

RIIKKA VANHANEN & JYRKI HOLAPPA (EDS.)

ATTRACTING GLOBAL TALENTS

FINNIPS network's ten years of
enhancing internationalisation



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ABSTRACT

Riikka Vanhanen & Jyrki Holappa (Eds.)

Attracting Global Talents

FINNIPS network's ten years of enhancing internationalisation

(Publications of JAMK University of Applied Sciences, 264)

The fourth publication of the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) is a celebration of the ten years of cooperation conducted within the network. Since the end of 2009, Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs) have joined forces to implement international education marketing and student recruitment together to attract global talents to Finnish higher education. By 2019, the FINNIPS network has promoted Finnish education and arranged entrance examinations in over 20 countries around the world and, with these efforts, created a significant channel for foreign degree students to come to Finland.

The publication describes the roles and tasks of the actors implementing the cooperation. Moreover, it looks into the results of the work conducted and reflects on the current issues and future development prospects of the FINNIPS network and UASs' international education in general.

The articles of the publication are written by experts of international higher education in Finnish UASs and the Finnish National Agency for Education, EDUFI. They provide versatile views to the development of UASs' internationalisation and introduce concrete examples on the development of the admission process and international degree programmes. Furthermore, the articles serve various insights regarding the impact of Finnish UASs' international education on different levels stretching from students' personal experiences to regional and societal effects.

Keywords: Universities of Applied Sciences, Internationalisation, International Degree Programmes, Network Cooperation, Education Export, International Marketing, International Student Recruitment, Development of Education, Regional Impact

FOREWORD

FINLAND SUCCEEDS WITH COMPETENCE

Knowledge, research and competencies are international, so higher education institutions are international by default. In practice, this means that internationality is an essential part of higher education institutions, linked to student recruitment, education export, exchange of personnel and students or cooperation in innovation activity, to name but a few. A university of applied sciences (UAS) is an international and regional developer at the same time, because the aim of education and innovation activity is to support regional development.

Finland needs more highly educated experts to maintain its welfare status and future prosperity. To support this objective, the Ministry of Education and Culture has prepared a programme named “Vision for higher education and research in Finland 2030”, which aims to raise the share of highly educated citizens to 50% in the age group of 25–34-year-olds. Though this objective is in the right direction, it is insufficient by itself. To support the objective, we need more international students to study their degree in Finnish higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions enable study-based immigration. Education export and recruitment of foreign students to Finland needs reinforcement in the coming years. This also requires solving the “bottlenecks” of student immigration.

Secondly, higher education institutions must find new solutions to support the integration and employment of international students. International students need to get better incorporated as part of the higher education community. Learning Finnish and Swedish also needs to be encouraged. Every UAS degree consists of obligatory practical training, which brings working life practices near international students. Furthermore, working life based learning and career paths need to be developed in a recognisable fashion.

There were 16,700 international students in Finland in 2017. Over half of these students (57%) studied in universities of applied sciences. This means that 7% of all students in universities of applied sciences were international students. The FINNIPS network has had an important role in supporting the internationalisation of Finnish universities of applied sciences. Since 2010, over 15,000 applicants have participated in the FINNIPS network’s entrance examinations around the world. Nearly 8,000 of the exam candidates have

been offered a study place in one of the network's UASs. The amount will be further increased with the results and data from the spring 2019 admissions round, which is currently ongoing. Overall, FINNIPS has proved to be among the best examples of successful cooperation between the UASs.

Tapio Varmola

Chairman of Rector's Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences,
ARENE ry

Introduction

TEN YEARS OF EFFECTIVENESS ON UASS' INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Riikka Vanhanen

The year 2019 marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS). Since the end of 2009, the network has joined Finnish universities of applied sciences (UAS) to work together in recruiting international students to their English-taught degree programmes. To facilitate this, FINNIPS has taken care of the coordination of the member UASs' entrance examinations in selected countries outside Finland. Along with its main task, the network has gained an important role in the marketing of Finnish higher education to attract foreign students to the programmes. Moreover, the network activities include a significant amount of development work in the planning and organisation of the overall admissions process, and it is implemented also in the forms of staff training, work groups, seminars and publications, to name but a few.

The fourth FINNIPS publication is dedicated to acknowledging the work conducted in the network and to embrace the contribution of the mass of people that has made and continues to make the cooperation concrete and effective. Attracting thousands of foreign students to Finnish UASs has not taken place in a vacuum; it has required a significant amount of planning and voluminous hours of work conducted by accomplished and committed people. Parallel to the reflections on the past activities and achievements, the publication also serves as a vantage point of the present and future with considerations regarding the outlook and prospective development of UASs' international education.

FROM PRACTICAL NEEDS TO PRACTICAL COOPERATION

The establishment of the cooperation network nearly ten years ago goes back to the hope and need of being able to organise the foreign degree students' recruitment process in the joint application system, with extensive cooperation between different UASs and degree programmes. The field-specific cooperation structures have marked, for years already, a well-organised and determined division of work for the UASs, as well as convenience for the applicants, who have been able to apply for several degree programmes through a single application and by taking just one entrance exam per study field. And thanks to the cooperation structured and facilitated by FINNIPS, the entrance exams,

being compulsory and for a long time the only route to Finnish UASs, have been brought close to the applicants living around the world.

It is, indeed, practical needs that have steered the functions of the network: if the result of an entrance exam is a prerequisite for an applicant to be considered for admission, and UASs want to recruit foreign students, it is effectively very necessary to arrange the exams also outside Finland. Furthermore, attracting international applicants is essential in order for them to even consider applying for higher education in Finland and taking part in the exams. Accordingly, the international marketing of the education provision of Finnish UASs has been naturally linked to the FINNIPS network's tasks. Nowadays, the FINNIPS marketing measures encompass participation in education fairs around the world, promotion on online portals and through a joint website, in addition to social media presence.

Joint organisation of the admissions process and implementation of entrance exams and international marketing serves the applicants by offering them compiled information about Finnish UAS education and well-structured routes to find one's way to it. To UASs, the cooperation facilitates an organised division of work in the admission process and a cost-effective way of realising international education marketing and student recruitment. Looking at a practical level, the cooperation with its obvious money-saving aspects makes sense when considering it from the perspectives of both the applicants and UASs. However, despite the apparent benefits of working together, the grounds and contents of cooperation are re-examined again every now and then in light of the changing conditions and needs stemming both from UASs and their interest groups locally and globally.

CHANGE TRIGGERS DEVELOPMENT

Over the past ten years, the coordination of the above-described cooperation has not taken place in similar conditions, but the organisation of activities has been implemented in an operational environment that has experienced several changes and transitions. The application system, for example, has changed from UASs' joint application to a national joint application, within which the applicants can apply to both UASs and universities. The expansion of the application system created new interdependencies and needs for many adjustments with regard to schedules and the overall organisation of the UASs' admissions process.

Establishing the expanded national joint application system in 2015 was not, however, the end of the development process; at the time of writing this

publication, the decree concerning the organisation of the joint application is undergoing yet another transformation. The constant changes are supposedly intended to improve the admissions procedures to Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs). However, catering to the needs of the varying groups of both Finnish and foreign applicants seeking their way to the wide selection of degree programmes offered at UASs and universities is not a straightforward task. Therefore, one of the current tasks of the FINNIPS network is to try to define the application process that serves our member UASs and the applicants to their English-taught programmes in the best way possible.

The international marketing of education, too, has undergone a transformation over recent years. The introduction of tuition fees to English-taught bachelor's and master's programmes in Finnish HEIs in 2017 was a game changer, along with which the attitudes and expectations regarding international education marketing have shifted remarkably. The necessity of marketing activities for enhancing Finland's reputation as an attractive higher education destination has been acknowledged more widely, and the topics of international student recruitment are discussed more actively also at the national level, e.g. in events hosted by the Finnish National Agency for Education, EDUFI, and its growth programme Education Finland. Within the FINNIPS network, the long-standing history of promoting Finnish UAS education internationally is an excellent basis for further enhancement and expansion of the joint marketing efforts, and increased discussion on the topic is welcomed. Nevertheless, FINNIPS continues to play a significant role in promoting Finnish higher education abroad.

Overall, amidst the constant changes, the work of the FINNIPS network is naturally also ever-evolving. It is both reactive and proactive to the changes in the national and international landscape with regard to the admissions systems, educational policies, political and economic factors and other developments that shape our HEIs and international student fluxes. In practice, this has meant active involvement in the development of the phases of the admissions process and input and investment in enhancing the visibility of Finnish UAS education around the world.

RESULTS MEASURED IN MANY LEVELS

When assessing the results of the network cooperation, the focus is most often drawn to the numbers of student selection. The over 15,000 applicants that have participated in the FINNIPS exams abroad, and the nearly 8,000 applicants that subsequently have been offered a study place in one of

the network's UASs, are solid proof of the results of the work conducted. While the share of foreign students in the network's UASs and degree programmes varies, it is evident that in light of these overall numbers the FINNIPS network's cooperation has formed a significant channel for the flow of foreign degree students to Finland. Moreover, arranging the entrance examinations in several locations around the globe has created a possibility of forming a diverse student body consisting of students from different countries and cultures.

Individual UASs may evaluate the role of the network cooperation by reflecting the results on their overall student intake and by proportioning the input to the FINNIPS network with their other student recruitment activities. Nowadays, along with the tuition fees, part of the results can be, and are, measured also in euros by the number of fee-paying students. Based on the systematically compiled statistics, and the UASs' experiences, aims and feedback regarding the results of student selection, the target countries for the FINNIPS exams and marketing efforts are defined yearly. The more precise and clear the objectives from the member UASs are, the easier it is also to set goals for the network's activities.

However, in addition to the numerical targets and data, it is important to assess the results in terms of quality. Joining forces in the development of the entrance examination's contents, for example in the tuning of the group discussion method designed to measure the applicants' English language skills, has enabled consistent progress and resulted in higher quality when it comes to the students' language skills, as reported by many UAS lecturers. A high-quality admission process ensures the recruitment of motivated and skilful students who have the prerequisites to advance in their studies and eventually graduate within a targeted period of time.

The FINNIPS UASs' staff members' involvement in the implementation of the network activities forms yet another aspect, which enables to assess the outputs and results of the cooperation. Participating in the international education marketing and/or execution of the entrance examinations around the world has granted a great amount of international experience to FINNIPS UASs' staff members, stretching from admission services to degree programmes and other expert tasks. The joint activities have contributed to individuals' professional development and staff competences, which in turn continuously contribute to the further internationalisation of the whole UAS. Overall, participation in the FINNIPS cooperation does not only ensure an organised and trustworthy method for successful student recruitment, but it also supports the building of staff competences and

advancement of internationalisation throughout the UAS. The ever-increasing and accumulating expertise at the member UASs finally comes back to the use and mutual benefit of the network.

PEOPLE BEHIND THE RESULTS

“FINNIPS cooperation”, “FINNIPS entrance examinations”, “FINNIPS training”. Over the years, FINNIPS has become a relatively well-known actor in the Finnish higher education scheme. While the network’s name and main functions may be recognised, it is worthwhile to stop examining the structures of cooperation in more detail and acknowledge the people behind “FINNIPS”. Who are these people, and what do they do to facilitate the network cooperation? What are their aims and development ideas, looking from the perspective of their tasks and areas of responsibility?

