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# FINNIPS

– Joint Efforts for  
Internationalisation

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– JOINT EFFORTS  
FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

PUBLICATIONS OF JAMK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES 155

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JYVÄSKYLÄN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU  
JAMK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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# ABSTRACT

Riikka Vanhanen, Helli Kitinoja, Jyrki Holappa (eds.)  
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Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) is a cooperation body, which, in 2013, brings together 22 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and over 50 of their Bachelor-level Degree Programmes conducted in English. The main task of the network is to arrange entrance examinations to these programmes in a selection of countries outside Finland.

This publication illuminates the reasons for arranging entrance examinations abroad in pursuance of describing the development and activities of the FINNIPS network. The depiction is done as a part of a wider mission to shed light on the role and significance of international degree programmes in Finnish UASs. The articles of the volume approach UAS education from various perspectives and together, they provide a comprehensive picture of the many different ways in which internationalisation can be enhanced by way of joint efforts.

Keywords: Universities of Applied Sciences, Internationalisation, International Degree Programmes, Finnish Network for International Programmes, FINNIPS, Entrance Examinations, Quality of Higher Education, Employability, Global Citizenship

# FOREWORD

## TOP-CLASS EDUCATION FROM FINLAND

The Finnish higher education system calls for more international collaboration in all its operations, and the challenges in the tougher international competition will need to be confronted. It appears that in future higher education students are willing and able to cross frontiers in search for the competences and development possibilities they want. At the same time, education is becoming a growing business worldwide. Finnish higher education institutions are also expected to take part in this development by playing a more significant role in selling education to people outside EEA.

It has been a long-term ambition for the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture to open education export in Finnish higher education. A term fee trial is in progress and about a dozen Master's degree programmes from universities and universities of applied sciences have participated in the trial for a couple of years. The trial has not expanded as was originally planned. Evaluation of the trial has not been completed yet, but something has to be done to increase the relatively low interest in Finnish paid education in order to really set the education export in motion. This requires both legislative measures and customer-oriented development of the supply and implementations. The needed measures are being mapped in a working group set up by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The working group aims at presenting its proposals this autumn.

The FINNIPS network has been one of the key actors in the development of international education marketing and student admission in Finnish universities of applied sciences. Being so small on their own – and even together – it is necessary for the universities of applied sciences to join forces. Apart from that, the fields and competences offered in education and RDI have to be considered carefully. The target countries and groups for marketing efforts also have to be considered more closely and thoroughly.

This publication describes excellently the development and operation of the FINNIPS network and demonstrates what can be achieved through cooperation.

I welcome all foreign students to apply for Finnish top-class education.

Markku Lahtinen

Chairman of Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences



## Introduction

# FROM FINNIBS TO FINNIPS: DIVERSE RANGE OF COOPERATION ACTIVITIES AMONG INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Riikka Vanhanen

Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) is a cooperation body, which, in 2013, brings together 22 universities of applied sciences (UAS) and over 50 of their Bachelor-level degree programmes conducted in English (see Table 1, p 19). The main task of the network is to arrange entrance examinations to these programmes in a selection of countries outside Finland.

This publication illuminates the reasons for arranging entrance examinations abroad in pursuance of describing the development and activities of the FINNIPS network. The depiction is done as a part of a wider mission to shed light on the role and significance of international degree programmes at Finnish UASs. The articles of the volume approach UAS education from various perspectives, and together they provide a comprehensive picture of the many different ways in which internationalisation can be enhanced by way of joint efforts.

## UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES' ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS OUTSIDE FINLAND

Until 2009, the Finnish universities of applied sciences' entrance examinations outside Finland were mainly arranged by the Finnish National Network for East and Southeast Asia (Ammattikorkeakoulujen Itä- ja Kaakkois-Aasian yhteistyöverkosto). The network had been organising entrance examinations in Bangladesh, India, China, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam since 2001 and established a wide set of cooperation practices along the way (Marten 2009). In 2009, however, the additional funding granted to the network by the Ministry of Education ended and, among other activities, the organisation of the entrance examinations abroad was suddenly an open question.

Besides the examinations coordinated by the Network for East and Southeast Asia, each university of applied sciences could arrange entrance examinations in different countries, respectively. The exams that were usually arranged in cooperation with the Finnish embassies would, however, only serve small groups of applicants abroad. Furthermore, working on a case-by-case basis would be time-consuming and strenuous. Arranging entrance examinations alone in several locations outside Finland would also be expensive for individual UASs.

Along with the guidelines of the Ministry of Education's then newly-published Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015 (2009), the universities of applied sciences had strong aspirations to actively engage in creating “a genuinely international higher education community”. Increasing the number of non-Finnish degree students was defined as part of this endeavour and, as it happens, universities of applied sciences considered that arranging entrance examinations in countries outside Finland was an important factor in drawing foreign students to the country. Accordingly, it was clear that, despite the fact that the examinations organised by the Network for East and Southeast Asia had come to an end, a demand for systematically coordinated entrance examinations for applicants from outside Finland still existed.

The first new cooperation initiative arose in the form of Great Capital Network (GCN), a coalition formed by Haaga-Helia, HAMK, Lahti, Laurea and Metropolia Universities of Applied Sciences. These universities of applied sciences decided to join together in order to manage the entrance examination arrangements in several countries abroad. The idea for the other new network, nowadays known as Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS), emerged among the UASs that were left out of the GCN alliance. More precisely, it was the representatives of four International Business Programmes (Janne Hopeela from Tampere UAS, Foster Ofosu from Turku UAS, Matti Hirsilä from JAMK UAS and Jyrki Holappa from Oulu UAS) who put their heads together in order to ensure that cooperation in planning and implementing the entrance examination in the field of business would continue, in spite of the termination of the activities under the Network for East and Southeast Asia.

Indeed, Finnish Network for International Business Studies (FINNIBS) was established at the end of 2009 as a response to the ending of the Network for East and Southeast Asia on the one hand, and the formation of the Great Capital Network on the other. The original name of the network stems from the fact that the cooperation plans first emerged from business programmes. However, quite soon after the establishment of the network it became obvious that degree programmes in other study fields also shared the same endeavour: to arrange entrance examinations outside Finland within the framework of joint cooperation. As a result of the negotiations during the autumn, a total of 14 universities of applied sciences and 43 degree programmes joined the network by the end of 2009.

On the whole, the trigger for the (current form of activities of the) FINNIPS network can be traced back to the above-mentioned incidents that took place

in 2009. Since then, the network has expanded both in terms of size and activities. The official name of the network was changed from FINNIBS to FINNIPS in autumn 2010.

## MOVING FROM CONFUSION TOWARDS CLARITY

The official establishment of the network did not indicate an automatic emergence of unambiguous and explicit guidelines for the incipient cooperation. On the contrary, it took time for all the actors to move from a state of confusion to a mode of building new and improved ways of cooperating. Janne Hopeela, one of the active forces involved in generating the new network, recalls that various questions were in the air at the beginning of the cooperation. How should we proceed? What has been done in different universities of applied sciences in terms of implementing exams abroad? How to ensure that all the existing knowledge and skills is harnessed for the development of the new network?

The good practices and experiences from the Network for East and Southeast Asia formed an important basis for the planning work. Moreover, the long-standing collaboration between the business programmes on the one hand, and among the universities of applied sciences' admissions offices on the other, ensured that the new network did not need to be started from scratch.

Indeed, when it comes to organising the cooperation in the planning and drawing up of the actual entrance examinations, the already well-functioning cooperation between the international business programmes was a good example. The representatives of business programmes from different UASs had established a system where the content of the mutual entrance exam of the study field was planned and discussed jointly. Furthermore, the responsibilities of drawing up the exam in practice were shared and agreed on between the programmes and UASs. This model has slowly but surely been moved to and adopted within other study fields as well. Nowadays, joint meetings of the representatives of degree programmes in connection with the FINNIPS seminars and training sessions and discussions on mailing lists are examples of methods of keeping up the collaboration in practice.

In addition to the organisation of the cooperation between the degree programmes, the expertise related to the joint application system and the application, guidance and invitation procedures in general, was crucially important when considering the network's overall functions. Accordingly, the universities of applied sciences' admissions offices formed another central factor in piecing together the necessary information.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF NETWORK COOPERATION

Within the negotiations concerning the composition of the network, the coordination of the newly established FINNIBS was allocated to JAMK University of Applied Sciences. As of the beginning of 2010, the network has had a coordinator responsible for the planning and organisation of the cooperation activities. Since one of the leading ideas of the network, from the very beginning, was the division of responsibility among the member UASs, the coordination task has only ever comprised 50–60 per cent of the coordinators' working time. That time, then, is used for effective coordination work meant to ensure the smooth realisation of the manifold activities of the network.

Along with the coordinator, FINNIPS also has a steering group pondering the questions of who, what, where, when and why in figuring out the guidelines for the operations. Moreover, in practice, all these questions are tackled in cooperation that covers actors from all the member universities of applied sciences. In addition to the member UASs and their staff, authorities such as the Finnish Immigration Service, the Finnish Border Guard, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Board of Education provide substantial support for the planning and implementation of the network activities.

What exactly are the areas of cooperation carried out in the network? Even if the idea of the FINNIPS activities often only culminates in the actual entrance examinations arranged abroad, the cooperation covers other aspects as well. Some of them are prerequisites for the implementation of the examinations in the first place, whereas some of the other activities have emerged as by-products along the way. Nowadays, the cooperation can be said to consist of activities in the following sectors:

- Defining the exam countries on a yearly basis
- Organisation of the exam arrangements including the recruitment of country-specific coordinators and exam supervisors
- Planning, drawing and developing the entrance examinations in the field-specific groups
- Joint marketing measures and promotion of the educational offerings of the degree programmes
- Developing the application and invitation process together with the admissions offices
- Cooperation with relevant authorities in ensuring the due course of proceedings

- Organising seminars, trainings and meetings in order to share the best practices and to ensure the continuous development of the network
- Monitoring the transparency, reliability and equity in all the network activities

Working on all the above-mentioned matters takes various forms, which will be disclosed and further analysed within the texts of this volume. Prior to embarking on a thorough description of the network activities and phenomena related to the topic of international degree programmes in general, it is relevant to stop to ponder on the idea of network cooperation as such.

Several times, the mere existence of such a wide-ranging cooperation body has evoked comments and questions accompanied by considerable, yet positive amazement. Representatives of various higher education institutions both in Finland and abroad have pointed out that collaboration with other universities that are in many cases regarded as rivals, is by no means self-evident. Surely, universities of applied sciences located in different parts of Finland have their own areas of specialisation, own regional interests and focuses, and competition for the best students always exists. Taking all this into account means that cooperation requires consolidation of various interests, but then, is that not the case with any concerted action? Either way, FINNIPS has so far proven to be an undertaking where responsibilities, experiences and information have been successfully shared for mutual benefit.

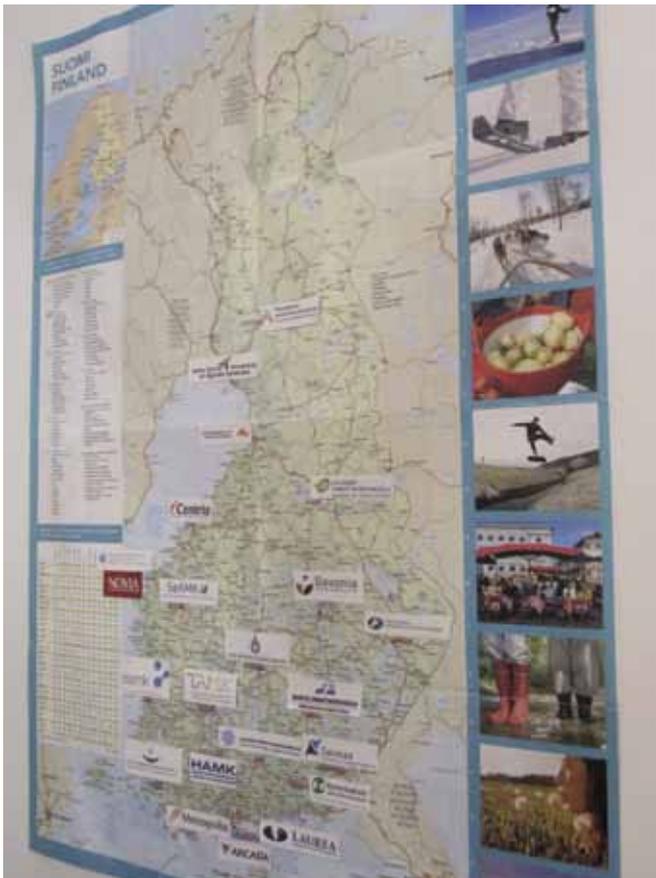
## THE CONTENT OF THE PUBLICATION

The publication at hand is yet another cooperative effort among FINNIPS and the network's collaboration partners and interest groups. Indeed, it contains a wide spectrum of views that reveal the extent of the fields of cooperation within FINNIPS on the one hand and reflect the different aspects of the actual practices, on the other.

To begin with, the Bachelor's degree programmes taught at Finnish universities of applied sciences are put into a wider framework as Counsellor of Education Carita Blomqvist from the Finnish National Board of Education discusses in relation to the agenda of the Bologna process. Following consideration of the comparability and compatibility of the UAS qualifications, Rector Jussi Halttunen provides a thorough account of the development and dimensions of internationalisation in Finnish UASs since 1990s. After that, the article by Manager of International Affairs Helli Kitinoja, raises

ideas regarding the significance of international degree programmes for the internationalisation of the whole UAS. These three articles together create an idea of the role and significance of international degree programmes in many different contexts.

The next chapter, on the other hand, sheds light on the contents, objectives and practices of the international degree programmes. At the moment, FINNIPS incorporates degree programmes from six different study fields. Accordingly, the texts will, in different ways, illuminate what, why and how international education is provided in the fields of 1) Social Sciences, Business and Administration, 2) Technology, Communication and Transport, 3) Social Services, Health and Sports, 4) Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services, 5) Natural Sciences and 6) Culture.



FINNIPS member UASs on the map (photo: Riikka Vanhanen).

Next, the focus is shifted to the ways in which FINNIPS functions. The various activities and actors involved in the cooperation are described as per the yearly cycle. Following the account of the organisation of the operations are country coordinators' descriptions of the entrance examinations in Russia, China and Kenya. The country coordinators reflect on, for example, the cooperation practices in different cultures and contemplate the exam arrangements as well as their experiences of them from different perspectives. Finally, at the end of the chapter, the texts of two students explain the admissions process from the applicant's perspective and disclose experiences of studying in an international degree programme in Finland.

The last chapter takes up yet another relevant topic when the discussion turns to working life. Employability and the link between education and working life are certainly themes that repeatedly come up in present-day discussions. First, the article by Director of International Affairs Arja Majakulma provides background information on the situation of international graduates from Finnish UASs in the labour markets. Next, an insight into working life is provided from another angle, as an employer's experiences of foreign nursing students are brought out in a text based on interviews with Head Nurse Anne Peräsalo and Staff Nurse Marjatta Rajamäki from Seinäjoki Central Hospital. Lastly, Project Manager Salla Niittymäki and Client Relations Manager Maaret Viskari describe the measures implemented within the PAJATSO project for the development of foreign students' employability.

As the subsequent texts will show, the purpose, value and influence of international degree programmes taught at Finnish universities of applied sciences are many. FINNIPS plays a significant role in the planning and implementation of the application process of the new students. However, along with the network's main task, it also seeks to take part in discussions and put forward ideas that support the further development of international degree programmes in Finnish UASs. Hopefully the ideas brought out in the publication will serve to advance this endeavour.

TABLE 1. Universities of Applied Sciences and Degree Programmes in FINNIPS in 2012–2013

<b>University of Applied Sciences</b>	<b>Degree Programme</b>
Arcada University of Applied Sciences	International Business Plastics Technology
Centria University of Applied Sciences	Business Management Industrial Management Nursing
HAMK University of Applied Sciences	Automation Engineering Construction Engineering International Business Mechanical Engineering and Production Technology
JAMK University of Applied Sciences	International Business Logistics Engineering Nursing
Kajaani University of Applied Sciences	International Business
Karelia University of Applied Sciences	International Business
Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences	Business Information Technology Nursing
Kyminlaakso University of Applied Sciences	Design International Business
Lahti University of Applied Sciences	Business Information Technology International Business Nursing
Laurea University of Applied Sciences	Business Information Technology Business Management Facility Management Security Management
Metropolia University of Applied Sciences	Electronics Environmental Engineering
Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences	Business Management Environmental Engineering Information Technology
Novia University of Applied Sciences	Maritime Management Environmental Engineering
Oulu University of Applied Sciences	Business Information Technology Information Technology International Business
Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences	Information Technology Innovative Business Services Tourism

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences	Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management International Business Mechanical Engineering and Production Technology
Satakunta University of Applied Sciences	Environmental Engineering International Business and Marketing Logistics
Savonia University of Applied Sciences	Industrial Management International Business
Seinäjäki University of Applied Sciences	International Business Nursing
Tampere University of Applied Sciences	Environmental Engineering International Business
Turku University of Applied Sciences	Information Technology International Business
Vaasa University of Applied Sciences	Information Technology International Business

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Ministry of Education. 2009. Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015. Helsinki: Publications of the Ministry of Education, Finland 2009:23.

# The Significance of International UAS Education in Finland

# FINNISH POLYTECHNICS<sup>1</sup> IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Carita Blomqvist

## INTRODUCTION

The European higher education systems have been undergoing a period of change since the onset of the Bologna Process in 1999. To implement the ideas expressed in the Bologna Declaration and following Ministerial Communiquéés, national authorities have embarked upon a series of actions and initiatives in higher education, which have a profound impact on national and international developments. National higher education systems have changed and international cooperation on all levels – national, institutional, Faculty – seems to have increased. The Bologna Process has brought changes to the structure, approach and conduct of higher education and the various individual reforms seem to amount to more than the sum of their parts. Formally, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched in March 2010, during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference. At the time of writing (summer 2013), it encompasses 47 countries.

This article will look more closely at two key areas of the Bologna Process and EHEA: convergence of degree structures and qualifications frameworks.

Those link at least to the following objectives of the Bologna Declaration:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the adoption of the Diploma Supplement.
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle will require successful completion of first-cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years.
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement

Whether we look back or ahead, putting agreed structures into practice has emerged and continues to emerge as one of the biggest challenges. European, including Finnish higher education institutions have a key role in implementing

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<sup>1</sup> The polytechnics use the term university of applied sciences when referring to themselves. In this article we use the term polytechnic, which is also used in the material published by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture

the Bologna agenda. New structures and policies will only work if they make a difference in teaching and learning, in the institutional practice and, ultimately, in the lives of students and graduates.

Putting into practice European policies, which have been agreed with national structures, can also be considered as part of the internationalisation agenda of Finnish higher education and more specifically Finnish higher education institutions. Due to the importance of institutional action and institutional measures for the implementation of the policies agreed in the framework of the Bologna Process, in this article the link to the institutional practice of Finnish polytechnics is being sought. Furthermore, along with the overall theme of this publication, we will discuss the qualifications awarded as a result of degree programmes taught in English (often referred to as international programmes) at Finnish polytechnics. The comparability and compatibility of Finnish qualifications is also an important factor when thinking of the internationalisation of higher education in general and, in this case, Finnish polytechnics in particular.

## CONVERGENCE OF DEGREE STRUCTURES

The introduction of the two-cycle degree structure has been one of the most visible and important achievements in the Bologna Process. There are still challenges before the implementation of two or three cycles can be said to have been concluded, but nevertheless the results have been significant (The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report 2012, 29–41).

On the other hand, it has also been observed, especially among those working on comparability and recognition of foreign qualifications, that behind the overall convergence there can be many significant differences, for instance in degree structures (cycles), variety in length of programmes, orientations, volumes, comprehensiveness, emphasis and in learning outcomes on national and institutional levels.

