

# HOW CAN LAPLAND UAS PREPARE ITS STUDENTS TO FINNISH WORK CULTURE?

Talent Boost Program at Lapland University of Applied Sciences

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The purpose of this thesis was to give a better understanding of Finnish working life and work culture including international experiences to other internationals whilst supporting and giving recommendations to the Talent Boost program on what information could be included in a Guide on Finnish work culture for the students at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. The objectives of the thesis are to understand Finnish work life and work culture, to discover if international people's experiences in the Finnish labour market are similar to what can be found in books, and to find the most common obstacles among foreigners. The main research questions are What are the biggest obstacles in Finnish work culture from the international point of view? and What information can improve the chances of entering the Finnish labour market for students?

This thesis is based on qualitative research methods whilst for accuracy reasons this research is including statistical data analysis from different sources. Furthermore, it includes common cultural theory with the work culture and unique features being in focus.

This thesis as a whole can be a great source of information for foreign students on Finnish work culture and working life as well as it can improve the accuracy of a guidebook for students. It is made by an international student from an international perspective and with experiences of foreigners.

**Keywords** work culture, working life, students' work, culture.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The research topic was given to the researcher by the commissioner Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Talent Boost program. The aim of the Talent Boost program at Lapland University of Applied Sciences is to ensure international students' integration into Finnish working life and work culture. One of the outcomes of this project is a guidebook for students to introduce them the Finnish working life in an interactive way. The role of the researcher in this project was to help the commissioner in the planning and information-gathering phase of the guidebook. The commissioner's role is to make sure that the guide gives students the knowledge to better prepare for entering the Finnish labour market.

The main focus of this research is the Finnish work culture and to highlight the unique features of Finnish working life from international experts' experiences point of view to discover if international people's experiences in the Finnish labour market. Are these experiences match with what can be found in literature? Furthermore, the thesis is discovering the most common obstacles among foreigners. This research can be beneficial for those who want to discover the Finnish working life and work culture through theory, statistical data, and real-life experiences.

The research questions are What are the biggest obstacles in Finnish work culture from an international point of view? and What information can improve the chances of entering the Finnish labour market for students? More detailed information about the Finnish work culture and working life can be found in chapter three. In chapter four some statical data with foreigners in the focus will be introduced. The biggest challenge that young graduates face is finding a job therefore this research's fifth chapter can be helpful for them where interviews about the experiences of international experts can be found.

The goal of this research is to gather the information that can help and support the outcomes of the Talent Boost program at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. This supporting information includes discovering obstacles and key characteristics of work culture and working life in Finland. The benefit of the

Talent Boost program is strengthening the Finnish labour market with foreigners whilst encouraging local businesses toward internationalisation.

This topic is connected to international business studies as it is mainly covering the work culture whilst analysing the different types of data in connection with foreign employment in Finland. Besides the nature of the program is also connected to the studies.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter covers the research methods in general, and the specific methods used during this research are in the group of qualitative research methods more specifically semi-structured interviews and the data collected during the interviews are going to be analysed based on the content analysis method. The topic of ethical research is also covered in this chapter as it is a crucial part of any research involving experiences and personal lives of people.

### 2.1 Qualitative Research

The two main types of research method groups are qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research methods are described as subjective, more interpretive and aim to collect detailed information gathered by the researcher in an unstructured way, whilst quantitative research methods are described as objective, more statistical and aim to collect a large volume of numerical data gathered by a tool chosen by the researcher (e.g., survey). The scale of the qualitative research methods tends to be carefully chosen information sources based on experience. In contrast, quantitative research methods tend to be more on a bigger scale randomly chosen group of people. Qualitative research describes the findings in depth based on the collected information while quantitative research explains the findings supported by numbers. (MacDonald & Headlam, 2008, 8-9; Saldana, 2011, 3-4)

The commissioner wanted this project to be experience based therefore the most suitable research methods group is the Qualitative. Qualitative research methods are mainly used for studying natural social life. The qualitative research method in general provides more flexibility than the quantitate, furthermore, it gives the freedom of more detailed information collected during the interviews since it can contain more open-end questions. The informality of the semi-structured interviews can give greater insights into the true experiences of the interviewees. (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey 2005, 3) The researcher decided to use a combination of the fact-finder type and the exploratory type of interview approach. This means in this research that both try to find information and to link previous findings together. (MacDonald & Headlam, 2008, 40-41)

The sampling method used in this thesis is the purposive method since the interviewees were chosen based on their current working location which is Lapland and not natives of Finland. A list of people who fitted both criteria was recommended to the researcher by the commissioner. The project manager of the Talent Boost program has given this list to the team to decide who reaches out to which experts to participate in the interview via email. The sampling size for this research was decided to be three due to the time-sensitivity of the research. The interviews were carried out in the form of online videocalls which gave the opportunity to make better notes as these conversations were recorded. (Mack et al. 2005, 5)

For the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, the content analysis method was chosen. Content analysis used to be only used in quantitative research, but it can be a useful method in qualitative research as well. With this technique, the researcher does not necessarily have to be working with a hypothesis and the conclusion of the data analysis can be repeatable. After the data has been collected it is wise to use coding with the content analysis method this creates a system in the data. (Graue 2015) The coding method used during the analysis is priori coding. Prior to the analysis, the classifications have been established based on the information found during the literature review. (Stemler 2001)

## 2.2 Ethical research

Ethical research is especially important in the case of qualitative research as it is a direct study of people. Therefore, it is a crucial aspect of the research to establish rules that protect the participants and always keep their comfort in mind as a first concern. (Mack et al. 2005, 8)

