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# **IMPACT OF TAILORED EDUCATION – CASES OF STUDYING IN FINLAND**

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Education export means productization and commercialization of education resulting in overseas income for the service provider and providing tailor made education for the client. Education export is profit-oriented and has also some negative echo among education actors. For Tampere Universities community this tailored education “means sharing the Finnish expertise and pioneering methods with the rest of the world, so that we can all globally develop hand in hand and provide better opportunities for the learners of today and the future” (Tampere Universities community, 2022). Since the task of higher education is to make impact and interact with the society at large, it is important to monitor the change and impact of these implementations accordingly. The aim of this study is to find out the expected and realized impact of tailored education. The study is implemented as a questionnaire survey and interview with cohorts in education with three cases from Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Through these cases deeper understanding of the importance of international programmes is studied, from the professional and personal point of view.

## **What is the impact of Higher Education?**

Higher education institutes (HEI's), like universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS), are expected to contribute to the development of societies by providing education and knowledge through research and education. Through these actions HEI's are creating an impact on the political, cultural, social, technological and economic development in society (Holmberg et al. 2019). Universities are forerunners in educating the current and next generation leaders, decision makers, implementing scientific and applied research for the development of the society. These measures include more open and wider cooperation with the businesses, governmental and third-sector organizations (NGO's) to create impact and strengthen the role of universities as effective actors in the society (Bornmann 2013; Geschwind et al. 2019).

Measuring and verifying impact is, however, a challenge. Despite the fact, that impact creation and monitoring has been under discussion and development since 1990's, there are still no systematic or standardized methods or indicators of identifying and measuring the wider societal impact of higher education institutions, i.e., impact of science and development on various levels and areas in the society (Bornmann 2013, Bornmann 2016; Holmberg et al. 2019). Various types of impact and approaches to measure impact have been suggested, but so far there are no generally accepted methods for measuring the **societal impact of research and development, which has turned out to be much more challenging than measuring scientific impact** (Bornmann 2016; Holmberg et al. 2019). Furthermore, the impact of education is also monitored in many ways, but how do these indicators fulfill the criteria of impact that education is bringing to society? Regarding to the aim of Tampere Universities community in terms of tailor-made education export, it is important to monitor the potential impact of this business, especially since it is also fairly new concept.

Typically, impact is a positive phenomenon that benefits individuals, organizations and/or nations outside the academic institution (ESRC 2020). Furthermore, impact is something that happens over a long period of time. Often it is difficult to identify which particular research or development process it is related to, but it is rather based on the number of outcomes from different research, development and innovation processes and projects. Impact is always considered to have a positive effect on change or benefit the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life outside academia, which at the same time or alternatively reduces or prevents any harms, risks, costs or negative effects (Holmberg et al. 2019). Impact should not demonstrate in any ineffective or negative effects nor violate any ethical principles (The Impact Compass 2020). Knowledge transfer means processes, where knowledge from one organization, in this context, university or research organization, is brought into use by another organization (e.g., industry) to benefit or improve its operations or performance i.e. making impact (de Wit-de Wries et al. 2019). Through knowledge transfer HEIs can have research impact in the society. The Economic and Social Research Council defines impact as *the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy*.

With that in mind, it is relevant to listen to former and/or current participants of international programs in order to assess their practices, perspectives and potential future outcomes and impact, to name a few variables. In that sense, interviews can be revealing about one's point of view and shed light over one same aspect (Portelli 1997; Alberti 2005). Studying abroad makes room for developing intercultural sensitivity and eventually intercultural competence (Mckay 2017) which are both necessary skills for a globalized career. What kind of change is expected or has taken place with the individual professionals and in the society after the education or degree has been completed?

### ***Intersections between impact and mobility***

Travelling is usually seen as a life-changing experience, if this entails moving to another country to study or work it widens up the experience since it promotes a plethora of skills such as socialization, intercultural competences acquisition, lifelong knowledge production, networking alongside valuing their professional career, which is squarely connected to the impact of such experience. That said, it is possible to claim that if the student's mobility is successful in terms of international experience, work and life skills, then it is very likely that this student will be impactful not only to him/herself but also to his/her career, family and community.