When it comes to access and then admission from the first cycle to the second cycle, and increasingly from the second cycle to the third cycle, problems seem to remain. This is partly obvious and justified: due to differences in contents, not all first-cycle qualification holders can have admission to any field of study in the next cycle – but in many cases institutional issues (including types of higher education institutions) are being considered as more important than the actual learning outcomes obtained by the individual.

Paradoxically, sometimes the issue is more significant inside the national system than internationally. For Finnish polytechnics, this was also stated

in the Evaluation of the Bologna Process Implementation in Finland (2012, 97), according to which “shifting from one higher education sector to another was easier for a UAS (University of Applied Sciences) Bachelor’s degree within the international context than in Finland, because foreign universities do not require students to complete complementary studies like Finnish universities do”. To some extent this can also be confirmed by the experience gained in the Finnish National Board of Education, which also acts as the Finnish ENIC/NARIC<sup>2</sup>. One of the tasks of the ENIC/NARIC Centre is to give information about national qualifications. It is quite rare to have questions concerning Finnish polytechnic degrees from abroad. Hopefully this also indicates that the Diploma Supplements issued by Finnish polytechnics contain all necessary information for instance for recognition purposes and that also more general information about Finnish higher education is easily available.

## QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

Convergence of degree structures has become visible also in the context of national and overarching qualifications frameworks, and more specifically, in the results of the self-certification and referencing procedures. Qualifications frameworks have become an important element of the European Higher Education Area and they link closely to the requirements for lifelong learning. Ministers adopted an overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA (QF-EHEA) in 2005 and committed to developing national frameworks compatible with the QF-EHEA. The EHEA countries have committed themselves to self-certify their national frameworks towards the QF-EHEA.

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) was developed by the European Commission and adopted in 2008. It encompasses eight levels from primary school to doctoral qualifications. Currently (summer 2013) the EQF applies to 35 countries. Those countries will reference their own qualifications against the EQF using agreed referencing criteria.

National qualifications frameworks provide a coherent description of qualifications within a system, how they interlink and how it is possible to progress inside the system. Qualification frameworks emphasise and are based on learning outcomes, and describe the generic learning outcomes one can expect learners to obtain for a certain qualification. Learning outcomes describe what learners should know, understand and be able to do on the basis of a given qualification.

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<sup>2</sup> European Network of Information Centres and National Academic Recognition Centres

According to the EQF Recommendation (European Parliament and Council 2008), there is compatibility between descriptors for the cycles of the QF-EHEA and learning outcomes for EQF levels: for example, the first-cycle descriptor of the QF-EHEA corresponds to learning outcomes for EQF level 6.

As an example, relevant learning outcomes for EQF level 6 in the EQF Recommendation are as follows:

- advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles
- advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study
- manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts
- take responsibility for managing the professional development of individuals and groups

Even if Finland has not yet completed self-certification and referencing processes towards the QF-EHEA and the EQF, it is possible to consider Finnish polytechnic Bachelor degrees as first-cycle degrees in the EHEA and placed on level six in the EQF.

## MAJOR COMPONENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

One element in internationalisation of higher education is the comparability of qualifications. Comparability does not mean that the contents – let alone learning outcomes – are similar from one system and institution to another. Diversity is one of the basic values of European cooperation also (and in particular) in the field of higher education, but throughout the Bologna Process attention and emphasis have also been given to convergence and similarities between systems and structures. In fact there are many differences in learning outcomes and more traditionally, content of degrees, even if the higher education structures are becoming more similar and cycles are converging. A certain level of comparability and compatibility makes it easier to have qualifications recognised and, on a more general level, compatibility also makes it easier for higher education institutions to internationalise their curricula, for instance through joint and double degrees, which have been planned jointly with foreign higher education institutions.

When discussing programmes taught in English and qualifications awarded by Finnish polytechnics, they can be considered from various points of view. Especially when discussing qualifications frameworks, five major components of which qualifications consist are often referred to (Bergan 2007): quality, workload, level, profile and learning outcomes. Here we try to characterise – keeping in mind the European dimension – Finnish polytechnic Bachelor degrees based on those five elements. These elements are also important in the recognition of qualifications, including Finnish, which can also be seen as an important factor in furthering the internationalisation of Finnish polytechnics.

Level designates the place of a qualification within an education system and/or national qualifications framework. We have already discussed the level in connection with the overarching qualifications frameworks and how Finnish polytechnic Bachelor degrees are placed in those.

For placing qualifications in European frameworks, the learning outcomes are a key factor. Finnish polytechnics have systematically worked on developing learning outcomes and ways to express them. The work was started on national level as early as 2004 when the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Polytechnics ARENE (later called the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences) initiated a project entitled 'Participation of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences in the European Higher Education Area'. In the second phase of the project, more attention was paid to student-centric and learning-centred approach, (competence-based) curriculum design, field-specific work, transparency and, most importantly, core and subject-specific competences and learning outcomes (The Bologna Process and Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences 2007, 22–27).

According to national legislation, studies leading to the polytechnic Bachelor degree provide the student with (1) broad overall knowledge and skills with relevant theoretical background for working as expert of the field; (2) knowledge and skills needed for following and advancing developments in the field; (3) knowledge and skills needed for continuous learning; (4) adequate language and communication skills; and (5) knowledge and skills required in the field internationally. The degree comprises basic and professional studies, elective studies, a practical training period and a Bachelor's thesis or final project.

These broad provisions have been further developed in the Government proposal to Parliament for an Act on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning. According to the proposal, the qualifications, syllabi and other extensive competence modules should be divided into eight reference levels according to the learning outcomes required by them. The proposal gives

the following descriptors for qualifications on level 6 in the proposed national qualifications framework:

“Possesses comprehensive and advanced knowledge of his/her field, involving a critical understanding and appraisal of theories, key concepts, methods and principles. Understands the extent and boundaries of professional functions and/or disciplines. Possesses advanced cognitive and practical skills, demonstrating mastery of the issues, the ability to apply knowledge and develop creative solutions and applications required in a specialised professional, scientific or artistic field to solve complex or unpredictable problems.

Is capable of managing complex professional activities or projects or is capable of working independently in expert duties in the field. Is capable of making decisions in unpredictable operating environments. Possesses at least the basic prerequisites for working as an independent entrepreneur in the field. Is capable of taking responsibility for the development of other individuals and groups, as well as for the assessment and development of his/her own competence.

Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate to a good standard verbally and in writing in his/her mother tongue, both to audiences in the field and outside it. Is able to deal with different people in learning and working communities and other groups and networks, taking account of communal and ethical considerations. Is capable of communicating at an international level and interacting in both national languages and at least one foreign language. Complies with sustainable working and operating practices.”

It is proposed that both university Bachelor and polytechnic Bachelor degrees are placed on level six. This is also to emphasise the fact that despite their different orientations they both give access to Master level studies in Finland. This is important also from the point of international recognition and comparability of Finnish qualifications. Most important are of course the learning outcomes based on national descriptors in different fields of study and further defined by polytechnics themselves.

Workload and credits are linked to the placement of qualifications in the qualifications framework. The Bachelor polytechnic degree consists of 180, 210 or 240 credits (3 to 4 years of full-time study) depending on the study field. For specific reasons, the scope of the degree may exceed 240 credits. In the Finnish system, one year of studies is equivalent to 1,600 hours of student work on the average and is defined as 60 credits. The Finnish credit system fully complies with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

In many cases, profile refers to the overall orientation of an institution or study programme, or both. For profile, the Finnish polytechnics are to be seen

as multi-field institutions of professional higher education. Polytechnics engage in applied research and development.

When it comes to the last, but not least, element of a qualification to be discussed here, the quality, there are many issues to look at. Quality and quality assurance have become an important issue with the emergence of increasingly diversified provision of qualifications and diverse and flexible learning paths.

On a national level, the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council conducts three main types of evaluations: audits of quality systems of higher education institutions, Centres of Excellence in Education evaluations and thematic evaluations and programme/field-specific evaluations. The goal of the audits is to support Finnish higher education institutions in developing their quality systems to correspond to the European quality assurance principles. The aim is also to create a strong quality culture in Finnish higher education institutions with the principles of transparency and publicity of the system. All the results of the audits of higher education institutions are published. As a relevant example of thematic evaluations, 'An Evaluation of International Degree Programs', conducted in 2013, can be mentioned.

## CONCLUSION

Qualifications have become the focus of more attention in the European Higher Education Area, especially along with the developments of qualifications frameworks. In this article, we have looked at the five major elements of a qualification (level, learning outcomes, quality, workload and profile) in a Finnish polytechnic Bachelor degree – and tried to establish compatibility with EHEA principles. We are happy to conclude, that from this point of view there seem to be no problems for the further internationalisation of Finnish polytechnic education – whether this means more international programmes, more international students or possibly the provision of international programmes abroad.

Nevertheless, when discussing higher education, only change is permanent and there are also considerable challenges. The European Higher Education Area will continue to develop. It is not necessarily wise to try to say something about the future, but at least certain elements of qualifications and qualification systems seem more stable than others. When it comes to level, or workload and, in most cases, also to orientation, the situation concerning Finnish polytechnic Bachelor degrees might remain similar to what it is now. One important challenge is also to communicate all this correctly and in a transparent way for the international audience. On the other hand, expectations and changes seem considerable when it comes to quality assurance and learning outcomes.

In order to assess individual qualification, which is an important element in international mobility, one needs to know something about the quality of the institution at which the qualification has been obtained. For a Finnish polytechnic, passing the audit organised by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council in line with European standards and guidelines for quality assurance and having results published are important elements. From the point of European discussion, it seems that quality assurance is increasingly also expected to assess programmes and institutions based on whether they ensure that students can reasonably achieve the expected learning outcomes. All in all, higher education institutions are also supposed to pay constant attention to issues related to assessment.

When discussing change, most expectations probably address learning outcomes provided by qualifications. When it comes to developing and defining learning outcomes, there is no end in sight – and there should not be. The work is never-ending. The importance of learning outcomes has implications for the design of study programmes in terms of structure, delivery and assessment. Learning outcomes also have an at least partly unexploited role to play in international recognition of qualifications, and they are becoming more and more important.

The internationalisation of higher education is a complex phenomenon, and includes many aspects, only a few of which we have discussed here. Finnish polytechnics have also considered internationalisation as one of their policy priorities. Achieving results has not been and will not be easy and takes time and effort, but the benefits of succeeding are worth the effort.

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# THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF GLOBAL EDUCATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Jussi Halttunen

## INTRODUCTION

The universities of applied sciences (later called UAS) were created in Finland during the 1990's through a long transformation process. There has been a very large and diverse network of former post-secondary vocational schools, which partially merged into 25 multidisciplinary higher education institutions, which would become known, during the first phase, as polytechnics. At this time a very remarkable change took place in the new curricula, such as attitudes toward internationalisation, pedagogical solutions and the required teacher competences. These former post-secondary vocational schools were more or less single-disciplinary institutions with a strong emphasis on vocational competences. In the new position as a higher education institution (later used HEI), the matter of internationalisation had to be re-evaluated as well. When creating the new educational institutions, there had to be more active internalisation and education in foreign languages than in the former post-secondary vocational schools. Most of the UASs started several new educational programmes with the whole curriculum taught in English in the 1990s. The most popular programmes were the Degree Programme in International Business and the Degree Programme in Nursing. The UASs held onto some of the international partner institutions inherited from the preceding former institutions, but much effort was later put later into building a new university- and college-based international network. The Ministry of Education encouraged the UASs to build collegiate networks for promoting internationalisation (like Pinnet, Finnish National Network for East and Southeast Asia, etc.) and helped institutions financially in order to encourage more active international exchange for students and faculty members.

## STRATEGIES AND PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE INTERNATIONALISATION AND GLOBAL EDUCATION OF THE UASS

The internationalisation framework of the higher education institutes at the European level is based on the Bologna Process, which started in June 1999, when the European Ministers of Education signed a joint declaration in the city of Bologna, Italy. The main goals of the Bologna declaration were to unify the

structural issues of the third cycle degrees, to launch the new ECTS system, to remove barriers to student mobility and to create the common understanding for implementing higher education in all of Europe. The Bologna Process has continued until today and the now-participating 47 European countries officially started the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010. (Niemelä et al. 2012.)

The European parliament made a very important recommendation in 2006, when the European Qualifications Framework of Lifelong Learning (EQF) was given. The aim of this framework is to unify the degree structures of higher education institutes. This recommendation was later applied in the National Qualification Framework (NQF) of higher education institutes and their degree structures in member states. It has given a mandate to position the UAS Master's degree at an equivalent level to that of the university-level Master's degree. Unfortunately the NQF has not yet been officially ratified by the Finnish Parliament for political reasons, although it has been in full use at all higher education institutes in Finland since 2006.

The Finnish government has, through its policy programme, set a goal to strengthen world-class competence and build stronger regional institutions in higher education by 2016. The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoE) has recommended HEIs to build strong international networks and coalitions, where there is the possibility to develop global education, joint and double degrees and cooperation in RDI work. The more accurate internationalisation strategy for HEIs given by MoE in 2009 includes five strategic goals: International Culture and Community, Increase the Quality and Attractiveness of Educational Programmes, Export of the Educational Services and Products, Supporting Multicultural Society and Promoting Global Responsibility. In most cases, the increase in the number of international degree students and the volume of international student exchange on campuses will enhance the perceived quality of the higher education and the attractiveness of the educational programmes. Therefore it will be necessary to increase the volume of the education and courses taught in English and other foreign languages. (Stearns 2009.)

The new UAS legislation will enter into force in Finland from the beginning of 2014. One of the biggest changes is going to be the new public funding model, which will be based 100% on the results gained from the three previous years. There will about 10 different indicators in the new funding, among which two will measure the internationalisation of UASs. One indicator is the global education rate as 3% value, which will be counted from the student exchange rate and the number of degrees completed by the foreign students. Another indicator by 1% value is the international mobility rate of faculty and staff.

## ACADEMIC QUALITY OF UAS EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT?

All the HEIs in Finland and especially the UASs will face a very challenging and highly competitive global environment in the future. However, the rapidly growing international market of the global education is still very interesting from the HEIs' point of view. Globalisation has increased the emphasis and put pressure on higher education as an internally-traded service operating in an increasingly competitive international marketplace (Stearns 2009). Of course those countries which use the English language as their mother tongue might have a strong competitive advantage in this export trade of education. The Finnish UASs might have some possibilities to engage in the export of education, especially in the fields of nursing and vocational teacher education. The potential market areas might be the Gulf region, China, Russia and the other CIS states, especially Kazakhstan.

To be competitive in a global student recruiting market the HEIs must pursue excellent world-class academic quality. That will mean at first increasing the total number of degree programmes and credits taught in English. (Stearns 2009.) Some other major global languages like Chinese, Russian, Spanish, French or German might be of some extra added value in the global game, but English is the main language of global education and the faculty and staff members need to be fluent in English. HEIs have to make sure that there will be enough courses available in English. What else might be crucial to achieving world-class prestige? According to the Bologna Process guidelines, the HEIs should have a comprehensive quality assurance system, which covers all the functions and operations of the HEI (Niemelä et al. 2012 and Talvinen 2009). This has to be regarded as the bare minimum requirement for being included among the relevant HEIs worldwide. Some first-class UASs will try to pass some more challenging quality accreditations like EPAS, EQUIS, AACBS or EUR-ACE, which will enable entry to the right legion and network of HEIs. In 2012, JAMK UAS passed successfully the EPAS accreditation by its IB programme as the first UAS in Finland and as a first HEI in Finland the international audit by FINHEEC in the second auditing cycle. (Hazelkorn et al. 2013.)

The Finnish UASs have been very active in recent years in starting international cooperation in terms of joint and double degrees with their international partner universities. This trend has been a very promising effort, especially when implementing the professional Master's degree programmes in UASs. JAMK has been one of the pathfinders among these operations

and has shown very promising results. The short-term programmes organised together with JAMK and San José State University (SJSU) have achieved very good results. Students from Jyväskylä will visit SJSU for a 10-day term during the autumn semester, and the students from California will participate in the International Summer School at JAMK in May-June. According to the JAMK strategy, we are striving to build an international network where we can learn more from the west, cooperate with our colleagues in Europe and be more involved in educational efforts in Asia and other parts of the eastern world. It would be a very good combination to mix the American global education of the business schools with the advanced pedagogical education of Finland. The prestige and good reputation of Finnish nursing education will also be subject to increasing demand in China and Russia in the future.

One remarkable part of the academic quality of education will be the international exchange of faculty and staff members. Traditionally this has meant that Finnish people frequently visit the partner universities as visiting lecturers. This has to be regarded as a basic mode of updating one's qualifications as a world-class educator. The other modes of faculty exchange should include participation in joint research projects and the implementation of online courses together with the partner universities. A very promising option for students at JAMK UAS is available from the Harvard University Business School lead network for Microeconomics of Competition (MOC), which will include customised and tailor-made courses acquired from the Harvard University offerings to all Master's students at JAMK.

The supply of international online courses, which may be downloaded from the websites and free portals of global universities, has increased tremendously during recent years. There might be a possibility for UAS students to choose optional and free online courses from all over the world. This will add to the supply of relevant international courses and programmes in a radical way. How to adopt them into your curriculum in a flexible way without weakening the academic quality of the education is the key question.

## EDUCATING GLOBAL EXPERTS AND CITIZENS AT UASS – FROM THE EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVE

The main function of the Finnish UASs is the education of professionals and specialists for the needs of the employers. Current legislation has a specific clause about close cooperation between the regional employers and UASs when implementing the education. Therefore the matter of international skills and competences needed in working life will be a key question in this

discussion. Current jobs, especially in industry and the service businesses, require certain qualifications to be a competent global professional and citizen. The need for global competence will certainly also increase in government bodies, NGOs and public services in the future. (Stearns 2009.) Finnish students' fluency in oral and written communication in the English language must be considered relatively good in order for them to be granted access to studies at UASs. The applicants from non-English speaking countries should pass the IELTS or TOEFL language tests with sufficient scores to be eligible to commence their studies. The ability to communicate in Russian, German, French or Spanish would be a remarkable value-added skill and capability for the graduates from UASs to get their first permanent job. Besides language skills, there also needs to have the right mindset to understand different foreign cultures and adapt a global citizen's attitude to working life abroad. This would be something other than the traditional and often parochial mindset, which would certainly prevent us from getting international jobs. (Stearns 2009.) In many cases, it will be even more important to learn about cultural issues than the very detailed factual and substance skills. To become a qualified nurse and to get the job, one needs to be a nursing professional and to pass the external accreditation of the governmental auditing body of VALVIRA soon after graduation.

How can the educators and the curriculum planners at the UASs be sure that there will be enough supply of internationally valid courses for degree students? These have to be such that they lead to the right kind of credits and offer content that will build strong competences relevant to getting a job after graduation. Close interaction and discussion between the employers' representatives and the academic advisory boards is a good way of updating one's qualifications. A very good option is a mandatory internship abroad or taking part in a student exchange for a semester or a year at a foreign partner university. JAMK UAS is one of the most active HEIs in the field of international student exchange. We try to place all our incoming international degree and exchange students on half-year internships at regional companies or public sector organisations. Outgoing JAMK students try to find their international working life connections with the help of our partner institutions. This does not yet work in a prolific enough way at both ends of the international exchange. There are still some doubts, especially among smaller enterprises, which prevent them from recruiting international student trainees in order to help them to brush up their global skills and competences in an SME. Some of the smaller employers are often too shy to admit an international trainee into their workplace. The language problems and lack of time or reluctance to tutor an

international student from a totally different culture might be perceived as such great obstacles that they lead to the employers avoiding these opportunities for internationalisation. In many cases, this would be a groundbreaking effort which might open new doors for a small company.

## HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF THE GLOBAL ISSUES IN RDI WORK, PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

The former post-secondary vocational institutions and polytechnics (before the UASs were started) were pure teaching-oriented institutions and did not make any great effort to do any kind of research. The polytechnic institutes offered some kind of technical testing services for industrial companies and some narrow market research was done at colleges for business and administration. In the first phase of UAS legislation in the 1990s, the new HEIs were regarded solely as teaching institutions, but that appeared to be the wrong strategy, especially in terms of academic quality assurance. The new UAS legislation in 2003 made a great change and introduced new functions in R&D and related regional development. The reason for that was the conclusion that there could not be first-class education or academic quality in the HEIs without supporting research and connections to regional development. Later in the 2000s, the task was enlarged to also include innovation work, which is a quite natural thing for the UASs. Unfortunately current legislation does not yet recognise this task in Finland. Also the international evaluation of the Finnish innovation system a couple of years ago did not put emphasis on the UASs' role in the system, largely for political reasons. (Veugelers et al. 2009.)

Why is it important for UASs to carry out applied and relevant RDI work in an international context tightly coupled to teaching? The traditional separation between research and teaching at UASs causes their courses to rely largely on dangerously simplified generalisations or popular management fads instead of relevant knowledge (ul Islam 2011). There could not be a proper academic quality of education without joint research in the same matters. In the case of the UASs, RDI work carried out there should have a sharp focus on applied research and innovation work rooted in that. When the UAS institutions strive to pass an international audit of their quality system or try to achieve some programme- or faculty-based accreditation, there is a requirement to emphasise the prestige and impact of the research work. Without that evidence, there can be no chance of passing the audit strictly on the basis of teaching results (ibid. 2011). In addition, to achieve the highly respected EQUIS accreditation, a UAS should achieve an ideal balance between the quality of education and

professional applied research. Schools should offer their students plenty of real-world relevance and exposure, making them highly competitive and qualified to handle global issues.

Most of the research carried out at UASs has been regarded as applied or action-oriented research. Therefore it is very important to take part in the right networks to ensure the acquisition of new knowledge. According to Gibbons et al. (1994), the new acquisition of knowledge will take place through Mode 2, which is loosely coupled with traditional Newtonian science practices. To be successful in the new Mode 2 of knowledge acquisition, UASs should build up a strong context of applied research in their respective areas of expertise. To ensure the sufficient funding of the RDI work, the UASs have built strong networks between global universities. The new national funding model for UASs in Finland will grant more basic funding for RDI work, but there will still be demand for external funding in terms of joint projects from the Finnish Academy, TEKES, European Union structural funds and the large European research programmes like HORIZON 2020.

## WHAT ARE THE REAL DRIVERS OF GLOBAL EDUCATION IN A UAS?

Finland has gained a good reputation from excellent learning outcomes and results at the secondary school level according to the results of the international PISA surveys. This has also prioritised the goal of increasing the international operations of the UASs through the export of educational services. As the domestic demand for education is expected to decrease in the future, the UASs have tried to compensate for this by increasing the volume of their international programmes or different kinds of short-term programmes abroad. Finland and the other Nordic countries (and Scotland) have so far been the only places in the world where HEIs do not charge tuition fees to their degree students. In some cases, this tuition fee-free education has given a slight competitive advantage to HEIs when enrolling students from Asia, Russia and the third world. In any case the HEIs in Nordic countries have carried out reciprocal exchange programmes throughout the world, which have ensured studies free from tuition fees to all students affected by these agreements. However, this situation is not expected to last forever, and there will be sharp pressure to charge tuition fees in the Nordic countries. Until that change, we have to ensure the high academic quality of education at UASs and our competitiveness in the global education market. Tuition fee-free degree studies are not a very sustainable competitive advantage.

In most cases, the motives for tuition fee-free global education have been the opportunities to enrol international students, who will be later recruited to permanent positions in Finland after their graduation. The internalisation and global education implemented at the UASs might not be separate from the global operations of the main stakeholders of the UASs. This need for relevance and dependence is directly derived from UAS legislation. When we support and increase the global competence of our students, they will later increase the global competence and prestige of Finnish industry after their graduation. A small country like Finland is highly dependent on export trade, and would benefit from the globally talented expertise and professionals who have graduated from the UASs.

## ARE THERE ANY PITFALLS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GLOBAL EDUCATION?

The implementation of global education at UASs requires certain conditions to be successful. First of all, it is crucial that the internationalisation and participation in global operations have been manifested as a main goal in the corporate strategy of the UAS. The top management of the HEI should stand strongly behind international operations by setting a personal example. Without such confidence and strong commitment, we cannot expect the same from faculty and staff members with regard to doing more in global operations. It is quite normal for only a few active faculty members to have enough courage to participate every year in international faculty exchanges or to arrange teaching in a short-term programme abroad. (Childress 2010.) When recruiting new senior and principal lecturers to UASs, we must take care that there will be new faculty members fluent in English who are willing and able to go abroad. There should be also enough lecturers from abroad representing different cultural backgrounds.

To ensure the relevance and the world-class academic quality of our global education, the UASs must build a strong international network of professionals, who frequently come as visiting lecturers and scholars to add value to our programmes. Without that kind of international expertise, there will be a high risk of a parochial or overly narrow approach in the programmes and courses implemented by UASs.

One considerable pitfall is related to the enrolment of international students, especially from third world countries. In some cases, the required language tests or even the whole applications have appeared to be falsified and the students disappear soon after the cheating has come to light. Therefore it is

very important that the UASs cooperate properly in the arrangement of entrance examinations like the FINNIPS network does worldwide.

In most cases, it would very easy to build a large international network of HEI partner institutions, at least at MOU level. It is quite easy to make initial contacts at large international get-togethers and conferences such as EIAE, NAFSA or APAIE, but unfortunately many promising contacts will remain at MOU level and will never become true cooperative partners, even in terms of student or faculty exchange, which will be at the lowest level of international cooperation.

It is very important to find the right partner with similar goals and curricula that are relevant to Finnish UASs. One of the basic things is, of course, for international partners and their faculty members and students to have a general interest in coming to Finland. If not, such cooperation is just a waste of time and money. Another very important aspect is the relevance of that country and region to Finnish industry or the service business. We should communicate with partners from those regions, who might somehow be potential target markets for our companies.

How can we avoid these pitfalls related to international operations? In many cases, the UASs could get some leads on new partners from already existing partners, and the network would then enlarge in a natural way. The active faculty and staff members at the international offices of the UASs are usually the key pathfinders when starting cooperation. How soon and promptly we reply to inquiries from partners and how well our international websites communicate are also crucial. An international network is always built between individuals in organisations. It could be started by the chance meeting of two people, but needs to be nourished to survive and have the strength to grow and last. (Anderson 2008.)

## CONCLUSION: OFF OF THE BANDWAGON AND TOWARDS THE REAL GLOBAL MINDSET OF FACULTY AND STAFF ON OUR CAMPUS

At the beginning of the UASs in the 1990s, the trend to be global or to target the area of internationalisation was regarded as some kind of bandwagon effect. Without any proper goals which are explicitly manifested in the corporate strategy of the UASs, the benefits of international operations might persist at only a very basic level.

Therefore it will be necessary to ensure and create a real positive global mindset for all faculty and staff members on campus. International services

should be available in everyday life. Without it, there cannot be any successful international education. The accountants in student offices or the waitress in the student restaurant are equally important as the lecturers in the classroom in building the big picture. (Childress 2010.)

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# INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND DEGREE PROGRAMMES AS A BASIS FOR GLOBAL COMPETENCY AND CITIZENSHIP

Helli Kitinoja

## INTRODUCTION

In 1996, the first nine of the new Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs) were officially established in Finland after a period of several years of intensive development, and now in 2013 there are 25 UASs in Finland. From the very beginning, the internationalisation of teaching and learning was one of the most important development tasks for these new institutions. Student mobility has played a significant role in internationalisation. Mobility includes shorter and longer credit study or training periods as well as degree studies at foreign partner universities. The goal of internationalisation of the Finnish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and the surrounding communities, enjoys broad public support by stakeholders and business. HEIs should also educate the local community about all the benefits and challenges of living in a globally diverse and increasingly integrated society where global understanding is needed. HEIs have their own social responsibility (Cooper 2013; Glassman, Nilsson, Lantto 2011).

The new two-cycle degree system was adopted by Finnish universities in 2005. At the same time, UASs were granted the right to offer Master-level degree programmes. The two-cycle degree structure was evaluated in 2010 by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. It was found that, since the degree reform, there has been a wider range of degree programmes in foreign languages and more active mobility cooperation with international HEIs than before the degree reform. According to the Finnish UASs, the degree reform has facilitated the recruitment of international students and increased internationalisation in general in Finland (Niemelä et al. 2012). In 2012, there were 399 foreign language-taught degree programmes offered in Finland, 142 of them provided by the UASs and 106 of which were Bachelor-level programmes. Finland has been at the top in Europe together with the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and France in offering international degree programmes taught in a foreign language. Out of 139 double and joint degree programmes, 67 were hosted by the UASs in Finland (Välimaa et al. 2013).

Finland has often been said to be the least international Nordic country. It has been found that Finland should attract greater numbers of international

research and teaching staff and international students. The ageing of the population is a Europe-wide problem, which increases the need to recruit labour from outside European countries, for example by offering educational opportunities for young people so that after graduation they can live and work in Finland.

Globalisation and technological development are radically changing the landscape of higher education. Over the next twenty years the demand for higher education is expected to grow rapidly, from the current 99 million students worldwide to 414 million by 2030, with China showing the highest increase in recent years followed by the other emerging economies of Brazil and India (EC 2013).

In Europe, countries like the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark charge tuition fees for students coming from non-EU countries. Tuition fees are used to raise income level and so scholarships for instance could be offered to students from developing countries. However, international students have a positive economic impact on the host country whether they are charged tuition fees or not. A survey by the Dutch government shows that if only 2.5% of international graduates remained to work in the country, this would result in positive long-term effects on the national economy (EC 2013). However, international education is too often seen in purely economic terms. Many researchers have pointed out that it is the death of international education if financial benefits are the only reason for internationalisation (De Wit 2011; Knight, Altbach 2007).

## GLOBAL COMPETENCY – GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

In July 2013 the European Commission launched a new strategy, European higher education in the world, aiming to ensure that European graduates gain the international skills they need to work anywhere in the world and that Europe remains the most attractive destination for international students. The Commission underlines that HEIs must also promote an international outlook among the 85% of students who are not mobile, so that these students too can acquire the international skills required in a globalised world. This means that HEIs need to develop international curricula, promote language skills and expand digital learning. International degree students support home-internationalisation. European HEIs need to think globally and the European Commission is committed to strengthening academic partnerships on a global scale (EC 2013). The basis for the new strategy is the EU's higher education modernisation agenda, published in 2011 (EC 2011).

Based on the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland (MoE 2009), Finnish HEIs should form a genuinely international higher education community. This requires a module supporting internationalisation in all degree programmes, increasing mobility, development of study counselling services for internationally mobile degree students, teaching in a foreign language and tutor training, development of international degree programmes and double degrees and increasing the number of international degree students to 7% by 2015 and the number of international teaching and research staff. Global responsibility is also one of the five priorities in the strategy for HEIs in Finland.

According to Ouyang and Mcalpine (2013) and Piilotettu osaaminen report (2013), internationalisation must be driven by the needs of society and what it can bring to students and faculty members. The preparation of students with global competencies is the central theme of internationalisation based on the demand for global talent and the global labour market. Students equipped with global competency have better opportunities to be employed in a globalised community. Through international education and degree programmes, Finnish students are also forced to face unfamiliar languages, cultures, global megatrends, values and knowledge. International education and international campuses will be, not only for internationally mobile students but also for all Finnish students, a transformative experience and personal growth process towards global citizenship and curiosity with the multi-dimensional perspective of the higher aim of internationalisation of HEIs.

## JOINT MARKETING EFFORTS TO MAKE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ATTRACTIVE

Based on a European Commission report (2013), the expectations of students are changing and they increasingly want to choose what, how and when they learn according to their individual needs and interests. Education, especially higher education, is at the heart of the Europe 2020 Strategy aiming at making Europe a smart, sustainable and knowledge-based economy and making society able to tackle global challenges more effectively with highly skilled human capital.

Europe, especially the United Kingdom, France and Germany, has remained an attractive destination for mobile learners with a stable share of around 45% of the international mobile student population, a population expected to grow from around 4 million today to 7 million by the end of the decade. However, there has been increasing competition with other

continents. The international degree mobility of students, the most widespread and still most powerful activity of internationalisation, is changing dramatically, and in some cases has become a critically important source of revenue for HEIs. Every year the number of higher education students going abroad is increasing by 7% with large numbers from China, India and the Republic of Korea. The share of mobile students who choose to study in Australia, New Zealand and Russia is growing fast and at the same time North America (the USA and Canada) remains as an attractive region. More and more, source countries are also becoming destination countries; China is the most important source country, but also today hosts 7% of the world's internationally mobile students (The European Higher Education Area in 2012). Educating students from developing countries has been seen, in harmony with the strategy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, as part of Finland's global responsibility.

Most EU Member States have set up "one-stop shop" websites in English that offer information and help for mobile learners. Finland has a national website administrated by the Center for International Mobility (CIMO) announcing study and funding opportunities ([www.studyinfinland.fi](http://www.studyinfinland.fi)).

Cooperation in recruiting international degree students can offer extra benefits. Half the Finnish UASs were involved in the marketing activities of the Finnish UASs' Asia Network in 2002–2008. CIMO is also an important partner for the UASs in marketing activities as well as the UASs' internationalisation network PINNET, which has been coordinating many marketing activities. Since then, the FINNIPS network has also implemented some marketing activities. Cooperation is a way to coordinate, save resources, share responsibility and knowledge as well as to multiply the benefits in relation to input. Alumni networks of international education programmes could be utilised in marketing activities too.

## SEAMLESS ADMISSION PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONALLY MOBILE DEGREE STUDENTS

Joint entrance examinations were organised in Asian countries by the Finnish UASs' Asia Network in 2002–2008 as a part of PINNET cooperation. At the same time in 2007, the Finnish UASs worked together with the National Board of Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture to create a national electronic joint application system ([www.admissions.fi](http://www.admissions.fi)) for Bachelor-level foreign language-taught degree programmes. This undertaking doubled the number of applicants compared to the traditional institutional application

system. The national collaboration expanded in autumn 2009, when 14 UASs created the Finnish Network for International Business Studies (FINNIBS), later FINNIPS (Finnish Network for International Programmes), to organise entrance examinations outside Finland. The PINNET network is one of the important partners.

Rules on the immigration of third-country nationals should support the efforts of HEIs to increase their international profile rather than create obstacles to mobility that weaken Finland's image abroad. Time and cost involved in obtaining the necessary visas and permits may act as an important factor in choosing a study destination. The recent European Migration Network (EMN) study entitled Immigration of International Students to the EU suggests that while Member States have facilitated the admission of third-country national students to the EU following directive 2004/114/EC, they can still face challenges as a result of national regulations and/or practices (EMN 2012). The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture also stresses the need to remove obstacles to international student recruitment, and the need to offer courses preparing for studies at UAS was also stressed (MoE 2008).

Study places in the international degree programmes of the Finnish HEIs have been offered on average to 28.7 % of applicants. Most of the foreign students to Finnish UASs came from China, Russia, Nepal, Vietnam and Nigeria (Välilmaa et al. 2013).

## EFFICIENT STUDY AND STUDENT COUNSELLING SUPPORT INTEGRATION INTO FINNISH SOCIETY

With increasing international mobility, the transparency and recognition of learning acquired elsewhere should be a key priority. Efforts already made to develop quality frameworks for mobility within the EU and the Bologna Process mean that Europe is the most advanced global region in this respect. In addition to the Diploma Supplement and the use of ECTS, the Erasmus Charter sets out the fundamental principles and minimum requirements for HEIs related to internationally mobile degree students (EC 2013).

HEIs should develop study counselling services for internationally mobile degree students as well as better services to send and receive international students, including individual counselling to advise on career paths and to facilitate integration into the region and country. Centralised information about services needed by international students, such as accommodation, health care and employment opportunities, is needed (MoE 2009, MoE 2008). At the beginning of the academic year, a long-term orientation for non-Finnish

degree students is important. UASs are recommended to create a model for international student counselling covering academic counselling and advice on living in Finland. The plan is a helpful tool for tutors and international office staff when they conduct personal interviews with their students. Cooperation with municipal representatives, other stakeholders and for instance the friendship family programme, is also important when implementing activities to support integration into the community. More than half (61%) of the UASs offer extra-curricular activities for international degree students, nearly 50% of them during the whole study period (Välilmaa et al. 2013). For achieving international competence it is very important for international students to have hobbies and other free time activities and cooperation with the Finnish peer-groups (Pilotettu osaaminen 2013).

Internationally mobile students need specific support in language learning including the opportunity to learn the local language, whether or not this is the language of the degree programme (MoE 2008, MoE 2012). Securing the language proficiency of the Finnish teaching staff is important as well as the possibility to offer adequate Finnish language and culture studies for international students. The ability to speak and understand the Finnish language facilitates employment in the Finnish labour market.

## INTERNATIONAL CURRICULUM FACILITATES GLOBAL COMPETENCY AND CITIZENSHIP

Higher education policies must increasingly focus on the integration of a global dimension in the design, content and implementation of all curricula and teaching/learning processes, to ensure that all the learners are able to acquire the international skills required in a globalised world (EC 2013).

Degree programmes taught in English should also provide high-level innovative international curricula, not only curricula translated into English, as well as excellence in teaching and research opportunities, and make a strong contribution to economic growth by encouraging innovation and ensuring that higher education responds to labour market needs. Most (71 %) of the international degree programmes include obligatory student visits and/or practical training in local enterprises. 91 % of UASs said that practical training can also be conducted outside Finland (Välilmaa et al. 2013).

Digital education and open online courses integrated into learning methods could also bring new opportunities for international students. Finnish and international students should also study together to gain more benefits from the learning processes.

## CONCLUSIONS

International students studying at Finnish UASs are vectors of cooperation with their home countries in education, business, economy and social life. Local companies and working life can gain extra benefit for their internationalisation and foreign trade, new innovations and networks from internationally mobile degree students, visiting faculty members and researchers.

The economic importance of international higher education is rapidly growing and the Finnish UASs should also increase their attractiveness and actively promote internationally mobile degree students and academic staff as well as enter into cooperation and strategic partnerships with other HEIs, government institutions, the private sector and civil society around the world to create higher education as a product and service that generates a significant source of income. UASs in Finland could also utilise the good results of PISA surveys in exporting Finnish education services, in a situation of decreasing government funding for UASs.

If UASs are successful in recruiting international students and staff, this will have a great impact on internationalisation, global competency and global citizenship in the classroom, on the campus and in the community. Global competency facilitates the employability of Finnish and international students. Student and staff mobility in turn requires UASs to have attractive international degree programmes, not only degree programmes translated from Finnish into English, and learning opportunities in English.

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International Degree Programmes  
in Various Fields of Study

# INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION: FROM LABOUR MARKET NEEDS TO SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL CAREERS

Jyrki Holappa, Tuuli Mirola and Petra Yli-Kovero

During their two decades of existence, the Finnish International Business (IB) programmes have found their position in the field of international business education. Since the country joined the European Union in 1995, the access of Finnish companies to the union-wide, new 'home market' placed a greater emphasis on skills and knowledge related to managing international business. Due to the later gradual liberalisation of international trade, the development of the global economy and the appearance of the so-called emerging economies, this emphasis has further gained in importance facilitating the success of Finnish companies and the Finnish economy. Consequently, in line with this development, a number of Finnish universities of applied sciences (UAS) began to create degree programmes focusing on international business in order to support local and regional small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in their endeavour to become international. The role of education has proven to be fundamental, not only in teaching internationally-oriented future employees and managers with relevant substance, language and intercultural communication skills, but also providing a framework for SMEs' business development in cooperation with universities of applied sciences.