When identifying the various tasks, processes and actors inherent in the FINNIPS student recruitment cycle, it is possible to better understand and evaluate the overall process and consider its further development. This kind of scrutiny over the different roles of people also serves as valuable background information, e.g. for discussions on ideas regarding the utilisation of technology in student selection. To what extent could the phases of the admissions process, from applicant guidance to student selection, be assisted or even replaced by AI? How could the student selection process be sped up without compromising the quality and security of the process?

In this publication, the work behind “FINNIPS” unravels, as the articles shed light on the roles and tasks of admissions officers, exam supervisors, country-specific coordinators and representatives of international degree programmes. Moreover, when introducing the real people responsible for the activities, it is possible to detect the wide variety of expertise that the network brings together. In admissions services, student and international services as well as degree programmes, we have people who, for the past ten years and beyond, have actively participated in the development of international UAS education and student recruitment activities not only in their organisations but also in FINNIPS. Whether the question is about cultural or field-specific substance knowledge, they bring a valuable amount of information and expertise to the joint network efforts.

By understanding the multitude and layers of expertise accumulated within the network structures, it is possible to better understand the importance and value of the international student recruitment process owned and led by the Finnish higher education institutions and their experts. Acknowledging

the achieved results and the power of cooperation is also a good start and a positive kick-off for planning the activities for the next decade.

CONTENT OF THE PUBLICATION

In this publication, the changes and developments of the Finnish UASs, their international education and the surrounding operational environment are discussed from various different angles. The first chapter provides considerations regarding the phenomena in light of numerical data and analytical reflections and looks at both the past and future of the internationalisation of higher education in Finland. In the first article, Helli Kitinoja from Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences and Marjo Pääskylä from Oulu University of Applied Sciences provide a thorough contemplation on the development of internationalisation and international cooperation of Finnish UASs. The second article by Irma Garam from the Finnish National Agency for Education, EDUFI, looks at the development of internationalisation through statistics, which in a detailed manner describe the numbers of foreign students in Finnish HEIs in both sectors. The third article is drawn up by Juha Ketolainen (EDUFI) and Lauri Tuomi (Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation, previously EDUFI). It turns the focus on education export and considers the opportunities that the internationalisation of Finnish higher education creates for it. The article by Jussi Halttunen from JAMK University of Applied Sciences continues on the topic of education export by contemplating the leadership of such internationalisation activities from a rector's position.

In the second chapter, the focus shifts closer to the actors behind the implementation of the network activities. First, the article by Johanna Auvinen and Sanna Tyrväinen from Tampere and JAMK Universities of Applied Sciences, respectively, provides a description of the development of the admissions process and practical level benefits of the cooperation between the Admission Services within the FINNIPS network. In the next article, Jyrki Holappa (Oulu UAS) and Matti Hirsilä (JAMK UAS) discuss the role and significance of the entrance examination for the high-quality student selection to International Business programmes. The third article, written by Riikka Vanhanen, JAMK UAS/FINNIPS, is an outline of the tasks of the FINNIPS entrance exam supervisors and country-specific coordinators, who in practice take care of the entrance examinations around the world. The following six articles by Sara Czabai-Leppänen (South-Eastern Finland UAS), Anzelika Krastina (Lapland UAS), Ajaya Joshi and Nicolas LeGrand (Turku UAS), Sebastian King (Laurea UAS), Anne Ahokas-Sironen (Seinäjoki UAS) and Otieno Mbare

(Turku UAS) serve as stories from the entrance examinations as long-term country coordinators and exam supervisors share their experiences. These short stories shed light on the reality of the exam arrangements, which, based on the accounts, are a combination of hard work and humorous incidents.

Finally, the third chapter looks into UASs' international education from two different angles by providing experiences from both the UASs' and students' point of view. While the UASs' articles focus on the building and development of international degree programmes and the international students' admissions process, the accounts of students' stories offer glimpses on the impact of UAS education at a personal level. The first article by Emilia Laapio-Rapi from Saimaa UAS is a description on the establishment of an international Nursing programme. The next piece, by Mari Koski (Laurea UAS) and Antonius de Arruda Camara (Haaga-Helia, previously Laurea UAS) is an account of a process of changing a Business Information Technology programme to be conducted fully online. Ida Borgar from Novia University of Applied Sciences writes about the internationalisation of the Maritime Management, Captain degree programme and also introduces a graduate student's story. Jaana Häkli's (Saimaa UAS) article is based on interviews of two alumni from the degree programme in Tourism and Hospitality Management. The last article, written by Anzelika Krastina and Petra Paloniemi from Lapland University of Applied Sciences, describes the importance of international education to the regional development of Lapland and the Arctic region and concludes the chapter with various examples of the concrete forms of the HEI's international activities and their benefits for the surrounding society.

The compilation of articles in this publication creates an idea of the extensive field of action, within which the FINNIPS network operates. Planning and implementation of international student recruitment as well as development of international degree programmes takes place in a turbulent environment where new needs and objectives steer the activities, sometimes in a speedy manner. Acknowledging the unsteady setting and changing conditions, the solid development and deepening of the FINNIPS cooperation over the last ten years is an achievement to be proud of. I am grateful to everyone who, with their own input and expertise, have made the cooperation not only possible and effective but also educational and inspiring.

International Education in Finnish UASs:
development, statistics and future
prospects globally and locally

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONALISATION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Helli Kitinoja & Marjo Pääskylä

The Finnish Ministry of Education (MoE) put out an action plan to develop the internationalisation of higher education in 1987. The focus of the proposal was on increasing international mobility. The first Finnish universities of applied sciences (UASs) were established five years later. At that time, in a seminar of the Ministry of Education, it was highlighted that if a higher education institution (HEI) is not international, it is useless. Networking has been considered important when Finnish higher education institutions have developed their international activities. It was understood that without local, national, international and global networks it wouldn't be possible to reach the aims set in the internationalisation of HEIs.

A long-term goal of the Finnish Government Programme is to have Finland in 2025 be an open and international society that is rich in its diversity of languages and cultures. One of the objectives is increasing internationalisation of education and research and the removal of obstacles to education exports. Finland also wants to be an active and responsible member in the global society, offering expertise and solving problems. As a member of Nordic, European and global networks, Finland is developing the joint and shared knowledge base. Based on the latest policy paper for the internationalisation of Finnish higher education and research in 2017–2025, education and research have been seen to play a crucial role in supporting social cohesion, economic growth, wellbeing and global competitiveness. (MoEC 2018b.)

PHASES OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

In her doctoral dissertation, Söderqvist (2002) has described five stages belonging to the development process of internationalisation of higher education institutions. In the zero stage, internationalisation was seen as a marginal activity, when HEIs had some free movers, some important actors travelled to conferences and foreign languages were taught. Finnish universities of applied sciences were at the zero stage in the beginning of the 1990s. The first stage, with student and teacher mobility, started some

years later in the middle of the 1990s. UASs became aware of the need to internationalise and they committed themselves to implementing different programmes enhancing the mobility of students. The Socrates programme of the European Union was the most important mobility programme for HEIs at the time. International offices were established to handle the routines of student mobility.

The second stage of internationalisation started at the end of the 1990s, when internationalisation of the curriculum and research, as well as the role of teachers and teacher mobility related to this process, were seen as important. International coordinators were appointed to coordinate the internationalisation of the curriculum and research. Internationalisation was also seen as a means to enhance the quality of education. (Söderqvist 2002.) At the end of the 1990s, UASs also got some extra financing from the Ministry of Education to strengthen their international activities, as well as performance-based funding. During this phase UASs also started to offer degree programmes that were taught completely in English. As a starting point of joint entrance examinations abroad, the Finnish National Network for East and Southeast Asia of the Finnish UASs organised examinations in some Asian countries for these English-taught degree programmes from 2001 onwards (Marten 2009). ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) became an important tool to facilitate student mobility, counselling and the recognition of foreign studies. Later, after 2004, the EQF (European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning) and ECTS systems became a framework for the whole field of higher education in Finnish UASs as a part of the Bologna Process, and in 2007 the European Commission decided to re-launch the awarding of ECTS and DS (Diploma Supplement) Labels. (Arene 2007; European Commission 2009.)

The stage of the institutionalisation of internationalisation can be seen to have started in the middle of the 2000s. UASs published strategies of internationalisation and the processes of internationalisation were described. Internationalisation was considered to be integrated into all other processes of HEIs. Partnerships, strategic alliances and networking were highly valued and managers of internationalisation were appointed. (Söderqvist 2002.) Cooperation between the UASs was also active. The quality of the processes of internationalisation was evaluated internally and in some cases also externally by using international external evaluators. Comprehensive internationalisation is a concept which has also been used to describe this stage. To strengthen the HEIs' prospects for success, comprehensive internationalisation needs to be infused throughout institutional missions and ethos. (Hudzik 2011.)

According to Söderqvist (2002), the latest stage is commercialising the outcomes of internationalisation. In this fourth stage, the export of education services and global education services has been one of the duties of HEIs in Finland since the end of the 2000s. In the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland in 2009–2015 (MoE 2009), higher education and educational expertise were seen as nationally significant exports, and the export of expertise and competence was one of the five main aims of the strategy. In 2010 the Finnish Government published the Finnish Education Export Strategy (MoE 2010), and three years later the Ministry of Education and Culture published an action plan to increase the export of education and expertise (MoEC 2013).

Already since 2004 it has been possible to develop joint and double degree programmes, which has also been a basis for the export of education. In 2005 the Ministry of Education had appointed a working group to discuss the question of tuition fees, but at that time they were not yet implemented. Since 2012, Finnish HEIs have been able to offer tailor-made degree programmes as products of education export (Act 953/2011). In 2010–2014, many of the UASs participated in the Ministry's pilot project concerning tuition fees for students coming from outside the European Union and studying in international master's programmes. One of the main arguments for tuition fees was that the opportunity to charge fees would give Finnish HEIs the same possibilities to participate in the global higher education market as HEIs from other countries. (Garam & Nielsen 2006.) Finland's National Government Programme (National Government 2015) also features commercial aims in the field of research, education and expertise, and the latest policy paper, Roadmap for Education Export, released by the Ministry of Education and Culture offers an action plan for 2016–2019 for the export of expertise (MoEC 2016). Based on a survey in 2016, half of the Finnish UASs were active in education export (Aura, Heikkinen, Kannasto, Kitinoja, Muttonen & Nemilentsev 2016). In 2019 the number of active UASs may be higher. Twenty-four out of 37 Finnish HEIs export short educational programmes, while 29 export or have a plan to export, in two years' time, tailor-made degree programmes (MoEC 2018a).

In the 2010s, internationalisation has been one of the indicators in the Ministry of Education and Culture's financing model for the UASs, including the amount of student (2%) and staff (1%) mobility in the latest financing model (MoEC 2019a). In the new financing model for 2021 onwards, internationalisation is no longer considered an independent indicator for financing. However, it will be included in other indicators, e.g. measures based on the strategy of the HEIs (MoEC 2019b).

