on this profile page circulates around XAMK as a beneficial learning environment for students. The profile page targets potential lecturers, trained employees and other business opportunities. Therefore, the profile page does not act as a bridge for students to network. This leads to the need for a dedicated networking group exclusively for XAMK students.

The LinkedIn group will be under the moderation of XAMK coordinator herself. This is because the coordinator can redirect managers who contact her to the group and maybe find the right student for those companies faster. Other than that, she can also control the rules in the group and maintain a healthy networking channel for students. There can be special schedules and regulations for posting any news or requests either from students or the managers. The group should be limited to XAMK students and XAMK alumni only to avoid bad reputations or unwanted outsiders. The reason why the group should include

XAMK alumni is because most of them will have connections in their working life already and they can also help connect XAMK students with managers.

There are some potential challenges for this solution. The fact that how many of the Finnish managers have a LinkedIn account is questionable. LinkedIn, in its nature, is a social media website which specialize in business networking. But as social media platforms have existed for the past two decades, they only gain extreme popularity in the recent decade following the explosion of smartphones. Therefore, many older generations are still unfamiliar with social media. Combine with the fact that most managers are older, they probably do not use LinkedIn at all. Another challenge is how to make sure that only XAMK students join this group. A simple method is asking for the students' school email on LinkedIn and email them a random number. If they can answer the number correctly when ask on LinkedIn, it proves that they have access to XAMK service and hence, are XAMK students. Table 5 concludes all pros and cons of XAMK LinkedIn group proposal.

Table 5. Pros and Cons of XAMK LinkedIn networking group.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Visibility for students. - Direct information from managers. - Fast connection process. - Active method for students. - Erase the barriers created by social forces. - Improve thesis collaboration rate. - Improve employments chances.	- Require human power to monitor. - Require rules and regulations.

Like the other solutions, further detailed work is needed to implement the idea. But establishing a monitored LinkedIn group shows great possibility for success. Suggestively, most of the students who answered the survey are interested in joining the LinkedIn group. Moreover, Mrs. Heta Vilén thinks that a LinkedIn group is a great idea.

8.1.3 Internship programs at XAMK to increase personnel level

The other recognized problem is the shortage of personnel level. Even though the shortage is not at a level which the current staffs are unable to handle, but it enables some drawbacks as priorities take place. In this case, the tasks to respond students are less urgent as to communicate with companies. Therefore, it is possible to propose a temporary or seasonal increase in personnel to help with business partnership coordinating tasks.

There are different forms of hiring personnel such as full-time jobs, part time jobs, short-term helper, internship. For the context of the case study, an internship position is evaluated. There are two main reasons why XAMK should offer internship for the tasks, besides the obvious reason. The first reason being internship positions can be paid or unpaid. Hence, the cost to hire internship is minimal and the interns can learn as well as work on simple tasks. Secondly, it creates some more chances for students to learn from professionals in network management. The human resource management skill is closely related to the programs that are taught at XAMK. This includes business management, international business and business programs taught in Finnish.

At first, there might be challenges, one of which is the coordinator is not used to managing interns. Other than that, the benefit of having an intern is unarguable. The interns can help with inputting data collected from students and managers, making notes for meetings, help monitoring the Linkedin group. In a way, the solution of hiring students to intern is to also help curating the previous suggestions. Table 6 summarises the advantages and disadvantages of coordinator’s assistant internship proposal.

Table 6. Pros and Cons of coordinator’s assistant internship proposal.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Reduce turnaround time. - Increase coordinating work efficiency. - Provide human resource for other proposals. - One more opportunity for students.	- Require XAMK organisational approval. - Require program plans and reports.

- Improve thesis collaboration rate.	

To conclude the internship program proposal, it can be said that the internship program is one solution that solves many problems. Not only it solves the shortage of personnel, but the program also solves the work load which other proposals bring if implemented. Therefore, the internship program proposal is highly suggested as it benefits multiple purposes, multiple parties and boost the network activities in general.