The extent of international mobility programs, whether they are short or long-term, can be investigated through background variables such as age, gender, former academic level and allow perspective on the personal characteristics and attitudes towards ever-changing globalized educational environment. Similar age groups may be mobile together and support each other, but the same can happen to different age groups who may also forge a bond (Killick 2012). That said, being aware of age groups with the targeted population of a study may unveil their motivations for being mobile. Gender variables can allow to envision whether there is imbalance (Coelen 2017) or predominance of more women or men in migrations of this kind and throw light into who chooses to be more mobile and why. Having a former academic level from the home country and studying a new one, or improving your former one in Finland, may also be a variable that points to a life-changing attitude (van Reine & Blom 2017). Moving to a foreign country entails decision-making processes that are many times influenced by the family you leave behind or take with you, and these may be linked to family supports (Coelen & Nairn 2017), among other factors that could be influential to the migrant.

Migration mobility might have roots in a plethora of reasons: seeking for a lifestyle that conveys life quality, getting away from society and its chaos in a completely diverse environment (Korpela 2011), escaping your home country for love (Ouverney-King 2014), better life conditions for families left in the home country (Castles 2000), transnational migration of students, workers, businessmen (Schiller 2005), among others, whichever cause there is, it is rather complex and it relies on individual choices and subjectivities. Nevertheless Coelen (2017, 09) mentions “mobility as life-changing experience”, one that is not only about bringing / taking students, teachers or researchers from / to other countries, it is about promoting communication between them and this does not entail only speaking a lingua franca, but communicating in a sense that cultures are understood by each other, perspectives and points of view are considered and they both dialogue / coexist while producing, promoting and acquiring knowledge in order to shape a global citizen with more opportunities in the short or long term. With that in mind, migration mobility can be impactful at the personal level – regarding more possibilities of employability to name one example, but also at the societal level – if it somehow promotes connections between companies in different regions, states or even countries, such as multinational businesses.

### ***Measuring impact of tailored education***

The researchers will employ a mixed method approach (Creswell & Plano 2007), following both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The method is chosen since it is reliable and allows for both generalization and individualization of data. Data collection will be three-folded: online self-assessment survey (Wright 2005) using Microsoft Forms, structured interview in English (Opdenakker 2006) and field notes (Bolger et al. 2003). The target groups of this study are Finnish Train the Trainers (FiTT) programme, carried out in 2017 and two 4-year Nursing Programmes with two cohorts from 2021 and 2022.



Since the project focus is on two different groups the case study method (Gerring 2004) will be employed with cross-sectional (for the FiTT group) and time-series (for the nursing group) analysis. It is descriptive, exploratory and makes use of field experiment. Informants for the online survey will be selected according to their participation in the two programmes. Interviewees will be selected according to their initial answers from the online survey regarding studying styles, the use of online tools, challenges while studying in Finland, and plans for staying – or not – in Finland after graduating.

Data analysis will be two folded: online survey and interviews. The former will combine both groups and allow the production of graphics that indicate whether demographics such as age, gender, place of birth, academic level, current working/studying status, family background are determining variables to study in Finland for both categories of teachers and students; it will also allow to envision motivations and opportunities for one's professional and personal life.

### ***Thoughts and expectations***

The research is now ongoing, and it will be possible to present concrete data at later phase. However, feedback from the initial meetings with participants indicate that the research will allow for a panoramic overview on how impactful international programmes in Finland can be into one's personal and professional life. Participants are encompassing life-changing decisions that may cross borders in a spiral cycle of new educational perspectives.

Feelings and challenges are expected to be reflected as results of the research. After all the participants have left their home country, to defy themselves and their destiny while creating new possibilities for themselves, their family, perhaps friends and other society members. Educational and cultural shock may also turn up to promote learning and global citizenry, while mixing and matching beliefs, values and the ethos, which in the long-term may play an essential role into fomenting a more plural and understanding society. Change is most

definitely expected, and it might be coupled by a lot of personal and group reflection, new knowledge, skills and perhaps attitude and behaviour. The results are expected to reveal the direction and magnitude of these changes.

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