Each HEI shall prepare clear objectives for international activities and an action plan supporting the objectives. The strategy of an HEI should include internationalisation that is true to the profile of the HEI. The focus should be on quality of internationalisation rather than quantity. Internationalisation in the strategic funding enables more diversified international activities in HEIs. However, though the Ministry of Education and Culture expects HEIs to increase international mobility, there exists a discrepancy between the policy and allocating sufficient resources for internationalisation. How important a role internationalisation will play in the future depends on the strategic decision of the HEIs. According to the responses in a survey made for the heads of international relations of UASs in December 2018 (Kitinoja & Pääskylä 2019), an increase in applying external funding for international activities and projects is foreseen. More intensified networks and strategic partnerships, as well as closer connections to other stakeholders, are also needed. In most of the UASs that responded to the survey, the international activities are partly decentralised (86.67%), which means that internationalisation is partly taken care of in centralised international offices/services and partly in schools/departments. Through versatile tasks related to internationalisation at different levels of the UAS, committed staff members enable comprehensive internationalisation of the UAS and better integration of internationalisation in other activities. Focusing even more on strategic internationalisation requires more attention to comprehensive leadership and development of internationalisation.

NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONALISATION OF FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Finland was accepted in the European Union's Erasmus Programme, launched in 1987, together with the other EFTA countries in the academic year 1992–1993. At that time, the easiest way to participate in this European cooperation was to join existing sectoral ICP networks (Inter-University Cooperation Programmes) and their student and teacher exchanges as well as develop curricula and intensive courses. The first programme adopted by the European Council was Comett, which preceded Erasmus. Participation in all the other European Union higher education programmes became possible when Finland joined the EU in 1995. The first Erasmus Intensive Language Courses (EILC) in Finnish were available in 1996. Since the end of the 1990s, bilateral Erasmus agreements have been prioritised, though even bigger networks have been

needed in research and development projects. Since 1997, HEIs were also required to publish and commit to the European Policy Statement (EPS), a strategy for developing European-level cooperation. For many HEIs it was the first strategy of their internationalisation. (Garam & Ketolainen 2009; Ketolainen 2007.) In 2015, the Erasmus programme was finally opened also for the networks between the HEIs in Europe and those outside the European Union, and the new Erasmus+ Global Mobility was launched.

The Nordic Nordplus programme and Nordic networks had already provided exchange opportunities for Finnish HEIs since 1988, and UASs were also able to participate in this programme since the beginning of the 1990s. Finnish programmes such as FIRST (Finnish-Russian Student and Teacher Exchange), North-South-South Higher Education Institution Network programme and Asia – Education Cooperation programme have also supported networking in mobility and projects.

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO (currently Finnish National Agency for Education EDUFI) was established under the Ministry of Education in 1991 to support Finnish HEIs in their international activities, especially student and teacher exchange. From the very beginning, experts responsible for international affairs also formed networks and mailing lists (e.g. Campo) to increase their knowledge concerning the internationalisation of HEIs. Some of the main aims also included collecting best practices and peer support. This network cooperation also resulted in a yearly conference on the administration of international affairs in the mid-1990s. (Garam & Ketolainen 2009.) The Finnish International Educators' Days (korkeakoulujen kansainvälisten asioiden kevätpäivät) is still the main event in international education cooperation in Finland organised by HEIs and CIMO. Regular meetings between international offices of HEIs and CIMO exist as a permanent cooperation practice. Nowadays, social media such as Facebook and other channels are also available in relation to different programmes like Erasmus+ and others. CIMO has had a very important role, as well as a very unique role compared to similar organisations in many other countries, as a national office supporting the internationalisation of Finnish HEIs and cooperating with other stakeholders abroad. In Europe, the biggest event in international education cooperation is the EAIE (European Association for International Education) conference, with thousands of participants every year.

The Finnish National Network for East and Southeast Asia of Finnish HEIs (Asia Network) was established in 1997 based on the report and action plan of the Ministry of Education. Four years later, in 2001, the Network was divided into two different networks, a network of the universities and a network of the

UASs, courtesy of the Ministry. Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences was the coordinator of the Network of UASs, though the Ministry of Education also granted network activities. Entrance examinations organised in Asian countries like Bangladesh, India, China, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam from 2001 onwards was one of the most innovative activities of the Asia Network of Finnish UASs. The Network also published the first joint brochure of the UASs introducing the degree programmes conducted in English and produced virtual Asian Studies and yearly Asian Orientation Days for exchange students going to Asian countries. In addition, staff members' capacity building and knowledge related to Asia was supported. In 2009, however, the additional funding granted to the network by the Ministry of Education ended and, among other activities, a new solution to organise entrance examinations abroad was needed. (Marten 2009; Vanhanen 2013.)

The Pinnet Network of the managers of international affairs of the UASs was established officially in 2004, and after that the Network was granted funding by the Ministry of Education for a period of six years. This was already based on long-lasting cooperation between the UASs. Turku University of Applied Sciences was the coordinator of the Pinnet Network. The Network's main aim was to respond to the challenges caused by the Bologna Process, a rapidly changing global operational environment and the national aims concerning internationalisation of higher education and research in Finland. (Salonen & Virtanen 2009; Ketolainen 2009.) Developing and sharing best practices, and increasing quality assurance and expertise in internationalisation as well as peer support, have been the most important results of this network cooperation. The Pinnet Network shared knowledge related to the institutional internationalisation and review of international programmes. The network members became familiar with e.g. the OECD's International Quality Review (IQR) process, one of the first international initiatives to assist institutions in evaluating and improving the quality of their international activities, and the MINT (Mapping Internationalisation) tool developed by Nuffic, as well as the European IMPI (Indicators for Mapping and Profiling Internationalisation) tool (van Gaalen 2010). Criteria for strategic alliances, partnerships and partner analyses were also described together.

Divided into active regional working groups, the Pinnet Network also had sub-projects related to marketing UASs internationally and producing virtual programmes supporting international mobility, among other things. The Network also actively participated in the preparation of the strategy for the internationalisation of HEIs together with the Ministry of Education, and at the Ministry's request it produced a "vision 2015" for the internationalisation

of the UASs. (Salonen & Virtanen 2009.) Currently, the Pinnet Network is active in developing international activities of the Finnish UASs together with e.g. the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Rectors' Conference of the Finnish UASs (Arene), the network of the managers of international affairs in the Finnish Universities (Aivorihi), the FINNIPS Network, the network of the managers of student affairs in the Finnish UASs and the experts of education export. In 2007 the Pinnet Network also had a representative in the Executive Group of the Development of the Joint Application System for the international degree programmes.

The Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS, former FINNIBS) was established at the end of 2009 based on the need to recruit students abroad and organise entrance examinations in target countries. The Network was also partly a response to the ending of the Network for East and Southeast Asia. In the beginning, the network cooperation was between four UASs and their International Business Programmes, but soon this cooperation expanded in total to 14 UASs and 43 degree programmes taught completely in English. (Vanhanen 2013.) At best, the cooperation has brought together 22 UASs and up to 67 degree programmes (Vanhanen 2015, 12). Currently, in 2019, the FINNIPS Network is still active, though the number of partner UASs and their English-taught degree programmes is a bit lower due to UAS mergers and introduction of new selection methods. However, in addition to ten years of solid cooperation, the Network has faced completely new challenges related to the new phase of commercialising international education. The FINNIPS Network also has an important role in sharing knowledge between UASs, maintaining contact with the stakeholders and ensuring the quality of the entire chain that is involved in getting international degree students to Finnish UASs.

INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THE PROFILE AND SUCCESS OF FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

International degree programmes (IDP) were introduced in Finnish universities of applied sciences at a very early stage of establishing permanent UASs in the mid-1990s. However, there were not that many IDPs and they were not established in all UASs. In the last decade, the Ministry of Education and Culture set target figures for UASs to educate more international degree students. IDPs were also established due to practical reasons. They made student exchange easier and increased international networks (Faktaa 2/2009). Tuition in English could be offered to exchange students and there were

ready-made course packages available to exchange students. IDPs are also currently the basis for global education and double degrees.

According to the evaluation of IDPs in Finland (KKA 2013), IDPs were seen as an important instrument for reaching the objectives of institutional internationalisation, and the higher education institutions' institutional strategy/strategies or internationalisation strategies are related to the IDPs.

The name of the degree programme should be informative enough, and the description of the degree programme should give a realistic picture of the qualification that can be obtained by completing the degree. The career possibilities and connections to working life as well as further education possibilities interest the prospective students.

According to the International Student Barometer (ISB) of autumn 2017, 95% of the foreigners completing their entire higher education degree in Finland found the specific course title (i.e. the content of the education) to be an important or very important criterion in deciding where to study. 93% of respondents found the reputation of the institution to be important or very important. For 81% of the respondents, opportunities for further study as well as full-time work in Finland were important or very important. (Facts Express 6B/2018.)

How can the IDPs stand out among the programmes offered in other UASs in Finland or abroad? There are plenty of degree programmes in International Business or Information Technology. What makes the difference between these programmes? The location of the higher education institution? How skilfully the programmes are being marketed to potential students? How well have the institution's English websites been designed, and do they provide information in an accurate way and proportion? Is the institution using different channels of social media in communicating with applicants and students? Are there alumni networks and student ambassadors? What kind of support services and facilities are available for the students? All these factors play an important role when young people decide what and where to study.

Each IDP should have its own individual clear profile that is true to the strategy of the higher education institution. It is delightful to notice that in some universities of applied sciences innovative and creative new degree programmes have been established that are offered in the spring 2019 application system (e.g. eSports Business, Game Design, Digital International Business, Internet of Things, Community Educator/Adventure and Outdoor Educator, Wellbeing Management). There are also three bachelor's programmes available as distance teaching and online studies, such as International Business, Business Information Technology and Musician. Only the bachelor-level degrees are

described in this article, but in spring 2019 there are also study options in 77 International Master's Degree Programmes (www.studyinfo.fi) in UASs. In an international context, the Degree Programme of Registered Nurse can be more informative than the Degree Programme in Nursing. It clearly states the status and qualification brought by the degree. It would be interesting to know if UASs have developed, for commercial purposes, specialised IDPs that would attract potential customers globally. Are the country-specific working life needs taken into consideration? What kinds of competences are needed from employees in countries other than Finland? Finnish UASs are dynamic and easily responsive to the requirements of working life. These qualities should also be put in action to create agile solutions for high-quality and competitive IDPs.

The profile of the IDP should be much more than the content of a similar programme that is taught in Finnish, but the language of instruction is English. Multiculturalism is also naturally present in all IDPs through multicultural student groups. What could then be the characteristics of IDPs that make them special and bring a competitive edge compared with other degree programmes in the home country and abroad? Has the IDP kept its promise, given in the marketing of the programme, to its potential students? What is the reality and life like during studies and after studies? Do the programmes offer high-quality education and prepare students for working life, and provide connections to local students and enterprises? According to the International strategy for higher education and research 2017–2025 (Ministry of Education and Culture), higher education institutions should promote a smoother integration of foreign students into the Finnish higher education and research community.

The benefits brought by foreign degree students for the public economy depend on their employment. It is essential for the country providing the education that a sufficient number of foreign students stay in the country after graduation and get employment corresponding to their education (Garam 2015). According to the International strategy for higher education and research 2017–2025 (Ministry of Education and Culture), the impact of international students and skilled persons on the regional business life and internationalisation of enterprises should be found out, and dissemination of good practices should be strengthened throughout Finland. This should be done in cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland.