Prior to the interview, the researcher explained to every participant the aim of the research and the use of the information collected during these interviews. In order to protect the participants of this research it has been decided to give them full anonymity and not mention their employers or any other information that could make the interviewees easily identifiable. As mentioned previously in 2.1 the researcher has recorded the interviews to help have as detailed information of the interviews as possible. Before the recording started the researcher politely



asked for consent from the participants and explained that these recordings are not going to be published anywhere the only purpose of it is to have more detailed data to analyse. (Mack at al. 2005, 9; MacDonald & Headlam, 2008, 59-40)

### 3 FINNISH WORK CULTURE

This chapter opens by covering the cultural concept as well as cultural dimensions based on Greet Hofstede with Finland and work being in the focus throughout the introduction of the 6 dimensions. The information found in the book serves as a referencing point to the following sections and upcoming chapters of the research. The second subsection is designated to work culture in Finland and the third subsection is introducing the term working life in contrast to work culture.

#### 3.1 Cultural dimensions of Hofstede

Hofstede's first culture dimension theory book was published in 1991 but the theory was already created in 1980 at that time it consisted of 4 dimensions. Later, Hofstede added a fifth dimension to his theory. Nowadays his theory is most known as the 6-D model, but the sixth dimension was only added in 2010. Even though people's minds are different there is a form which can help understand each other. This theory was developed to have a better understanding of why people from different backgrounds from all around the world behave a certain way, therefore, helping to find a mutual point that can improve the interaction and avoid misunderstandings while interacting in an international setting. (Hofstede, 2010, 4)

Hofstede defines culture as mental software even though culture has more meanings in everyday life it is maybe defined as art, literature, and education made by a literate person. But in social anthropology culture is defined as a collective term of ways people think, act, and feel. It also includes for example how people from the same social environment greet each other or how big of a distance they keep. Furthermore, Hofstede explains that culture is something people are learning, and it should be well differentiated from both one's personality and human nature. Culture as a concept in Hofstede's book is using the multi-layered onion metaphor and this 'onion' has four layers (symbols, heroes, rituals, and values). In this concept symbols as a category have been placed on the outer layer as they can change fast as symbols are for example flags or signs. Digging deeper the next layer is heroes in this category the idea is

that people chose a role model based on behavioural which is highly appreciated by society. The rituals are the last layer of the 'onion', which is practised, and it includes all activities which are socially fundamental. The last layer which is the core of the is 'onion' is the values which explained as depending on whether something is 'this' or 'that' based on feelings. Furthermore, people are learning throughout their lives these values and practices. (Hofstede, 2010, 5-10)

### Hofstede's 6 dimensional model

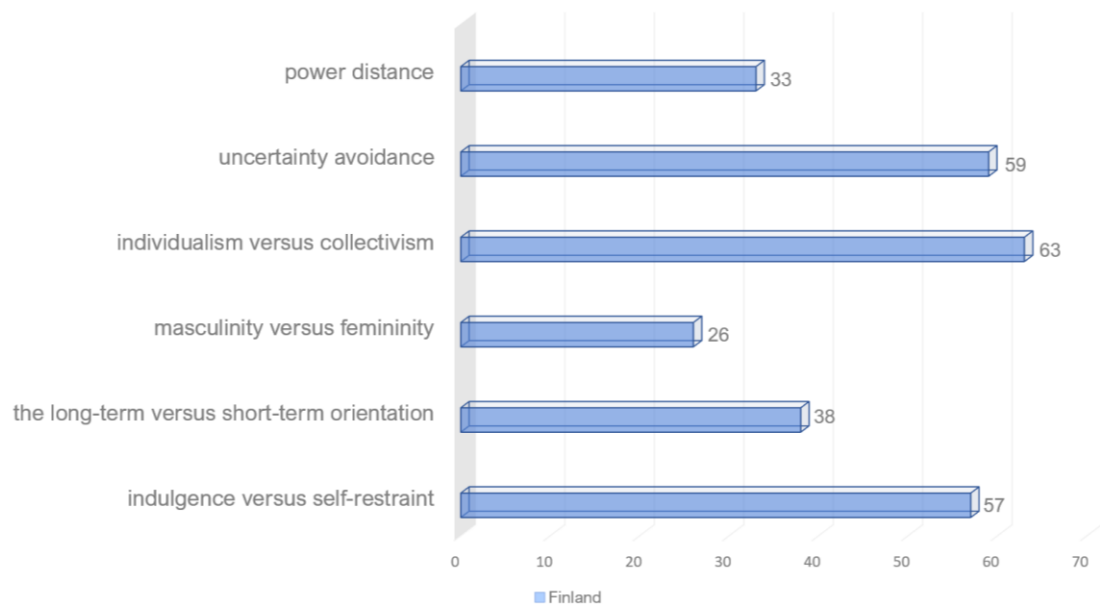


Figure 1 Finland's scores of Hofstede's 6-D model (Source: Hofstede, 2010)

#### 3.1.1 Power distance

The power distance index measures the level of inequality within society. In this case, inequality refers to whether it matters that people are powerful, wealthy or have status in society. In other words, the power distance index refers to the imbalance between low- and high-class people in society and how the people of a society deal with this difference between the classes. (Hofstede, 2010, 54; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

As Figure 1 shows Finland's score in this dimension is 33 which is quite low as in the power distances index the lowest score was 11. This number shows that Finland is dealing with inequality well and it also means that in Finland independence is valued in the workplace among managers and employees. Therefore, being initiative is common in a low power distance country. Furthermore, it also explains that the hierarchy is present in Finnish companies, but it is only for the sake of simplicity. Typically, the managers are reachable, and they are more towards the coaching leadership style, and they rely on their team's expertise. The communication between managers and employees is informal and it is common to address each other by their first names. (Hofstede, 2010, 60-61, 74-75; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