## CURRICULUM DESIGN RESPONDS TO VARIOUS REQUIREMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The role of a curriculum is to implement various needs, hopes and tasks that have been set for international business education. Naturally, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Finnish national qualifications framework form a basis for the curriculum development, but they also incorporate the strategies, development plans, profiles and areas of emphasis of individual UASs. Furthermore, Finnish universities of applied sciences have built up their curricula in cooperation with Finnish industries and companies operating in international business. Additionally, the views of local and regional SMEs and various interest groups in working life are taken into consideration. Thus, the contents of the curricula have partly been adjusted according to the labour market needs.

A typical aim for the degree programmes is to educate graduates that are able to cope with different aspects of international business, such as marketing,

sales, international entrepreneurship, management, business strategy, logistics, as well as language and cultural skills. An important part of the education is frequent cooperation with SMEs through individual courses (course work, visits), project work, work practice and theses at the final stage of studies. Furthermore, in many degree programmes the framework of having faculty members, students, alumni and working life representatives working together as a degree programme team has proven to be a valuable method of developing the content and practices of a particular degree programme.

## EMPHASIS ON INTERCULTURAL SKILLS

International business needs multicultural experts with theoretical and practical skills. To meet these requirements, the IB programmes offer high-level know-how and versatile skills for the diverse aspects of international business operations. Cultural and social skills needed when working in international business are learnt in an intercultural environment during the studies. The learning of these intercultural competences and skills is supported in multicultural study groups and further deepened in exchange studies in partner institutions. Valuable relationships and international networks are created during exchange studies as well as in work placements abroad.

The success of the curriculum depends on the individual courses, which in their turn depend on how they are carried out by the teachers. In addition to the course content and substance, the teacher of an international student group must pay close attention to the other learning competences. Therefore, the role of the teacher in multicultural learning groups can be described as diversity management. The teacher must support the acclimatisation and adjustment of international students without compromising Finnish educational standards or requirements. This requires deep understanding and sensitivity to the cultural diversity of the students. It is not only the differences in national cultures but also in educational and learning cultures that the Finnish IB teachers face in their everyday classroom environment.

The IB teacher needs a firm but gentle hand in guiding the international group to learn how to play by the rules of the Finnish education system and the school requirements. For some international students, the Finnish academic freedom may come as a surprise, especially since it comes with the requirement that the students must also take great responsibility for their own studies. Planning and following their own personal study plan is not easy for the beginners. Lapses in following the timetables, submitting assignments and passing courses are common unless the plans are supervised and the students are supported by the

teachers and tutors. Especially at the beginning of studies, the need of support is heightened because of the different backgrounds of teaching and learning methods that the students are familiar with. Many international students are used to traditional lecturers and individual assignments whereas the Finnish higher education system prefers diverse teaching methods including learning by doing, problem-based learning, group assignments, etc.

Learning how to accept and embrace national and cultural differences as valuable assets during their studies helps students profoundly in their future careers. At the beginning of IB studies, working in a group can be challenging, not only because of the lack of previous experience of using this method, but also due to students' tendency to form national rather than multicultural teams. In an ideal situation every team is multicultural and degree students also work with exchange students, thus maximising the benefits of intercultural interaction in learning experiences. Another challenging aspect regarding group work is that, in some cultures, students are not used to expressing their arguments freely. This affects group dynamics resulting in difficulties in completing group assignments and sometimes in their poor quality. However, these skills in group work and arguing are required when working in multicultural business.

Students in IB programmes learn to understand and accept English spoken in different accents, and to pay attention to the content of the speech instead of the speaker's language skills. Using English daily in all kinds of situations/circumstances gives students courage and self-confidence to use a foreign language without worrying about the grammar, and instead concentrate on being understood. On the other hand, the use of proper language and grammar is more emphasised in written assignments and documents.

## INTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY

The role of an IB teacher and a tutor is complex. On one hand, the teacher/tutor is an educational authority supporting the students' professional growth and development. On the other hand, she/he has a "softer" social role as a mentor or even a somewhat parental role in which support in everyday issues from housing to hobbies is emphasised. Sometimes the role can be that of a listener, such as when an international student feels home sick or has other difficulties in settling into student life or Finnish society. Teachers/tutors offer personal support and help students to find their inner resources and solutions to everyday problems from broken computers and lost bus passes to car insurance.

International students can be quite young when they start their studies. Therefore, the teacher often needs to support the students' ability to take

responsibility for their own lives, such as in financial issues, physical and mental well-being, daily routines and time management. Learning to take care of these issues is essential for the studies to proceed as planned, and even more crucial in students' careers, irrespective of which country they live in. Facing and solving these kinds of challenges gives the students valuable skills and the ability to adjust to different cultures or countries in their international careers. For students coming from outside of Europe to study, a Finnish IB degree programme gives experience in Finnish/European society and the way of doing business. For Finnish IB students, on the other hand, observing the adjustment process of the international students gives them an idea of what to expect when they work or study in a foreign culture.

The acid test of the performance of the IB programmes lies in the combination of the curricula and the cultural melting pot of the classroom activities in international learning groups. The Finnish international business degrees, both Bachelor's and Master's, are internationally well-recognised, highly valued and respected. The degree programmes have an increasing number of both Finnish and foreign applicants, as well as incoming exchange students. The graduates of Finnish IB programmes are in high demand in local and international companies. Cooperation with Finnish businesses is also active and increasing. Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences have proven their success in their educational endeavour.

# THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE ENGINEERING DEGREE PROGRAMMES IN ENGLISH

Aila Puttonen

Organising full engineering degree programmes in English has become common at Finnish universities of applied sciences (UAS) during the past ten years. Programmes are offered in various fields of study and many of the universities of applied sciences offer more than one degree programme in English. This differs from many European universities, which offer only half a year or one year programmes, if any, in English to attract exchange students.

International cooperation has been considered important to Finnish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and working life. Since the 1990s, the Ministry of Education and Culture has been promoting internationality in HEIs by evaluating their activities and delivering special funding based on, among others things, their progress in international activities (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011). Also, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Centre of International Mobility CIMO supports the internationalisation of students at all levels of study (CIMO 2013).

## INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE WHOLE INSTITUTION

In general, the significance of internationalisation in engineering education has been increasing in recent years. This has raised the profile and increased the visibility of engineering education in general. Education in English and international students have introduced an international aspect to the whole university, also for students who never would or could go abroad to study. Multicultural aspects in everyday life, understanding and accepting different cultures and behaviour have increased at universities and, in smaller municipalities, the attitudes of local people towards foreigners may have been improved too. Both staff and students learn to adapt and work with persons from different backgrounds, either in learning situations or in normal life. The language skills of personnel and students are developed by the everyday use of English in various situations.

Even though foreign students and staff members are a minority in any university of applied sciences in Finland, most services are offered in English, and the foreign students and staff members do not need to master the official Finnish native languages. The programme's language has become an official working language for the organisation too. This proves that the programmes

in English are not considered inferior to the programmes run in Finnish or Swedish. Free time activities and also some events are organised in English for international students.

## SKILLS FOR WORKING LIFE

As internationality is part of everyday life, students develop their communication skills and personal strategies while working in a multicultural atmosphere. They learn to adapt and work in another language with persons from different cultures, which creates opportunities for innovation and development. The continuous use of professional language provides the students with an excellent chance to practise professional English language. They are also offered the opportunity for insight into the state of affairs in technology and development in other countries. When graduating, they have a wide perspective of their profession and are capable of participating in professional discussions and international meetings and writing reports in good English. This development prepares the future engineers for the framework of global working life and provides them with the skills required in modern working life.

Enterprises heading for international markets benefit from hiring an engineering student coming from the target country or area, especially if they need information about the potential customers, partners, local environment or regulations. Students knowing both the Finnish and local manners have the ability to balance cultural differences in negotiations, in research and in business. Although the student may return to his/her home country after the graduation, he/she will be a valuable contact person, customer or partner representative in the country.

In the IT field, for example, although the language of programming is typically English, an engineering student can help the enterprises in translating and modifying their web pages and user interfaces for better response from users in the student's home country. IT enterprises have also hired students early in their study years allowing them to show their motivation and ability for independent work at an early stage. Part-time working throughout the study years and practical placements benefit both the enterprise and the student, and may lead to successful permanent employment.

Environmental projects or business require a broad understanding of local features, people and nature. The companies working in the environmental field can utilise a student's knowledge of his/her home country, such as the public administration system, authorities and regulations, the state of the environment, water treatment systems, waste management or high-technology applications.

For example, engineering students of Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences have done theses for Finnish companies in Russia and participated in the international projects of universities of applied sciences to find out information or to work as a bridge between researchers and local people. Topics have varied from water quality in fisheries to sustainable waste management technologies and planning ecological villages.

Some companies have noticed that long-term cooperation with a group of international students is particularly beneficial. The company can invite students for an excursion and give them interesting real-life tasks and projects with standards increasing by study years. This offers them the chance to evaluate the students' suitability for practical placement in the company and also gives them a risk-free recruitment possibility as they get to know the students during projects or practical placements.

Despite all the benefits, it is a challenge for foreign students to find a practical placement during their studies (Aalto 2003, 46), and often they are forced to go to their home country for it. Only 54% of the foreign engineering students are employed in Finland one year after graduation (CIMO 2012). In addition to language skills, there may be adverse attitudes preventing employment. Lack of integration into Finnish working life does not favour getting educated and skilled foreign workers to fill the predicted future labour shortage. Integration of foreign students into Finnish working life in higher numbers than today might help Finnish business life, as has been called for by some quarters like Finpro, to increase the internationalisation of business and the commercialisation of innovations (Häyrinen 2013).

## EXPERIENCES OF SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES

The programmes conducted in English offer a natural base to develop the international relations of a university of applied sciences. It allows staff exchanges and student exchanges without extra efforts. Double degree agreements and R&D projects are easier to plan and implement with partner universities. As a secondary effect, good practices are shared with foreign universities in international cooperation.

The educational activities in engineering programmes in English are mostly the same as in respective programmes in Finnish, but international aspects are emphasised more. It is important to discuss various practices and technologies used in other countries. Also, depending on the topic, Finnish regulations alone are not enough or not so relevant for foreign students. In addition to laboratory work typical of engineering studies, some programmes have developed a more

practical approach to teaching: project work has become more common and studying is often process-based and customer-friendly. This helps the students, who are not using their native language, to better understand complicated theoretical or abstract information.

Normal class teaching brings more challenges to teachers as they must pay attention to the language in addition to the contents. They must develop their own professional language knowledge above the level required in discussions, and must also make sure the information is well understood by the students for whom the language of instruction is not a native one. Understanding the students' questions and presentations might be a problem too, because of dialect or accent and lack of vocabulary.

In international programmes attracting a large number of applicants, the competition often leads to a high level of accepted students who are typically highly motivated, although the level of knowledge and learning may vary among the foreign students. On average, the number of Finnish students is low but they perform excellently and are easily employed. Among foreign students are those already holding a Bachelor's or higher degree in some other field, which enriches teaching, discussions and projects. The positive effect also spreads to the programmes in Finnish via several routes: as the study places are regulated, programmes in Finnish have fewer places to apply to, thus increasing competition between the applicants there too. Moreover, combining the English and Finnish speaking groups at suitable occasions for group work or projects spreads motivation and an innovative approach for all students.

As a drawback, some foreign students do not master the language of the programme well enough and lack motivation for studying. They may never graduate from demanding engineering programmes and many of them quit after the first year. They may have used the studies only as an excuse to enter the EU. They are a challenge to the staff and especially to the teacher responsible for groups of foreign students. The teachers must be ready to provide extra help and counselling because of cultural differences, cheating in exams, permit and housing problems and even private problems.

The future prospects of engineering programmes conducted in English are mainly positive and the extent of them is expected to remain at today's level. Additional investment is, however, needed to develop them and, in many universities of applied sciences, the strategy for the coming years is focused on developing internationality, amongst other things. On the other hand, the new plans of the Ministry of Education and Culture based on educational responsibilities may threaten the status of degree programmes in English at some universities of applied sciences. If the programmes are merged with other

degree programmes within the same educational responsibility, they may lose their independence or even their existence, especially if they are not clearly visible in marketing. Furthermore, the possible introduction of fees for non-EU students may threaten the attractiveness of the engineering programmes in Finland.

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# TOWARDS MULTICULTURAL NURSING IN FINLAND

Marjo Palovaara and William Garbrah

Currently, the Finnish healthcare system is faced with a deficit of qualified nurses (Nieminen 2011). This situation has compelled different healthcare organisations to recruit nurses from foreign countries such as Spain. In 2010, there were 950 foreign nurses in Finland, 425 of whom were working (Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus ja suomalaiset ulkomailla 2010). In addition, over 100 foreign students start their nursing studies in English at Finnish universities of applied sciences each year (Naturally Finland). Although Finland has fewer nurses with an immigrant background than EU countries on average, the amount of nurses with foreign background has increased almost 60% in the past 10 years (Wismar et al. 2011).

These phenomena set a challenge for higher education institutes, working life as well as for the newcomers in the integration and mentoring process. Students in the English-language nursing programmes on the other hand, feel that the benefits of a multicultural studying environment could be maximised (Pitkälä 2012, 51). Moreover, the cultural diversity that the multicultural employees bring with them has also been affirmed to be valued by employers. However, in the recruitment processes, these features are not fully taken into account (Piilotettu osaaminen 2013.)

Although the degree programmes in nursing conducted in English have existed for over 10 years at some universities of applied sciences in Finland, certain challenges remain. Nursing education consists of both theoretical and practical studies, the practical part being one-third of the whole degree (Bachelor of Health Care Degree 2013). Practical studies are implemented in various authentic healthcare environments. Finding placements for foreign nursing students is always demanding for the university. The challenge usually arises from the language barrier between the workplace and the student (Pitkälä, Eriksson, Kekki & Pitkälä 2012).

Consistently, students acknowledge that a positive attitude and interest from the mentoring nurse and the entire clinical environment towards the student is one of the most essential factors in learning during the practical studies (Pitkälä, Eriksson, Kekki & Pitkälä 2012). If neglected or ignored by the mentor, however, the experience from the practice will leave the student feeling like an outsider. Negative experiences from practical training decrease the motivation in learning and also prolong the time that it takes to adapt to working life. (Pitkälä, Eriksson & Pitkälä 2012).

## MEASURES TO SUPPORT COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

Obviously, both the universities and working life are facing challenges with the multicultural environment and are perhaps in need of further education/strategies to meet the requirements of a changing society. Nurses working in different healthcare settings need support to acquire the diverse range of skills needed to face a foreign student, colleague or patient (Nummi 2011). JAMK University of Applied Sciences has developed several support and development tools to help working life with this challenge. The tools for working life comprise educational packages, instructions for mentors, seminars held jointly by staff from different universities and joint small projects. For nursing students, the UAS offers language courses and mentoring support during studies.

The educational package called “Guide In English, please!” has potential in trying to help nurses gain competence and confidence in mentoring foreign students. The course (3ECTS) has two main aims, enhancing the cultural competence of the nurse and also improving their skills in English, especially in the field of nursing. The teaching method for the course is blended learning where e-learning, face-to-face discussions, independent developmental assignments and key lectures play an important part. The course is tailored according to each participating group.

All the critical and current issues concerning foreign students are discussed together every semester in joint seminars with working life. There is also always some key lecture to enhance the knowledge of the attendees and to involve them in discussions. The mentoring guidelines developed together give the mentors and teachers ideas and knowledge on how to deal with the everyday situations of a foreign student. Working life is also encouraged to involve international nursing students in their development projects. For these the students have done minor assignments, but there is also a desire to involve their Bachelor’s theses in real practice.

The foreign students’ language skills in Finnish language are evaluated at the beginning of studies. Recommendations are then made accordingly on how to proceed with their language studies. The teachers include language in the studies in everyday teaching, as much as is possible. During nursing studies, the students have a chance to study up to 23 ECTS of Finnish language. In the final phase of their studies, the university supports the students, for example by enabling them to complete their final practical training as paid work.

By developing the mentoring nurse’s cultural competence in working life environments and adding language studies for nursing students, we are

solving only a part of the challenge. Inevitably healthcare in Finland is becoming multicultural. It is time to recognise people's competence and become more curious about what multiculturalism can offer (Piilotettu osaaminen 2013). Perhaps in future, emphasis could be put on social integration to help acculturate and retain many of our foreign nursing students?

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# TOURISM EDUCATION CONTRIBUTES TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ulla Kangasniemi and Heli Korpinen

What do the Lappeenranta-Imatra region in South Karelia and Rovaniemi in Lapland have in common? You may need to think twice to find the connection but when you get it everything seems very clear. Firstly, there are plenty of foreign tourists in these areas. If you look at the statistics, you can see that, after the metropolitan area, Lapland and South Karelia are number two and three in terms of where foreign tourists visited in 2012 (Statistics Finland).

Tourists also spend money. Statistics from Global Blue Finland Oy show that the tax-free sales of the two neighbouring cities in South Karelia, Lappeenranta and Imatra, are as great as the tax-free sales of Helsinki, at times even greater. Rovaniemi also recorded a huge rise in tax-free revenue in 2012. (Imatra Region Development Company KEHY.)

The second issue in common is that both Saimaa University of Applied Sciences in Imatra and Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences offer Bachelor-level education in the field of Tourism and Hospitality in English. The demand for this arises from the tourism industry in the areas; inter-culturally competent and linguistically-skilled people are needed to make sure that the service needs of tourists are met. The tourism and hospitality industries are international in nature, so internationalisation in this field of study is the basic knowledge every student should acquire during his or her studies, not something extra or something added on top.

## CLOSE TIES TO THE LOCAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

The role of this international programme in both institutions is clear: it is valued by students, personnel and local businesses. Of course there is also educational cooperation with the other degree programmes of these institutions. At Rovaniemi UAS, for instance, there is cooperation with other international degree programmes, Finnish degree programmes and the University of Lapland. This has created much positive feedback and interest among the students of the programme.

Local tourism companies and organisations are close partners. It is evident and natural that there are many forms of cooperation with the local tourism business. These can be implemented and included in the study

units themselves or taken separately, for instance as projects or thesis topics. This kind of cooperation also gives the local companies a boost in internationalisation and gives their employees a valuable way to practise their intercultural skills.

## STUDYING IN DIVERSE GROUPS IN WINTER CONDITIONS

It is without doubt a privilege for a teacher to be able to work with multicultural student groups, and sometimes a bit challenging too. Especially during the first semester of studies, everything runs smoothly and every student is really excited about studying in a group with people from different cultural backgrounds. However, it is quite natural that some problems might arise inside the group after a while. This teaches the students the extremely valuable skills of being able to work in a multicultural group, because this is the actual case when working in the tourism field; you work with people from different countries, from different cultures with different habits, requirements and expectations. Therefore these kinds of skills are in high demand and thus help the students to gain more experience of and expertise in teamwork, customer service, cultures, leadership, HRM, etc., all required by the tourism industry anywhere in the world. The fact that both universities offer an entire degree programme in English also attracts exchange students from all over the world and that broadens the cultural diversity even more.

The long and cold winter period may also present an extra challenge for some of the students, especially from the Asian countries. Even if they know that winter can be hard and teachers prepare them for it, it may come as a surprise to some of them how their body and mind react. The experience, however, may also be valuable to the students, helping them to prepare themselves for the next time that they visit culturally and climatically different environment.

The future for international education in tourism looks good. It is important that various universities of applied sciences in Finland that offer tourism education find their own specific areas of specialisation. There will be changes in the educational field in Finland and, in the future, the quality of education will be even better. It might also be a good idea to have more cooperation between Finnish institutions offering tourism studies; we can offer more diverse tourism education by having common courses, projects, study trips or even by sharing thesis topics. It is also evident that social media and other electronic platforms, for example, will bring new, potential forms of cooperation in the future.

