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**The integration of foreign students and immigrants in the  
Finnish society**

Case: Seinäjoen Seurakunta

Thesis

Winter 2015

International Business Administration

SeAmk



SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

## **Thesis Abstract**

Faculty: School of Business and culture

Degree programme: Business Administration

Specialisation: international Business Administration

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Title of thesis: The integration of foreign students and immigrants in the Finnish society. Case: Seinäjoki Seurakunta

Supervisor/s: Mia Koski

Year: 2015      Pages: 65      Number of appendices: 2

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This study was conducted in Seinäjoki to demonstrate how the Parish of Seinäjoki helps or can help students and immigrants integrate in the society.

The study is an initial attempt to investigate how much it costs and what benefits the students and immigrants get from the Parish.

The research method used here is both qualitative and quantitative, but mostly qualitative.

The theoretical chapters cover the history of Seinäjoki Parish and how the Parish helps foreigners integrate in the society. Interviews were conducted at Café Kismus, where some of the immigrants and students in Seinäjoki meet every Monday for hand crafts and conversations. Data was also searched using Webropol research questionnaires and by email.

In the empirical part, the results of the questionnaires are analysed by going through all the questions one by one to get an in-depth understanding of the topic related. The questionnaires were distributed to the school priest who posted them on the church webpage in Facebook, and some were given to foreign students via email and the Webropol online survey software. In total, there were 25 responses; the sample included mostly foreign students and some immigrants.

The conclusion part offers future recommendation for the Parish of Seinäjoki on how to help more students and immigrants integrate in the society. It also helps them know what most of the foreign students and immigrants want from them as well.

The main result is that living in Seinäjoki as a foreign student or immigrant is not as easy as it seems. According to most of the answers to the last question of the questionnaire, the Parish could help them get jobs or at least try to find jobs for them to integrate. The language barrier was also another thing that led the students and immigrants to search for jobs helplessly.

Keywords: Seinäjoki, Seurakunta, integrate, parish center

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS ABSTRACT .....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	3
ABBREVIATIONS .....	6
1 INTRODUCTION .....	6
1.1 AIM OF THE THESIS .....	6
1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS .....	7
1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS .....	9
2 STUDENTS AND IMMIGRANTS IN SEINÄJOKI .....	13
2.1 REASONS FOR BEING IN SEINÄJOKI .....	19
2.2 CHALLENGES THEY FACE .....	20
3 SEINÄJOEN SEURAKUNTA .....	25
3.1 PARISH OF SEINÄJOKI .....	25
3.2 WHO CAN PARTICIPATE? .....	28
3.3 HOW IT HELPS IMMIGRANTS & STUDENTS .....	29
3.4 COSTS AND BENEFITS .....	30
4 METHODOLOGY .....	36
4.1 SAMPLE .....	36
4.2 INTERVIEWS .....	41
4.3 LIMITATIONS .....	41
5 RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH .....	43
5.1 STUDENTS RESULTS .....	43
5.2 IMMIGRANTS' RESULTS .....	46
6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....	48
6.1 SUMMERY AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS .....	48
6.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	53

BIBLIOGRAPHY .....54

APPENDICES.....58

## **Tables and figures**

Figure 1. Advanced literature review diagram, Caroline kuhn.....	11
Figure 2: Seinäjoki parish vicars from 1975 to present .....	16
Figure 3. Statistics on residence permits.....	26
Table 1. Statistics of foreigners in Finland (2013-2014).....	17
Table 2: Religion statistic in Finland 1990 - 2013.....	27

## Abbreviations

<b>Seurakunta</b>	Parish center
<b>EVL</b>	Evangelical Lutheran church of Finland
<b>Pg.</b>	Page
<b>SeAMK</b>	Seinäjoki Ammattikorkeakoulu/ University of applied sciences.
<b>Etc.</b>	Et cetera

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Seinäjoki seurakunta is a Finnish word for the congregation of Lutheran church in Seinäjoki, It is also known as the parish center of Seinäjoki. In this theses, I might use all three definitions to describe the seurakunta or when using it in a sentence.

This paper will discuss the benefits and costs that Seinäjoki parish center provides in order to help students and immigrants integrate in the society. It will explain what the Evangelical Lutheran church is all about and show the results on the research questionnaire answered by the target group which are foreign students and immigrants.

In this research I will use mostly Evangelical Lutheran church as my focus parish center. It will also be mostly conducted in Seinäjoki together with most students, workers, and immigrants living in the area.

## 1.1 Aim of the thesis

The main goal of this thesis is to determine how foreign students and immigrants integrate in Seinäjoki society and how the Evangelical Lutheran church helps them reach their goals.

The targeted group of both SeAMK international students and just foreign immigrants living in Seinäjoki will help reach the goal intended.

With the help of students Pastor available at SeAMK, she answered most of the questions on Seinäjoki seurakunta and the benefits and costs.

This thesis will not go into deep on the churches religion and ways of worshipping but mostly on their benefits they provide to immigrants and students both members and nonmembers. This research will also help the church to know more on what the students and immigrants expect from them.

All in all, the aim and the purpose of the thesis is to find out how Seinäjoki seurakunta/ parish center helps students and immigrants integrate in this society.

The results of this study are based on the interviews with the workers of seurakunta like the Pastor who deals with foreign student, foreign students themselves and immigrants living in Seinäjoki. The study focuses on the cost and benefits that students and immigrants get from the parish center and how satisfied they are as a member of Evangelical Lutheran Church. Study further highlights obstacles that immigrants and students face while living in Seinäjoki despite the parish center's help or services.

## **1.2 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis consists of six main chapters; first is the Introduction part which focuses on the aim of the thesis, the structure of the theses and research problems and questions. Most of the research done in this part comes from different webpages found online and common knowledge. The Research problem and questions part, may also be found in books like Sage research methods by Richard Andrews and Caroline Haythornthwaite. This part also includes different journals sites like USC libraries research guides, carolinekuhn wordpress literature review etc.

Then comes the 'student and immigrant' part for the second chapter, which explains more on the reasons why they are here in Finland and especially Seinäjoki. This part also includes the challenges they are facing and how they cope living in Seinäjoki. It also includes some of Finnish cultures and etiquette. Most of the information found in this second chapter is found in the net and from few journals and books like strategic integration edited by Howard Thomas and Don O'neal etc.

Chapter 3 consists of information on Seinäjoki seurakunta/ Evangelical Lutheran church/ parish center. This part goes into detail on what parish center really is, who can participate and how to become a member of the church. This chapter also includes the ways how Seinäjoki seurakunta helps immigrants and students integrate in the Seinäjoki society and its costs and benefits. There were very few information on the church (EVL), on how it helps foreigners but with the help from the school Pastor and some online pages, the information gathered was helpful to construct chapter 3.



Chapter 4 is about methodology, this chapter consists of sample, interviews, layout of the interview, questionnaire and limitations. Most of the information found in this chapter are from books like mixing methods (qualitative and quantitative) edited by Julia Brannen, Qualitative studies in education edited by Jane Salisbury and Sara Delamont etc.as well as webpages.

Chapter 5 consists of the results of the empirical research. This chapter explains in details on both the students and immigrant's results individually. Using qualitative method mainly as the thesis research method there was only one interview participant, the school Pastor and the rest 20 students and 5 immigrants were provided with questionnaire from Webropol or via email.

The last chapter is about discussion and conclusion which includes summery and discussion of the results and suggestion for future research. This part might also help Seinäjoki seurakunta on how to help students and immigrants to integrate more in the society. It also helps new writers who are going to attempt similar subject.

Doing so, the below part indicates how this thesis came together and ways or steps used to finish this thesis;

For the research methodology, the questionnaires that are made in Webropol online survey and analysis software are distributed to the targeted group and also the school pastor who add the link on the church Facebook group.

The interviews that were conducted in Café kismus in Seinäjoki city center was mainly to get more immigrants attending the session respond to the questions asked. Most of the students answered the survey questionnaire instead. The main thing was also to interview the school Pastor since she was part of Seinäjoki seurakunta.

The theory part considers mainly online search and few books because of the minimum information on the church and its help and benefits to foreigners. The theory part consists of information on students and immigrants, reasons for being in Seinäjoki/Finland and challenges they face. It also have information on seurakunta, its background, who can participate, how it helps students and

immigrants to integrate and its costs and benefits. This part was done immediately at the beginning before forming the questionnaires.