### 3.1.2 Uncertainty avoidance

The uncertainty avoidance index was found a secondary product of the power distance index. This index deals with how a society copes with knowing that the future is unknown and unforeseeable. The uncertainty avoidance index is measuring how much a society feels threatened by the unknown and what steps are they making in order to reduce the anxiety caused by the uncertainty. (Hofstede, 2010, 191; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

Finland has a score of 59 which indicates that Finnish society prefers avoiding uncertainty. (Figure 1) This means that in Finland people uphold stringent rules of religion and practice and are intolerant of unconventional actions and concepts. These rules include both laws and informal ones which are helping to control the rights and duties of both employers and employees. People with a strong preference towards avoiding uncertainty have an internal aspiration to be active and work hard, and accuracy and punctuality are expected of them. Furthermore, cultures where they have strong uncertainty avoidance also prefer to have more specialists at their workplaces. (Hofstede, 2010, 209;211; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

### 3.1.3 Individualism versus collectivism

The individualism versus collectivism index deals with the fact of whether a society defines its sense of self as "we" or "I". In collective societies, children not

only grow up with their close family but also many times their extended family in which environment they learn that they are a member of the “we” group when thinking about themselves. On the opposite end in individualistic societies, children mostly grow up only with their parents and siblings in which environment they learn that they think “I” as themselves. (Hofstede, 2010, 91; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

Finland’s score indicates an individualistic society with its being 63. This makes Finnish society strongly prefer a flexible system where people are only obligated to care for their close family and themselves. In an individualistic society, offence generates confidence loss and shame. working relationships are based on mutual benefits by contract, advancement opportunities are determined by excellence, while leadership concentrates on managing the individuals. (Hofstede, 2010, 95,120; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

#### 3.1.4 Masculinity versus femininity

Winners define success, among other things, rivalry, and excellency serve as the driving force of masculine society. This driving force is introduced in the school system and remains to be present throughout organisational life. The guiding principle of the feminine society is caring and preserving the quality of life. However, this type of society does not appreciate those who stand out as they measure success in comfort and happiness. The main difference between masculine and feminine societies is the source of motivation whether it’s to excel or actually like the thing to do. (Hofstede, 2010, 136; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

As Figure 1 shows Finland scored low in this index which makes the society feminine. That means that their main aspects are "working in order to live", in conflict situations preferring to negotiate and compromise, equal opportunities, unity, and excellent performance at work whilst concentrating on their well-being. A preferred reword in such societies' corporate culture is flexibility or free time. (Hofstede, 2010, 166; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

### 3.1.5 Long-term versus short-term orientation

In societies with a long-term orientation, it is important to look forward to the future; therefore, in this society, people are inspired to save and take steps towards the development of contemporary education. On the opposite end, short-term orientation societies seek to preserve traditional values and conventions while viewing shifts in society with mistrust. (Hofstede, 2010, 239; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

Finland has scored low in this dimension which makes the Finnish society short-term oriented which also means that they are traditionalists with a low willingness to invest in their future and are focused on obtaining rapid results. (Hofstede, 2010, 239, 257; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

### 3.1.6 Indulgence versus self-restraint

This dimension is about socialisation and how people regulate their impulses and wants based on their upbringing. On the indulgence side, the 'want' relates to being able to have fun and enjoy life. Self-restraint societies try to limit and restrict enjoyment by social norms. (Hofstede, 2010, 281; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

Finland is classified as an indulgent country, based on its comparatively high score of 57. This means Finnish people are more likely to follow their inclinations and wants when it comes to fulfilling their wants. People from indulgent countries are more likely to be happy, and optimistic, as well as they tend to put more emphasis on free time. (Hofstede, 2010, 291; Hofstede Insights, 2023)

## 3.2 Work culture in Finland

Finland has a long history but as an independent country, it has only been around for 106 years. But neither Russia nor Sweden could demolish Finnish culture or language, which shows how resilient are the Finnish people. Both Sweden and Russia mention in their history that Finnish people are brave, trustworthy, and hard-working. After gaining independence, Finns started to build an independent and equal country. Lewis says that Finns are pessimists, blunt, and clumsy. On the other hand, he also describes them as warm-hearted, tolerant, and extremely

individualistic. Finnish people also love their country and have more national self-awareness than most people. Furthermore, Lewis also mentions that Finns are afraid to join the conversation in an international setting. (Lewis, 2006, 330–337)

Foreigners in a manager position in Finland will experience that the informal work culture will allow them to make decisions and actions more freely since the hierarchy at Finnish companies is flat. Furthermore, they will experience while working with employees from Finland that they value readiness, punctuality, truthfulness, and their own space. Working with Finnish people is about being straightforward, setting goals clearly, and defining objectives as well as their responsibilities and authorities are important. However, due to the characteristics of extreme individualism and independence, Finns prefer to only show the end result as opposed to being closely supervised. (Lewis, 2006, 330–337)

At Finnish companies the use of the first names is normal and it is also showing how much Finns value equality. Due to the flat hierarchy, everybody is encouraged to express their opinions and thoughts. Efficiency is kept in mind when scheduling, setting deadlines, and making plans. Furthermore, Finnish people respect the rules. They also highly value learning and therefore improving skills is a key component. In Finland, workplaces are encouraging and providing opportunities for those who have the desire to advance the skills of their employees. (Work In Finland, 2023a)

### 3.3 Working life in Finland

#### 3.3.1 Introducing the term

In order to have a better overall understanding on the terms working life and work culture this section is opening with the explanations of those terms. The term working life has multiple definitions in the dictionaries. Cambridge Dictionary defines working life related to people as

“The part of a person's life when they do a job or are at work. Or the years of your life that you spend working and earning money. Or the time that someone spends at work, rather than at home.”