CONCLUSIONS

Knowledge has become more important to our lives than ever before. The development of our societies is increasingly based on the use of knowledge. Education cooperation has also become one of the main instruments of diplomacy. Some examples of cooperation programmes in this field in the 2000s were the Tempus and Asia-Link programmes. (Coyne 2004.) Based on the European Commission (2013), higher education policies must increasingly focus on the integration of a global dimension in design, content and implementation of all curricula and teaching/learning processes to ensure that all learners are able to acquire the international skills required in a globalised world. Also, the Finnish degree programmes taught in English as well as all export of education products should provide a basis for high-level knowledge, skills, innovations and good cooperation among people, which is necessary in a globalised environment. International students studying in the programmes of Finnish UASs are vectors of cooperation with their home countries in education, business, economy and social life. Global competency facilitates the employability of Finnish and international students, and it should also finally strengthen overall wellbeing, global citizenship and diplomacy. Generally, there has been an impression that the aim of the IDPs is to attract foreign students who will stay and work in Finland after graduation. However, according to a survey conducted about IDPs in 2008, it is not the primary aim to attract labour to Finland, but to more generally meet the needs of working life. (Faktaa 2/2009.) International degree students bring valuable international competences to business life. Therefore, it is essential that the international degree students are fully integrated to the HE community and working life. They should also have opportunities to learn the two main official languages of Finland in order to better integrate into Finnish working life. It is important that the international programmes have distinctive profiles to better attract international students and get a competitive edge on the global market.

Education has always had an important role in development cooperation and projects. The development cooperation has also been seen to integrate closely to Finland's latest international educational policy and educational activities, such as education export/global education services and edtech activities. As such, in the future Finland could step up its global role in education, as well as in education as a part of development cooperation. Finnish educational expertise is needed e.g. in countries with "learning crises" and in educational reforms. There is also a need to strengthen the Finnish

human resource base in education for international development as well as to engage in education research globally and offer development-oriented programmes and courses. (Reinikka, Niemi & Tulivuori 2018.)

During their almost 30-year history, Finnish UASs have participated in dozens of development projects. Most of their international degree students also come from developing countries, and in recent years the export of education activities has also been implemented in developing countries, aiming at building up the capacity of individuals, institutions or a community. New pedagogical methods and online learning environments are needed when the European higher education area is widening to the global higher education and research area, and when European transnational cooperation is widening to international global cooperation. Ethics and empathy are needed in educational cooperation with developing countries, as well as skilful staff members who are able to work in a global context. Global responsibility is important to take into account when HEIs educate professionals and decision-makers for the future. The effectiveness of Finnish higher education is measured, but it is important to remember that by selecting special indicators it is also possible to influence the activities which Finnish HEIs prioritise. After the stages of institutionalisation of internationalisation and commercialising, it is interesting to see what the next stage in the internationalisation of Finnish UASs is.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND DEGREE PROGRAMMES IN FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION IN LIGHT OF STATISTICS

Irma Garam

In this article, I will discuss what internationalisation of Finnish universities of applied sciences (UAS) looks like in light of statistics on foreign degree students and foreign-language degree programmes. The recruitment of international degree students and the development of degree programmes taught in a foreign language are already well-established practices in Finnish higher education. All UASs and universities offer English-taught degree programmes, to which they also recruit international students.

Since autumn 2017, students from non-EU/EEA countries have been charged tuition fees. Tuition fees change the position of Finnish higher education institutions as providers of international education and recruiters of international students. For example, the number of international students in Sweden declined after the introduction of fees, while in Denmark the proportion of students recruited from the EU/EEA increased. Having to pay for the education may affect students' attitude towards their studies and the way that higher education institutions provide support services. In this situation, it is particularly interesting to follow how the change will be reflected in the education offered in a foreign language and international students in Finland.

NEED FOR MORE COMPREHENSIVE STATISTICS ON PROGRAMMES TAUGHT IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The evaluation of international degree programmes stated in 2013 that examining international degree programmes is like trying to shoot at a moving target (Välilä et al. 2013). It is difficult to form an accurate picture of the development, as new programmes are established and old ones discontinued without any comprehensive statistics being compiled on them. Some information can be found in different databases, but the grounds for compiling the information vary.

In autumn 2019, the UAS sector will offer 150 degree programmes in which English is at least one of the languages of instruction, according to the Studyinfo service. The number of available programmes has declined since autumn 2018, when they totalled just over 200. In the university sector, the number of English-

taught programmes is significantly higher, almost 400 in autumn 2019. The information in Studyinfo is, however, not quite accurate as the total includes programmes that are defined as partly taught in English, but which in practice are implemented largely in the two national languages, Finnish or Swedish.

The data gathered by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) Study in Finland service provides a similar picture of international degree programmes in Finnish institutions. During the academic year 2018–2019, UASs offer a total of 122 programmes, and about 70 per cent of them are bachelor's level programmes. Universities offer a significantly larger number of programmes, more than 300 in 2018–2019. With a few exceptions, they are master's level programmes.

The number of international programmes has not changed significantly in UASs during the past few years. In 2012, UASs offered 142 international degree programmes, 76% of which were at the bachelor's level. In the university sector, there were fewer international programmes seven years ago than there are today, less than 260, and almost all of them were master's programmes. (Välilmaa et al. 2013.)

PROGRAMMES OFFERED IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ARE CENTRAL IN INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Higher education institutions in Finland have established international programmes since the 1980s. According to the evaluation of international degree programmes, there have been two periods during which the institutions have been particularly active. The first took place in the latter half of the 1990s, when degree programmes taught in English were established especially at UASs. The other growth period took place between 2006 and 2007, when the Finnish universities were particularly active. (Välilmaa et al. 2013.)

Establishing degree programmes taught in a foreign language is not a feature specific to Finland, as similar developments have also been seen in other European countries. In Europe, degree programmes taught in a foreign language have centred in countries in the north of Europe. Relative to the size of the system, Finland and the Netherlands have been particularly active in offering education in a foreign language (Maiworm & Wächter 2002; Wächter & Maiworm 2008).

Finnish institutions have had various motives for establishing degree programmes taught in a foreign language: responding to the institution's strategic targets and to national ones, profiling the institution internationally

and in Finland, providing the abilities required in the world of work, the internationalisation of Finnish students, making use of the special expertise in the unit and strengthening the expertise in the unit. UASs have emphasised, more than universities, the importance of providing Finnish students with opportunities for internationalisation, the internationalisation of working life in the region and obtaining a competent workforce for Finland. (Garam 2009.)

All in all, Finnish institutions consider degree programmes taught in a foreign language to be central to their internationalisation process (Välilmaa et al. 2013). Degree programmes taught in a foreign language offer a kind of node around which the higher education institution can centre its different international activities.

THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT UASS HAS STABILISED AT APPROXIMATELY 9,000 STUDENTS

In contrast to international degree programmes, detailed statistics are compiled on international students in Finnish higher education. Because international students mainly study in programmes taught in a foreign language, the statistics on international students also reveal the situation in international degree programmes. Of course, there are also exceptions. The statistics are based on nationality and may include some foreign nationals who have already lived in Finland before starting their higher education studies, and who know the language and study in degree programmes taught in Finnish.

The number of international students at Finnish UASs has increased significantly in the long term. The increase was especially strong between 2005 and 2012, after which it has stopped and the number of foreign students in UASs has remained at just over 9,000 students. In 2017, the number of international students studying for a bachelor's degree in UASs fell by just over 300 from the previous year. The fall is explained by the tuition fees of students from non-EU/EEA countries, which were applied for the first time to degree programmes beginning in autumn 2017.

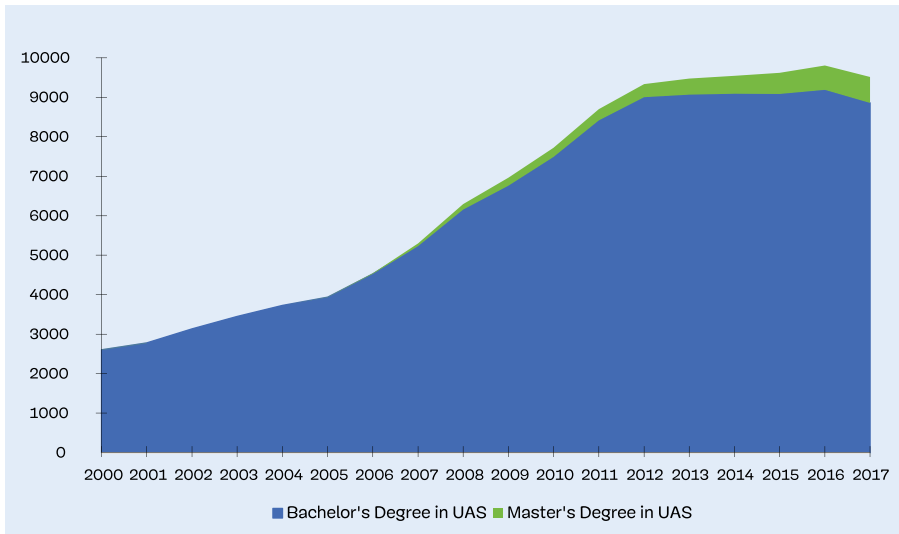


Figure 1. International degree students at universities of applied sciences (UAS) 2000-2017

At the university sector, more than 10,000 international students were studying in 2017, which is approximately one thousand students more than at UASs. The cycles seen in the development have been similar to those at UASs. From 2005, there was a strong increase in the number of students. The increase slowed down during the first half of the 2010s but did not stop as clearly as at UASs. In 2017, the number of international master’s students at universities also fell by approximately 400 students.

THE NUMBER OF NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FELL AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF TUITION FEES

The impact of the introduction of tuition fees can be seen more clearly by examining the number of new first-year students. In 2017, a total of 2,277 international students started a programme leading to a UAS degree, a decline of almost 500 students and 17% from the previous year. However, the decline seen at UASs was moderate compared to universities. The number of international students starting a master’s programme at universities fell by almost 40 per cent, from just over 2,300 to just under 1,500 students.

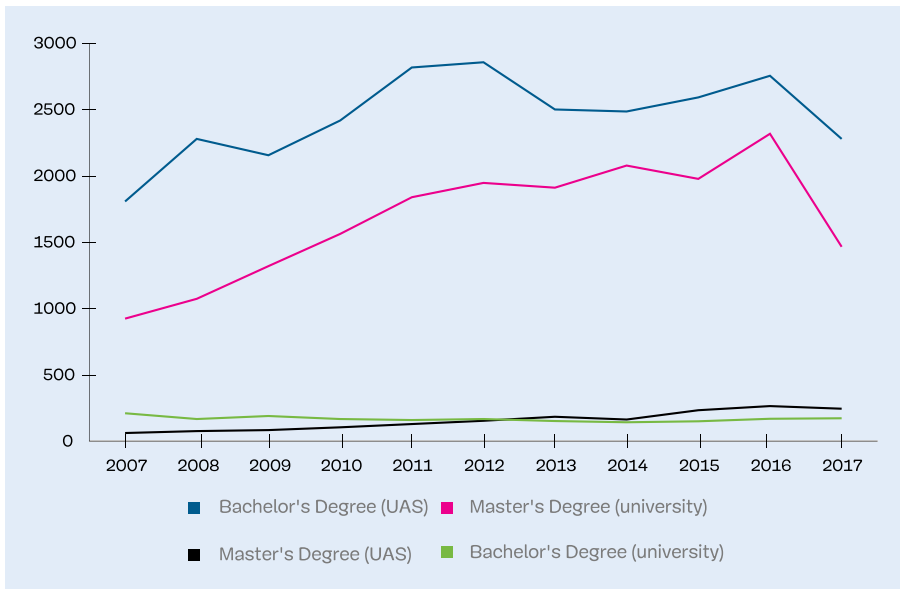


Figure 2. New international students at universities of applied sciences (UAS) and universities 2007–2017

The “division of work” between the two higher education sectors in terms of the different levels of study can be seen clearly in the statistics: at UASs, international students mainly study in programmes leading to a bachelor’s degree, while at universities they study in programmes leading to a master’s degree or a doctorate. Only a few international students study for a master’s degree at a UAS or a bachelor’s degree at a university.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT THE UAS SECTOR STUDY BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATION

At Finnish UASs, the recruitment of international students has a strong emphasis on business and administration. This field of study has been an important recruiter of international students since the beginning of the 2000s and its share has increased over time. Finnish UASs are not the only education providers in this field, as a large proportion of international students also study business and administration in the other OECD countries (OECD 2018).