And lastly, the empirical results which included both students and immigrant's results on the questionnaire provided to them. The conclusion was written by answering the questions from the questionnaire separately or one question at a time, both on webropol and via emails.

### **1.3 Research problems and questions**

A research problem describes an area of concern, a difficulty that needs to be eliminated, any condition that have to be improved upon, or a troubling and difficult question that exists in scholarly literature, in practice or in theory that explains the need for meaningful understanding and deliberate investigation. According to page 26 of USC library research guides, Research problems are typically posed in one or more questions in some social science disciplines. A research problem does not state how to do something, offer a vague or broad proposition, or present a value question.

It is a general statement of an issue meriting research. Its nature will suggest appropriate forms for its investigation. From pg.26 of Srmo (sage research method) webpage explains that, "the research problem in some social science research projects using the hypothetico-deductive method (a proposed description of scientific method) is expressed in terms of the testing of a particular hypothesis". It is therefore important to know what makes good hypotheses and how they can be formulated. However, it is not appropriate to use the hypothetico-deductive method, or even scientific method, in every research study.

The purpose of a problem statement is to:

1. Introduce the reader to the importance of the topic being studied. The reader is oriented to the significance of the study and the research questions or hypotheses to follow.
2. Place the problem into a particular context that defines the parameters of what is to be investigated.
3. Provide the framework for reporting the results and indicates what is probably necessary to conduct the study and explain how the findings will present this information.

Most research problems are difficult, or even impossible, to solve without breaking them down into smaller problems. The short sentences devised during the problem formulation period can give a clue to presence of sub problems.

According to Booth et al. (1995, pg. 40) you can organize your questions to define the sub-problems by looking at your topic from these four perspectives:

- 1 What are the parts of your topic and what larger whole is it a part of?
- 2 What is its history and what larger history is it a part of?
- 3 What kind of categories can you find in it, and to what larger categories of things does it belong?
- 4 What good is it? What can you use it for?



As this thesis focuses on the students and immigrants in Seinäjoki. The following research questions were the first things that the thesis focused on and definitely the key reason to starting and doing this whole topic in general.

These research questions also helped in the conclusion part. By answering these questions, it help answered the summary of the thesis.

The research questions are as follows;

1. what kind of help do foreign students and immigrants expect from the Parish center
2. Does the membership fee fulfil their expectations on the benefits they get from the seurakunta?
3. Despite the benefits the parish center provides, is there something else that they don't provide but is important to be considered?

With any good thesis, there are problems that comes with it. Because there are few materials about Seinäjoki seurakunta/ Parish center in English, it makes it harder to get valid information that can make it easier to research. The website seurakunta provides, has nothing to do with the thesis, which is also a problem because having a new topic that nobody else have research makes it more complicating. These problems also answers the part of Limitations in chapter four. And in there the limitations are answered deeply.

But with the help from the student pastor and the interviews and questionnaires all the questions asked/ intended were answered or at least answered.

## 2 STUDENTS AND IMMIGRANTS IN SEINÄJOKI

Finland is a growing destination for immigrants, more than fifteen years ago migration consisted of approximately 3,500 people, where now the number has tripled.

Immigration in Finland has been constantly rising since 1980s. Table 1 on Statistics of foreigners in Finland (2013-2014) shows that almost 3% more of immigrants increased just in one year.

The naturalization number has been constantly growing from 1991 to 2005, 41272 persons were granted citizenship (statistics Finland 2006 b: 17) not counting from 2005 till present which had doubled the number.

According to Statistics Finland, Finnish citizenship was granted in 2013 to 8,930 foreign citizens permanently resident in Finland. It is the second highest during Finland's independence and only 157 lower than in 2012. Ninety-five per cent of those having been granted Finnish citizenship retained their former citizenship. Among the persons receiving Finnish citizenship, 4,688 were women and 4,242 men. Finnish citizenship was also granted to 2,517 under 15 years of age and 205 were older than 65.

Why students choose Finland as a study place?

Finland has a first class education system, it offers excellent opportunities in educating its people in every field of study. According to CIMO (center of international mobility) they expressed that "Finland is everything you would expect a modern welfare state to be and more: for example, it enjoys political and economic stability, it is efficiently run and has a first-class education system. Its culture is unique: the Finnish way of life combines all the advantages of a high-tech society with a love of the country's rich and vast expanses of unspoilt nature".

According to Top universities country guide they described that nine Finnish universities are featured in the QS world university ranking 2014/15, which describes world's top university ranking.

While fellow Nordic nations Denmark and Sweden have both now introduced fees for students outside of the EU/EEA area, Finland has so far managed to avoid this, as has Norway. All undergraduate and PhD courses are free in Finland; some master's courses do charge fees for non-EU/EEA students, but scholarships may be available.

They also listed few universities like University of Helsinki which is the oldest university in Finland. It is the highest ranked institute ranked 67<sup>th</sup> place in the world. It is also Finland's larger higher education institution with more than 36,500 students currently enrolled. University of Helsinki according to Top university country guide has 11 faculties and 11 research institutes. It also offers degrees in Finnish, Swedish and English.

Another university was Aalto University, which is ranked Finland's second highest institution- 187<sup>th</sup> in the world. The idea of the Finnish government was to create a new university, which would be a model of innovation and a symbol of high quality education which led them to merge three existing institutions (the Helsinki University of Technology, the Helsinki School of Economics and the University of Art and Design Helsinki) in 2010. Today around 19,600 students are enrolled in Aalto University.

They also mentioned other universities like University of Oulu, University of Eastern Finland etc. which all had higher rankings in the world.

Around 7,000 foreign students representing more than 40 nationalities are studying for a degree in Finland at the moment. In addition, thousands of others come to Finland every year either on exchange programmes or independently.

According to CIMO, Finland's national strategy is based on a desire to develop the country as an information society that educates its citizens to a high standard and channels substantial investment into research. With internationally recognized expertise in many areas and its institutions of higher education such as

universities and polytechnics Finland have state-of-the-art facilities. For example libraries in Finland are well-stocked and have computers with internet access that are freely available to all visitors. Finns are great believers in equal rights for all and this naturally extends to higher education, teachers provide their students with ongoing support throughout their studies and are more than happy to discuss any problems they may encounter. – CIMO

#### What Finland Offers:

Finland offers no tuition fees as a general rule. It has excellent opportunities for studies that everybody has a right to be part. Finland have a good education system with high standards and efficient quality assurance. It has world-renown expertise in many areas e.g. IT, bio-tech, forestry and environmental sciences, architecture, art and design. It also offers internationally oriented universities and polytechnics with special regional features and not forgetting study programmes involving close collaboration with industry and business.

CIMO also wrote that, there are higher education programs throughout Finland and they are also open to foreign students. Higher education is provided by 20 universities and 29 polytechnics, situated in almost every corner of the country. All of them are internationally oriented with good services for foreign students

You don't have to know any Finnish to study in Finland because there are more than 300 International study programs taught in English with excellent choice of subjects, programs ranging from short-term courses to complete degrees, Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's degree programs, good-quality graduate schools for young researchers and scholarships for post-graduate study and research.

When adding a Finnish dimension to your studies you don't have to actually study in Finland, but instead you could complete the practical training period there. If you choose to train in Finland you will have a unique opportunity to experience firsthand Finnish culture, commerce and industry, education and technological expertise. Training opportunities in Finland are available for both full-time students who have completed at least two years at a university, polytechnic or vocational



college and graduates of not more than two years' standing. The selection of placements is wide ranging from environmental technology, IT applications and marketing to tourism. Assistant teaching posts are also available for native speakers of English, French or German.

Finland also provides:

Finland provides many good opportunities for practical training relating to your studies. IT have a wide range of programs from technology to marketing and tourism. During studies Finnish schools also arranges placements in Finnish companies with a high international profile. Which makes most of the students get some experience working in a Finnish environment. They have programmes designed for students and recently graduated persons over 18 years of age. The training periods varying from one-month summer placements to a maximum of 18 months, which is quite enough for students to continue with studies and also have sufficient amount of credits to continue with other things and their future working life after.