In contrast, the term work culture includes a company's common values, opinions, mindsets, and practices. This also involves how things are carried out in the workplace and may impact how employees communicate with one another as well as with consumers or consumers. (See section 3.1)

### 3.3.2 Working life in the past in Finland

Working life in Finland has been researched by sociologists since the 1980s and around this same time, Finland's statistical institution has decided to start an experiment and asked people about working life. This survey is called Quality of working life and has been conducted on a large scale since 1977 and has been periodically sent out ever since. Furthermore, the outcome of this survey has been a key element in monitoring changes in Finnish working life. Besides, it served as a great source for further social research. (Sippola, Alasoini, 2019, 233-234)

In the 1990s new ideas have been introduced to the social policies to handle globalisation. These ideas include creating a work environment where people are competitive and where rewards are based on personal achievements at the workplace whilst still allowing flexibility and project-oriented form of working. (Sippola, Alasoini, 2019, 235-236)

### 3.3.3 Working life nowadays

In relation to working life Finnish companies know that their most important resources are the happy and well-rested employees. Therefore, the average work week is 35-40 hours from Monday to Friday which leaves enough time for the employee to have free time and to maintain a healthy work-life balance. (Work In Finland 2023b.) Moreover, in Finland companies encourage their employees to rest and use their holidays which is four to six weeks a year. Usually, these holidays are used in summer and besides those holidays Finnish people have days off during Christmas and Easter. (Work In Finland 2023a)

Finnish people in general are honest but on the other hand, they are avoiding conflict situations. These qualities are also expected from their co-workers. When planning meetings in Finland it is common to use the week numbers. Making



decisions in most cases is democratic at a Finnish company. (Leney and Barrett 2006)

As Finns are consuming 12kg of coffee per year per capita which makes Finland the number one in coffee consumption worldwide. (Bernard, 2020) This information is supporting the fact that most companies provide their employees with coffee breaks throughout the workday on top of the lunch break. Even though Finnish people are diligent at work, most of them clearly separate business and personal life when they are done at the office. (Work In Finland 2023a)

## 4 STATISTICAL DATA

This chapter is focussing on statistical data regarding Finland from an international perspective, which can help understand better what international people value in Finland and what they might find hard to adjust to settling down. Two statistics are analysed in this chapter. First, a comparison of statistical data is found from Expat Insider 2021 and 2022 and second from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) where the comparison is between Finland and the OECD average from the same year.

### 4.1 Exploring Expat Insider Results

#### 4.1.1 What is Expat Insider?

The Expat Insider survey has been conducted annually since 2014 and its purpose is to provide a better understanding of living and working abroad from an international point of view. The worldwide survey contains quality of life, ease of settling in, working abroad, and personal finances in addition to these four main topics in the 2022 Expat Insider report the expat essentials as the main topic also can be found. (InterNations 2022)

In this thesis, the Expat Insider 2021-2022 going to be used as those two are the most recent ones and it can give a great insight into Finland's ranking whilst answering the question of did it change. The results of the Expat Insider have involved 59 countries in the ranking list in 2021 and 52 countries ranked in 2022. To have a fair comparison the researcher has removed the 7 additional countries which have been ranked in 2021. Therefore, in this research, the expat rankings regarding Finland may differ from what can be seen in the official Expat Insider 2021 presentation. In Figure 2 the revaluated ranks of Finland can be seen based

on the main categories. In the next subsections Figure 2 referenced as the rankings of Finland.

### Finland's Ranking Expat Insiders

2021		2022
4.	Quality of Life index	7.
43.	Ease of Settling index	44.
23.	Working Abroad index	20.
39.	Personal Finance index	39.
	Expat Essentials index	21.

Figure 2. Finland's Ranking in 2021 and 2022 on the Expat Insider (InterNations 2022a; InterNations 2021)

#### 4.1.2 Contrasting the results of 2021 and 2022

The overall ranking of Finland in 2021 was 33 while in 2022 ranked at 32. This means that the overall ranking of Finland has gone up a place in 2022 in comparison to the year 2021. Furthermore, it also means that Finland is overall a bit closer to the bottom third of the ranking than to the middle third in both years. (InterNations 2022a; InterNations 2021)

Considering every aspect, Finland ranks seventh in 2022 in quality of life and fourth in 2021. (Figure 2.) In 2021 in 3 subcategories ranked first place Safety and security, digital life, and Quality of environment. While in 2022 only ranked first in the environment and climate category but safety and security are still in the top 3. Altogether it can be concluded that Finland got a bit better ranking in 2021 than in the year 2022 from the expats. (InterNations 2022a; InterNations 2021)

Finland's overall ranking in Ease of settling in is near the bottom of the list with 43rd in 2021 and 44th in 2022. (Figure 2) This means that Finland has fallen back a place compared to the year 2021. The main reason for ranking low in that category is that expats have a hard time making local friends. 60 percent of

expats find it difficult to make local friends compared to the global average of 37% in 2022. (InterNations 2022a; InterNations 2021)