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# FINNIPS BRINGS IN HALF OF THE OULU BIT STUDENTS

Ilkka Mikkonen

The first enrolment in the Degree Programme in Business Information Technology (BIT) at Oulu University of Applied Sciences took place in 2004. The Business Information Technology programme educates internationally-oriented experts for business and information systems development. The programme serves the IT needs of working life in the field of software development (web applications and mobile applications), digital media and IT-support. The graduates will gain an understanding of both information technology and business processes. The main role of the BIT programme in regional development is to serve the area's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), IT companies as well as non-IT companies, in their internationalisation and globalisation activities by bringing in and educating new and keen international IT professionals.

## THE FOCUS AND VALUE OF THE PROGRAMME

The focus of the BIT programme has been differentiated from the corresponding Finnish degree programme (Tietojenkäsittely, TIK) to emphasise communication (especially corporate communication), business and languages. The aim is to prepare graduates to work successfully in the customer interface, for example as a product manager in an international business environment. The focus is on assisting the internationalisation process of SME companies. Students from many different countries create added value for the degree programme. The international students have valuable target market knowledge and cultural skills from their countries, which would otherwise be difficult to obtain by SME companies in the Oulu area and the rest of Northern Finland.

## STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Already in the planning phase of the degree programme, the target for student enrolment was about 50% Finnish students and 50% students with a foreign background. It was clear that the foreign population in the Oulu area is not large enough to accomplish the recruitment of foreign students only locally, thus it has been extremely important for us also to be able to market our programme abroad and to have the possibility to arrange entrance examinations outside Finland.

During the first years of the degree programme, which started in 2004, the possibility to take an entrance examination abroad was provided through collaboration with some of the Finnish embassies abroad. Entrance examinations in some Asian countries were also made available by means of temporary project funding through the Finnish National Network for East and Southeast Asia.

The entrance exam possibilities through the embassies and the Finnish National Network for East and Southeast Asia were, however, limited to a small number of countries and locations. The starting of the FINNIPS network has enhanced the possibilities to arrange entrance examinations abroad to a much higher level. In spring 2013, there were entrance exams in 16 countries at 23 locations (FINNIPS website 2013).

## MULTICULTURAL STUDYING IN THE DEGREE PROGRAMME

So far the BIT degree programme students have represented well over 30 different nationalities, so the everyday study experience is really multicultural. The student group work is usually organised so that each small group has both Finnish and foreign students. The degree programme also includes a lot of working life-oriented commissions and various kinds of projects. In those it has also proven to be very beneficial to have merged student groups consisting of both Finnish and foreign students doing assignments for companies and other organisations. In many cases for example, an SME company finds it easier to commission a student project when there is at least one Finnish student in the group. The Finnish student can help to orientate the other students in the working culture and other practicalities of the company, and the foreign students can come up with alternative solutions and create new innovative approaches to the company.

Some of the BIT students will remain in the Oulu area after the graduation, serving the local companies and other organisations, and thus providing an important contribution to the economic development of the area. The graduates who leave Oulu after their graduation are also important “ambassadors” for the area. During their studies and life in Oulu, they will have gained a lot of knowledge of the local culture, language and local business life, and created a valuable network of contacts. Thus they will act as ambassadors for Oulu and Finland everywhere they go!

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FINNIPS ENTRANCE EXAMS

The BIT programme at Oulu University of Applied Sciences has an annual enrolment of 25 students. Table 1 shows the development of the number of applicants for the years 2010 – 2013. The overall applicant figures are on a very good level and the majority of the entrance examinations have been taken at the FINNIPS exams. In 2013, the number of all applicants increased by 9.3% and the number of primary applicants increased by 4.8%. (Opetushallitus, Oamk.)

	2010	2011	2012	2013
All applicants	687	797	645	705
Primary applicants	203	255	207	217
Entrance exams taken	87	145	109	162
FINNIPS exams taken	57	107	81	132

The rather large drop in the amount of the entrance exams taken compared to the number of applicants is mainly a result of the large number of applicants in some countries where the FINNIPS organisation does not hold entrance examinations. For practical reasons, many applicants from these countries do not have the chance to come to Finland or to other examination countries to take an exam. Examples of such countries are Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Pakistan.

When looking at the number of applicants coming from specific countries, there is more variation in the numbers. Table 2 presents the changes in the numbers of applicants in the countries where the programme has had more than 10 applicants. The countries are presented in order of all applicants in the recent application period of 2013. Besides these countries, there have been 1–9 applicants from a total of 71 countries, of which 17 are European Union member countries. In 2013 the strongest increase has been in applications coming from Nepal and Vietnam (Oamk 2012 and Oamk 2013).

TABLE 2. Major applicant countries						
	2011		2012		2013	
	All applicants	Primary applicants	All applicants	Primary applicants	All applicants	Primary applicants
Nigeria	321	106	233	99	197	69
Nepal	11	7	27	2	147	46
Vietnam	28	10	25	14	59	20
Kenya	47	10	33	7	43	7
Ghana	45	11	37	10	40	12
Finland	43	19	38	12	34	10
Pakistan	42	10	47	11	27	15
Ethiopia	54	21	36	5	23	1
Bangladesh	69	33	28	4	22	9
China	33	4	25	10	19	9
Russia	10	4	11	3	8	1

The Degree Programme in Business Information Technology is one factor in the internationalisation process of the Oulu region and rest of Northern Finland, especially related to the region's SME companies, and the entrance examinations abroad provided by the FINNIPS network are an important factor in the success of the BIT programme.

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# FROM TRADITIONAL DESIGN EDUCATION TO INTERNATIONAL DESIGN

Saara Newton and Mikko Matveinen

Design as an industry has been changing rapidly over the last decade. Design was originally considered to be designing artistic beautiful objects, whereas now design covers more complex global service and system development as well as open and social wellbeing innovations. This change has had the effect of making the design education of Karelia University of Applied Sciences in Joensuu and North Karelia region more international.

The Degree Programme in Design was founded in 1994 by Karelia University of Applied Sciences (prior to 2013, North Karelia University of Applied Sciences). This programme included traditional design education for arts, products and clothing, and teaching was done in Finnish. Later on design education was expanded to include graphic and interior design. In 2007, a Degree Programme in International Design was established as one of the first of its type in Finland. Teaching was in English and in cooperation with the Degree programme in International Business. In the background was a need for a new kind of design education responding to the change in society from the industrial age to the service economy. (Kälviäinen 2011.)

## INTERNATIONAL DESIGN EDUCATION THROUGH A USER-DRIVEN APPROACH

In a saturated, complex and proactive globalised market situation, customers and users are active stakeholders and collaborative designers. The assumption that the product or service is finalised before it goes to the consumer has changed and companies are facing the challenge of having real user information, testing and methods that allow interaction between the developers and users. This is emphasised when companies plan to go international (Kälviäinen 2010).

The Degree Programme in International Design has been offering interdisciplinary and multicultural education for the user-driven development of products and services. The curriculum has included close cooperation with the Degree Programme in International Business, where design and business students learn co-creation methods for complex value offerings through real business projects (Kälviäinen 2010). Both programmes have a majority of foreign students, and this mixture of different nationalities adds cultural considerations

to the learning process as well as to the real business projects realised for local companies. The curriculum for the Degree Programme in International Design also includes exchange opportunities for students as part of their third year of studies. The majority of students take the chance to go abroad to broaden their understanding of design in a global context.

Karelia University of Applied Sciences hosts the D'ART Resource Centre, a service unit for companies, and the ISAK Centre for Innovations for Independent Living, which produces services and products enhancing independent living for the elderly and the well-being sector. These centres act as important and interactive links for the collaboration of education and working life as well as cores for research and innovation activities (Kälviäinen 2010; Kälviäinen 2011). This link helps international non-Finnish students to gain work experience in collaboration with regional companies, especially for some small companies that experience language difficulties without professional support between native Finnish and foreign languages. As a part of D'ART services, there is a platform for interdisciplinary cooperation called INNOstudio®. The INNOstudio® concept is for collaboration activities including innovation methods, visualisation and synthesis tools (Kälviäinen 2010). INNOstudio® has been widely used with companies and international partner universities over the years, allowing students to learn to operate in interdisciplinary innovation activities.

## DESIGN EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR OPEN AND SOCIAL INNOVATIONS FOR GLOBAL CONTEXTS

A new type of development culture is questioning the former policy of keeping company knowledge secret. In the future, different organisations and users will innovate together and will need to find synergy to create new solutions for saturated international markets. This will happen only by sharing knowledge, where the design approach will support knowledge sharing (Kurula et al. 2009).

Karelia University of Applied Sciences is developing the Sirkkalan Tehdas environment for the future needs of development and education. The Sirkkalan Tehdas environment is meant to be a platform for students, companies, public and third-sector organisations and international partners to work on research and development projects. From the young education point of view, Sirkkalan Tehdas supports the continuation of design education even though there will no longer be a Degree Programme in Design at Karelia University of Applied Sciences in the future. The core idea is that students from other professions

can learn a “design-friendly” way of working (design thinking) through project work and mandatory multidisciplinary courses in English. This way, international studies and the multicultural learning can be widely used by any student from any degree programme.

Karelia University of Applied Sciences has also been in the front line in promoting entrepreneurship. One good example of this is the unique Draft-training programme for students from all different cultural backgrounds and lecturers with innovative product and service ideas. The majority of the participants have come from a foreign background and especially from design programmes where design students are open-minded in sharing their ideas and developing them in collaboration with others to generate better business ideas. As part of the Draft-training programme, Karelia University of Applied Sciences and the Foundation for Finnish Inventions are financially supporting developer teams, which are selected by a panel of judges. This spring, another programme was introduced, Draft Non-Profit, which funds developer teams with solutions for societal problems in Finland and abroad. This kind of entrepreneurship studies offers more chances for foreign students to integrate into Finnish society and to find their own employment opportunities.

One of Karelia University of Applied Sciences’ strategies is the knowledge and development of Russian cultural needs. The regional businesses in North Karelia are more and more dependent on Russian markets. As a regional University of Applied Sciences, Karelia has started to strengthen collaboration across the border. There are also, for example, other international activities related to exporting education knowledge to Asia and Southern Europe. The Degree Programme in International Design has played a part in generating the knowledge and skills for the university to continue international collaboration in the future.



Innovation and co-design methods are part of education for international design students at Karelia University of Applied Sciences (photo: Samuli Longi).

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**FINNIPS in Action: Experiences  
from Around the World**

# FINNIPS ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS OUTSIDE FINLAND

Riikka Vanhanen

Between 2010 and 2013, more than 7,000 applicants have taken part in FINNIPS entrance examinations in 19 countries around the world. The total number of completed exams is nearly 9,000 (see Table 1, p 86). Since the question “why entrance examinations abroad” is tackled from various angles in other texts of the publication, the focus will now be put on the “how” and “by whom”. Indeed, such wide-ranging cooperation requires not only careful planning and clear guidelines for implementation, but also skillful and committed people to realise all that in practice.

Although FINNIPS entrance examinations outside Finland are arranged within just two weeks every spring, the overall organisation of the activities of the cooperation network takes place all year round. The following describes the processes occurring before, during and after the exams and explains the roles of the various actors involved in the activities.

## DEFINING THE SELECTION OF EXAM COUNTRIES SETS THE WHEELS IN MOTION

One of the most essential phases in the preparation for the examination process is decision-making concerning the exam countries. FINNIPS has a nine-member steering group that is responsible for the planning, monitoring and development of the network’s activities. Discussion and evaluation regarding the exam locations goes on continuously throughout the year but in autumn, at the beginning of the academic year, the steering group makes a proposal for the exam countries for the following spring.

At the very beginning of the network cooperation, in the first round of entrance examinations in 2010, the exam countries were those where either the National Network for East and Southeast Asia or individual UASs had previously arranged exams. In the course of time, along with the progress of cooperation, FINNIPS has further refined the criteria for selecting the target countries for the exams. All the member UASs of the network obviously have their own aspirations and interests based on institutional strategies, for instance. Moreover, degree programmes in different study fields may have varying interests when it comes to the preferred departure countries of the students. Despite some deviation in the emphasis put on different target areas

and countries, one clear common aspiration has been to aim at creating study groups that are as international and multicultural as possible. Accordingly, as a result of combining the wishes of numerous UAS and degree programmes, the exam locations stretch over various countries in Asia, Africa and Europe.

When considering the actual countries and cities as locations for the exams, the factors affecting decision-making are many. According to an internal survey conducted within the network UASs in spring 2012, the following features counted among the selection criteria: the country's position as a recipient of Finnish exports, the needs and trends in industry and commerce, the students' possibilities to be employed either in Finland or in the country of departure, the country's geographical location (with regards to Finland and/or neighbouring countries), political and economic standing, the history and level of education, experiences of the students' level of English language skills and experience of the visa processes from different countries. Furthermore, previous projects and cooperation within other HEI activities or programmes as well as the good experiences of students from certain countries may play a role when considering the locations of the exams.

The above-mentioned criteria are by no means set in stone and the selection of exam countries and cities may vary along with periodic changes in the operational environment. Indeed, the FINNIPS steering group evaluates the country selection on a yearly basis with the help of feedback and statistics collected regularly in the network.

The statistics compiled about the numbers of exams taken in each country and about the applicants accepted as students through the FINNIPS exams (see, for example, Ilkka Mikkonen's article on the statistics in the BIT programme) may, at times, clearly indicate whether or not it is worthwhile arranging the exams at certain locations. Statistical information, however, is not the only deciding factor and low numbers of applicants, characteristic to some European countries, do not automatically lead to the abandonment of exams in these locations. Instead of changing locations drastically every year, it has been acknowledged that making the educational offerings of the Finnish UAS known and attracting students require perseverance. The entrance exams also function as events for promoting UAS education and hence they may be arranged even in countries where the number of applicants is low. Then again, large numbers of applicants from certain countries may lead to a situation where the exams are not arranged there annually but perhaps every other year. Finally, the total number of exam locations is obviously also regulated by the network's annual budget which, again, is defined by the number of UASs and degree programmes participating in the cooperation.

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC COORDINATORS IN CHARGE OF THE ARRANGEMENTS ABROAD

Once the selection of the exam countries has been sealed, the next step is the recruitment of country-specific coordinators. For each of the FINNIPS exam countries, a country-specific coordinator is chosen from one of the FINNIPS UASs. This coordinator takes care of planning and organising the entrance exam practicalities together with a cooperation partner abroad. Even if the exam process as such is carefully prearranged according to the network guidelines, it is the task of the country coordinators to negotiate and agree with the partners on the suitability of the arrangements for each specific location. This obviously requires a good command of knowledge of both the target culture and the working methods of the partner.

As a rule, the cooperation partners abroad, be they universities or other organisations, are such that are known and approved by the country coordinator's own UAS. Indeed, successful cooperation in most of the countries is based on working with partner institutions that are familiar to the UASs through other cooperation activities than just the entrance examinations. The role of the cooperation organisations is important as they provide the premises for the exams and assist the FINNIPS country coordinators and exam supervisors in the applicants' registration process and other practicalities. The importance of local partners to the successful completion of the exam arrangements is immense, as the accounts of the country-specific coordinators of their experiences from different countries reveal in the subsequent texts of this chapter. It is, in any case, the country coordinators and exam supervisors sent from Finnish UASs who are ultimately responsible for carrying out the exams abroad.

## DRAWING UP THE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS IN FIELD-SPECIFIC COOPERATION

The actual entrance examinations are planned and drawn up in field-specific cooperation groups. Apart from a couple of exceptions, almost all the degree programmes in FINNIPS carry out cooperation in entrance examination with other programmes in the same study field. This means that the result of the entrance exam of the applicant's first-choice degree programme is also accepted in the other –second, third or fourth– options if they are among the cooperative programmes within the study field (National Board of Education 2013).

For applicants the system is convenient as by taking just one exam, the result will be considered in several programmes within the same study

field. Furthermore, from the perspective of the practical arrangements of the exams, the cooperation of various degree programmes means that the number of different kinds of exam versions is reasonable. It is, indeed, a lot more straightforward to arrange the exams this way rather than flying around the world with over 50 different exam versions!

Even if the decision on engaging in collaboration in preparing the exams ultimately lies within the study fields and each degree programme respectively, there has been an intentional effort in FINNIPS to enhance cooperation between the UASs and degree programmes. It seems that the network has indeed succeeded in its bid to increase cooperation and harmonise exam practices. For instance, in 2013 there were a neat number of eight exams for six different study fields as against the 11 different kinds of exams arranged in 2011 for degree programmes in seven study fields. Moreover, the intensified exchange of information within and between the degree programmes and study fields has enabled active discussion of the assessment criteria and the acknowledgement of the different kinds of factors affecting the equal treatment of all applicants. On the whole, besides drawing up the entrance exams, the assembly of field-specific cooperation groups also creates a possibility to engage in the development of the degree programmes and study fields from other perspectives.

Cooperation between the UASs and degree programmes within different study fields has taken place in various forms, especially when it comes to education in Finnish. The planning and drawing up of the entrance examinations for the degree programmes conducted in English has clearly activated cooperation within the international programmes as well. The role of FINNIPS in all this can be perceived to be that of a mediator between the degree programmes in different UASs. Furthermore, the network also functions as an activator of discussion concerning the role and status of international degree programmes in Finnish UASs in general.

## INVITATION PROCESS AND APPLICANT GUIDANCE TAKEN CARE OF BY ADMISSIONS OFFICES

One of the cornerstones of the FINNIPS exam process is the commonly-agreed practices of the UASs' admissions offices. The need of information for those applying to study in Finland from foreign countries is understandably different from that of Finnish applicants. In order to make sure that the applicants receive accurate and consistent information on the FINNIPS entrance examinations, cooperation between admissions offices is crucial.

Applying to Bachelor's degree programmes conducted in English at Finnish UASs takes place through the joint national application system maintained by the Finnish National Board of Education. According to the principles of the system, all eligible applicants are invited to entrance examinations that are generally arranged at each university of applied science's premises in Finland. Besides these occasions, applicants from certain pre-determined countries are invited to take the exams in the FINNIPS exam countries outside Finland. Even if the application process itself runs according to the procedures of the national system, the invitation material for the exams abroad, schedules of the invitation process and mutual guidelines for applicant guidance are carefully planned within the network. The use of uniform invitation documents and information letters and the cooperation and exchange of ideas between the admissions offices both aim at ensuring that all the applicants receive the same information about the exams from all the UASs and are thus treated equally.

Throughout the entire application process, much attention is paid to the thorough checking and authentication of the applicants' documents. The verification of the foreign school certificates, in particular, is a task that requires the special expertise of the staff of the admissions offices. Ensuring the applicants' eligibility is inherent in the normal application process and the authentication of all the documents is a matter that the admissions offices have worked on for years together with the National Board of Education, even prior to the emergence of FINNIPS. However, along with the development of the network, the cooperation of the UASs with authorities such as the Finnish Migration Service and the Finnish Border Guard has intensified greatly. The collaboration aims at enhancing the capabilities for recognising and preventing possible malpractice regarding both the application and identity documents of the applicants. Diligent management and coordination of applicant information and information security are crucial factors in sustaining a secure and high-quality application and exam process.

In addition to taking care of the application procedures and informing the applicants of the mutual practices before the exams, the admissions offices play an important role in providing information about the functionality of the arrangements after the exams. Once the exams are over, the admissions offices compile statistics on the number of applicants who have been accepted as students at their respective UASs after taking the exam at one of the occasions arranged by FINNIPS. In addition, the admissions offices monitor the number of students who arrive in Finland and actually start their studies. These figures together with experiences of visa problems and observations regarding other possible challenges that have occurred in the exam/admissions process of foreign students are extremely important background information for making the plans for the following year.