Finnish Immigration service demonstrated a statistics on residence permits provided to immigrants during their stay here in Finland as follows;

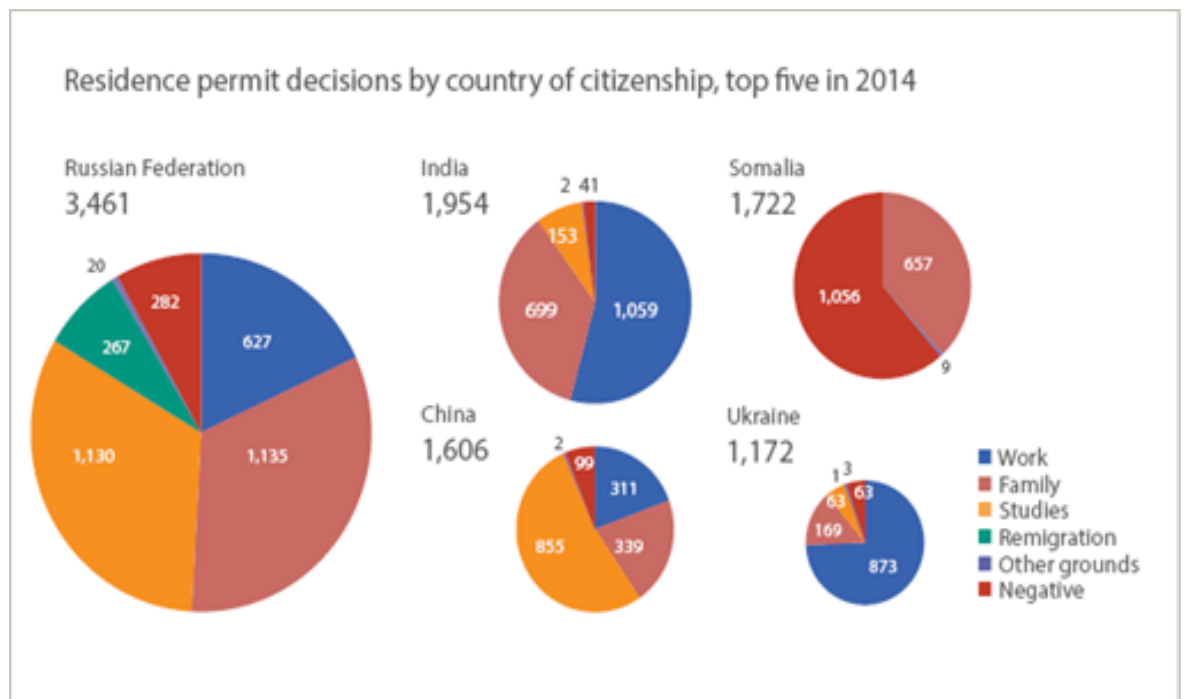


Figure 2: Finnish immigration service (Pie chart), Statistics on residence permit

This shows that countries like Russia, India, china and Ukraine come also for studies in Finland. The Russians have a higher rate of coming to Finland as students followed by China and the rest shown on the diagram.

Some people also plan to come for studies in Finland but end up working and not continuing with their studies as planned. Which shows that sometimes plans can change and end up doing something else than the main purposes of coming to Finland. Some people actually graduate and find jobs in Finland.

The below table demonstrates the statistics of foreigners in Finland 2013 and 2014 posted by Statistics Finland web page which was last updated in 14.04.2015, where they had different statistics including asylum seekers and refugee's statistics. Since my research is focusing on immigrants and students, the statistics below demonstrates people from different countries moving to Finland or coming for study purposes and end up living in Finland for good. The table below also shows the percentage and annual change between the two years. The total average amount shows that foreigners increased by 5.9% in 2014.

Table 1: Statistics of foreigners in Finland (2013-2014)

<b>Country of citizenship</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Annual change, %</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Annual change, %</b>
Estonia	44 774	21,6	12,6	48 354	22,0	8,0
Russia	30 757	14,8	1,9	30 619	13,9	-0,4
Sweden	8 382	4,0	-0,4	8 288	3,8	-1,1
China	7 121	3,4	7,5	7 559	3,4	6,2

Somalia	7 465	3,6	0,0	7 381	3,4	-1,1
Thailand	6 484	3,1	7,5	6 864	3,1	5,9
Iraq	6 353	3,1	7,3	6 795	3,1	7,0
India	4 372	2,1	8,5	4 728	2,2	8,1
Turkey	4 398	2,1	2,9	4 508	2,1	2,5
United Kingdom	4 048	2,0	4,4	4 280	1,9	5,7
Germany	3 974	1,9	1,7	4 044	1,8	1,8
Viet Nam	3 595	1,7	7,5	3 993	1,8	11,1
Poland	3 319	1,6	15,0	3 684	1,7	11,0
Afghanistan	3 202	1,5	7,1	3 527	1,6	10,1
Former Serbia and Montenegro	3 155	1,5	3,9	3 360	1,5	6,5
Others	66 112	31,9	5,3	71 691	32,6	8,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>207 511</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6,1</b>	<b>219 675</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,9</b>

## 2.1 Reasons for being in Seinäjoki

But why choose Seinäjoki instead of any other cities in Finland?

Seinäjoki have everything a person needs; shops, schools, entertainment etc. As a foreigner living and studying in Seinäjoki myself there is no difference between leaving in a big city like Helsinki or small city like Seinäjoki. Personality and background of a person is what makes people choose their ideal homes. Place suitable for their life styles.

Finland also provides government support. Which is in many cases is the best thing that any foreigner living far from home is assured that living in Finland more easy any secured. Students are provided with money support every month that enables them to have an easier life. The government also supports basically everybody like unemployed, elderly, children grant, free education, parents start up box which includes new babies clothes and thing that can help them survive for couple of months. These government support are big deal for everyone especially students and foreigner since many country do not provide any support, so coming to Finland is a great opportunity for many people. These government supports are valid all around Finland, so people living in Seinäjoki gets the same supports as anywhere in Finland.

Another reason that students and immigrants choose Seinäjoki is by hearing about it from friends/ family living in Seinäjoki. Normally when a person living in Finland finds it nice or enjoys life in Finland, they spread the word to their families or people they know to also come and enjoy or try the benefits the country provides. Students coming for exchange in Seinäjoki also shares their experiences to other people back in their home countries and as a result many students ends up coming for exchange in Finland and in Seinäjoki as suggested by other students.

According to Technische Hochschule Nürnberg Georg Simon Ohm (German University page) they had a specific page on Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, where students expressed or explained why they chose to come to Seinäjoki to study and how satisfied they were.

According to the German University page, they explained the main reason why they decided to spend their semester in Finland, was the level of education which is supposed to be the highest in the world. By coming to study in Seinäjoki University they confirmed their expectations. They added three major reasons that made Finnish education so efficient which were; Learn by doing, students putting what they learn into practice, then the second one was the amount of material provided which was not too much but adequate to the time period. Then lastly they wrote on the online courses the university provides, which on their part was better to have some individual courses that students can study them on their own pace. Then they wrote on accommodation where they were happy to have two different places that students can choose according to their ways of living. Students who wanted to party chose to live in city center location and for those who wanted their privacy preferred to live to the other location a bit far from the city center. The article also explained on the living expenses, weather and Finnish language and culture.

This is a good example of one of the reasons that students choose to come to study in Seinäjoki, which is by hearing and reading articles like these.

These are probably not all the reasons why people choose to live in Seinäjoki but they are definitely the most common reasons foreigners or foreign students express.

## **2.2 Challenges they face**

In this part there will be few information on the challenges the foreign students and immigrants face while being in Finland or Seinäjoki.

Firstly, weather climate is the biggest challenge that most students and immigrants face when coming to Finland. Finland have four seasons, summer is normally short but very good. Winters are longer normally November to February but it can be -30 degrees and above and not everyone is comfortable living in a very cold environment. Since most of the days are cold in Finland, it makes foreigners have

a hard time coping and surviving especially in cold weathers. This is not only a foreign person's challenge but also to some of Finnish people themselves.

Another challenge is cultural shock, as a foreigner myself it was hard at first to cope in the Finnish environment due to different cultural habits. Finnish culture is somehow quite different from many other cultures we have seen and heard. The differences between cultures makes a big impact to students and immigrants who wish to stay in Finland longer. Finland as a feminine country also makes it challenging for immigrants and foreign students who comes from countries with male domination.

Finnish culture includes:

Finnish customs and manners are clearly European, with only a few national variations, and attitudes are liberal. There is very little chance of a visitor committing fundamental social gaffes or breaches of etiquette that would fatally damage relations between himself and his hosts. Such breaches are viewed by Finns with equanimity if committed by their own countrymen and with understanding or amusement if committed by foreigners. Codes of behavior are fairly relaxed, and reputations - good or bad - are built up over time as the result of personal actions rather than conforming to norms or standards. It is difficult in Finland to make or break a reputation with a single social blunder or rumor.