Working Abroad index Finland has ranked 23rd and 3 places higher at 20th in 2022. (Figure 2) In this section changes in the ranking system can be seen which can also be the reason why Finland has placed overall higher. The working abroad index is from 3 subcategories in 2021 and divided differently in 2022 into 4 subcategories. The subcategories of 2021 are career prospects & satisfaction, work & leisure, and economy & job security in contrast to that in 2022 the subcategories are career prospects, work & leisure, salary & job security, and the new category of work culture & satisfaction. The 2022 categorisation gives a better overall picture of satisfaction and career prospect. In 2021 the first category Finland ranked 39th and in 2022 career prospects ranked 44th and work culture and satisfaction placed 11th. In the second category, Finland ranked 9th in 2021 and 10th in 2022 not a significant change but it shows that expats have ranked Finland a bit lower than the previous year. In the third category, Finland ranked the same place at 15th which means that expats are quite satisfied with their salaries and feel their jobs secured. (InterNations 2022a; InterNations 2021)

In the 2022 Expat Insider report there is an additional category of the Expat Essentials index where Finland has ranked at 22nd place. This category contains subcategories such as Digital life which can be also found in the 2021 Expat Insider in the category of Quality of life. Finland ranked 1st in the digital life subcategory in 2021 and placed second in 2022. (InterNations 2022a; InterNations 2021)

## 4.2 OECD Integration of Immigrants

### 4.2.1 What does Integration of immigrant cover?

OECD's integration of Immigrants from 2017 gives insights on how foreigners settling down in Finland in comparison OECD countries average. In the first data column the colours indicate a -5 percent or + 5 percent greater difference compared to the average. In the second data column the same rule applies with beginning with 10 percent or greater difference. In both cases the colours mean

the same, the green colour indicates positive change in comparison to the average while the orange colour indicates the negative change furthermore no colour means that the difference is not significant. The grey colour means no data or no base data to compare it to. The following sub-section 4.2.2 is mainly focusing on the work-related aspects and the aspects where the colours indicate difference between the average and Finland.

The best way to explain what OECD is? By having their own introduction of themselves which gives a greater overall picture of this organisation and their goals.

“The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives. Our goal is to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity, and well-being for all. We draw on 60 years of experience and insights to better prepare the world of tomorrow.” (OECD, 2023)

#### 4.2.2 Results from 2017

Table 1 OECD Integration of immigrants results of Finland in 2017 (OECD, 2017)



 <b>Finland</b> <i>Destination with significant humanitarian migration</i>	Current outcomes for foreign-born population, 2017 <i>colour: compared with OECD avg, values: %</i>	Foreign-born vs. native-born populations, 2017 <i>colour: compared with OECD avg, values: % points</i>
<a href="#">Employment</a>	59.6	-10.8
<a href="#">Unemployment</a>	16.0	7.6
<a href="#">Long-term unemployment</a>	28.1	1.8
<a href="#">Labour market participation</a>	70.9	-5.9
<a href="#">Working in low-skilled jobs</a>	14.6	9.6
<a href="#">Overqualified workers</a>	30.0	11.7
<a href="#">Self-employed</a>	13.1	3.1
<a href="#">Advanced host country language proficiency</a>	57.5	-
<a href="#">Relative poverty</a>	24.3	10.5
<a href="#">Self-reported health status</a>	62.4	-4.6
<a href="#">Unmet medical needs</a>	10.1	2.3
<a href="#">Living in overcrowded housing</a>	11.1	5.4
<a href="#">Living in substandard housing conditions</a>	13.5	4.0
<a href="#">Voter participation</a>	67.6	-16.4
<a href="#">Acquisition of nationality</a>	62.2	-
<a href="#">Perceived discrimination</a>	10.9	-
<a href="#">Sense of belonging</a>	93.0	-2.9

Table 2 OECD Integration of immigrants results of OECD countries in 2017 (OECD, 2017)

 OECD	Current outcomes for foreign-born population, 2017 colour: compared with OECD avg, values: %	Foreign-born vs. native-born populations, 2017 colour: compared with OECD avg, values: % points
<a href="#">Employment</a>	67.8	0.8
<a href="#">Unemployment</a>	7.9	1.8
<a href="#">Long-term unemployment</a>	37.3	3.1
<a href="#">Labour market participation</a>	73.6	2.3
<a href="#">Working in low-skilled jobs</a>	18.2	7.3
<a href="#">Overqualified workers</a>	35.1	4.3
<a href="#">Self-employed</a>	12.1	-0.1
<a href="#">Advanced host country language proficiency</a>	65.5	-
<a href="#">Relative poverty</a>	29.2	10.2
<a href="#">Self-reported health status</a>	79.4	3.4
<a href="#">Unmet medical needs</a>	5.7	0.2
<a href="#">Living in overcrowded housing</a>	16.8	8.5
<a href="#">Living in substandard housing conditions</a>	22.9	4.3
<a href="#">Voter participation</a>	73.7	-6.6
<a href="#">Acquisition of nationality</a>	62.8	-

OECD's average foreign-born population is 10% while in Finland it is 6% which means that Finland has a bit fewer international people living there than it is expected by OECD. (OECD 2017.) Table 1 covers 17 different yet crucial aspects of an immigrant's settle-in while Table 2 has 15 aspects which is the reference point for this comparison as it shows the average set by OECD. Furthermore, this data can also give a better understanding of what are the aspects where Finland is under the OECD's average which can show what are the areas where immigrants have a hard time settling down in Finland. (Table 1 & Table 2)

As Table 1 shows in Finland the employment of foreigners is under the average by 8,2 percent from this information the conclusion can be drawn that fewer foreigners are employed in Finland than the OECD's average. This is also supported by the data in the second column which shows how the employment of foreigners versus the Finns compare which is -10,8 percentage points. That means that the success rate of foreigners having a job is about 10 percentage points lower than Finnish people. This is also supported by the next aspect which is unemployment. As Table 1 shows it is 16 percent in Finland which is 8,1 percent higher than it is on average in the OECD countries. Furthermore, the tables also show that the long-term unemployment rate in Finland is better than

the average by 9,2 percent from which it can be seen that even though international people have a harder time getting a job in Finland they are not long-term unemployed. The labour market participation is within the average in Finland but the foreign-born versus native population in that aspect is showing an unfavourable -5,9 percentage point which means that more Finnish people are partaking in the labour market than foreigners. (Table 1 & Table 2)