## VERSATILE COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR EXAM SUPERVISORS

The entrance examinations abroad are carried out over two to four days depending on the number of applicants in each location. Two to five persons (one of whom is the country coordinator) from the FINNIPS UASs, are sent to the exam countries abroad to take care of the management and supervision of the exams. Arranging the examinations for various study fields in a foreign country, in varying circumstances with people from different cultural backgrounds as well as with colleagues from different Finnish UASs, is far more complex than organising a single exam event in familiar surroundings in Finland. Consequently, the exam supervisors taking care of the exam arrangements abroad are required to possess various competences including excellent skills in the English language and intercultural communication, good cooperation and negotiation skills and to be socially adept. Furthermore, the persons need to have experience of work assignments abroad and be familiar with exam supervision, interviewing and assessment practices. Like the country-specific coordinators, the exam supervisors are selected from the candidates who have been put forward by their respective UASs.

Both the country coordinators and exam supervisors all go through a compulsory training day meant to prepare them for the upcoming task. After all, the question is not just about laying the right papers in front of the exam candidates but about organising a large amount of information, handling documents, directing and instructing applicants and assessing their skills. In the training arranged a couple of months before the exams, the supervisors are talked through all the exams, and the assessment criteria, particularly regarding the group discussions, are scrutinised in detail. In the training, the exam supervisors who often come from different UASs get to meet each other and plan the country-specific arrangements under the direction of the country coordinator. Best practices and tips are shared and development ideas raised. As with the admissions offices, monitoring the applicant information is of crucial importance and hence the exam supervisors are also meticulously trained to check the identities of the exam candidates.

Preparing for the examinations includes assimilating a great deal of instructions and mutually agreed practices. However, as experience has shown, taking care of the exam arrangements requires flexibility and stamina more than anything else. Despite any amount of careful planning, surprising situations may arise due to various unpredictable factors. In spring 2010, for example, a sudden volcanic eruption in Iceland caused an ash cloud that closed most European airspace and cancelled 100,000 flights (The Telegraph 2011). This

took place at a time when most of the FINNIPS exam supervisors were due to fly back home after arranging the first round of exams in the new network.

This exceptional event not only affected the return journeys of the exam supervisors but also necessitated rearrangements for the processes that take place after the exams are held. In addition to the coordinated arrangement of the exam events abroad, network cooperation also covers the centralised sorting of the thousands of exams papers and the compiling of statistics on them. However, despite the severe delays, several stopovers and alternative flight routes, all the supervisors and exam papers eventually found their way back to Finland and, with a bit of extra effort, the exam papers were sorted and delivered to the UASs for marking just as planned. This experience at the very beginning of the network cooperation serves as a valuable reminder of the fact that the exam supervisors really need to be prepared for anything. At the same time, however, it proved that even in the most unusual circumstances, it was possible to carry out the exam process successfully.



Exam papers are sorted and statistics compiled centrally as part of the FINNIPS cooperation (photo: Riikka Vanhanen).

## COMMUNICATION AND SHARING EXPERIENCES AT THE CORE OF COOPERATION

Carrying out the FINNIPS exam process is a cooperative effort tying together the steering group, representatives of the degree programmes and admissions offices, country coordinators, exam supervisors, various authorities in Finland and cooperation partners abroad. In order to ensure the effective flow of information in every direction needed, there is a designated FINNIPS contact person at every member UAS. The task of this contact person is to make sure that information that is not clearly aimed either at the representatives of the degree programmes and admissions offices or country coordinators and exam supervisors gets passed to the relevant people at the UAS. In addition to the above-mentioned actors, international offices and marketing departments, for example, may also participate in the planning of the network activities.

Despite the prompt progress and intensification of the network activities, there are still areas within which cooperation practices have not yet become firmly established and where the forms and depth of collaboration remains to be further evaluated. Marketing the degree programmes is one of the matters about which different UASs still have varying views: some of them see that the promotion of the degree programmes should be enhanced as a network activity, whereas others consider that it as business that should be dealt with within each UAS respectively. The marketing measures in FINNIPS have gradually evolved in this kind of riptide and the current actions reflect both views.

Over the past few years, FINNIPS has participated in educational fairs in Europe with the aim of promoting all the degree programmes of the network and endorsing the chance to take the entrance examination in one's own country or at least close to it. In addition, the network has a website ([finnips.fi](http://finnips.fi)) that presents information about the application procedures and leads visitors to seek further information on the degree programmes from the member UASs' own websites. FINNIPS as a network does its share of marketing work this way but it is still the individual UASs that are ultimately in charge of the ways of promoting their education both in Finland and abroad.

As pointed out in the introduction, having 22 universities engaged in such large-scale cooperation despite their positions as rivals, is not something to be taken for granted. In addition to willingness, it requires strong commitment to the implementation and further development of mutual operations. So far, the four rounds of successfully completed entrance exams in a total of 19 different countries (see Table 1) stand as a fair demonstration of a functional system. Furthermore, the eagerness of so many to share their experiences and

development ideas for the benefit of the network, serves as a springboard to continuing the cooperation. From the coordinator's point of view, it is no less than a privilege to be able to work as a part of a network with such a great potential for dynamic development.

TABLE 1. Number of UASs and Degree Programmes in the network and exams taken in different countries 2010–2013.

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Country	14 UASs/ 43 DPs	21 UASs/ 67 DPs	22 UASs/ 66 DPs	22 UASs/ 54 DPs
Bangladesh	180	270	-	-
Bulgaria	-	16	10	3
China	86	157	189	123
Czech Republic	-	5	4	11
Estonia	-	-	52	50
Ethiopia	74	-	-	-
Germany	-	6	22	15
Ghana	352	649	180	184
Great Britain	-	35	59	78
Hungary	9	19	21	18
India	6	-	-	-
Kenya	101	178	172	188
Latvia	15	36	37	42
Nepal	229	451	541	613
Poland	24	14	14	6
Romania	-	20	13	12
Russia	208	390	498	503
Turkey	-	57	30	20
Vietnam	155	355	454	663
19	8922			

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# APPLICATION PROCESS IN RUSSIA IS A MATTER FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Anastasia McAvennie

The arrangements for FINNIPS entrance examinations start with negotiations with a partner abroad. Finding a reliable partner in Russia is crucial for the successful implementation of the examinations. The partner must understand the importance of providing adequate premises and conditions for the applicants in order for the exams to run smoothly. Generally, the partners abroad should also be aware that they are playing an important role in the implementation of the entrance exams abroad. Even though the partners are not employed by any Finnish university of applied sciences (UAS), their actions may affect how applicants portray the UAS. Providing thorough training for the partners covering the process, as well as keeping them continuously updated, ensures that they will be able to act efficiently as mediators between the UAS and applicants during the pre-registration and registration process.

Kajaani UAS's current partner in Murmansk has been helping with the implementation of entrance examinations for the past three years, since their beginning in that city. Building trusting relationships in Russia is a core requirement for a successful partnership. Kajaani UAS communicates with its partner throughout the year, even outside the period of exam preparation and implementation, in order to maintain a good relationship. The partner appreciates that all information regarding the FINNIPS exams is provided in Russian as well as English, which allows them to understand every detail. It is also normal to have a couple of phone calls through Skype with the partner to discuss arrangements, as in Russia it is often a more effective and personal communication method than e-mail. Even though phone conversations take time, they reduce the number of applicant pre-registration enquiries forwarded to the UAS since the partner is fully briefed in the process.

## PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE EXAMS

All applicants receive detailed instructions on the FINNIPS entrance examination with their invitation letters. However, during the pre-registration process many seek clarification on their exam-related questions. It is fairly common for Russian applicants to seek reassurance by phone or email that the information that was sent to them is correct and remains valid. Some wish to know who is conducting the entrance examinations and whether it is possible to meet upon

arrival. It is also common for the contact person to receive phone calls from worried parents who would like to verify that their children understand all the information provided and that the arrangements have not changed.

Image plays an important role in Russia and hence venues for the examinations in Murmansk are well maintained and business-like. On the morning of the examinations at the registration desk it always appears at first glance that we have twice the number of applicants that we were expecting. The reason for this is that the majority of the applicants bring one parent. In Russian culture, parents play a significant role in the choice of where their child should study, and participate in each step of the selection process (apart from physically being present during their child's examination). Once the information session in English is over for the applicants, it is usual to repeat the information in Russian for the parents, who are anxious to know all the details. Most commonly the parents want to know how difficult the entrance examination is and what chance their children have of being accepted into their preferred degree programmes.

In Murmansk, the registration in person process is handled by the exam supervisors. Registrations usually run smoothly apart from some minor confusion with passports. Russian applicants possess an internal passport, which is used only inside the country and is written in Cyrillic, and a travel passport that is used for going abroad. Many applicants provide copies of both passports for fear that it could affect their application.

## POLITE APPLICANTS AND SUPPORTIVE PARENTS

During the group discussions the standard of students' English language and discussion skills vary. However most of the participants have one thing in common – politeness/manners. Each interview is commonly interspersed with such phrases as “Excuse me”, “Thank you”, “May I interrupt you?”, etc. Even though in a sense the applicants are competing against each other for a place at one of the Universities of Applied Sciences, during many group discussions they demonstrate significant respect for each other, which creates a feeling of camaraderie. This may include the more active applicants commonly trying to encourage passive applicants to take part in the discussion.

At the end of the entrance examinations, a few applicants tend to wait with their parents to request more information on what will happen with the written examinations and how they will be delivered to the Universities of Applied Sciences. It is also normal that, even when the exams are over, the partner will receive a few phone calls from worried parents who want to check whether any new information regarding selection has come out and also to share their

children's impressions of the entrance exams. It seems that the partner and applicants' parents get to know each other very well during this process. For Kajaani UAS, arranging the entrance examinations in Murmansk gives us the opportunity to form lasting memories of meeting many nervous applicants and their supportive parents, and to experience our partner's assistance, generosity and hospitality.



Exam supervisors at work in Murmansk (photo: Valerian Gavrilov).

# ACKNOWLEDGING THE LOCAL CULTURE: ARRANGING THE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS IN CHINA

Eija Torkinlampi

China has been one of the countries where FINNIPS (originally FINNIBS) has been organising entrance exams since 2010. In spring 2013, the exams were held at four locations. Having China as one of the exam countries is justified due to the large potential number of applicants and also due to the good results Chinese pupils in comprehensive school have recently received in international student assessments such as PISA, especially in Shanghai region (OECD 2010).

The exam organisation process starts by contacting the local partner. Having a local partner is essential when dealing with a country as far away as China and with a culture as different from Finnish as Chinese culture. The partner is in charge of organising the venue and taking care of pre-registration and all other practical issues. These would be quite difficult to organise from Finland. However, using a local partner does not mean that the country coordinator is not responsible for the organisation, but it does reduce his/her work load. Registration on the actual exam day is co-organised by FINNIPS representatives and the local partner. The applicants also find it more convenient and time-saving to be able to deal with the practical issues in their own mother tongue and this has indeed decreased the number of misunderstandings. All in all, the questions that the applicants ask are mostly about practical arrangements. The applicants do not usually ask about the exams themselves. Only one applicant has ever asked about the correct answers to the exam questions and where they could be found.

Using a local Chinese partner also makes FINNIPS more trustworthy for many Chinese applicants. They trust the authority close to them. In some places, students have used an agent to take care of the application process, even if the application documents could be freely copied from the internet. The same applicants also had a teacher to guide them to the exam venue. Whenever the applicants had anything to ask, they first asked the teacher and then the teacher asked the Chinese organisers who then asked the FINNIPS representatives. On another occasion, the teacher called the Chinese partner to ask something on behalf of an applicant and the Chinese partner then asked the FINNIPS representative and again the answer was given and delivered in reverse order. This was not because of poor spoken skills but simply because of the deeply

rooted tradition of allowing authorities to deal with questions. It was also a bit funny when it was time to start the exam and we, the FINNIPS representatives, told the applicants to turn over the exam papers and start, and nothing happened. The applicants just looked at the Chinese supervisors and waited for them to give permission. Once they had given permission, the applicants started. The local partner is essential to the success of the exam procedure and therefore should be chosen with care and must be kept updated all the time.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE SKILLS

The applicants taking business and nursing exams take a spoken test as part of the exams. This is organised after the written test as a group discussion. Testing the applicants' spoken language skills is important since they are planning to come to a totally different culture where they cannot expect to manage using only their mother tongue. They should be able to manage in everyday life in English before acquiring enough Finnish skills. Furthermore, they should be able to study field-specific topics in English, and understand instructions and orders in English. The reason for applying to an English language degree programme should not be the desire to learn English as the applicants should already be quite fluent in English. Unfortunately this is not always the case and therefore the spoken test is quite crucial. Having good written skills and being able to read English fluently do not always automatically guarantee good spoken skills. In Asian countries, the teaching of languages often focuses on grammar and written production. Therefore it is a bit surprising that only two fields of study, business and nursing, have adopted the spoken test. It would also be needed in other fields.

The group discussion is a good indicator of an applicant's spoken skills and also of his/her group skills. Having a face-to-face discussion with the supervisor gives the applicant more time and opportunity to speak but is not as authentic. In the group discussion, all the students are in the same position and no-one is leading the discussion, as would undoubtedly happen in a more supervisor-driven discussion. The Chinese applicants usually tend to make the situation more formal than we observers expect. Discussion is not natural but instead they try to make speeches and formulate their ideas into formal statements with introductions and conclusions. Once one applicant even protested that he did not have time to give his final conclusion. The students are usually quite polite and do not interrupt even if one applicant ends up making a lengthy monologue. If they disagree with someone, they also try to soften their own opinions and very politely express their views. No harsh words are uttered.

In recent years the number of Chinese applicants has decreased slightly, especially in bigger cities. This might be due to the growing possibilities for Chinese students to complete international degrees in China, since many universities offer their degree programmes there, for example in Shanghai. Still, as stated already, China should definitely be kept as one of the countries where FINNIPS organises entrance exams. In China, one should remember the size and long history of the country. The Chinese are eager to learn about new cultures but they are not willing to do that at the expense of losing their own cultural heritage. Respectful partnership is the best guarantee of success, also in education.

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# FINNIPS EXAMS IN KENYA: GATEWAY TO HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION

Otieno Mbare

A considerable number of people have wondered how FINNIPS has been able to traverse the entire universe like a colossus. The process of conducting examinations abroad require meticulous planning and incisive understanding of the cultures combined with a repertoire of local practices and etiquettes of the regions in which exams have to be taken. This is due to the fact that carrying out examinations in far-flung regions of the world is not such an easy undertaking.

My objective here is to provide an account of my own experiences and observations over the years as coordinator and supervisor at one of the FINNIPS examination locations in Nairobi, Kenya. This text strives to unveil the processes involved in organising and administrating entrance examinations abroad. Furthermore, it touches the issue of the effectiveness and impact of education gained in Finland.

## PART OF PLANNING IS PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Among the reasons why FINNIPS chose Kenya as the entrance examination location in the East and Central Africa region are its strategic location and its good infrastructure. Students from neighbouring countries, such as Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, and Ethiopia can also participate in the FINNIPS examinations in Nairobi. The advantage of having Kenya as the epicenter is the fact that there is no visa requirement for applicants from the neighbouring countries, thus making it easy for the candidates to participate in the entrance exams.

The planning process of the entrance examinations begins with the selection and appointment of country coordinators and exam supervisors from the network's UASs. It has been the tradition of FINNIPS to send people who already have some knowledge about the countries where the entrance examinations take place. These are individuals who have impeccable knowledge of those countries' cultures and etiquettes. The planning process also entails agreeing with the local partners on what roles they will play before the actual day of the examinations and during the entire period of the examinations. As the country coordinator, I have to discuss with the partners the finer details and knitty-gritty, so that we take a common position

with our partners. This discussion revolves around the role that our partners will carry out once they agree with the rules and regulations governing the FINNIPS examinations.

When it comes to the practical arrangements of the examinations, one can imagine the challenges posed, especially in a country where things are not organised the same way as in Finland. In Finland, we get clear timetables of lectures and where they are going to be held. This brings to mind the experience we had the second time we had our examinations in Kenya. The partners had assured us that all the bookings for the halls had been done. We thus assumed that nothing would go wrong since we had the assurance. But no sooner had we started calling the names of applicants to enter than the other teacher arrived with his students claiming the same hall. The whole process was halted for about ten minutes to resolve the matter. It took a lot of effort to cajole and persuade people to ensure that we had it for our own use. These are some of the challenges that you face as you try to coordinate examinations in developing countries. Otherwise, the partnership has gone very well and, as we continue to partner, the relationship is continuously getting better. But, still one has to be prepared for any surprises anytime.

The process of conducting an exam abroad is rather complex and requires a person with both local and foreign knowledge coupled with international best practices. As country coordinator, I have always ensured that the examinations meet the Finnish ethical criteria. During the administration of the exams abroad, FINNIPS has always provided two to three extra supervisors from the UAS network. The coordinator requires this support because the exams have to be done in accordance with Finnish regulations. We always have extra supervisors from Finland because there is a limit to what activities local support staff can handle. In addition, we also conduct face-to-face interviews in some exams; in this case, there is a need to have a supervisor from the UAS network to perform such a task, the reason being that they are more familiar and conversant with the requirements of the organisation.

## THE IMPACT OF FINNIPS AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATION

Many people who are not familiar with how tedious the process of taking an entrance examination was, may not understand the special position currently occupied by FINNIPS. I remember how difficult it was for students seeking study places in Finland. Applicants had to travel all the way from their own countries to Finland to sit for an entrance examination. This was a very tedious process,

very expensive and posed serious challenges for both the applicants and their parents. It set a major challenge because the applicants had to go through the rigorous process of acquiring a visa through the embassy before being allowed to travel to Finland. That process made it difficult for many applicants to participate in the entrance examinations set by the Finnish Universities. Again, there was no guarantee that once you have attained the visa, you would pass the examination since the visa was only given for a short stay for the purposes of the examinations. That made it extremely expensive because those who failed the examinations had to return back to their countries. But this also posed another problem for the government because some students, sensing that they had spent almost all their savings back home, decided to disappear or go into hiding. Such students would then engage the police in a game of “hide and seek”.

Nonetheless, a number of universities also realised that it was becoming increasingly expensive to conduct examinations alone. So, when FINNIPS was born, it understood the weaknesses of the old system and developed a robust system that made it cheaper for all network universities to conduct and recruit students around the globe for a small membership fee. I can say that FINNIPS has enabled more students to participate in the entrance examinations than could do so under the old system.

The impact of Finnish education is felt everywhere around the world. Everyone wants to come and study in Finland. This is because the education system in Finland has been recognised even by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey has consistently placed Finland at the top, making it such an attractive country to study in. Even as I write this article, a professor at a local university in Kenya has just sent me an email asking how his son can get a place at our universities here in Finland. This email helps to buttress my argument that Finnish education remains the best and most attractive education system the world over. What we need to continue doing as lecturers, is to remain creative and innovative in the way we deliver our lectures. The other thing often ignored, especially in the Nordic countries, is that students getting a Finnish education remain great pillars for Finnish business and investments abroad. Americans and Britons have long realised the importance of educating and thereafter keeping close relationships with those who benefitted from their education system. This has been demonstrated a number of times in their support for leaders who were once students in their countries.

FINNIPS has been holding entrance examinations in Kenya for the last four years. Within that time, we have noticed remarkable improvements in

terms of cultural tolerance and understanding; students are able to interact, exchange and learn a lot from other cultures. In a sense, FINNIPS can be ranked second to the Internet in terms of shuttering the tyranny of geography by bringing people of different cultures and backgrounds into a single arena of learning. However, a lot of support is still needed to ensure it will remain a vibrant organisation.