Identity:

Finns have a very strong sense of national identity. This is rooted in the country's history, particularly its honorable wartime achievements and significant sporting merits and is today nurtured by pride in Finland's high-tech expertise.

Etiquette and Customs in Finland

- Finnish Meeting Etiquette

Greetings are formal, with a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and a smile. It is common practice to repeat you're first and surname while shaking hands. When greeting a married couple, the wife should be greeted first.

This may sometime be different to other foreigners and students who come to Finland and find the culture shocking. The part where people have to greet the wife first when meeting a couple is also different to Finns themselves. Not every Finn do that.

- Finnish Gift Giving Etiquette

If you are invited to a Finn's home, bring flowers, good quality chocolates or wine to the host. Flowers should not be given in even numbers. Do not give white or yellow flowers since they are used at funerals. Do not give potted plants. Gifts are opened when received. Giving gifts might be a great gesture but besides being invited to someone's home, some foreigners feel it's a must go give gifts to people who invite you but I think not every Finn minds when not given anything.

- Finnish Dining Etiquette

If you are invited to a Finn's home arrive on time. Finns are punctual in both business and social situations. Remove your outdoor shoes before entering the house. Contact the hostess ahead of time to see if she would like you to bring a dish. Offer to help the hostess with the preparation or clearing up after a meal is served. If you are invited for coffee and cake, there may be as many as 7 cakes to sample. Do not discuss business. Thank the hosts for the hospitality before saying good-bye to the other guests.

- Table Manners

Wait to be told where to sit. Table manners are Continental, hold the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating. Always keep your hands visible when eating. Keep your wrists resting on the edge of the table. Do not begin eating until the hostess invites you to start. Bread and shrimp are the only foods eaten by hand. Even fruit is eaten with utensils. Accept second helpings.

When passing salt and pepper shakers, put them on the table within the person's reach. Do not give them directly. Men should keep their jacket on at meals unless the host removes his. Finish everything on your plate. Finns do not appreciate waste. When you have finished eating, place your knife and fork across your plate with the prongs facing down and the handles facing to the right.

- Finnish Business Etiquette and Protocol

Relationships & Communication Business etiquette

Most Finns are transactional and do not need long-standing personal relationships in order to conduct business. The basic business style is formal i.e. there is relatively little small talk and Finns prefer people to speak succinctly (express in few words) and to focus purely on business. Finns do not require face-to-face contact and, in fact, are quite comfortable using e-mail.

Finns are excellent time managers who prefer to organize their workday in order to accomplish as much as possible. Finns are interested in long-term relationships. Relationship building often takes place outside the office: in a restaurant or the sauna.

Never turn down an invitation to use the sauna, as it is an entrenched part of the Finnish culture. If this is not possible, it is wise to tell them the truth on why you won't make it. Finns are very truthful, they believe in people not lying and speaking the truth. Finns place a great value on speaking plainly and openly. What someone says is accepted at face value and this is a culture where "a man's word is his bond" and will be treated as seriously as a written contract, so verbal commitments are considered agreements.

Finns are direct communicators. Expect your colleagues to tell you what they think rather than what you want to hear. Professional differences are not viewed as personal attacks

#### – Business Meeting Etiquette

Appointments are necessary and should be made in advance by telephone, e-mail, or fax. It is extremely difficult to meet with people without a formal appointment. Do not schedule meetings between June and August as many Finns take vacation during the summer. You should arrive at meetings on time or slightly early. Telephone immediately if you will be detained more than 5 minutes. Being punctual is a sign of respect and efficiency. Expect a bare minimum of small talk, if any, before getting into the business discussion. Send an agenda before the meeting as well as the biographies of your team. Meetings begin and end on time.

Avoid hype, exaggerated claims, or bells and whistles in your presentation. Finns seldom ask questions. The presenter is expected to make his/her case with sufficient detail that their Finnish colleagues do not need to ask questions. There is no taboo on humor in the business environment.



- Dress Etiquette

Business attire is stylish and conservative. Men should wear dark colored, conservative business suits. Women should wear conservative business suits, trouser suits, or dresses. Even though this depends on the type of company. Some companies do not take the dressing code too seriously as long as it is appropriate.

- Business Card Etiquette

Business cards are exchanged without formal ritual. Present your business card so it is readable to the recipient. Treat someone's business card with respect as it symbolizes the way you will treat them

These few Finnish culture examples may be challenging to some immigrants and foreign students who have very different cultures than the way Finns behave. The only way is to try and learn the Finnish culture and try to embrace it. When a person decides to move to a certain country it is wise to try and adapt the country's culture and ways of living. This will make it easy to integrate in any society.

Racism is also another challenge some of the foreigners face. I don't think there is any country without racism. Foreigners find themselves challenged with racism due to many reasons. Language also makes it harder to communicate and leads to misunderstandings. There are also many situations that lead to racism like influences from TVs, social Medias, news on certain type of people. Sometimes what happens to their countries also leads to foreigners feeling segregated and experience racism.

Of course not all foreigners experience racism in Finland sometimes it is just being at wrong place at a wrong time.

To conclude, with most of the challenges foreigners experience, Finland also provides them with many good living environment that most of the foreigners end up living in Finland longer despite the challenges they are facing sometimes.

## 3 SEINÄJOEN SEURAKUNTA

### 3.1 Parish of Seinäjoki

Seinäjoki is a city located in Southern Ostrobothnia, Finland. Seinäjoki became a municipality in 1868, market town in 1931 and town in 1960. In 2005, the municipality of Peräseinäjoki was merged into Seinäjoki, and in the beginning of 2009, the neighbouring municipalities of Nurmo and Ylistaro were consolidated with Seinäjoki.

The population of Seinäjoki is around 31,696 (2003), 35,918 (2005 after consolidation with Peräseinäjoki) and 56,229 (2009 after consolidation with Nurmo and Ylistaro). It grows annually around 624 people.

The Parish centre was established in 1965-1966 by Alvar Aalto who in 1950-52 participated in an architecture competition with his design entry having the working title "Cross of the Plains". This is now the first building of Seinäjoki's administrative and cultural centre. Later Aalto designed the church yard, which the Parish Centre forms, in such a way that it is possible to organize religious outdoor activities there.

The central administration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has protected the church since 2003.

Seinäjoki parish was founded in 1863. The population then was about 1500, the church has grown to about 50 000 members of a vibrant and active community. The Church Board of Directors made a decision in the spring of 2008 that Seinäjoki church is joined in 01.01.2009 by Nurmo and Ylistaro churches kappeliseurakuntina. Peräseinäjoki congregation joined already in 2005, Thus, when talking about the Seinäjoki church it refers to the large congregation, about 50 000 inhabitants in the church.

There are about 230 Employees of Seinäjoki church. In addition to more than 3000 parishioners volunteers taking part each year.



Figure 3: Seinäjoki parish vicars (in the picture): Erkki copper (right). Vicar from 1975 to 1980, Jussi field-Piri 1990-2002, Tapio Luoma, 2002-2012 and Jukka Salo 2012 –

### Church population register

Traditionally, the church has played a very important role in maintaining a population register in Finland. The vicars have maintained a church record of persons born, married and deceased in their parishes since at least the 1660s, constituting one of the oldest population records in Europe. This system was in place for over 300 years. It was only replaced by a computerized central population database in 1971, while the two state churches continued to maintain population registers in co-operation with the government's local register offices until 1999, when the churches' task was limited to only maintaining a membership register.

Between 1919 and 1970, a separate Civil Register was maintained of those who had no affiliation with neither of the state churches. Currently, the centralized Population Information System records the person's affiliation with a legally recognized religious community, if any. In 2003, the new Freedom of Religion Act made it possible to resign from religious communities in writing. That is, by letter,

or any written form acceptable to authorities. This is also extended to email by the 2003 electronic communications in the public sector act. Resignation by email became possible in 2005 in most magistrates. Eroakirkosta.fi, an Internet campaign promoting resignation from religious communities, challenged the rest of the magistrates through a letter to the parliamentary ombudsman. In November 2006, the ombudsman recommended that all magistrates should accept resignations from religious communities via email.