14,6 percent of international people work in low-skilled jobs which is also within the average. It is worth mentioning that it is 3,6 percent lower than OECD's average. At the same time, 30 percent of the foreigners in Finland are overqualified at their jobs which is 5,1 percent lower than the OECD countries' average. While 13,1 percent of the foreigners are entrepreneurs which is one percent more than the average. Table 1 also shows that 3,1 percentage points more foreigners are self-employed than the Finnish population. This is significantly higher than the average which is -0,1 percentage point. This indicates that in Finland international experts have a better opportunity to become entrepreneurs than on average in other countries.

57,5 percent of the foreigners living in Finland are saying that their Finnish language skills are advanced. In contrast to that the average is 65,5 percent. This is significantly lower which also shows that the Finnish language is hard to learn. On average 16,8 percent of the immigrants are living in overcrowded houses while in Finland only 11,1 percent of them are living in such conditions. On average 22,9 percent of immigrants live in houses where they don't have their own bathroom and/or it is below the standard of the liveable house while in Finland only 13,5 percent of them live in such conditions. Table 1 also shows that only 67,6 percent of foreigners who can vote in Finland do so while on average in the OECD countries, this is 73,7 percent.

As can be seen from Table 1 in Finland 62,2 percentage of the immigrants were able to get Finnish nationality which is about the average in the OECD countries. 10,9 percent of the foreigners in Finland have reported experiencing discrimination. For this aspect, there is no average but the highest is 28,3 percent and the lowest is 3,2 percent concerning these numbers Finland is closer to the lower half than the top half. And the last aspect on the list is the sense of

belonging which is 93 percent in Finland which means that only 7 percent of foreigners feel that they do not belong to Finland.



## 5 WHAT HAVE INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE EXPERIENCED IN FINNISH WORK CULTURE/LIFE?

In this chapter, the focus is on international people's experiences from Europe in Finnish work culture. During one interview the researcher also had the opportunity to get some insights into a Finnish company perspective from a manager's point of view. Considering that the researcher had only one company's perspective the information cannot be generalised meaning that not all Finnish companies operate based on the same views and the different internationals may not experience the same work environment as the researcher may refer to in this chapter.

The interviews that are referred to in this chapter were carried out by the researcher. The questions for these interviews were designed in collaboration with those who work on the Talent Boost program at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. These interviews were the main source of information to provide relevant information for the outcome of the project and thesis as well. In this chapter, the Talent Boost program and its objectives will be covered as well.

The focus of the interviews was designed to get to know how international people experienced entering and integrating into Finnish work life in Lapland and how they coped with the changes. In addition, there was a question about if they have experienced any differences between different regions of Finland. Furthermore, data collected on the most mentioned advantages and obstacles to integrating into Finnish working life were discovered.

### 5.1 Introducing the Talent Boost program

The talent boost program is a Finnish government program designed to support international people's integration to Finnish market. The aim of the Talent Boost program is to help international talents to integrate and support Finnish labour market. The objectives of the programme include: To make Finland become a more appealing location to work, study, conduct research and invest for internationals. Organizations and companies are prepared and capable to hire international talent. Finnish organisations and companies are being shifted

towards internationalisation and renewal with the assistance of international talents' expertise. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. 2021a)

“Close long-term cooperation between the state, cities, educational institutions, businesses, and other actors is required to attract, accommodate, and integrate international specialists and to put their skills to effective use. If there are significant gaps between the services of different providers, Finland will have trouble attracting or retaining talent. The Talent Boost programme provides a framework for close cooperation between the different actors.” (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. 2021a)

Overall, at Lapland University of Applied Science as part of this project, the most visible outcome will be the guidebook created for its students to help them better understand and prepare for the Finnish work culture and working life. This is the part of the project where this research connects to it.

## 5.2 Interview results

### 5.2.1 Background of the interviewees

The interviewees needed to answer first some background related questions such as where are they from in Europe? and how long have they been living in Finland? These two questions serve the purpose of simply giving a perspective on what they can compare their experiences to and how long they have been exposed to Finnish culture and work culture which gives a better overall understanding of their experiences.

The interviewees originally come from different parts of Europe (Albania, Estonia, and Ireland) which is a great starting point for both this thesis and Talent Boost programme. Considering that the Interviewees have come from different background the thesis can show a more diverse overall picture on how foreigners experience Finnish work culture. Interviewee 3 has been living in Finland significantly longer than interviewee 1 and 2. (Figure 3.) This information is important in a way that Interviewee 1 and 2 currently facing some similar obstacles while interviewee 3 might had different obstacles.