8.1.4 **Infographic instruction for students**

A less favoured proposal is to make an infographic instruction for students. As the name implies, it is an instruction document or poster that uses graphic to present information about networking. It can be about networking for thesis commission, employment and finding internship. The instruction can be posted on Moodle in the related courses, or any relevant location within XAMK campuses that reach students.

The content of the instruction needs to be creative and informative to help students understand better. It is possible to inquire the help of graphic design students on how to present the information. The instruction should consist of the information such as type of relationships, recommendation of planning time, channels to find business (including XAMK-duuni) and motivational quotes.

The disadvantages of the instruction proposal are the time it takes to be created, the questionable necessity of the instruction, the specific location of distribution. It requires some time to plan all the needed information, create a sketch with suitable art style, modification and finalization. Moreover, this is a task that requires at least two people, one of them is the graphic designer who must be chosen among graphic design students if the person is not readily available.

However, the problem of questionable necessity exists because there are so many courses at XAMK designed to navigate students through University life and working life already. The only new information in the instruction is how to find thesis commission. Therefore, it could either be just a waste of effort to create the instruction when most of the information is available, or it could be short summarise of all the information that students needed. It is depended on how well the content is arranged.

Other than that, the concern of where to distribute the infographic instruction exists. Every product needs a way to get to its targeted consumers, if it fails to reach the consumers then there is no point in making that product at all. The distribution channel needs to be confirmed even before making the actual instruction in order to avoid the inefficiency such as this thesis survey. Table 7 comprises the perks as well as drawbacks of the infographic instruction proposal.

Table 7. Pros and Cons of the infographic instruction proposal.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Convenient source of information for students. - Encourage students to be active. - Improve thesis collaboration rate. - Improve employment chances.	- Require human resource. - Require time and effort to create. - Hard to measure success rate. - Require distribution methods. - Require XAMK organizational approval.

With all those challenges, the infographic instruction proposal is less favoured than other proposals. But it is undeniable that there are potential to the idea if executed properly. Moreover, the only way to know if something works or not is to try it out. With that said, the infographic instruction proposal still deserves some consideration if other proposals are deemed to be impossible.

8.2 Main conclusion

Considering the objectives and research questions that are set at the beginning of this thesis, not only there are accomplishments but also drawbacks. Overall, the results are perceived as the most suitable and practical for all current problems, regarding the business partnership coordinating process and the business collaboration searching process. But the decision of turning ideas into implementation is not for the author to decide.

The thesis is able to answer the main research question and three out of four sub-questions. The other sub-question that the thesis only answers partly is “What are the common difficulties for XAMK students when starting a thesis collaboration?”. This is due to the unexpected events from incautious survey planning and restricted research time.

Consequently, not all the objectives set at the beginning of thesis writing processes are achieved. The objectives to gain better understanding from XAMK students’ point of view about the topic discussed are partially completed. As explained in “Survey results” chapter, the collected data suggests that most students are underestimating the restricted time of thesis research as well as other challenges in networking.

To once again summarize and clarify the research’s discoveries, each research questions are repeated with their shorten answers. First, to increase the success rate of connecting businesses and students for thesis collaboration, four proposals are made. Each of these proposals targets the challenging factors that are discovered through the research process. Secondly, the partnership coordinating processes are recorded and detailly described in Chapter 6.2. Thirdly, the roles of XAMK students and XAMK business partnership coordinator within the network are found using business network framework and recruitment management theories. XAMK business partnership coordinator’s role is to process requests from business and select students with the help of XAMK lecturers. For XAMK students, they are less active in the relationship with XAMK coordinator. Fourthly, the common difficulties for XAMK students when starting a thesis collaboration are psychological factors and ineffective networking channels. Finally, there are three Finnish characteristics which affect social networking processes: solitude, expressionless and stubbornness.

Other discovery is that there is currently a high demand for qualified trained students from businesses. This means that there are more employments opportunities for students after graduation than it is perceived. Beside that, noticeable discoveries such as there is a LinkedIn company page of XAMK; distinct Finnish characteristics and the unexpected role of XAMK lecturers in the network.