### Religion in Finland

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland</b>	<b>Finnish Orthodox Church</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>No religious affiliation</b>
1900	98.1%	1.7%	0.2%	0.0%
1950	95.0%	1.7%	0.5%	2.8%
1980	90.0%	1.1%	0.7%	7.8%
1990	87.8%	1.1%	0.9%	10.2%
2000	85.1%	1.1%	1.1%	12.7%
2010	78.3%	1.1%	1.4%	19.2%
2011	77.3%	1.1%	1.5%	20.1%
2012	76.4%	1.1%	1.5%	21.0%
2013	75.2%	1.1%	1.5%	22.1%

Table 2: Religion in Finland from 1900 - 2013

### 3.2 Who can participate?

#### Membership

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is committed to ecumenical dialogue and good practice, as set forth by the Conference of European Church's Charta Oecumenica which according to Wikipedia Charta Oecumenica is the joint document from the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE, Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae) which contains guidelines for increasing co-operation among the churches in Europe. If you belong to another denomination, they assist you to find a congregation of that denomination as they welcome you to their services and activities – in which you may participate without feeling obliged to abandon the discipline of your own tradition.

According to Evl (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) webpage they demonstrated that Membership without re-baptism is open to all Christians. Members of the following churches may join the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland by means of a simple declaration:

- churches belonging to the Lutheran World Federation
- Anglican churches of the Porvoo Communion
- the Church of Scotland

The site also explained more that members of other denominations may join the church by application to their local parish, which will offer advice and assistance in all matters pertaining to the application. All applications are treated in the strictest confidence.

The Membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland also brings with it both rights and responsibilities. People are entitled to avail of all the services offered by the church, and through active participation to share in the proclamation of the Gospel. The member's voice is assured by their right to vote in parish elections, and contribution through church tax supports the church's work.

## **How to Participate**

Members of other denominations may join the church by application to their local parish, which will offer advice and assistance in all matters pertaining to the application.

For the no baptized who to join the church, they should contact the local parish for information about baptismal preparation. It is important to underline that Baptism is the sacrament of Christian initiation: the prerequisite of Christian belonging rather than an admission to a particular denomination, which is a second order issue.

Membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland brings with it both rights and responsibilities. You are entitled to avail of all the services offered by the church, and through active participation to share in the proclamation of the Gospel. Your voice is assured by your right to vote in parish elections, and your contribution through church tax supports the church's work.

### **3.3 How it helps immigrants & students**

Seinäjoki parish center feels responsible to help any human kind. According to Priest Aila Orsila, she explained that the parish center helps anyone who need help and it doesn't matter the religion or origin. If you are not part of the church then some benefits will be a little bit more expensive than the church members pay. These costs are not as much as any other places people seek for help. In Seinäjoki for example, foreign students and immigrants have the same price and benefits as any Finnish students or Finnish person. When being a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, it is your right to get all the benefits the church provides.

The parish center helps students and immigrants integrate in this society by making them feel that they are part of something and there is help anytime needed. This assures most people by feeling at home and integrate in the society as fast as possible.

### 3.4 Costs and Benefits

#### Costs

The parish center charges everyone 1% of their income as a member fee. And because the church gets most of the payment from the tax office, then if a person does not have income they don't need to pay anything to be a member of the church until one finds a job or gets income somewhere.

These fees are mostly deducted straight from the salary each month, which makes it harder for people to tell you exactly how much they pay the membership charge.

#### Benefits

There are many benefits provided by the parish center, as long as people use those benefits. According to Priest Orsila Aila, she said that not everyone uses the benefits they are provided.

For nonmembers, some benefits may cost more than the members but some benefits cost exactly the same as anybody else.

The following are some of the benefits people get from seurakunta:

- The parish center organizes family coffees and family clubs which some of them are free and others not. If something is free for the members then it will also be free for the nonmembers.
- The parish office also organizes the family clubs specially design to help stay home mothers/ parent who needs a timeout by themselves without their children. These clubs are almost the same as taking a child to a daycare but cheaper. The clubs cost 60€ per semester, twice a week for 4 hours.
- Girls and boys clubs, which are free for everyone. These clubs are design to help children to what they really like as hobbies etc.

- The parish center also provides Music classes for children which cost 100 € per semester and it is twice as cheap as taking a child to the music academy.
- They provide lunch normally organized after Sunday worship, the lunch costs more for the nonmembers but way less for the members of the church. According to Pastor Aila she explained that “It depends. Sometimes that payment is up to the person, everyone can pay as much as they want or can and sometimes it costs about 7 euros”. She also explained more by saying “But sometimes there are specific organized lunch and they collect money for some reason like missionary work. And then they sell tickets to the lunch (like on mother’s day or on father’s day). But if there is lunch after worship and it is informed “lounas ja kirkkokahvit” quite often you can choose how much you pay for it
- Family counseling is one of the most important benefits the parish center provides and it costs nothing for everybody. People can seek for family advice at the parish center and it does not matter what religion, origin, member or nonmember.
- The church provides funeral services to anybody. It costs less for members of the church to get a burial spot and little more expensive for the nonmembers. For example if a student / foreigner dies and needs to be buried here in Seinäjoki then they will have to pay more than others as long as they are not members of the church.
- Pastor Aila also organizes knitting clubs for everyone who wants to learn how to knit, or who are willing to teach others knit, have conversations, learning some Finnish for foreigners by taking part at the club and all in all is just to have fun and enjoy each other’s company. This knitting club is always on Mondays 6pm at Café Kismus.
- The parish centers also organize trips for families with different backgrounds and for couples who have a Finnish partner. These trips are mainly organized to help couples understand more what other couples with



multinational cultures or same environment are going through. There are normally people taking care of the children while adults are participating to these conversations. It costs around 25€ which normally would cost about 60€ but the church offers to pay the rest. This price include a baby sitter, food and a bus trip to where it is organized. It might take almost the whole day so the organizers provide comfortable environment for everyone to enjoy.

The church in general provides:

According to Seinäjoki seurakunta web page, the church calls people into a relationship with a merciful God, and to live sustainably for the good of humanity and creation. The following is what they provide in general;

*Christian initiation and pastoral services:*

- Baptism, confirmation, marriage, blessing of homes, confession and funerals
- Parish as a community for sharing and living the Christian life

*Worship and spiritual life:*

- Services on Sundays and at festivals, weekday services, services for special occasions
- Bible study and prayer groups, retreats

*Children and young people:*

- Children's day clubs, after-school clubs, cooking, film and sport clubs etc.
- family clubs, Sunday school, scouting
- confirmation classes, camp counsellor programmes, youth evenings, camps and retreats

*Pastoral support:*

- family and relationship counselling
- phone and web helplines
- hospital chaplaincy
- bereavement groups
- work with the elderly: neighborhood services, home visits, activity groups
- mental health support groups
- working with the disabled
- supporting the unemployed
- financial assistance, housing support
- addiction counselling
- refugee support
- prisoner and probation support

*Community action and responsibility:*

- environmental awareness, action on climate issues
- administration of public records
- cemetery maintenance
- maintenance of buildings of cultural and historical importance
- military chaplaincy
- workplace chaplaincy
- educational workers and chaplains

*Music:*

- musical education and choral activity
- children's music schools, instrumental tuition, bands and music groups

*Sport and culture:*

- fitness clubs and recreational sport, hiking and excursions
- sport chaplaincy
- art clubs and camps
- drama clubs, bibliodrama

*Mission and international diaconal work:*

- Finn Church Aid and mission organizations work in international crisis relief
- development work throughout the world
- Ministry to Finns abroad
- The Seamen's Mission

These above benefits can be used by both members and nonmembers, Finns and non-Finns, children-youth-adults, etc.

**Money matters**

The church looks after its own financial affairs. The basis of the church's funding is church taxation, which makes up four fifths of total revenue. Members pay at an average rate of 1.33 % – the rate is set by the elected officials of each parish – and the tax is collected by the state, whose expenses in doing so are met by the church.

Church taxation accounts for some 75 % of parishes' revenue. Personnel costs are the parishes' biggest expense.

Sound management of the church's finances supports the parishes' work and enables them to care for and strengthen the spiritual lives of millions of members. Parish housekeeping differs little from that of municipalities, for the work of both depends on the accumulation of tax revenues and in both an elected board is tasked with making the most important decisions.

The state allocates a share of corporation tax ("yhteisövero") to the Lutheran and Orthodox churches in recognition of the social services the churches provide and the cultural and historical value of the buildings they maintain. The percentage of that share is decided in budget negotiations.

Parishes' financial situations vary. Most are free of debt, but they still need to juggle with surpluses and deficits. The Central Church Fund allocates grants to poorer parishes.