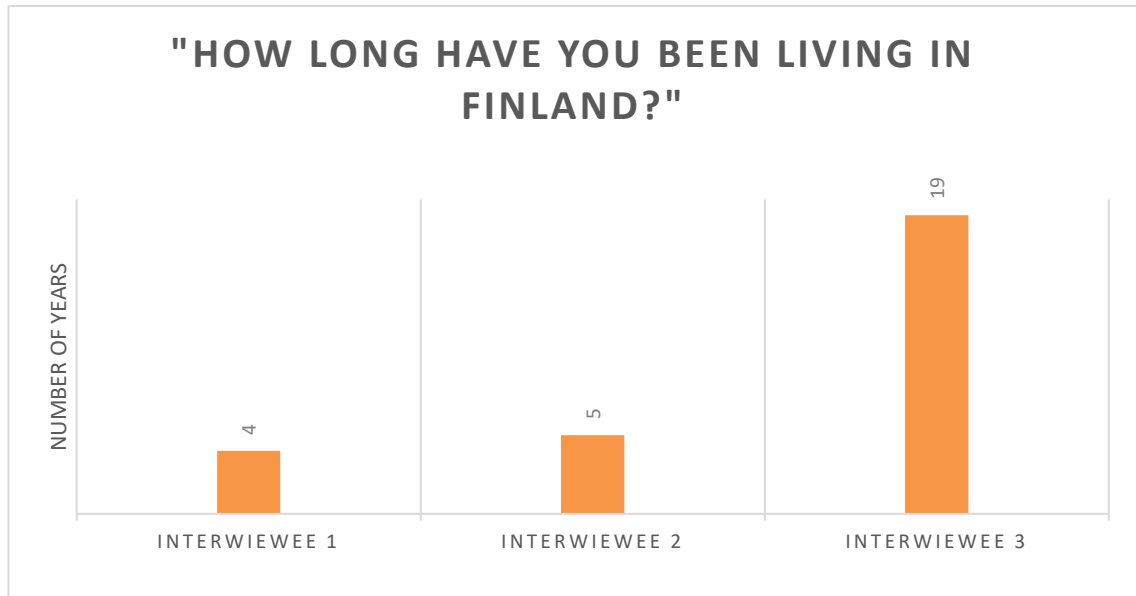


Figure 3. How long have interviewees been living in Finland?

The next question was whether they had worked in different parts of Finland or only in Lapland. Two of the three interviewees answered yes to this question. This was a relevant information in a way that the Talent Boost program was also curious to see if there have been some differences between South of Finland and Lapland work culture. During the interviews carried out by the researcher for this question relevant answer was not found as the interviewees did not experience a huge difference between working in Southern Finland and working in Lapland or they did not have any experiences in the southern part at all.

### 5.2.2 Experiences in the work culture

Finding out how the international experts have experienced the work culture and working life in Finland is one of the most important parts of this thesis as it is part of the objectives of this research. As this topic has been covered in Chapter 3 it is expected that some of the terms describing Finnish work culture and working life are going to be mentioned by the interviewees as well. However, some of the terms may not be said out loud by the interviewees but rather describe them in other words.

When the interviewees and the researcher discussed Finnish working life and work culture in general the most frequently used words to describe it were flexible and straightforward. The overall most used adjective was flexible to describe the

Finnish work culture. Flexibility was mentioned in different contexts regarding Finnish work culture and working life almost twice as often than straightforward.

All three interviewees have experienced that Finnish working life and work culture as flexible, and that the importance of Finnish language knowledge is making daily working life easier. For example, Interviewee 1 has described his/her experience of flexibility as

“Do things in my own way and in my style of working so that has given a lot of freedom to explore but also to be creative and push things forward.” (Interviewee 1, 2022)

Interviewee 2 has described his/her experiences in Finnish work culture as

“You can be independent and the only thing that matters is the outcome of your work. Nobody is watching when you come into the office.” (Interviewee 2, 2022)

These two experiences at their core are the same but in different words. Therefore, in Finnish working life based on the experiences of the interviews for this research not only about flexibility as Interviewee 2 has mentioned that his/her workplace is not that strict with the time when people start working until their job is done on time with quality. As interviewee 1 explains Finnish work culture is also flexible in a way that gives “creative” freedom to the employees. From this information, it can be concluded that the Finnish work culture is not only flexible but also individualistic even though this term was not mentioned but the interviews have explained the term well.

All three interviewees have experienced that Finnish colleagues are helpful and supportive. The interviewees have expressed that they always received help when they asked for it. Whenever they needed guidance with their work, they were able to rely on their supervisors and received the help they needed in order to move on with their tasks. As well as they have received help from co-workers with Finnish official papers at the beginning of their employment.

### 5.2.3 The obstacles

All of the interviewees have faced some obstacles related to working life in Finland, Lapland. During the interviews, the researcher discovered that all the

interviewees had different experiences. The obstacles generalised are the Language barrier, job hunting, and public transportation in Lapland, Rovaniemi.

Interviewee 1's biggest obstacle was the language barrier.

"The language has been the biggest barrier based on my experience. All Finnish people understand English, and all could speak English, but they are just scared to speak it and it makes sense in a way because we are here, and we should speak Finnish and it's normal there but of course it's difficult language. [...] people here are way more open to speaking English and more supportive." (Interviewee 1, 2022)

He/she also highlighted the fact that even though people in Finland might be scared to speak English the chances compared to other countries in Europe are higher, because Finnish people are supportive of speaking English. (Interviewee 1, 2022) The reason behind this might be because Finnish people know that the Finnish language is hard to learn as well as in the Finnish education system is preparing its students to the globalization. (Leney and Barrett 2006, 181)

Interviewee 2 has been experiencing obstacles in a way of finding job.

"Experience of trying to find a job [...], I thought it would have been easier and I'm a person with a master's degree from a Finnish university and who has quite significant work experience in an international organization." (Interviewee 2, 2022)

Interviewee 2 also explained that due to Rovaniemi's size internationals can experience a quite competitive job market in a way that many internationals apply to the same job advertisement therefore he/she advises that students need to find a way to stand out. However, he/she added that it can also easily happen that companies find some people overqualified or not interesting.

Interviewee 3's main obstacle has been transportation in Rovaniemi.