Engineering and information and communication technologies are also important fields that recruit students to UASs. The proportion of international students studying information and communication technologies has declined from what it was ten years ago, while the proportion of those

studying engineering has remained almost the same. However, information and communication technologies remains the most active field recruiting international students in terms of the proportion of international students in that field. One in eight students studying in this field in the UAS sector are international. The figures in the field of business and administration are almost the same.

TABLE 1. International students at universities of applied sciences (UAS) by field of study in 2017

	No.	%	Proportion in students in the field	Development 2008-2017
Education	34	0%	2%	+10%
Arts and humanities	217	2%	3%	+10%
Social sciences	1	0%	0%	0%
Business, administration and law	3 633	38%	12%	+70%
Natural sciences	19	0%	7%	+27%
Information and communication technologies	1 760	18%	13%	+9%
Engineering	1 782	19%	6%	+71%
Agriculture and forestry	11	0%	0%	-27%
Health and welfare	1 285	14%	3%	+72%
Services	773	8%	8%	+55%
Total	9 515	100%	7%	+51%

International students in the university sector study in slightly different fields. The largest number of international students (21%) are recruited to the field of engineering. In the university sector, international students are more evenly distributed in the different fields of study than in the UAS sector. Universities also have a large number of international students studying information and communication technologies, arts and humanities, business and administration, and natural sciences.

UASS ATTRACT MORE STUDENTS FROM OUTSIDE THE EU/EEA THAN UNIVERSITIES

The majority (80%) of international degree students at Finnish UASs come from outside the EU/EEA. The number of non-EU/EEA citizens was at its

highest between 2008 and 2016, when they accounted for between 81 and 84 per cent of international students. In 2017, the number and proportion of non-EU/EEA students declined slightly. However, their proportion was at its smallest in the early 2000s, when non-EU/EEA students accounted for only about 70 per cent of all international students in Finnish UASs.

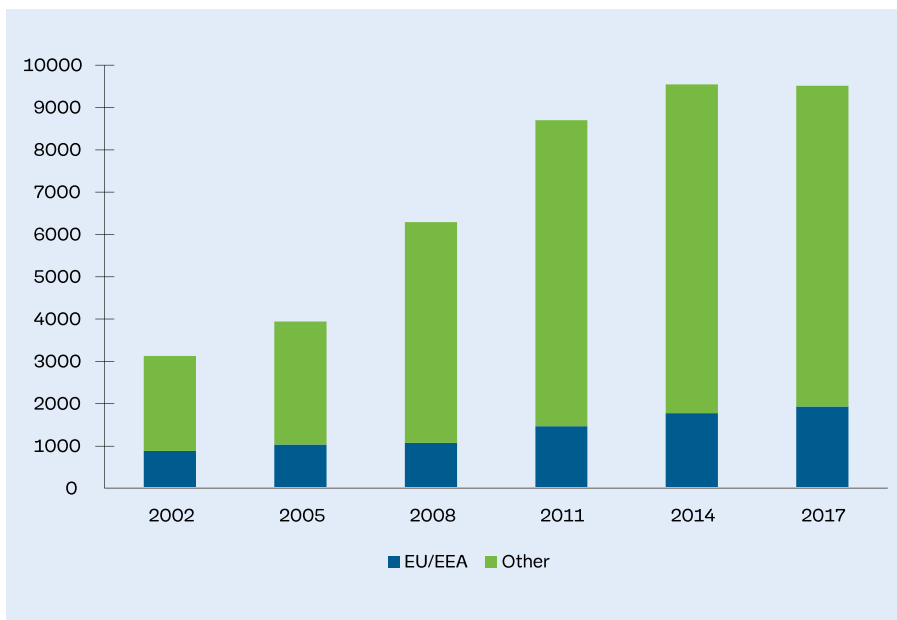


Figure 3. International degree students at universities of applied sciences (UAS) by citizenship group

In the UAS sector, the proportion of non-EU/EEA students has for a long time been bigger than in the university sector. At universities, students from non-EU/EEA countries accounted for 74% of international degree students in 2017 and only just over 50% in the early 2000s.

THE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE STUDENTS HAS GROWN RAPIDLY - AND DECLINED RAPIDLY

Vietnamese and Russians are the nationalities with by far the largest numbers of students at UASs. The next largest groups are Nepalese and Chinese students, although the difference between them and the two most common nationalities is considerable. A few nationalities dominate among international students at Finnish UASs, and the four most common nationalities make up more than 50% of all international students.

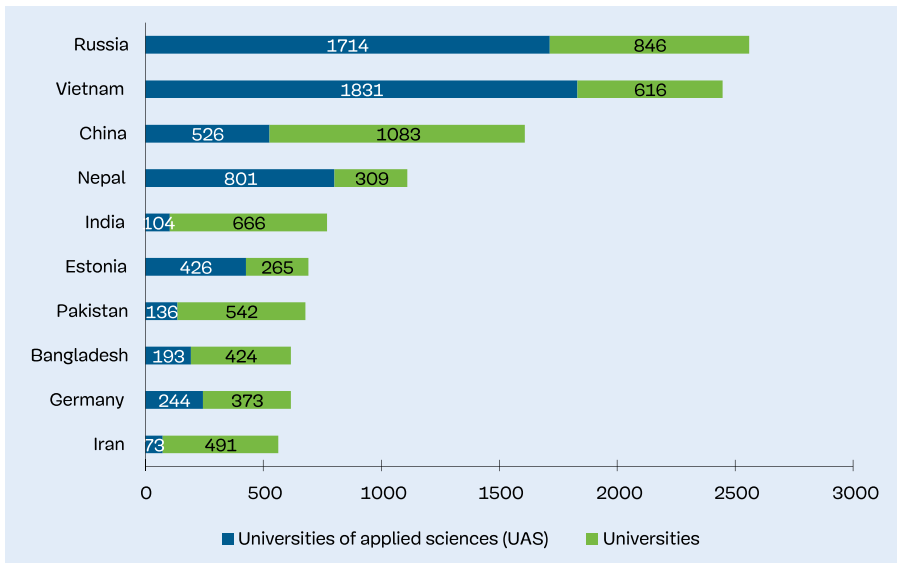


Figure 4. Ten most common nationalities among international students in higher education in 2017

International students in the university sector partly come from different countries. Universities receive more students from countries such as China, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In the university sector, a small number of nationalities also do not dominate as strongly among international students: the four most common nationalities account for less than a third of all international students at universities.

Especially the number of Vietnamese students has grown sharply in recent years. The number of Nepalese and Russian students has also increased. In 2017, the year that tuition fees were introduced, the number of Vietnamese and Russian students among international first-year students was significantly lower than previously. The number of Nepalese students did not decrease in the same way. If the same development continues, international students at UASs will, in the future, be a group that will look very different from now in terms of students' nationalities.

THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS IS ON THE INCREASE AGAIN

Tuition fees are also reflected in international applicants to Finnish UASs. Fewer international students applied to degree programmes starting in autumn

2017 than the previous year. However, the number of international applicants to programmes starting in autumn 2018 increased and was higher than in 2016, which was the last year before the introduction of tuition fees. The number of applicants selected to UASs and those who accepted the place increased from the previous autumn but did not reach the level of autumn 2016¹.

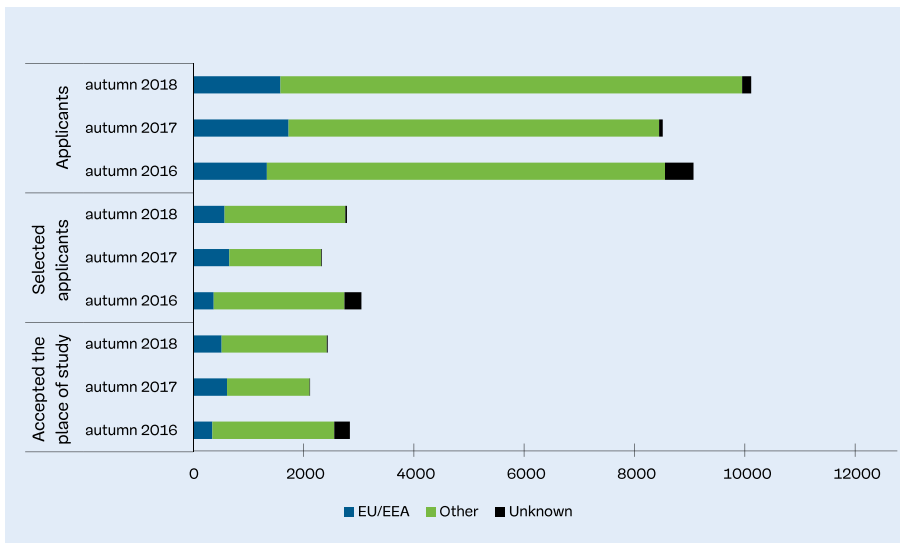


Figure 5. International applicants to UASs for degree programmes beginning in autumn 2016, 2017 and 2018

EU/EEA citizens accounted for 16% of applicants to UASs for autumn 2018. The proportion of EU/EEA citizens in the selected candidates was higher: they accounted for 20% of them. There has been very little increase in the proportion of EU/EEA citizens among applicants to UASs. Instead, their proportion in selected applicants has increased over the past couple of years.

Asian and European applicants are more successful in applying than applicants from Africa, as more of them are selected. Asians account for 48%, Africans for 16% and Europeans for 31% of the international candidates selected to UASs. The corresponding figures for applicants are 43%, 29% and 23%.

¹ The information on international applicants to UASs is based on the data in Studyinfo and can be found in Vipunen - Education Statistics Finland: Applicants and those who accepted a place in university of applied sciences education.

TABLE 2. International applicants to UASs, ten most common nationalities

	Applicants to degree programmes beginning in autumn 2018	Of whom were selected, %
Nepal	1 031	26%
Bangladesh	908	30%
Nigeria	893	13%
Russia	620	40%
Vietnam	580	61%
Estonia	448	20%
Kenya	428	18%
Cameroon	424	25%
Pakistan	367	17%
Ghana	356	7%

EMPLOYMENT AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS HAS DECLINED OVER A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS

Opportunities for international students to find post-graduation employment in Finland is one of the persisting challenges in the internationalisation of higher education. Many students are interested in staying in Finland after completing the programme, but many of them would also like to get more support for finding employment (EDUFI 2018). What does the employment situation of graduates from UASs look like in the light of statistics? Information on their employment can be found in the Vipunen statistical service².