How church tax is used:

- Parish work 44 %
- Maintenance of churches and other buildings 17 %
- Pensions, tax collection, general expenses 12 %
- Construction 10 %
- Administration 9 %
- Cemetery maintenance 6 %
- Missionary work and development aid 2 %

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

The topic of this thesis is dealing with how Seinäjoki seurakunta helps students and immigrants living in Seinäjoki be able to integrate in the society. The main role is to determine how their cost and benefits helps them survive or at least integrate to the society. Checking if the services provided fulfil the costs covered. The thesis clarifies first the reasons and challenges the students and immigrants are facing, and secondly tries to find out in which ways the Parish center could help them integrate to the society. The thesis is mostly about the Seinäjoki seurakunta but the research also make the whole Finland as a target country. Finally thesis will provide some suggestions and ideas for further research.

The target groups of this research are those international students who came to study in Seinäjoki and also for those students planning to leave here in Finland after studies. The target group has all stayed in Finland less than a year.

The second target groups are the immigrants living in Finland. This group are mainly people who have decided to live in Finland for good, start a family or look for work here in Finland.

In this research both qualitative and quantitate methods are used but qualitative research method is the main research method used in this thesis.

### **4.1 Sample**

Qualitative research in general:

When wanting to get inside your customers mind you need to use qualitative research as your research method. Qualitative research is about finding what people think and why they think it. People get to talk about their opinions and for you to get to understand their motivations and feelings.

Face-to-face interviews and group discussions are the best ways of getting in-depth feedback. Normally it is valuable when developing new products or new marketing initiatives but qualitative research is also used by people like me who have less time to do my thesis and less materials both in the library and in the internet.

Among the benefits of the qualitative approach is that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study. "It is common practice in qualitative research for researchers to be less specific about sample sizes, as one of the standard approaches to this type of work is to carry on with the fieldwork until it yields no new insights. This makes it difficult to precisely predict sample sizes in advance; qualitative researchers may have to estimate the number of interviews or focus groups they expect to carry out but may need to alter this"- Health research authority .

Unlike a structured questionnaire where all the questions and variables are defined upfront, qualitative research is open to participants determining what the important issues are. Researchers may think they know what is important and on what questions will lead to the answers they want, but sometimes it is not until discussions are held with them, that the real issues emerge.

This means that when a researcher chooses to use qualitative research they will work with topic guides which outline the issues to be discussed and allow some freedom around those topics, as opposed to a tightly defined questionnaire.

The main methods for collecting qualitative data are:

- Individual interviews
- Observation
- Focus groups
- Action Research

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted “(Albert Einstein)

Qualitative research is mainly characterized by its aims, it relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis.

Qualitative research is supposed to be more expensive since its data collection methods are time consuming, the data is usually collected from a smaller sample which is a different case for quantitative approaches.

There are common criticisms that makes the aims and methods of qualitative research seem imprecise. Common criticisms include:

- It is difficult to know how far to generalize the results because the samples are small and not necessarily representative of the broader population,
- The findings lack rigour; (the quality of being extremely thorough and careful)
- It is difficult to tell how far the findings are biased (unfairly prejudiced for or against someone or something) by the researcher’s own opinions.

The following are methods used for collecting qualitative data;

The Data collection methods for qualitative research usually involves:

- Direct interaction with individuals on a one to one basis
- Or direct interaction with individuals in a group setting

This thesis used qualitative research on interviewing the Pastor directly at café Kismus and also interviewed couple of students who attended the knitting session at café kismus that day but because the responses of the students I got at café kismus are similar to the results I got through webropol questionnaire. Then the student’s results were only focused from the results of the questionnaires answered.

Qualitative research is often been combined with other methods to give further insight. With this understanding the research/ thesis came to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods to get more results.

What is mixed methods research?

Many definitions of mixed methods are available in the literature (e.g., Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). For purposes of this discussion, mixed methods research will be defined as a research approach or methodology:

Mixed method research can also be focusing on research questions that call for real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and cultural influences. Quantitative research can be employed assessing magnitude and frequency of constructs and rigorous qualitative research on exploring the meaning and understanding of constructs.

Mixed method research is used for utilizing multiple methods (e.g., intervention trials and in-depth interviews). It is intentionally used for integrating or combining these methods to draw on the strengths of each method and framing the investigation within philosophical and theoretical positions.

According to Julia Brannen on page 3 of her book on mixing methods, she wrote that, when combining different methods within a single piece of research, it normally raise the question of movement between paradigms at the levels of epistemology (the study or a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity) and theory. But whether or not these movements occurs, the process of combining mixing methods will highlight the importance of choosing appropriate method of research.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data:

Mixed methods begins with the assumption that investigators, in understanding the social and health world, gather evidence based on the nature of the question



and theoretical orientation. Social inquiry is targeted toward various sources and many levels that influence a given problem (e.g., policies, organizations, family, individual). Quantitative (mainly deductive) methods are ideal for measuring pervasiveness of "known" phenomena and central patterns of association, including inferences of causality. Qualitative (mainly inductive) methods allow for identification of previously unknown processes, explanations of why and how phenomena occur, and the range of their effects (Pasick et al., 2009). Mixed methods research, then, is more than simply collecting qualitative data from interviews, or collecting multiple forms of qualitative evidence (e.g., observations and interviews) or multiple types of quantitative evidence (e.g., surveys and diagnostic tests). It involves the intentional collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and the combination of the strengths of each to answer research questions.

Quantitative research in this thesis was used to form questionnaires from the research engine site called Webropol. Twenty students from SeAmk responded to this questionnaire and found it easy to answer than normal email.

Qualitative part was interviewing the worker from Seinöjoki Evangelical Lutheran church by meeting her in person and also using email to get more answers whenever there was a need.

This comes to a conclusion that the thesis used more qualitative research than quantitative because all the responses and results of this research were responses on interviewing the school Pastor and data collected on webropol from students and immigrants.

## **4.2 Interviews**

Interview was chosen as one of the tools to conduct the research.

Interview as a tool of qualitative methods is livelier and allocates experiences and opinion of the subject which can be analyzed and process with wider perspective. Interview is a good way to capture the actual meaning of what respondent is describing and to understand it well (Kvale, 1996).

Interview is also a way to capture the real story and experiences of the respondents in clear and detail way (McNamara, 1999). It makes it easy for the respondents to talk and describe their experiences and the obstacles they are facing.

In this thesis interview was used specifically for the worker of Seinäjoki seurakunta to tell more about the church's benefits and costs. This interview also helped to figure out what the church do to help immigrants and students integrate in the Finnish society.

Because of this a lot of additional information was discovered during the interview. With very less information on the church the interview also made possible to ask additional questions to gain more related information. Especially this additional information gave extra new findings to this research.

Refer to the layout of the interview and questionnaire at the appendices.

## **4.3 Limitations**

My research had several limitations. This study was primarily limited by its material. The materials could have been improved my more information about the parish office and statistics on international side. Most of the material in the internet where in Finnish and Swedish.

Lack of available and reliable data added also some limitations to the analysis part (Seinäjoki seurakunta, Ref 02.03.2015]. There are not so many research done about the topic in Seinäjoki or even in Finland.

Many of the sources that can be find are about Parish center in Seinäjoki and all the Evangelical Lutheran churches around Finland. Also the part on the future research is hard in this field.

Time constraint was also one of the biggest limitation. Because there was less time to complete the thesis before graduation, the questionnaire data took more than two weeks only to get twenty responses.

An earlier start in data collection would have increased the time needed to interview more participants. Ideally, the number of the participants would have been more evenly destitution across gender/ year in the seurakunta etc. Due to the narrow range of participants to interview, by time and more questionnaires would have benefited our results.

## 5 RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This chapter shows or explains what students and immigrants have responded to the questionnaires or interviews provided to them one question at a time. The results may be just a short version and explaining in general whenever the answers are similar.

### 5.1 Students results

According to the twenty students who have answered my questionnaire where most of them came from Vietnam and Nigeria and few from Tanzania and Spain, their responses were similar to most of the people who answered the questionnaire. These students who answered the questionnaire have been living here less than a year and five of them have been here longer than 5 years. Which covers the first question on the questionnaire.

Question two is about their purpose of coming to Finland. Most of them came to study either through Erasmus or just studying from the beginning as a first year student. These students were all from Seinäjoki University of applied sciences doing international Business.