# FROM THE HEART OF EUROPE TO FINLAND'S TANGO CAPITAL

Agnes Bauer

Before I start to tell my story about my extraordinary choice of study, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Agnes Bauer and I am 19 years old. This name might suggest to you some German origin, but as a matter of fact I come from a beautiful country in the heart of Europe called Hungary. I had a wonderful childhood and a memorable time at secondary school in my home country. In addition to studying, I was very active in sports. I went fencing after school for six years. In wintertime, I always spent at least one week skiing and snowboarding. I am also interested in music although I have never had any specific music education. When I have free capacity, I also like to learn languages. I can speak four languages, which is pretty useful in this international environment where I'm studying.

Speaking of studying, I never dreamt about studying abroad when I was younger, but in my last year of secondary school I had the chance to attend a remarkable presentation on Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. Before the presentation, I had no idea about how higher education works in Finland, and that there are so many opportunities for foreign people. So I told my parents and they agreed that this opportunity was something that was worth at least one try. As a matter of fact, in Hungary it is not so common to study abroad, and those who do just go to Austria or some other neighbouring country. I can say that my idea about going to study far away in Europe was way more extreme than the others' plans for the future. When I sent my application form last year, I had no big expectations about it, because I was also applying to Hungarian universities. But later on when I received the invitation to the entrance examination, things got more serious.

## EXPERIENCES OF THE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

The entrance exam was held two weeks before my final exams for secondary school so it was a pretty busy period in my life to prepare for both exams. One month beforehand, we received the material that had to be learned for the test. To be honest, it was pretty hard to read through and understand a 140-page report from a Finnish company. There were a lot of special expressions, which are only used in the context of economy and business, so this made the learning process much harder. After weeks of tough work and study, the time came for

the entrance examination. Luckily I could do my FINNIPS exam in Budapest, which made things easier. In the written part of the exam there were three parts. The first was a very basic mathematical test with a twist, for which we were not allowed to use a calculator or any other device. The second part was an essay based on the given material and the third was a multiple-choice test with general questions about the report. The oral part of the exam consisted of a group discussion. Four applicants were randomly chosen for each group, and we had to talk about a given topic and give each other good arguments. After the entrance exam, most of the people said “okay, now you can relax as the hardest part is done.” In fact the hardest part was yet to come. Waiting for weeks to get the result was much harder. Meanwhile I very successfully completed my final exams’ written part and I prepared for the oral exams.

Some point at the end of May the day of reckoning arrived. When the envelope with the result arrived I was pretty desperate. I was scared about both a positive and a negative outcome. Before opening the envelope I went through both scenarios in my mind: “What if I succeed? Am I ready for such a big change in my life? But what if I fail? I would be so disappointed.” I just took a deep breath and read the letter. For hours I was not able to comprehend it -I was incredibly happy. That day, I received millions of congratulatory messages. My friends and family were so proud of me and immediately a lot of friends just showed up at my place to celebrate with me. At the same time, I received the results of my applications to Hungarian universities. I got accepted to Eötvös Loránd University to study mathematics, but there was then no doubt that I would choose SeAMK for my future studies.

After all the stress and exams, I spent an amazing summer with my friends and family. Later, after having such a wonderful time it was incredibly hard to say goodbye, pack up my whole life into four suitcases and leave my home, family and friends and go to a place I had never been. I have to admit it was scary, but every time I think about it, I know that this was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

## SURVIVING AND THRIVING

The school started at the beginning of September. I arrived at Seinäjoki a couple days earlier to get used to the place and to get to know people. In my first days, my tutors gave me so much help. Without them I would have been completely lost. They also helped me to make some friends and feel relaxed immediately. During the first week at school, we had orientation. We got a lot of information about the school, language studies, sport activities, the student

union and many other things. When the real classes started, I was very scared that my English knowledge would not be enough to understand the teachers. Fortunately I was positively surprised. The first months were very easy as it was more about getting used to speaking English all the time and getting to know each other and the different cultures. As a matter of fact, my expectations were completely different from reality. I had been prepared for very strict professors and having to act very formally with them all the time, but quite the opposite. The teachers are very kind and understanding and create a very relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. The required level is reachable, depending on the student's abilities and former education.

Since I came to Finland, I have had many wonderful experiences that I would have never had as a normal student in Hungary. I have a chance to live on an international campus and make friends from all around the world, get to know different cultures and learn how to handle the differences. My personality has also changed: I have become more independent, sociable and of course my language skills have improved a lot. I was chosen as a tutor even though I am not Finnish. This tutoring gave me a chance to get to know more Finnish people and make friends. After nine months of living in Finland, I really feel that I belong here. In a way I am lucky that, after nine months, I have such good friends who make me want to stay. All in all, I can say that Finland really is "worth a try".

My plans for the near future are pretty challenging. Next semester I will take part in a special research and development study project. The language of the project will be Finnish so this will challenge me for sure. Looking further into the future, after graduating I would like to complete a Master's degree programme somewhere in Finland as well.

# VIETNAMESE STUDENT'S VIEW ON EDUCATION AND LIVING IN FINLAND

Do Toan Trung

My name is Do Toan Trung. I am 20 years old and I come from Vietnam. I am now studying International Business at Lahti University of Applied Sciences. I am currently in my second year and am happy to be studying at LAMK.

## REASONS FOR STUDYING BUSINESS IN FINLAND

I chose Finland because Finland has the best education quality among developed countries in the world according to PISA ranking in the last three years. I believed that if I was accepted to study at a university of applied sciences in Finland, I would be able to obtain good and advanced higher education, which would be good for my future career. Secondly, Finland is a developed country where advanced technologies are applied, which brings about great social benefits for local people. The business environment in Finland is also very good thanks to a transparent government and policies. Studying in Finland will be a great opportunity for me to update myself with the latest information and development trends in the world in general and business in particular. Finally, I chose Finland to study because I knew that the Finnish people are renowned for their friendliness. I believe that I can fit well into the UAS and daily life in Finland.

I chose business as a subject firstly because I think my personality is suitable for doing business. I like challenges and am willing to cope with difficulties and to learn new things. On the other hand, I am a dynamic and innovative person, which is very important in becoming a businessman. Another reason for choosing business is that business is developing rapidly in the world. It can be concluded that no country can stay outside the globalisation process. Therefore, there will be challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurs who are well-educated and prepared for new trends. I want to study business because I want to understand it, to learn how to do business and find opportunities in this globalisation process.

## FROM ENTRANCE EXAMINATION TO INTERNATIONAL STUDY ENVIRONMENT

It has now been two years since I did the entrance examination but it was memorable for me. I remember that I practised hard and I did it successfully. We had to pre-read 120 pages about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in companies. I struggled with academic writing in the pre-reading material, so I had to learn vocabulary and also terms in business to understand it deeply. It took me one-and-a-half months to understand thoroughly and remember it. As a result, I finished the multiple choice section with 15/15. I believe that, if you prepare carefully for the exam, there is no doubt that you will be successful in it.

I have been studying in an international environment as I have always wanted to do. It helps me to improve my English and self-confidence. I have to admit that the education here is very good and there is no pressure on students. There are not many assignments and students still have plenty of free time. On the other hand, there is a great deal of competition inside school and internationally, so students can learn, adapt and improve their skills. Teachers are friendly and knowledgeable. I was surprised that teachers care deeply about students and are willing to help any time. Also in Finland, school helps to support your studies and living. Students are seen as equal. Collectivism is more important than individualism.

I have learned a lot about business. The main modules are Marketing, Supply Chain Management, Business Management and a minor in Accounting. After graduating from a Finnish UAS, students have sufficient knowledge about business and are able to work in a company. I hope that there will be even more international students in future so that we can learn from each other more. I strongly believe that studying at a Finnish UAS is the best choice for me and my career.

International Education creates  
Potential for the Labour Market

# WHERE DO THE INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES FROM FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES END UP – AND WHY?

Arja Majakulma

The emergence of the knowledge economy and global competition for skills have provided a new driver for the internationalisation of higher education systems in many countries, with the recruitment of international students part of a broader strategy to recruit highly-skilled immigrants (OECD 2008; Tremblay 2005). Studying abroad has become much easier, as many countries are attracting international students, facilitating their admission, and non-English-speaking countries have increased the amount of teaching through the medium of English. The number of internationally mobile students has increased rapidly, from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to 4.1 million in 2010 (OECD 2012, 362). Also in Finland the number of international students has increased as a result of the wide range of programmes taught in English. In the Strategy for the Internationalisation of HEIs in Finland 2009–2015 (Ministry of Education 2009) and also in the latest Development Plan of Education and Research 2011–2016 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012), one aim is to increase the number of non-Finnish degree students. International students graduating in Finland are a potential source of highly- skilled labour with international as well as local knowledge and expertise.

At the end of their studies, students expect to have better career opportunities, either in their home country, their country of study or a third country. The issue of potential employability during and after the course of study and the opportunity of staying in the host country after studies is important. Previously many students intended to return to their home countries after studies, but now they are increasingly preferring to remain in the host country. The years of study provide a good opportunity to gather information on the host country, job opportunities, income and working and living conditions. Various factors affect the decisions on whether to return or stay: students' perceptions of ethnic differences and the labour markets in the host country; their adjustment process to the host country; social and emotional adaptations; personal, family status and friendship networks and ties in home and host countries. The home region, the reason to study abroad and the field of study also affect the decision to stay or leave (Alberts and Hazen 2005; Baruch, Budhwar, Khatri 2007; Lu, Zong and Schissel 2009; Soon 2012). Many countries allow graduates to stay and work and eventually settle in the host country instead of having to

return home upon completion of their studies (OECD 2012, 367; OECD 201, 65; Tremblay 2005). In Finland graduates have the opportunity to apply for a six-month residence permit that can be granted without consideration of the availability of labour. The stay rates of international students in OECD countries average 25% (OECD 2011, 64–67).

In Finland too, many international students not only seek a degree, but would also like to find a job in the country. The majority of international students come because of studies, but some were already in Finland for other reasons (Niemi 2009, 27, 34). Students already residing in Finland before the start of their studies probably plan to stay after graduation as well, but the competence and cultural know-how of all international graduates could be utilised as a resource to enrich Finnish culture. According to studies (CIMO 2012a; Koivisto & Juusola 2008; Niemi 2008, 2009; Välimaa et al. 2013), the reasons for studying in Finland include the high quality of education and research, the opportunity to study in English, the absence of tuition fees and personal reasons or family ties. Career development and good employment prospects are also important reasons. The students were, however, somewhat concerned about their future careers. Finding a job not only after graduation but also during studies was important, not only because of the income, but also because it integrated the students into Finnish society and Finnish work culture. In all programmes at the UASs, internships and working life experience gained through the projects were an integral part of the studies. The major obstacles to getting a job were similar to those among immigrants in general: lack of proficiency in Finnish, lack of contacts and no work experience. Many students thought that attitudes were not receptive to foreigners, and many had experienced racism, discrimination, prejudice or social rejection. Adequate proficiency in Finnish, other language skills, the education completed in Finland and relevant work experience improved employment prospects.

## WHERE DO THE INTERNATIONAL UAS GRADUATES END UP?

The earlier mentioned studies were conducted during students' studies or upon graduation. The employment status of international graduates from UASs was, however, unclear until recently. It was not even known how many students actually stay in Finland. Majakulma's study (2011a) was the first one where quantitative data on the employment status of graduates from Finnish UASs was analysed. The data consisted of statistics produced by Statistics Finland: graduates from English Bachelor programmes at UASs from 2002–2006,

according to country of birth and main type of activity in 2008. Most of the graduates from English programmes had stayed in Finland and only 13% had left. The country of birth of those who had left was not known, (probably there were also some Finns who had taken the English programme). Regarding the rest, 61% of the graduates were Finns who had stayed in Finland, while 25% were born abroad and had stayed. Most (59%) of the international graduates were employed. However, this figure was much lower than that of the Finnish graduates (82%). One-fifth of the international graduates were outside the labour force, for example on family leave, a figure that was considerably higher than among Finnish graduates. There were also more full-time students (12%) among the international graduates than among Finnish graduates (6%). The unemployment rate of international graduates (8%) was twice as high as that of Finnish graduates (4%). Unemployment was highest among graduates born in Africa, especially those from North Africa and Somalia. The proportion of employed graduates was quite low among those graduates originally from Asia, but many of them were students.

CIMO (2012b) has since analysed similar statistics on stay rates and the employment of international graduates from all Finnish HEIs (higher education institutions). The analysis was based on the data of Statistics Finland on the status of graduates from 2007 and 2009. 70% of the UAS graduates from 2007 and 79% of the graduates from 2009 were in Finland a year after graduation. Altogether 54% of UAS graduates in both year groups were employed in Finland. The employment rate was highest among the graduates from social and health care. Later Shumilova, Cai and Pekkola (2012) also studied the employability of international graduates educated at Finnish HEIs. Their study was based on a survey looking at graduates from the years 2009 and 2010 from 16 HEIs with a response rate of 21%. 78% of the respondents had stayed in Finland, only 13% had returned to their home country and 9% had moved elsewhere. 70% of all international graduates were employed and, among those not employed, 61% were students and 11% were doing an internship. The employment rate of UAS graduates was 68% and was higher among those who had settled in Finland or returned to their home country than among those who had moved elsewhere. There were differences in the employment rate according to the continents of origin, with the employment rate of graduates from Africa lowest. Most of the employed graduates were satisfied (44%) or very satisfied (25%) with their jobs. The relevance of current job to the field and level of study was also good. 58% found the job fully and 27% somewhat relevant to the field of study. The job was mostly at the same level as (64%) or at a higher level (11%) than the qualification.

## HOW DO THEY GET EMPLOYED? WHICH FACTORS ENHANCE OR HINDER EMPLOYABILITY?

The same factors affect the employability of international students as the employability of foreign talent generally. International students' entry into the labour market of their country of study is, however, facilitated by their familiarity with the customs, culture and working life of the country. The possession of a degree from the host country is an additional advantage because of the recognition of qualifications and because employers know the degrees (Tremblay 2005). The most qualified immigrants are generally more easily employed. In Finland, however, many academically educated immigrants have had difficulties in getting employment in their own fields and at a level equivalent to their education. The unemployment rate of people of foreign origin has been high, about three times higher than the unemployment rate of the population as a whole.

Based on the three studies described earlier, the majority of graduates stay in Finland and are employed here. This does not, however, indicate the quality of employment or factors that have affected employment. Thus, 21 UAS graduates from different fields of study (business, engineering, health care and social services) and national backgrounds were interviewed (Majakulma 2011b). They were asked about the factors that have affected their employment and what they think has improved or weakened their employment possibilities. Similar factors were also found out in the later study by Shumilova, Cai and Pekkola (2012).

Some of these factors were structural. The demand for employees differs; according to the graduates, the employment of nurses and engineers is good, but many fellow business graduates work in positions that do not match their qualification. The economic recession has made it more difficult to find employment. Some also stated that it is generally difficult for foreigners to find employment in Finland. The negative attitudes of employers and an unwillingness to employ foreigners were generally seen as barriers to employment. Some graduates pointed out that one's ethnic background is more important than being a foreigner as such.

The graduates also described individual factors that have had an influence on employability. The importance of knowing the Finnish language was emphasised, and was often the first and last issue they discussed. For some interviewees, a good knowledge of Finnish had been helpful when getting employed, for others not knowing Finnish well enough had been a barrier. Many were working in a Finnish-speaking environment, while for some the working language was English.

Not only language skills but also a knowledge and understanding of Finnish society were found to be important. However, it was said that an understanding of the culture develops with exposure and experience.

More than a half the graduates emphasised the importance of personality and certain personal characteristics in getting employed – this was even thought to be more important than education or nationality. Personal characteristics are naturally important for all employees, but some are especially important for foreign job seekers. The importance of motivation and self-confidence was emphasised. Activeness, taking the initiative and even persistence in job hunting – by sending out applications, calling people, attending recruitment fairs, going out and meeting people – had helped in job hunting. Moreover, some characteristics that employers value in general, openness, flexibility, self-direction, independence, willingness to learn, ability to adapt to changes and to cope in different situations, were found important.

The importance of professional competence was also emphasised. A majority of the graduates stated that having the degree as such was essential for finding employment. This depended somewhat on the profession and on the job. Some of them had at some point worked in positions where the degree was not necessarily needed; they were employed because of other qualifications. The fact that the degree was completed in Finland was a positive factor. Not only the degree, but also the importance of the competence gained during education was emphasised as well. It is possible to develop specific special skills during studies, for example through the area of specialisation, thesis and elective studies, and these skills were considered beneficial. Professional competence develops through education but also through work experience. Work experience gained through placements had enhanced employment. Placements were a compulsory part of the studies and most graduates had completed them in Finland and, in this way, gained local work experience. Many were later employed at places where they had completed the placements. Many graduates had also had a part-time job during the studies, sometimes in the field of study.

Knowledge of the host language and culture was important, but the graduates also had other language skills and cultural competence. Many of them mentioned that their cultural competence had affected their employability positively. In some cases it was their general multicultural experience; bringing new ideas and ways of thinking and in some cases specific knowledge and experience from a certain geographical area, their region of origin. However, some graduates said that the employers did not necessarily value cultural competence as much as other qualifications. Language skills other than Finnish, either their mother tongue or English, were also valuable when looking

for employment. In a few cases, language skills were the main reason for employment, and education was not considered to be as important.

Some graduates emphasised the importance of job-seeking skills. All job seekers need these skills, but foreigners were seen to need them even more than Finns. These skills are somewhat culture-bound, and somebody familiar with the culture would naturally know how to behave in certain situations, how to express themselves, etc.

The importance of networks was also emphasised by most graduates. Networks had helped some to get employed, and others indicated that a lack of networks had been a barrier. Some had developed these networks during the placements or during their education, but also through hobbies. The networks of Finnish families had also helped a lot in getting to know Finnish society. The networks worked in several ways, either concretely by helping to find a job or by giving advice and supporting. The networks of other people with a non-Finnish background were also very helpful, although they might work in the opposite way as well – the negative experiences of other immigrants can deflate hopes and belief.

## CHALLENGES AND MEASURES OF SUPPORT? HOW CAN HIGHER EDUCATION ENHANCE THE EMPLOYABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?

If the aim is to increase the human capital of the receiving country, it is important to prepare the students for the local labour market during education. In the study of Majakulma (2011c), graduates who already had much experience of the requirements of work, both in Finland and abroad, described their experiences of the connection between education and employability. The following is a summary of areas specific to the education of international students. In the later studies of Shumilova, Cai and Pekkola (2012) and Välimaa et al. (2013), similar suggestions for improving employment prospects during higher education were also proposed.

The contents of the curriculum that enhance integration into Finnish society, such as Finnish language studies, were found important. The graduates emphasised that it is very important to motivate the students to learn the language at the beginning of their studies. The motivation to study Finnish depends on future plans; if the plan is not to stay in Finland, learning the language seems like waste of time, but it should be remembered that plans change. A few graduates emphasised that Finnish studies should be compulsory and not elective, since choosing Finnish as an elective study means missing out on something else. One suggestion made was to expect the students to

learn Finnish before their professional studies start. More Finnish courses, especially advanced studies, would be needed. The type of Finnish studies was also discussed. Communication skills that relate to everyday situations and learning the spoken language were regarded as more important, though some graduates emphasised writing skills as well. Some graduates suggested that there should also be more about Finnish culture and working culture in their education. In particular, it was thought that practical issues on how to manage in Finnish society and working life should be emphasised. The student's own responsibility for learning the language and culture was also acknowledged.

The importance of reflection on professional development was emphasised as well. As a student, it is difficult to know what is really needed for working life and making the right choices during studies is not easy. This is of course a concern of domestic students as well, but is especially important to international students. Supporting the professional development and self-esteem of international students was regarded as important by many, since they see examples of people with a foreign background who have not succeeded in finding employment in Finland, even though they are educated. Changing such negative perceptions was considered to be important. In addition, it was stated that students should be offered more guidance and counselling, and that providing positive examples to the students would be beneficial, for example using older students or alumni in the guidance of students and having more staff with a foreign background at higher education institutions.