Just under 50% of international students who graduated with a UAS degree in 2015 worked in full-time or part-time employment in Finland one year after their graduation. The difference between them and their Finnish peers is significant, as 80% of Finnish students were employed. The difference is explained by the fact that some international students leave Finland. Some move abroad because they cannot find work, others because they never intended to stay in Finland. For example, in 2017 one in two international students in their final year were planning to stay in the country after graduation (EDUFI 2018). On the other hand, not everyone succeeds in finding work in Finland even if they want to stay. They may have problems due to a lack of language skills, networks and work experience (see e.g. Shumilova et al. 2012).

² Vipunen - Education Statistics Finland: Graduates' entry into employment and placement into further education

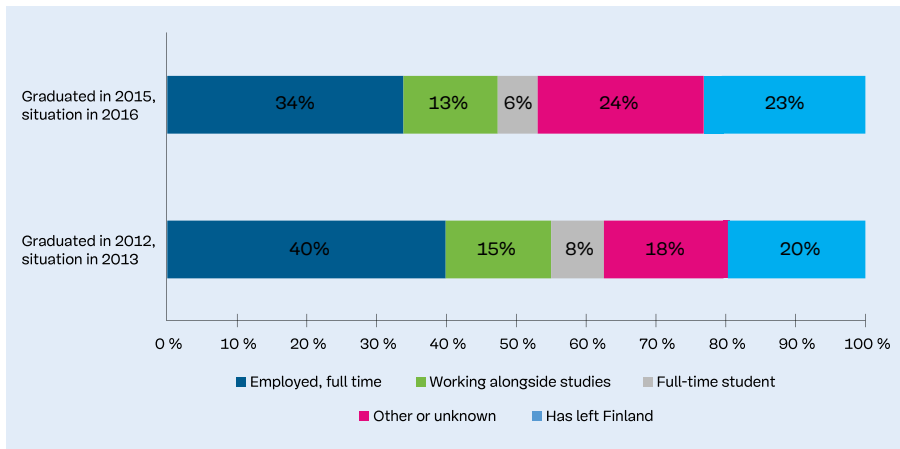


Figure 6. International graduates from programmes leading to a bachelor’s degree in UASs, situation 1 year after graduation

When interpreting these figures, it should be noted that the proportion of graduates who have left Finland is likely to be larger than just over 20%, as indicated in the diagram. The status “Has left Finland” is based on the notice of change of address submitted by the person leaving and a notice is not submitted by everyone. It is likely that many under the status “Other or unknown” have left Finland without submitting a notice.

The level of employment among international students has fallen over a period of three years, as more than half of those who graduated in 2012 were still working in Finland one year after graduation. This development may reflect the tightened situation in the Finnish job market, but it may also reflect the fact that as the number of international students grows, there will also be an increasing number of students who do not have any special networks in Finland or any special relation with the country.

However, UAS graduates are slightly more successful in finding employment than university graduates. Of international students who graduated with a master’s degree from a university in 2015, 41% were working in Finland a year later. The same applies to 35% of those who graduated with a doctorate. Correspondingly, a larger number of their peers had left Finland. UAS degrees are more clearly oriented to working life in Finland, which can be seen in the employment figures. The studies also last longer than the two-year master’s programmes, and there is consequently more time for integration.

When examined by field of study, students of health and welfare are the most successful in finding employment. Students in the field of services also

find employment more successfully than on average. These fields have already employed international students actively for a longer period of time. (CIMO 2012; CIMO 2014; CIMO 2016.)

DO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS END UP IN JOBS MATCHING THEIR EDUCATION?

In addition to finding employment, the type of work is also essential. International students find employment in different types of positions compared to their Finnish peers. International students work in expert positions less often and, correspondingly, more often as employees at the operational level. The difference is particularly significant with regard to non-EU/EEA students. Of Finnish students who graduated from UASs in 2015 and were in employment a year later, 54% worked in expert positions. The corresponding percentage among EU/EEA citizens was 40% and among non-EU/EEA citizens only 22%. Moreover, 29% of the employed non-EU/EEA citizens worked in the category “other employees” while the percentage of Finns working in these positions was only a few per cent and that of EU/EEA citizens 8%. Similar differences between nationalities in work tasks can be seen in statistics over several years. Many international students are likely to end up doing work that does not fully match their education. Although all work experience is valuable, employment in jobs that do not match the person’s education means that the resources of higher education institutions and students are wasted in the long term.

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INTERNATIONALISATION OF FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION EXPORT

Juha Ketolainen & Lauri Tuomi

The development of international student mobility gained in importance in the overall development of higher education during the 1990s. Special attention was given to outgoing student mobility, and specific targets were set in relation to it. The most important channels to achieve this aim were the different European Union, Nordic and nationally funded mobility and cooperation programmes which expanded and opened new opportunities for Finnish higher education institutions and students.

The growing numbers of exchange students also paved the way for the need to develop study programmes in English. It soon became clear that Finland was beginning to be an interesting country as a study destination in the eyes of potentially mobile foreign students, or as a cooperation partner for higher education institutions (HEIs). More attention was given to the recruitment of international degree students, and new and ambitious recruitment targets were set nationally and within HEIs.

Cooperation in curriculum development between Finnish and foreign higher education institutions, as well as development of joint study programmes, including joint degrees, was seen as an increasingly important way to develop higher education in a global context. HEIs created more strategically oriented plans for their international activities, whereas previously individual subject areas, teachers and researchers were the source of initiatives leading to international cooperation activities.

Simultaneously, the export of Finnish knowledge and know-how started to appear in the national discourse more often. The Finnish school system received excellent results in international comparisons and rankings. There were great expectations for education export in terms of importance for the national economy.

EDUCATION EXPORT FINDS ITS PLACE IN NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The national strategy for international actions in higher education from 2001 was updated with new targets set for 2010. The emerging and expanding

economic aspects with a market approach in international higher education were seen as a major global trend, and in this respect, attention was also given to the export of Finnish education. However, the main emphasis was still on promoting mobility, in competence development as well as in quality aspects in higher education.

The next national strategy included education export as one of the five main goals. The main target for this goal was achieving a situation where the education export sector would be an important part of the national export sector. The Ministry of Education also set a task force to develop a national education export strategy to be approved by the government. Thus, education export had become an issue, the importance of which was underlined and with great expectations connected to its results.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture (2016) published a roadmap which aimed to highlight the official measures supporting the acceleration of education export. The roadmap emphasised the importance of the development of well-coordinated support services for the exporters. Thus, the Finnish National Agency for Education – a subsidiary for the Ministry of Education and Culture - was given the responsibility of coordinating “Education Finland,” the national growth programme on education export.

The latest international strategy for higher education and research 2017–2025 was drawn in the context of the process of creating a vision for Finnish higher education and research in 2030. Within this strategy, strengthening international HE cooperation, creating networks outside Finland, new flagships in certain scientific areas, attracting top-level knowledge and talents, national branding and strengthening Finnish messages globally all formed a framework of strategic thinking and concrete actions which further supported education export efforts.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPORT

According to the Education Finland programme, the volume of Finland’s education export is estimated to have reached EUR 350 million by the end of 2018. The export volume of Finnish higher education was about EUR 12 million. However, the size of the education market is expected to grow to EUR 10 trillion by 2030 (see e.g. HolonIQ 2019). In this respect there is a great potential for Finland to raise its profile in the global market.

Today, Finland is known not only for its great results in international rankings but also as being a country with a well-functioning education system supporting life-long learning. Therefore, the demand for education export

is targeted at all levels of education as well as on the development of the educational system. Fortunately, the supply on education export has also been expanded to cover all levels of education, including the technological innovations.

Today, Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences offer a wide range of educational services such as in-service training programmes, teacher education, management training and consultancy. The volume of international students paying tuition fees (i.e. students coming from outside the EU/ETA region) is still relatively small, but the estimates show growth. Moreover, the higher education institutes have been actively planning new forms for degree programme services, e.g. by starting joint programmes and campuses together with international partners.

The industry-specific expertise of higher education institutes (e.g. on social and health care, mining, medical science and clean tech) provides excellent opportunities to widen the offering for export. The first joint ventures with businesses and higher education institutes have already been started to export the joint services. Also, the networking with e.g. vocational education and training institutes provides ways to widen the supply.

However, as education export is a rather new form in higher education in Finland, there is a need for strategic decisions on resourcing, financing and organising the activities. Furthermore, the commitment of top management is seen as one of the most important elements in ensuring success in the long run.

FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR EDUCATION EXPORT

In 2018, the World Bank (2018) warned of a global 'learning crisis' due to schooling without learning, especially in developing countries. Correspondingly, the United Nations (2019) has published its twelve sustainable development goals: obtaining 'quality education' is one of the foundations for a better life. In this respect, there will be new opportunities for higher education institutes in their global operations. However, it is important to understand that the development cooperation and education export may complement each other in order to provide the best solutions to the developing countries. Despite the need for it in developing countries, education reforms in developed countries and regions also provide new opportunities for Finnish educational exporters. So far, the focus regions for education export have been China, Southeast Asia, the Gulf region and Latin America. Nonetheless, there is also a growing demand in e.g. Eastern Europe and North America as well as Europe. Thus,

in the future Finland could have a global role in selected regions in providing opportunities for children, students and adults to grow to their own potential.

In order to reach a position as a global ‘player’ in the global education market, collaboration between the educational sector and private business is needed. Finland’s ‘philosophy’ on education export has placed a strong emphasis on co-creation. It has been seen that the collaboration with international partners is crucial in order to adjust the Finnish solution to local needs. Co-creation is seen to be the basis for sustainable solutions and long-term partnerships.

Finland’s reputation as the leading country in education challenges exporters to ensure the quality of their operations. Quality assurance through the continuous development of products and services, quality assessments and customer experience are the only ways to grow and develop – and create a better world.

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LEADING THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Jussi Halttunen

My enthusiasm for writing this essay grew as I made my annual report on the state of our University of Applied Sciences (UAS) at the Jyväskylä City Board meeting. The politicians nodded with satisfaction and heard that JAMK UAS will bring in many new ways of prosperity and activity in the city. The job growth of our institute was also praised. The new openings that we have made in the previous year in international markets met a particularly enthusiastic response. My astonishment was great when the city's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) made a critical statement at the end of the event, where he clearly doubted the importance of the university's export of education and international projects. In addition, he thought that there were significant financial risks involved in international activities, and suspected the margin on international trade to be too low in relation to those risks. The speech by the experienced CFO made me seriously consider the situation at JAMK and especially its management. Perhaps it was also the basic intention of the speaker. This is an indication of the interest and even passion of education exports.

LEGITIMISATION AND RESOURCING OF EDUCATION EXPORT

At the national level, university education as well as other higher education is seen as a great opportunity to increase our country's export earnings and create new jobs for universities. At one time, a working group led by Member of Parliament Päivi Lipponen (SDP) examined the education export of universities and made some recommendations to accelerate it. The most obvious of these was the presentation of a state-owned training export company. This issue has stunned many active educational export actors. This group's presentation contained features of the old Soviet Gosplan as well as strong centralism, causing many to question its suitability for today's global market economy. In my opinion, the team led by Päivi Lipponen did a good job and certainly contributed to the growth of education export in higher education institutions. The most important thing was that the working group gave a clear legitimacy to higher education export and other internationalisation efforts.