Question three was about networks. "What networks do you have that makes you cope in the Finnish society?" Most of the students had friends living in Seinäjoki, others had friends from Seinäjoki but only communicate via Facebook. One student has a degree in Finnish language and Finnish roommate which were his network. Some students have friends that are well integrated in the Finnish society, as well as Finnish friends and contacts that they met along the way. Local classmates, some teachers, International Club etc. were network that one student had. Some students also have partners or family living in Finland and rely on them for emotional support. In this question not all participants had networks here in Finland but are helped by the teachers and the student pastor who is available for them anytime. This student pastor is located close to the student houses in the city center and she is also a seurakunta (Evangelical Lutheran church) Pastor.

Question four and five, was on Finnish friends, if they had any and how often they meet them, and most of the students replied less than 3 but these are those students who have been here less than a year. For the students who have been here longer they had many Finnish friends even though majority of them meet them once a week or very rarely. For the three students who meet their Finnish friends every day are either roommates or class mates

These foreign students have met their friends through Samo activities, at the university and parties. One student met her friend from an event at the Lutheran church. This part also covers question six, seven and eight on “Where did you meet?”, “Do you have other friends that are not Finnish?” and “How often do you meet them?”.

Question nine; what things you think are important to integrate in the Finnish society? Explain – In this part most of the students responded as follows; “Job related information/contacts”, “More Finnish friends, and more sports events to attend to with Finns”, “Less sport-related, more coffee-breaks or quizzes or interactive activities”, “I would like to spend some more time with them (Finns)”, “More events with Finns, to build friendships...”, “Events where we can join traditional custom”, “work, integration and socialization” , “Camping”, “sports, culture music’s and dance”, “Better jobs”

The above are direct quotes from the students and immigrants on important things/ ways to integrate in the society. Most Students wanted opportunities to get work. And by working they will be able to integrate in the society. Some of them think that in order to integrate in the society, being part in different social events would help them integrate. Some of them wished to attend in different social events in order to get to know more Finnish people.

What kind of networks / contacts/ events you would like or wish to have more? Covers question ten. This part most students wished for work/Job related information/contacts, more sports events to attend together with Finns, events where traditional customs are joined together etc.

Question eleven was about their point of view, what would help the integration process?

Some students didn't know the answer to this, others suggested that in order to succeed in integration one has to be willing to integrate on their own. "If I planned to stay for longer than my degree requires, learning the language, adapting to the cold and making new friends would help" wrote one of the student. Learning Finnish would also help in the integration process. Speaking and understand Finnish is the key to gaining many things like friends, work etc.

Another thing that could help with integration is when entrepreneurs give a chance to foreign immigrants to work for them. This would help other companies to follow their footsteps and give more work opportunities to international students who have the qualifications but not the language skills.

"Is when the institutions involved, wake up and realize that integration is practical and not theoretical" wrote one of the students on webropol. This happens mostly when companies look for workers with experience and makes it harder for graduate students to work because they don't have any past work experiences.

Number twelve was a question if they have ever got any help from Seurakunta/ EVL Church that helped them integrate in the society? Out of those twenty students only four admitted on getting help from the church. Most of the students don't really know what benefits the parish center provides. Which then covers question fourteen "Do you know all the benefits that the church provides?"

Question fifteen," Which ones do you use most?"- For the few students who actually know some of the benefits the church provides, they only use 2 or three benefits. Some of these benefits are Sunday service and Sunday school, Monday knitting gathering at café kismus and music classes for their children.

Question sixteen, "If Seurakunta gave you an opportunity to tell them what else you wish to gain from them that would help you integrate in the society, what it would be? Tell as much as you can".

"Church as I assume is the part of the government pillar, I mean it has the influence in government so it should act more vigorously to influence the authorities to accept foreign talents than it is right now, like I personally suppose be a talented Technician but never find a place to work as a Technician just by

having not studied my professional here in Finland. People who are in churches own companies but never dare to hire a foreigner especially from Africa just because of the altitude"- wrote one of the immigrants.

"Churches could organize event and even training for immigrant stranded out of the employment office which always have their must qualification category."- He added.

Some students and immigrants also wrote the following; "Religion is not the only way to integrate people in the society".

"Seurakunta should do some meetings with the students in the school, and give us information about what are they doing".

"The church has play its role and I think what church doing is full integration because it has so many different activities which keep us closer to Finnish society".

There are different opinions on how the church could help students and immigrants integrate. Most students don't know what exactly the church can do for them and how to be part of the church. Some students or immigrants who knows the benefits that the church provides are very satisfied and fills that there are no reasons why they should add more benefits since the ones they have are enough.

The following are results on how immigrants responded to the questionnaires provided even though this part also covered some information on the immigrants as well.

## **5.2 Immigrants' results**

These part consists of the answers provided by the immigrants living in Seinäjoki more than two years. Most the immigrants who answered the questionnaire/emails where originally from Africa. These immigrants have lived in Seinäjoki for more than 3 years and some have actually been here for 7 years and more.

Their purpose of coming to Finland was either work or studies and ended up living in Finland for good.

In question three on networks, only one person had networks because he attends sports events or is part of a certain sport. He also attended church choir and goes to work where he meets different people. The rest didn't have any networks outside their works or homes.

Most of the people (immigrants) who have lived in Seinäjoki longer have Finnish friend and meet them at least every day at work. Some of them don't count them as friends but work mates. Even though they might meet every day they do not contact outside work.

All of these immigrants have friends that were not Finnish and mostly from their home countries. This is easier for them somehow because they have people to communicate and socialize to.

According to their responses, it shows that most of these immigrants are very happy on the benefits they get from Seurakunta. Most of them actually suggested that the benefits the church provides are more than enough and there are actually benefits that they don't use or haven't used them yet.

Immigrants living in Seinäjoki also wanted the church to offer ways on how to get work or hire themselves foreigners.



## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will include first the summary of the thesis and discussion of the results then the suggestions for future results.

### 6.1 Summary and Discussion of the results

The aims of this studies were (A) to determine how foreign students and immigrants can integrate in Seinäjoki society (B) Identify the costs and benefits provided by the parish center to international students and immigrants living in Seinäjoki. (C) If the membership fee fulfil the expectations on the benefits they get from the seurakunta? And (D) despite the benefits the parish center provides, is there something else that they don't provide but is important to be considered?

The study's originally consisted of research results provided by the students and immigrants, who answered the questionnaires via webropol research site or email. It also consisted of an interview conducted at café kismus with the student's pastor and also through emails back and forward whenever there were questions needed to be answered on behalf of seurakunta.

Twenty questionnaires were answered by the students in webropol, five emails interview questions/ word questionnaire were answered by the immigrants living in Seinäjoki and one interview with the church worker.

These aims of the study were operationalized into four research questions, to which the answers are provided in the following;

- (A) To determine how foreign students and immigrants can integrate in Seinäjoki society.

According to Tuomas MArtikainen and Lalita Gola (2007, pg.12-14), the settlement and integration process of immigrants are both long-lasting and complex phenomena. Immigrants may have to adapt to local linguistic, education, culture, economic and other circumstances, while their human and social capital may be less or more compatible with local expectations and norms. The original reasons,

expectations and motives for migrants are essential in early stage of settlement (Berry et al. 2002: 349-370; Castles and Miller, 2003:30-32).

The questionnaire results suggested that language plays a big role in integration. Knowing Finnish language may be one of the great opportunity in both job opportunities and making new friends.

By learning and accepting the Finnish culture, foreign students and immigrants might have a better understand on how to cope in the Finnish society. Trying harder to fit in, trying local foods, having a similar mentality might also led to a successful integration.

Self-initiative and confidence and believing that, It doesn't matter what color or where you are from, but if you put your heart to succeed then it will eventually happen.

Finns are very outdoors people, for an immigrant of a foreign student trying to integrate to the Finnish society maybe it is also wise to be active in sports and different social activities when integrating. This might also help the integration process be less hard.

Most of the students also had an opinion on how Finns can make they stay easier. "Huh! though I'm not a social professional to categorize important hint of human behavior that make them interact and socialize but to my understanding and experience is first for the Finnish society to be more open to foreigners, welcoming and open to interact than how it is at moment although i do respect their quietness but seem to be too much in such not easy to notice the hater and the friendly one". Said one of the immigrants who lived in Finland for 7 years.

"They should be more open" said a student at SeAmk. "Always keep time and don't get too close"

Acceptance might be a big deal to locals but it might be easy for most immigrants to integrate in the society when knowing that the locals actually accept them for who they are and where they come from.