The graduates discussed the learning methods used as well. Many emphasised the usefulness of the different learning methods, such as group work, project work and self-directive learning, to professional development. However, many students were used to different learning methods and strategies than those used in Finnish education – learning cultures vary in different countries. An improved orientation to Finnish learning methods is needed. Learning methods where students from English and Finnish degree programmes studied together were considered important since getting to know local students usually enhances integration into society. Furthermore, increased cooperation that enhances the integration of students with different national backgrounds would be needed.

Almost all graduates emphasised the importance of developing connections to the world of Finnish work during studies. Work placements were thought to be valuable; during them it was possible to develop the competences needed for Finnish work life and to strengthen the students' confidence in their own professional competence. The importance of tutoring during the placement, especially the tutor's ability to understand the international students' special

needs, was emphasised. Reflecting on the learning experiences after the placements in classes was also found to be useful. The fact that many students later found permanent employment through the placement should be emphasised to the students. Some graduates had completed some or all of the placements abroad, which did broaden their professional development. The disadvantage of this was that it did not help to connect them to Finnish working life. Completing assignments or projects connected to working life was also regarded as a useful way of developing contacts. Additionally, people from outside the educational establishment who worked in companies but came to the UAS and used their expertise to present specific topics were regarded as beneficial for future employment. Career and recruitment services had also been useful in getting connected to Finnish working life, so organising more exhibitions or recruitment fairs where companies and students could meet was also seen as beneficial. Several graduates felt that it was difficult for international students to find companies and institutions for placements or projects, so it was recommended for UASs and teachers to form more contacts with businesses. Some felt that this was the most important issue to develop in the education, because those students who do not speak Finnish have fewer places to choose from. It was noted that the UASs should make better use of alumni connections.

The teaching of job-seeking skills was noted as specific content that was missing from the curricula. Several graduates considered it especially important for international students as they had noticed that different techniques, for example in writing an application or a CV, are used in Finland than in their country of origin. Interview techniques, being prepared to answer certain questions, were considered important as well.

The English programmes and the multicultural student groups offer excellent possibilities for the development of international and intercultural competence. This is one of the reasons why these programmes were established – to support local students who wish to gain such skills. This is important for international students as well and many graduates mentioned that the cultural competence they had developed through interacting with their multicultural group during their studies had been useful and that this asset of the programmes could be utilised more effectively. It should be made clear, however, that the fact that the programme is in English and that students come from different cultures does not necessarily mean the enhancement of intercultural competence, if it is not a topic that is actively taught or considered in the curriculum. Having special courses on this topic and going beyond generalities during the course would be beneficial. The importance of the teachers' intercultural competence was also emphasised. Some graduates appreciated having had non-Finnish teachers

and suggested that there should be more teachers with a foreign background who have completed their education in Finland and are aware of the challenges that the students face. Exchange teachers from partner institutions abroad were said to bring more international aspects to the studies, and so enhancing international cooperation was also said to be important. Lastly, intercultural competence was also seen as being further developed through studies in a third country and such experiences were valued too.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES TO THE FINNISH LABOUR MARKET: RESOURCE USED OR WASTED?

Student mobility is another form of mobility of talent, if international students are willing and able to enter the host country workforce upon graduation. Finland, like many other countries, is facing a demographic change, and a potential lack of labour. Highly-skilled human resources gained through student mobility fuel the knowledge economies and provide a competitive edge over others. In many countries, income generation is also a motivation for the recruitment of international students. In Finland, however, human resources development has been the main motivation, since there are no tuition fees at higher education institutions. At the moment, there is a trial period for charging non-EU students in English-language Master's programmes. According to the studies discussed here, most international graduates from Finnish UASs have stayed in Finland and the unemployment rate is clearly lower than that of foreigners in Finland generally. The often expressed concern that Finnish higher education institutions educate people for free for foreign labour markets seems to be exaggerated. Some graduates have left, either returning to their countries of origin or going to third countries, and they benefit not only these countries but possibly also Finland through the connections they created during their studies.

In the studies described, graduates with ample experience of the needs of the world of work both in Finland and abroad described their experiences of the factors that had affected their employability. Many factors which, according to earlier studies, explain the labour market position of foreign talent and international students were also emphasised by these graduates. Individual skills, language skills, personality, educational level and work experience had been important. Language is less of an issue in English-speaking countries or other countries where the national language is widely spoken, but in Finland it definitely seems to be – although there are some workplaces, such as multinational companies, where English is the working language. One option to enhance Finnish language skills is to offer professional studies in Finnish,

especially to students who already resided in Finland before the start of their studies and know some Finnish. It is, however, not possible to study in Finnish without prior knowledge of the language. Language preparation before the actual start of the studies would be one option, but willingness first to start the language studies from the beginning and then to complete a higher education degree is not necessarily a very tempting option – potential applicants from abroad would generally rather choose an English-speaking country, or a country where their national language is more widely spoken. To increase the number of international students, Finnish HEIs need to provide education in English as well, but there is a need to improve of the programmes, especially concerning the improvement of employability in Finland.

The importance of networks was emphasised as well. The graduates found the prejudices and attitudes of employers to be inhibiting factors. Most of them, however, emphasised individual competences more than the country of origin. Demand for employees was also important. Some of the factors affecting the employability of international graduates are factors that are important for anybody seeking employment. International graduates may lack some of the skills of the local population, but they also possess special competences, which are their assets. Cultural competences had had a positive effect on many graduates, but only a few were employed in so-called ethno-specific positions.

The education completed had supported the employment of graduates in the Finnish labour market in many ways. The degrees they had completed had provided most of them with a good labour market position, but they also recognised areas for improvement. Some of the issues they emphasised were issues that all graduates – Finnish and international – would find important, but there were specific issues that were especially important for the education and long-term employment prospects of international students in Finland. The importance of learning the local language, job-seeking skills, good connections to the world of Finnish work, the importance of reflecting upon a student's professional development and the development of intercultural competence during education were stressed.

All in all, the special needs of international students should be taken into consideration in education. Offering the same study programme that already exists in the local language in English, without considering the aim and the content of the programme and the special services that the international students need, is not enough. If the aim is to educate international professionals for local labour markets then the programmes should be planned accordingly. Improvement in employability is not only crucial to the student, but also to the Finnish world of work and society in a globalising world.

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# EMPLOYER'S VIEW ON FOREIGN NURSING STUDENTS AS TRAINEES IN FINLAND

Maria Loukola

Interviewees: Head Nurse Anne Peräsalo and Staff Nurse Marjatta Rajamäki, Seinäjoki Central Hospital

Acquiring a compulsory work placement is generally somewhat problematic for foreign students at Finnish universities of applied sciences (Garam 2009, 10) as also indicated by the students themselves (Niemi 2009, 103–108). However, regarding work placements in health care studies, the situation is quite unique compared to some other fields of education, not least due to the high demand for employees in the field, stemming from the present and/or upcoming shortage of nurses in Finland and in other European countries (Sermeus & Bruyneel 2010, 11; Koponen, Laiho & Tuomaala 2012, 19–21). Although there is a clear demand for nurses and there are a lot of opportunities in educating foreign nursing students, their work placement periods also present some challenges.

This article concentrates on employer experiences of foreign nursing students of Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences (Seinäjoki UAS) as trainees at Seinäjoki Central Hospital, Finland (Peräsalo & Rajamäki 2013). The international Bachelor Degree Programme in Nursing has been taught at Seinäjoki UAS since autumn 2009. One of the strengths and attractions of Finnish Nursing programmes is the substantial amount of practical training – 75 ECTS credits of clinical training according to the EU directives and 15 ECTS credits of laboratory skills training.

## FINNISH LANGUAGE: A KEY TO SUCCESS

As stated in CIMO's survey on the implementation of internationalisation strategies in Finnish provinces, those organisations which are already involved in international activities, are willing to recruit international employees, but they expect them to master the Finnish language (Korkala 2012, 16). The situation is the same in the health care sector. According to the employer perspective of the Seinäjoki Central Hospital (Peräsalo & Rajamäki 2013), foreign nursing students are truly welcome to train in the wards and are seen as well motivated and hard-working trainees who execute their job without delay or discrimination of tasks and who also know how to consult their supervisors when needed. However, the employers also acknowledge the students' difficulty in mastering the Finnish language to the level required in a nurse's work.

The main challenges of the implementation of the work placements thus originate from issues such as patient safety requirements and the building of trust-based care relationships, which are highly dependent on communication, mainly based on Finnish language (Koponen et al. 2012, 32). What makes things even more problematic for the foreign students who are only learning the basics of Finnish language are the Finnish dialects which are ever-present in the working environments, both among the staff members and the patients. For example, not many elderly people in Seinäjoki region use standard Finnish. Also some level of fear is noticeable among the staff regarding the sufficiency of their own English language skills for the purpose of instructing the students in more detail (Peräsalo & Rajamäki 2013).

The fast pace of work in the wards is another concern. Staff members wonder, for example, whether they have enough time to take language issues into consideration when guiding the trainees during their busiest working hours, or whether the foreign students are able to register all patient needs while using the Finnish language. Although the foreign students' diligent and determined working style and willingness to learn are highly appreciated in the wards, the employers are also slightly worried about abilities of the foreign students to cope physically and mentally. This is partly because they do not have much time to rest as they usually do part-time work such as cleaning in the evenings and at weekends to finance their living in Finland while they are studying and doing their practical training (Peräsalo & Rajamäki 2013).

## ENRICHING WORKPLACES THROUGH MULTICULTURALISM

Seinäjoki UAS aims to equip its foreign students with cultural and working life skills that are relevant in the Finnish context (Work for Future). At Seinäjoki Central Hospital, staff members in fact have not encountered any major problems with trainees due to cultural differences in relation to Finnish working life values, such as strict schedule and time adherence. On the contrary, the foreign students have received much positive feedback from the staff members and patients related to their healthy and humble attitude towards the nursing work, their diligence and especially their respect for elderly people, which is a much more visible value in some of the foreign students' home countries in comparison to Finland.

The hospital staff have not noticed any difference between the professional competences of Finnish and foreign students studying in either the international programme or in the Finnish-taught programme of nursing. According to the employer, the foreign students are as competent, for example, in aseptic and medication calculation skills as they would expect from any trainees. In addition,

the employers think that the multicultural competence of the foreign nursing students will be an important asset in the future as the region becomes more international. Their presence in the wards has also been a valuable and enriching experience for the work community, facilitating the Finnish staff members' process of learning about other cultures (Peräsalo and Rajamäki 2013).

All in all, it is inevitable that the health care sector organisations will need employees from other countries in order to have a sufficiently competent workforce (Koponen et al. 2012, 36), and many organisations, such as Seinäjoki Central Hospital, agree with this statement and readily welcome foreign students as nursing trainees (Peräsalo & Rajamäki 2013). However, it seems that more solutions are needed in order to further develop the fluency of the foreign students' work placement process, as well as cooperation between the student, the higher education institution and the employer, especially regarding the linguistic challenges (Peräsalo & Rajamäki 2013; Koponen et al. 2012, 32). Peräsalo and Rajamäki (2013) also think that it would be beneficial for new foreign nursing graduates first to consider working in an environment with fewer acute and risk situations – for example in elderly care units or wards for patients with long-term illnesses – in order to give them more time to develop their skills in the context of the Finnish health care sector.



The international nursing students of Seinäjoki UAS have received positive feedback on their sympathetic way of encountering the patients (photo: Photo library of Seinäjoki UAS/ Mikko Lehtimäki).

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# PAJATSO PROJECT ENHANCES THE EMPLOYABILITY OF FOREIGN STUDENTS OF HAMK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Salla Niittymäki and Maaret Viskari

The PAJATSO project was established to enhance the employability of the foreign students of HAMK University of Applied Sciences (HAMK). The two-year (2012–2014) project is funded by the European Social Fund and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of the Häme region.

The aim of the PAJATSO project is to develop foreign students' employability and work search skills on the one hand, and to increase the cooperation between HAMK and companies on the other hand. The project creates systematic and functional ways to organise career-related training and company cooperation for the benefit of the students and companies. As a result, students gain competence, experience and networks in Finland that will help them to find employment after graduation.

## THE GAP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

According to current research, the employment rate of foreign higher education graduates in Finland is significantly lower than the employment rate of Finnish graduates (Majakulma, 2011). The employability of foreign students in Finland is a complex matter because they lack networks, language skills and general knowledge about Finnish work culture and industries. In addition, it is also very challenging to gather data on the employment rate of foreign graduates, since many of them move away from Finland or their contact information is outdated.

Internally, PAJATSO project develops HAMK career services. In the project, we have identified the complexity of career-related issues, especially from the point of view of the foreign student. We are utilising the material and information designed and tested in the VALOA project, which aimed to increase cooperation and networking between universities and employers in order to open new employment opportunities for foreign degree students in Finland. We have also created career planning pages in the HAMK student portal and arranged career events, job seeking lectures, CV-advisory clinics and other piloted services concerning career planning. In addition, there have been surveys for students in connection with career-related education and services. According to the surveys, the above-mentioned activities are exactly what students indicated as being essential in their career planning.

## THE POTENTIAL VALUE FOR THE REGION

Regional development is an important task of universities of applied sciences and, at its best, it can create remarkable competitive strength for companies and regions. The Centre for International Mobility CIMO (2012) claims that the Finnish labour market makes scant use of international graduates' skills. Additionally, the presence of foreign students at Finnish higher education institutions raises the competence level of Finnish students. They become more accustomed to working with individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures, as well as expanding their international competence to serve today's global network (Piilotettu Osaaminen 2013). These future employees, who are already trained to work in an international environment, are very valuable from the employer's perspective, as the domestic market has become more global. With over 600 foreign students from over 50 countries in six degree programmes, HAMK plays an important role in the internationalisation of the companies in the Häme region.

Our main objective at HAMK is for our students to become employed in the region, or at least in Finland or in Finnish companies abroad. At the moment, we do not maintain contact with our talented foreign students after they graduate, and a serious "brain drain" takes place after every semester. This is also very expensive for the whole society, as Finland grants free higher education for all. The students leave Finland and use the skills and knowledge gained during studies somewhere else. One of the best ways to tie the students to the Finnish labour market and society is to systematically coordinate cooperation with companies and to organise opportunities for networking during studies.

In the PAJATSO project we are making an extra effort to market the competence of our foreign students and the benefits of cooperation. We are contacting companies directly, as well as talking with company representatives at different events and occasions. We have prepared marketing material that emphasises the benefits of cooperation from the perspective of companies. Feedback from local company representatives has been encouraging, as the professional and cultural competence of our students is easily available to them. In future, we must be able to design even more precise cross-disciplinary service products that add value to the internationalisation process of the local companies, HAMK and the Häme region.

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## CONCLUSIONS

# CONCLUSIONS

The Editors

The purpose of this publication was to contemplate the role and significance of international degree programmes in Finnish universities of applied sciences (UAS) and to shed light to the forms of cooperation they engage in within the FINNIPS network. The insights with regards to the FINNIPS cooperation will be dealt with shortly, but first the focus is drawn once more to the variety of topics in the light of which international degree programmes have been discussed. Among them were the development and dimensions of the internationalisation of Finnish UAS as well as the quality and impact of education. Furthermore, the theme of global citizenship and the aim of building a genuinely international higher education community were analysed in the texts.

Internationalisation efforts have been carried out at Finnish UASs since their establishment in the 1990s. The role and contents of international degree programmes have developed significantly since then, along with the changes in the operational environments both in Finland and in global terms. Indeed, international degree programmes at Finnish UASs are connected to and continuously shaped by various simultaneous processes at different levels. The Bologna process and the recently published European Higher Education in the World strategy are examples of the policies setting guidelines for HEIs at European level. The Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland and the upcoming reform of UAS legislation in 2014, on the other hand, serve as examples of processes at the national level. Moreover, the strategies of individual Finnish UASs, regional focus areas, economic situation, not to mention needs stemming from working life have an effect on the form and status of international degree programmes at UASs. However, the course of development of internationalisation and international degree programmes is by no means directed and influenced solely and automatically by the outputs of external factors. On the contrary, the efforts for continuous development must rise from within the HEIs and evolve in close interaction with the operational environment. Hence, it is crucial that internationalisation is seen as a strategic choice made consciously by top management.

As the many references to the topic of the quality of education highlighted in the texts, UASs and degree programmes need to strive for continuous development in order to succeed in the competition for talented and motivated students on one hand, and to be able to harness the strong educational expertise

for education export on the other. The quality of Finnish education has received worldwide recognition in recent decades. The PISA results, in particular, have contributed to a wider awareness of the Finnish educational system, and increased its attractiveness. However, the requirement of comparability and recognition of qualifications as well as the need to respond to the varying needs of consumers and buyers of education mean that the contents and forms of education must be evaluated and developed continuously.

In the context of internationalisation, it is crucially important to acknowledge that the requirement of quality cuts across all the activities of HEIs and accordingly, needs to be ensured not only in classroom education but within several processes in the entire institution. For example, the student recruitment process, curriculum design, teaching and learning, student counselling and support services and extra-curricular activities are typical areas where the processes of quality management need to be applied. Creating attractive educational packages for education export is another current activity within which it is important to be able to demonstrate the standards, measures and results of quality management. Accordingly, in order to stand out and thrive in the global education market, Finnish UASs need to be able both to provide high-quality education and prove it with accurate processes, and to a growing extent with quality labels and certificates.

When it comes to evaluating the quality of education and the realisation of the internationalisation efforts at HEIs in practice, it is interesting to look beyond the labels and observe the actors involved. Finnish HEIs aim at being genuinely international higher education communities. In this publication, the articles describing the contents, objectives and practices of the international degree programmes in different study fields disclose how this aim is met in the everyday learning environment. Additionally, the accounts of the two foreign degree students on their experiences of studying and living in Finland provide a complementary picture of this endeavour. These depictions together show that the efforts to create genuinely international higher education communities are diverse and that the staff and students in international degree programmes and at UASs in general, are committed to developing their global competencies on their way towards global citizenship. A lot remains to be done and one of the topical questions is how the global competencies gained within international degree programmes can be better transferred to and made better use of in the labour markets. However, it is still possible to conclude that international degree programmes contribute greatly to the internationalisation of UASs and facilitate the execution of the UASs' basic task of regional development.

The articles in this publication reveal the great range of angles from which the topic of international UAS education can be approached. For all of the above-mentioned matters, the FINNIPS network plays a facilitating and contributing role. For the participating 22 Finnish UASs, the network provides valuable help in terms of attracting foreign applicants, marketing the degree programmes, designing entrance exams and arranging the entrance examinations outside Finland. As a result of carefully planned and organised entrance examinations, the international degree programmes receive motivated students with the requisite skills to study in and contribute to the further development of high-quality education.

Reflecting on the mutual benefits gained from the joint efforts with regard to entrance examinations and foreign students' recruitment and admissions processes in general, has, in fact, been extremely enlightening as it has shown exactly how far the cooperation has progressed within four years. Accounts of successful cooperation will, without doubt, encourage continuing to work together. Moreover, the extensive analyses of the various dimensions of the internationalisation of UASs provide many ideas for possible new areas of cooperation.

The editors would like to thank the authors of the articles in this publication. The diversity of subjects covered in the articles highlights the rewarding complexity of providing international education, and its significance for the future of Finland.



Joint efforts for internationalisation (photo: Riikka Vanhanen).

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Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) is a cooperation body, which, in 2013, brings together 22 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and over 50 of their Bachelor-level Degree Programmes conducted in English. The main task of the network is to arrange entrance examinations to these programmes in a selection of countries outside Finland.

This publication illuminates the reasons for arranging entrance examinations abroad in pursuance of describing the development and activities of the FINNIPS network. The depiction is done as a part of a wider mission to shed light on the role and significance of international degree programmes in Finnish UASs. The articles of the volume approach UAS education from various perspectives and together, they provide a comprehensive picture of the many different ways in which internationalisation can be enhanced by way of joint efforts.

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