The key challenge for Finnish higher education institutions (HEI) education is the lack of experts involved in international operations. From my own

experience, it is now fairly easy to get a deal on the world market, where the demand for different education is growing in leaps and bounds. Larger challenges are usually encountered when the project is launched. The scarcity of expert resources is particularly affected by the availability of expertise in relation to the normal tasks of universities. Language skills may also contribute to personal family reasons that prevent long-term travel abroad. Universities have reacted to the scarcity of resources by creating a variety of export consortia and mutual societies, through which more experts can be obtained. Good examples of these are EduCluster Finland Oy (University of Jyväskylä, JAMK and Gradia) operating in Jyväskylä, and EduExellece Oy (Haaga-Helia, Laurea and Metropolia UAS) and the KFEIG consortium (JAMK, HAMK and LAMK UAS). Many of the Finnish universities of applied sciences have successfully implemented the FINNIPS network in the field of enrolling new degree students from abroad. You might read more of this success story from this publication.

Many universities of applied sciences have education export and increasing international activities as a strategic goal. It has been shown that the potential to increase the volume of the operations, both in terms of education and RDI activities, exists. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), significant international players include at least Centria UAS, South-Eastern Finland UAS (XAMK), Haaga-Helia UAS, Häme UAS (HAMK) and also JAMK. In our own UAS, international activities are seen as an integral part of our new generation of higher education and its complementary funding in our strategy. Last year, 24% of our total income came from outside the core financing (including strategy money) brought by the MoEC financing model, and this share is expected to increase significantly in the future. Non-government funding for education creates stability and enables growth in activity.

GROWTH OBJECTIVES GUIDE INTERNATIONALISATION

Being the head of the university's internationalisation mentioned in the title is an important part of the rector's work. It requires not only attendance at the signing of international contracts, but also, above all else, acting in the role of facilitator and inspirer. The aspirations among the faculty and staff may also quite easily arouse critical discussion and controversy in the university community. Many business trips conducted abroad by the rector and other managers may come under suspicion, not only inside the institution but also within the interest groups of the universities. Directing and using the work

of the best experts and rewarding successful work require the role of the facilitator. The role of the enthusiast is especially needed when an important RDI project arrives as a “core” of Horizon2020. Finally, the business and land risk inherent in international transactions is ultimately targeted at the rector’s back.

A very natural way to internationalise is to increase the number of foreign degree students. Tuition fees collected from students coming from outside the EU/EEA area have already become a significant source of additional income for some universities and UASs. This revenue is expected to grow significantly in the next few years, and many companies have launched new English-language degree programmes aimed at recruiting more paying students. There have been some challenges when recruiting international students who have to pay a normal tuition fee for the Finnish universities. As such, the number of applicants has been moderate, but problems have arisen in obtaining a residence in Finland for citizens of certain countries. There will also be discussions about the right way and level of granting scholarships for the students. It appears to be obvious that universities will have to relinquish their excessively generous principles when granting international scholarships.

Why are the international operations and education export of the HEIs so important, and why should we try and work hard to increase the volumes? The most important aspect is the new learning opportunity related to international activities. International education and RDI projects abroad provide a significant opportunity for faculty and staff members to learn new things and get international references. When properly implemented, international student exchange will give Finnish degree students a significant opportunity to study abroad at high-level universities and colleges. International competence and good language skills significantly improve the labour market potential of a person who has graduated from the profession. If successful, international trade, and in particular education export, can also be covered. However, many international RDI projects are based on invoicing actual costs. In the future, a significant opportunity will be the sale of training to the international market via e-commerce. Unfortunately, in this aspect Finnish universities are still far behind the American and British operators. Yet, strong Finnish knowledge of education may turn out to be a productive success if it is productised. Interesting new openings have already been made for online courses with the use of artificial intelligence.

INTERNATIONALISATION IS A QUESTION OF EXISTENCE

In my opinion, international action is an essential and natural part of the university's activities. At its best, it is part of the quality of the university and its effectiveness. Good quality is of great interest to the world and beyond. Success in international activities requires activity. If we just wait for orders, as some people in the institution think, success will not be achieved. A nation of 5 million people like Finland lives on international trade, and its success will largely be tied to the new international expertise produced by universities.

In the EAIE Barometer over internationalisation of education in Europe, several good reasons for HEIs to strive for internationalisation have been stated. The top three reasons for internationalisation are: 1.) Improving the quality of education, 2.) Preparing students for a global world, and 3.) Attracting more international students. (Sandström & Hudson 2018.)

The aim is not merely to increase the number of international students, but to improve the overall quality of education that the HEIs provide. The international education is primarily viewed as an important element of what constitutes a high-quality education. If the institutions have not established any targeted strategy for internationalisation, there is a risk that they will often be regarded as lagging behind in the field's internationalisation. Leading HEIs in internationalisation pay additional, targeted attention to their international activities, which in turn leads to enhanced results in internationalisation. Growing activity in international strategic partnerships is considered a sign of the high quality of international education. This should be approached as an integral part of HEIs' strategies while aiming to provide high-quality international education for all students, international and domestic. It should also be closely related to the international research and innovation work, which HEIs carry out.

At JAMK we are currently re-inventing our strategy for higher education and building the HEI of the new generation of 2020. Such a kind of university of applied sciences will utilise the current and future digital transformation in education and learning. We also expect that this will provide plenty of opportunities to build new, international prestige. To become internationally appreciated is already a significant reason for an HEI to enroll more talented people, both as students and faculty as well as staff members. Choosing to only be a local or regional player, without any international aims, will entail much risk of fading away into irrelevance. Therefore I will finish my story with this statement: Be an international educator or die!



On 22 January 2019 JAMK signed a preliminary agreement with Singapore Polytechnic on the establishment of a cyber security competence center RGCE in Singapore. From left to right Rector Jussi Halttunen, Ambassador of Finland to Singapore Paula Parviainen, and Rector Soh Wai Wah. (Photo: Singapore Polytechnic)

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The more the merrier: comprehensive
cooperation in the admission process

COOPERATION AND CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT: APPLICATION PROCESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ADMISSION OFFICERS

Johanna Auvinen & Sanna Tyrväinen

Over the years, there has been a wide variety of admission criteria among universities of applied sciences (UAS) in Finland when selecting students outside of Finland. At the beginning, UASs had their own applications and used only their own exams. In the early 2000s, the first forms of cooperation began when the Finnish Polytechnic Network for East and Southeast Asia started to organise entrance exams in eight countries. This cooperation lasted from 2001 to 2009 (Marten 2009, 55). During that time UASs also organised exams for individual applicants in Finnish embassies abroad, where the UAS sent the exam materials and the personnel of the embassies supervised the exams. Before 2007, applicants applied for degree programmes conducted in English in separate applications. If they wanted to apply e.g. to six options, they filled in six different paper applications.

The biggest problems in the early days were the lack of information on the possibilities to take the exam outside Finland and dealing with practical issues concerning the exam. The admission officers could not give guaranteed information to the applicants early enough on whether they could take the exam in their home or neighbouring country, or if the applicants had to travel all the way to Finland to participate in the compulsory entrance exam. The scheduling was also a problem, because in many cases the exam was exactly the same as it was in Finland. This meant that the only time it could be done was the exact time the exam was held also in Finland. In some cases, the same exam could not be held because of the overly different time zones, the lack of personnel or lack of expertise in the embassies; in such cases the programmes faced difficulties on how to consider the results equal to those of the exams made in Finland. Of course, measures were taken to change the exams so that they measured the same skills; for example, the interview could be replaced with an essay on the same issue.

THE JOINT APPLICATION SYSTEM ENABLES COOPERATION BETWEEN THE ADMISSIONS OFFICES

The cooperation between the admissions offices of UASs in Finland has been strong since the Finnish-taught programmes were gathered to the national

joint application system in 2003. When English-taught bachelor's programmes joined the national joint application system in 2007 (admissions.fi, VKYH-system), it was easy to widen the cooperation. That is when admission officers started using the same national online database for applications administered by the National Board of Education, Finland. From then on, admission officers have formed common guidelines and instructions together, and national admission criteria for UASs is also drafted every year. For example, admission officers have created several data sheets of different countries' education systems so that every UAS would check the high school certificates and decide the eligibility equally. In 2009–2011, national admission criteria were developed in the group comprising the Finnish National Agency for Education, admissions offices and representatives of degree programmes. At some point, the responsibility for drawing up the national admission criteria was assigned to the working committee of UASs' heads of student services and field-specific admission criteria work groups. The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, Arene, confirms the national admission criteria yearly.

During 2007–2008, applicants could be exempted from the entrance examination language test if they provided a certificate of their language skills (i.e. IELTS, TOEFL) with certain minimum requirements. In addition to the senior school certificate, an applicant who applied with a non-Finnish qualification and was not a citizen of an EU/EEA country provided proof of their English language skills by the end of the application period to obtain invitation for exams during the years 2009–2016. In 2017, the English language certificate requirement was abandoned (English language skills are assessed as a part of the exams) because of tuition fees, and partly due to the fact that English certificates can be forged; in some countries, several verification systems are even involved in corruption, for example. In 2016, a year before the tuition fees were enacted, the Finnish National Agency for Education charged €100 from applicants outside the EU/EEA for administrative costs. This practice was in use for only one year. It required a lot of new features in the system and work for UASs' admission offices.

In the joint application, the first-preference UAS checks applications and makes the eligibility decision for all the applicant's UAS study options. The new application system (studyinfo.fi) where all the Finnish education institutions' education were gathered together came into being in 2015. At that point, some UASs put their programmes taught in English into direct applications. This was the first time that the national cooperation in English-taught programmes began to crack.

VARIETY INCREASES

During 2017–2018, UASs started to hold their English-taught programmes for both application periods during the spring (January and March application periods). This was done mainly because the Finnish applicants seemed to apply later in the spring when all the Finnish-taught programmes were also offered. At the moment there is a large variety of applications in UASs for English-taught programmes. Some UASs are also piloting the continuing application period, where an application can be made whenever it suits the applicant during the whole year. The admissions can be made e.g. based on the online interview organised by the UAS in question. The education still begins once or twice a year from the beginning of the academic term. It is interesting to see how this will develop. It seems that all this takes more effort than the results promise.

According to the changes in the laws, in 2017 higher education institutions had to start charging tuition fees from non-EU/EEA citizens when applying for English-taught programmes. New features had to be created in the application system, e.g. tuition fee obligation marking, attachment requests for proving citizenship/resident permit status, and scholarship applications. There is a lot of variation regarding the amount of tuition fees, scholarship schemes, etc. One positive thing is that UASs have published information about their tuition fees, scholarship amounts and granting processes for applicants. However, every higher education institution may have different fees, various kinds of rules regarding payments, deadlines, dates for showing resident permit status, etc. Therefore, it is very difficult for an applicant to create an overall picture of the processes in Finland.