For integration to be successful both immigrants and locals have to work together in helping each other out despite the cultures and norms.

(B) Identify the costs and benefits provided by the parish center to international students and immigrants living in Seinäjoki

As explained in page 30 of this thesis, the cost of becoming a member of Evangelical Lutheran church is 1% of tax every month. That means for the unemployed, the membership fee is free until when they get work or get some kind of income.

The benefits are also listed in page 26 on the chapter of Seinäjoki seurakunta (costs and benefits). According to the research found on the benefits, Evangelical Lutheran church provides their benefits to everyone. Members and nonmembers. So for international students these benefits are available to them as well. Some benefits may cost more than the members of the church but they are still cheaper than getting them anywhere else. There are free benefits provided by the parish center which means that both members and nonmembers get those benefits for free as well.

(C) ) If the membership fee fulfil the expectations on the benefits they get from the seurakunta?

According to the research results from both students and immigrants, don't know how much they are paying the membership fee since it goes straight to their payments.

Most of the students who replied the questionnaires are nonmembers and the immigrants were members of the church but did not know the amount they are paying. Two members did not pay anything since their tax present was zero or did not work.

This shows that seurakunta helps everyone who need their help despite being a member.

Not all students knew the benefits they can get from the church and the few benefits they knew where enough for them or very satisfying. The questions sent via emails attached the benefits the church provided and most people were surprised on the amount of benefits they can get from seurakunta.

(D) Despite the benefits the parish center provides, is there something else that they don't provide but is important to be considered?

From the last question of the research questionnaire "If Seurakunta gave you an opportunity to tell them what else you wish to gain from them that would help you integrate in the society, what would it be? Tell as much as you can". The following are the responses from the students and immigrants;

"Do some meetings with the students in the school, to give us information about what are they doing."

"The church has play its role and I think what church doing is full integration because it has so many different activities which keep us closer to Finnish society".

"They should do more in convincing the City council get more educated foreigners in the area of getting jobs as that could help more in developing the city".

"The benefits they provide are not obvious to a lot of foreigners. They should do more in the area of creating awareness".

"Have it been introduced to every students here? Maybe we should have the presentation for this so students know about it".

"Well, I was an aerobics athlete, I did know something and now I just wish to have a small class to teach young children these things I know. It is my little dream when I am still here, I do not know if it is possible, hope to hear the good news someday. Then, as well as teaching, I think I have little passion in Art

Entertainment, you know dancing, playing instrument, etc... but I am shy and I do not know so much. How about having some dancing class (not only tango or couple dances, I would love to have some modern thing)?”

“They should try to help foreigners in the area of getting jobs”.

The above quotes were directly from the questionnaires answered in both webropol and emails.

According to the school's Pastor, seurakunta have been helping students searching for jobs whenever needed. They help students who are willing to try to work in Finland especially by helping them with the job applications and even attending the interview meetings with the students if they really need them. “When I meet new students I tell them (Finnish and international) that one of reasons why students come to my office is that they need help with finding a job. And then after that lesson many of them come to my office or book an appointment for that reason. So every year there are many students that fill the application to different jobs with me. So I think the main problem is that there is not so many places and it is not enough just filling the application. I have told students that I could even come along to the company, but it is their choice to choose to go there with or without me” Said pastor Aila.

To conclude, there is no harm in asking for a favor or help. The students are provided with a pastor from Evangelical Lutheran church, who speaks English and plans most of her events and social clubs especially for international students to integrate in the Finnish society. She helps immigrants integrate and make them feel at home.

Foreign students have to have the courage to ask for help both to the school teachers and to the Pastor. Instead of waiting for opportunities to find them instead, which might take a while.

## 6.2 Suggestions for further research

Suggestions for further research is just a vivid information for any person who will try to write on Seinäjoki seurakunta or on similar subject in the future.

With the following information, the research might in the future be more successful and easier.

Firstly, as part of the limitations, time constraint was a big deal. Having enough time to search for information work allow the writer to gain more information on Seurakunta.

The methodology could have also included surveying or interviewing individuals involved with the participants like workers of Seinäjoki seurakunta/ Parish center, members of the church and pastors/Priests.

Another possible improvement to the study could have been researching every parish centers in Finland and not only Seinäjoki. This method could have added more information on international students and immigrants who are taking part or who are members of the parish center.

There is less information on immigrants and foreign students available in the internet or Lutheran church books written. One way to get more information on this is to visit the parish center and talk to the person in charge or deacon work. They have information on how many students and foreigners join the church and probably have statistics about them. This would help in collecting more data on the parish center and immigrants in general.

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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX 1. Questionnaire interview on emails

APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire survey on Webropol

**APPENDIX 1. Questionnaire interview on emails**

Research questions on;

“How Seinäjoki Seurakunta/ Parish Center/ Evangelical Lutheran church help students and immigrants integrate in the society”.

Please answer freely.

1. How long have you been living in Finland/ Seinäjoki?
2. Purpose of coming to Finland
3. What networks do you have that makes you cope in the society?
4. How many Finnish friends do you have?
5. How often do you communicate per week?
6. Where did you meet?
7. Do you have other friends that are not Finnish?
8. How often do you meet them?
9. What thing you think are important to integrate in the Finnish society?
10. What kind of networks / contacts/ events you would like to have more?
11. On your point of view, what things would help integration?
12. Have you ever got any help from Seurakunta that helped you integrate in the society?
13. Describe the help/benefits you get from Seinäjoki seurakunta
14. Do you know all the benefits that Seurakunta provides?

15. If yes, do you use all the benefits they provide to you?

16. Which ones do you use most?

17. If Seurakunta gave you an opportunity to tell them what else would you wish to gain from them that would help you integrate in the society, what would it be? Tell as much as you can.

*Benefits they provide:*

**Christian initiation and pastoral services:**

- Baptism, confirmation, marriage, blessing of homes, confession and funerals
- Parish as a community for sharing and living the Christian life

**Worship and spiritual life:**

- Services on Sundays and at festivals, weekday services, services for special occasions
- Bible study and prayer groups, retreats

**Children and young people:**

- children's day clubs, after-school clubs, cooking, film and sport clubs etc
- family clubs, Sunday school, scouting
- confirmation classes, camp counsellor programmes, youth evenings, camps and retreats

**Pastoral support**

- family and relationship counselling
- phone and web helplines
- hospital chaplaincy
- bereavement groups
- work with the elderly: neighbourhood services, home visits, activity groups
- mental health support groups
- working with the disabled
- supporting the unemployed
- financial assistance, housing support

- addiction counselling
- refugee support
- prisoner and probation support

#### Community action and responsibility

- environmental awareness, action on climate issues
- administration of public records
- cemetery maintenance
- maintenance of buildings of cultural and historical importance
- military chaplaincy
- workplace chaplaincy
- educational workers and chaplains

#### Music

- musical education and choral activity
- children's music schools, instrumental tuition, bands and music groups

#### Sport and culture

- fitness clubs and recreational sport, hiking and excursions
- sport chaplaincy
- art clubs and camps
- drama clubs, bibliodrama

#### Mission and international diaconal work

- Finn Church Aid and mission organizations work in international crisis relief
- development work throughout the world
- Ministry to Finns abroad
- The Seamen's Mission

**APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire survey on Webropol**

**How Evangelical Lutheran church/ Parish center helps students and immigrants integrate in the society**



1. How long have you been living in Finland/ Seinäjoki?

2. Purpose of coming to Finland

3. What networks do you have that makes you cope in the Finnish society?

4. How many Finnish friends do you have?

5. How often do you communicate per week? \*

- Everyday
- Once a week
- Very rarely

6. Where did you meet?

7. Do you have other friends that are not Finnish? \*

- Yes
- No

8. How often do you meet them?

- Everyday
- More than 3 times a week
- Less than 3 times a week
- Rarely

9. What things you think are important to integrate in the Finnish society? Explain

10. What kind of networks / contacts/ events you would like or wish to have more?



11. On your point of view, what would help the integration process?

12. Have you ever got any help from Seurakunta/EVLChurch that helped you integrate in the society?

- Yes
- No
- I dont know

13. If the answer is yes, describe the help/benefits you get from Seinäjoki seurakunta/  
Evangelical Lutheran (EVL) Church

14. Do you know all the benefits that the church provides \*

- Yes
- No

15. Which ones do you use most?

16. If Seurakunta gave you an opportunity to tell them what else you wish to gain from them that would help you integrate in the society, what would it be? Tell as much as you can.

Submit