For the reliability of the thesis when reviewed, the research process presents a credible level of reliability. For instance, when reapply the same background theories to the network's relationships, then compare with the facts from research subject, the conclusions remain uniform and factual. Because of the use of ground theory analytical approachs when studying interview's statements.

Validity wise, as stated in the Introduction chapter, the research considers businesses-students' collaboration as business trading processes. Therefore, the application of business network frameworks is suitable. Moreover, other informative theories are also included to help view the research topic fully. Besides that, by conducting interview and survey on the direct actors, collected information are realistic and close to fact.

Lastly, for limitation, besides the mentioned restricted research time problem, unexpected discoveries create more variable to the research topic. Discoveries such as the role of XAMK lecturers increase the number of actors within the researched network. Along with the general theoretical examination of businesses' actor roles, the roles of XAMK lecturers are suggested for further study.

8.3 **Suggestion for further study**

Regarding the thesis's cases and field of study – network management, further study can be made to investigate the students' perspectives more. As because one of the research objectives is incomplete, further study can be conducted to clarify the students' point of view and hence improve this thesis research implementation and complement other research.

The research thesis did not consider XAMK lecturers as one of the network's main actors. Therefore, studies on XAMK lecturers' opinions can be conducted through questionnaires or interviews. Moreover, the part of businesses within the network is only examined theoretically. Further studies that include interviews or case studies of recruitment management in businesses are extremely useful.

All of the proposals made from this thesis research can also be further studied and measured after implementation to make alterations if needed. Other further studies can be about the same topic but different organizations than South-East Finland University of Applied Sciences and compare the outcomes both before and after implementations. The research topic can also be developed into studies that increase student’s employment chances after graduation.

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FIGURES

TABLES

Appendix 1

LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the partnership coordinating process?
2. What is the estimated number of students who contact coordinator directly?
3. What is the estimated number of businesses who contact coordinator directly?
4. What system is used to manage requests?
5. How long can the coordinating process take?
6. What are the challenging factors when coordinating partnership?
7. Are most Finns expressionless, solitude and stubborn?
8. Do Finns characteristics affect networking process?
9. What are the coordinator’s opinions on the LinkedIn group proposal?

Appendix 2

LIST OF SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Are you a first, second or third year student at XAMK?
2. What is your nationality?
3. Do you have a topic for your thesis?
4. What stage of thesis writing are you in?
5. Do you want to have a commission company for your thesis?
6. Why do/did you want to collaborate with a company on your thesis? (multiple choices)

    I want my thesis result to be practical and beneficial for a specific organization.

    I want to have experiences in working with businesses/professionals.

    I want to network with companies' managers.

    I think it would be fun.

    I want to increase my employment chances

    Others.

7. Why don't you want to collaborate with a company on your thesis? (multiple choices)

    It's too much work.

    I don't know how to find a company.

    My topic is not beneficial for a company/organization.

    I would like to work alone.

    Others.

8. Where can you meet with companies' managers and propose collaboration? Rate these channels from 1 to 5 as 1=Possible and 5=Impossible.

    Social media: LinkedIn, Facebook, …

    Networking events: Entrepreneurs events, Job fairs, …

    Previous/current employers.

    XAMK University's business partnership coordinator.

    Friends, families' network.

    Online web search: MOL.fi, Xamk Duuni, tiitus, ...

    Your lecturers' networks

9. What difficulty do/did you meet when searching for commission company? (multiple choices)

Ineffective networking channels.

Incompetent communication skills. (negotiation, convincing, debating, etc)

Incompetent language skills. (Finnish, English and other languages)

Psychological factors. (anxiety, scares, etc)

Environmental factors. (Different culture, social norms, prejudice, etc)

Others.

10. What do you think you need to have/know in order to find a commission company?

11. How soon do you think you/other students have to find a commission company before starting to write the thesis?

Right when I/they have some topic ideas.

5 months ahead. The thesis topic only needs to relate to my/their study.

12. Have you tried the new XAMK-Duuni platform?

13. If there is a new dedicated group on LinkedIn for XAMK students to network with businesses, will you be interested in joining?

14. Rate this survey.

15. Other comments about this survey.

Appendix 3

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