"Local transportation is very not sufficient, and you need to own a car which means that you have to have a very good paid salary work if you want to own a car in Finland so it's probably one of the things to think through". (Interviewee 3, 2022)

The public transportation in Rovaniemi is something that can be an obstacle for many foreign students who are coming from bigger cities or capital cities where they have gotten used to the benefits of public transportation and might not even own a driver's licence since they never really needed to use a car in their daily life. Furthermore, he/she also mentioned that the starter salaries in contrast with

the cost of living are not in balance. This is something that can be an obstacle for many people, but this is something that is specifically from the perspective of Rovaniemi.

#### 5.2.4 Finnish language

All 3 international experts have agreed on the fact that the Finnish language is difficult to learn, and it does not matter if your mother tongue is similar to it or not. Finnish and Estonian languages are close to each other and the interviewee from Estonia said that he/she thinks that it is even more challenging to learn Finnish because they are too similar, and many words are the same but have completely different meanings. He/she added that there have been some misunderstandings due to mixing up the Finnish and Estonian meanings of the word.

“Extremally difficult language, and you need to study like really study it otherwise it's very difficult to learn although I'm surrounded by Finnish people all the time and they speak sometimes Finnish to me it's very difficult to learn without studying it for some time until you reach some level.” (Interviewee 1, 2022)

As interviewee 1 also mentioned that it is important to study the language another interviewee has said that getting into a Finnish language course is making the study process a lot easier. During further discussions about the Finnish language, a great metaphor was also brought up that summarizes the difference between written and spoken Finnish. As there is a significant difference between the spoken and written forms of this language.

“It's like a jigsaw puzzle there's some small pieces and putting it all together is very difficult sometimes.” (Interviewee 2, 2022)

Furthermore, they all agreed that learning the Finnish language is crucial if they want to integrate well into the Finnish culture and Finnish workplaces. They also mentioned that even though Finland is going toward globalization and hiring more and more international people to help Finnish companies grow. Internationals should learn the language out of respect since Finland is a small country and not many people speak their language outside of the country. The interviewees furthermore declared in unison that knowing the language opens more job opportunities.

### 5.2.5 Advice from the international experts

At the end of all interviews its asked what advice would they give to the students who are just entering the Finnish labor market for the first time. These responses gave some ideas to the talent boost guide as these were some good recommendations from the international experts.

“You really add value by bringing a different countries perspective and you try to think out of the box so don’t be afraid to be yourself. I think that’s the added value that you bring in an organization you always see things from a different context, different point of view.” (Interviewee 1, 2022)

“Having too high expectations can really limit the opportunities that you’ll have. If you take the positions, there are and if you’re or flexible to take a risk than you might be surprised at the outcomes.” (Interviewee 2, 2022)

“Finnish people do act like a mirror in this sense when you are open and friendly, they are very open and friendly too [...] try to learn Finnish language to get deeper understanding of people who work there together with you because sometimes even though their official language is English many people do not speak it that well.” (Interviewee 3, 2022)

All 3 of the interviewees have agreed on the fact that the best advice to the students is to be themselves when entering the Finnish labour market for the first time. Furthermore, they all agreed on the fact that you should learn the language as well.

### 5.2.6 Insights of an internationally operating Finnish company

One of the interviewees is from a Finnish company and he/she agreed to also give his/her experiences from the company's point of view as well. As the company operates in Finland but also does business abroad, he/she said that the official office language is English to make it more flexible and easier to settle in the company for international experts. Furthermore, he/she explained that at this company workers are very well managed and supported and of course, the coffee breaks were a bit of a shock for him/her, but this also supports the fact that the company values well-being.

He/she also highlighted that the company is always closely following the rules and regulations in every aspect. This might be weird for some foreigners where the rights of the employees are not as respected as they are in Finland. He/she

also explained what is expected from applicants who would want to apply and work in the team he/she manages. These qualities include Empathy, emotional intelligence, and understanding the customer's point of view whilst protecting and keeping in mind the company values.



## 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 How can the findings help current and future international students in entering the workforce in the Lapland region?

The most valuable information for the Talent Boost program was discovered during the interviews with international people as the questions of the interviews were designed with the guide in mind that they published for international students. Maybe the most valuable were the answers of the interviewees to the question regarding if they have any advice for the students who are about to enter the Finnish labour market.

The key finding of this research is that the Finnish work culture and work life, in general, is based on a flat hierarchical system, flexibility, and independence whilst the rules are followed closely, and the companies focus on employees' well-being. The obstacles include job hunting, and the difficulty level of the Finnish language.

The objectives of the thesis have been met as overall, the information about Finland based on Hofstede's dimensions overlaps with Lewis' observations as well as other sources referred to in Chapter 3. This in conclusion gives a well-rounded overview of the characteristics of the Finnish work culture, working life, and Finnish people in general. These characteristics include flexibility, independence, focus on well-being, a flat hierarchy, and being clear and straightforward. In contrast to Chapter 5, most of these characteristics have been mentioned during the interviews as well. This in conclusion indicates that the information found during interviews is as accurate as the information in the books and articles.

However, the interviews and the statistical data have answered the research questions as the finding the obstacles which international people face in Finnish work culture was harder to discover in literature. These sources highlighted that it is hard to find a job in Finland as a foreigner. Based on the interviewees' responses the biggest obstacle is the language. Based on the Expat Insider analysis the biggest obstacle for them was making local friends therefore it makes it harder to integrate.

The combination of all this information and this thesis as a whole gave a better overall picture of the Finnish work culture and working life for current and future international students. The information covered in this thesis is detailed on the main and most common information every foreigner should know before entering the Finnish labour market.

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