After the implementation of tuition fees in higher education institutions, the atmosphere of cooperation has seemed to change. Higher education institutions began favouring direct applications because every UAS would like to get the best students who could afford to pay the tuition fees. The idea seems to be that when the applicant is guided directly to the direct application, they do not gain information of the other possibilities to study in Finland. However, it would be prudent to understand how small a country Finland is among the other countries offering English-taught higher education programmes. When one then adds the fact that universities in Finland overall offer annual scholarships to cover the student's living expenses, thereby making them more tempting than UAS programmes in Finland, it leaves UASs in a situation where it is not profitable to act alone. It is important to see the whole picture from the applicants' perspective and understand that a UAS will have more benefits and cost-effectiveness in cooperation than if it had to deal with it all by itself.

COOPERATION SMOOTHENS AND UNIFIES PRACTICES OF STUDENT SELECTION

When FINNIPS entrance exams were organised for the first time in 2010, all the guidelines, documents and arrangements seemed laborious at first, but then we noticed how much less the applicants sent enquiries, how much easier it was to get information on the exams, how much better organised the exams were and how much better students we gained. Nowadays, part of the international marketing of the UASs' degree programmes is also made via the FINNIPS cooperation, so we can just lay back and wait for the applications to arrive. It may not quite be like that, however, but the cooperation is organised so well that we can count on everything going as planned, and if some problems arise, it does not take long for those to be fixed. It is easy to guide applicants when all of the network's UASs act in the same way, such as using the same form for invitation letters for the exams, for example. This cooperation offers us UASs the website, the marketing, the scheduling, the exam venues, the exam arrangements, the invitation letters, different types of expert trainings and the statistics yearly. It goes without saying that the member UASs have to do their part, but with the guidance of the FINNIPS coordinator, everything goes smoothly. And most importantly, every part of the yearly process is constantly measured and developed.

The benefits of this FINNIPS cooperation for the applicants are as vital as the benefits for the cooperating UASs. The common international marketing gives us more funds altogether to participate in the student fairs worldwide, especially in the countries where the exams are organised. This helps prospective applicants to have face-to-face contact with the FINNIPS and UASs already before applying. It is important to have this kind of touch when trying to decide what country offers the most attractive opportunities from the applicant's perspective. FINNIPS also offers prime instructions and well-organised exams to the applicants. When UASs work together with the common guidelines, the transparency increases the applicant's trust on the UASs. As well as information on Finland and living in Finland, the network offers truthful information on the costs of living and tuition fees. It is very difficult for people to understand, especially in third world countries, how expensive studying and living in Finland truly is. There is no sense in denying this fact when recruiting the students.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

One of the biggest benefits for UASs and applicants is that participating in the entrance exams engages the applicant to the UAS. This may be the reason why these applicants often choose to confirm the offered study place, arrive in Finland when the financial issues are cleared, begin their studies and, most importantly, study well and graduate. This provides a huge advantage compared to the paper-based admissions, where the students are selected solely on the basis of their school certificates. The paper-based admission is not the most expedient way to select students for English-taught bachelor's programmes. There is always the possibility that foreign degree certificates are forged, and comparing different countries' certificates is very difficult in any case because of differences in grading scales and evaluation criteria.

At the moment (January 2019), the proposal for the new decree regarding the joint application is undergoing a round of consultation. The fear is that cooperation between UASs will be shattered even more with this new decree, because its purpose is to remove the prioritisation of study options from the January joint application. It enables an applicant to receive up to six study place offers, and UASs will have no idea which study place the applicant will accept. It is possible that the applicant will explore the study options, their contents, tuition fees, etc. only at this point. The current system, with the prioritisation, has forced applicants to make up their minds already by the time they have filled in the application. The new implementation, on the other hand, will delay the applicant's resident permit process and arrival in Finland. The UASs' selections from a waiting list will not be conducted until late July, which is too late for the applicants' resident permit process. Though it remains to be seen, we are ready to make an effort for this good cooperation to continue.

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MISSION POSSIBLE: ENTRANCE EXAMS ENABLE THE RECRUITMENT OF COMPETENT BUSINESS STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL SETTING

Jyrki Holappa & Matti Hirsilä

One of the key ingredients for the success of any educational programme are the participating students. They play a vital role in the execution of the curriculum and the creation of a positive learning environment that encourages and challenges the students to achieve the set learning objectives. Consequently, the nature of students admitted to a study programme should be of essential interest to the degree programmes.

The skills and knowledge of candidates, relevant to the performance of degree programme studies, should be measured, in addition to attracting candidates of a certain competence profile/background that meets the application prerequisite. This measurement becomes crucial when dealing with cohorts of international applicants with diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. A successful measurement will, in turn, ensure a consistent body of students with a similar ability to communicate, interact and pass through the various criteria set out in the curriculum for a prompt graduation. Typically, this kind of measurement of applicants' skills and knowledge takes place via an entrance examination. In this article we will focus on the use and development of entrance exams deployed by International Business Degree programmes participating in the FINNIPS network.

JOINT EFFORTS FOR MATCHING EXAMS

On the basis of our experience, the role of an entrance exam has been very important in securing a capable student body. Due to variations in educational systems internationally, such as their assessment scales and assessment methods, making a fair and homogeneous comparison of applicants' school performance in the global context is very challenging. Furthermore, one can argue that not all language tests or test results can be considered trustworthy, although a good command of the English language is one of the key measures of forecasting a successful completion of studies. These realities rationalise the use of entrance examinations, and meeting applicants in person is perhaps the most reliable method in terms of selecting the degree students,

simultaneously guaranteeing a transparent and fair entrance examination policy in an international setting.

The cooperation on joint entrance exams in the field of international business started in spring 2010, as the FINNIPS network was first established in 2009 by the respective International Business Degree Programmes at Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), JAMK University of Applied Sciences (JAMK), Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS) and Oulu University of Applied Sciences (Oamk). Soon the network expanded; there are currently 13 universities of applied sciences, eight fields of studies and 39 degree programmes participating in the FINNIPS network. During the years of cooperation, there seem to be three key principles related to organising entrance exams that have emerged. First of all, in the student selection process the applicants need to be met in person. Secondly, the examinations, assessment and actual student selection is conducted by qualified representatives of Finnish universities of applied sciences on the basis of jointly developed and applied procedures and criteria. Thirdly, the student selection may not be outsourced to commercial agents or educational consultants.

MEASURING APPLICANTS' COMPETENCES

Over the years, the structure and contents of each year's entrance exam in the field of International Business has been under continuous development, and the experiences and feedback gained have been utilised in the planning of the following year's exam. In general, the major efforts of development have focused on the choice of the exam's pre-reading materials, the construction and evaluation of the essay part, and the execution and evaluation of the group discussion part.

The capability of students to interact and express themselves fluently in English has been seen to be of great value for the implementation of business education. In addition to the learning process, the spoken language skills are also needed in facilitating students' reciprocal familiarisation and networking. Earlier, the written language skills of an applicant were evaluated on the basis of a motivational letter. This proved to be problematic, as over time the contents of scriptures for a motivational letter began to contain somewhat standard aspirations or memorised sentences. Thus, the introduction of essay writing on the basis of the pre-reading materials in the entrance exam has produced more accurate scriptures depicting the applicant's true skills in written English.

The current model for the entrance exam in the field of International Business includes testing applicants' spoken and written capabilities in English, logical-

mathematical thinking and an ability to apply information on the basis of the pre-reading materials on certain themes in the exam to produce solutions. The pre-reading materials are published as the application period begins and are conveniently at the disposal of applicants on the websites of each participating degree programme as well as on the network's joint FINNIPS website.

EXAMS WITH BENEFITS

The efforts focused on developing the entrance exams have yielded rather positive results. We are able to measure applicants' current skills and knowledge (current competences), which in turn will reflect on the admitted students' performance in studies. Moreover, the admitted students have more or less similar levels of skills and knowledge that enable a solid starting point for the incipient business education. As pointed out earlier, students' adequate spoken English skills also reflect positively on their ability to integrate, network and form friendships in the study group, and in the learning environment at large. Additionally, the training of exam supervisors evaluating applicants' group discussions enables consistency in evaluation.

Furthermore, the evaluation of other sections of the exam has also been continuously developed by providing rather explicit instructions to exam inspectors on evaluation and grading. As a result, the group of commencing students is of a similar competence level. Thus, we recognise the role of the entrance exam in testing an applicant's true intentions and motivation in applying for business education, as it will take some effort and commitment in advance. Participating in and passing an entrance exam is perceived to be a positive achievement by applicants.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF AN ENTRANCE EXAMINATION IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

- Measurement of applicant's current skills and knowledge (competences)
- Development of entrance exams will enable the measurement of skills and knowledge needed for the student's performance in studies
- Admitted students have a more or less similar level of skills and knowledge that enable a solid starting point for the incipient business education
- Importance of student's spoken English skills

- Training of supervisors evaluating applicants' group discussions as a part of the exam enables consistency in evaluation and a more equal group of commencing students
- Positive impact on students' study performance
- Positive impact on timely graduation and employment
- Positive impact on students' ability to integrate, network and form friendships in the study group
- Participating and passing an entrance exam is perceived to be a positive achievement by applicants
- Entrance exam tests an applicant's true intentions and motivation to apply for education, as it will take some effort and commitment on the part of the applicant in advance

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

What does the future hold for the role of entrance exams in the degree programmes? In the previous paragraph, some examples of the benefits of organising traditional entrance exams were explained. At the same time, the developments in ICT will surely open up new possibilities to consider in terms of evaluating applicants' skills and knowledge as well – possibly without or instead of a traditional entrance exam. However, this may create new concerns related to the level of technology and infrastructure used in the countries in which entrance exams are held, the applicants' equal access to computers, software and the intranet, reliability of ICT connections, reliability and verification of an applicant's true identity and answering the exam questions in person without any outside help and influence – just to name a few cautionary examples. There are several interesting questions to be considered: what are the benefits that digitalisation could bring? Can an online interview replace meeting the applicant in person? Will robotics and face recognition help us? Is the student selection as such shifting from attracting large volumes of applicants towards practices similar to that of head hunting?

One can argue that the glorious years of globalisation are now on hold, as regionalism and nationalism have entered the arena of international policy. The recent refugee crises and their aftermath have made the policies and practices of the immigration offices more careful. The fear of illegal immigration and associated harmful phenomena are openly discussed in many societies. Consequently, these developments may lower the interest of families and parents to send their offspring abroad to study. On the other hand, Finland as a safe, modern and clean environment should be able to

continue to attract talented applicants interested in developing their future professional skills. The question is rather how we as a country and as Finnish universities of applied sciences can better reach the potential applicants with our international marketing efforts? The current Finnish policy of higher education partly supports the interests of Finnish Higher Education Institutions to invest in international student recruitment. The tuition fees collected from non-EU citizens admitted to degree programmes certainly do provide an economic incentive also for Finnish universities of applied sciences to further develop their international marketing efforts and actions, also in collaboration with the FINNIPS network.

It can be argued that the key principles related to organising entrance exams in international degree programmes will continue to remain justifiable. In particular, the recently introduced new financing model for Finnish universities of applied sciences by the Ministry of Education and Culture emphasises timely graduation and employment, thereby inversely highlighting the initial suitability and quality of prospective degree students for their studies. Furthermore, we should recognise the roles and policies of The Finnish Border Guard and The Finnish Immigration Service in the process. The FINNIPS procedure of ensuring the continuous monitoring and verification of the applicants' identity throughout the application and entrance examination process is seen as a valuable tool in terms of the prevention of individuals aiming to enter the European Union, Schengen Area and Finland under the pretense of studies – thus, partly combatting the phenomena of human trafficking and related criminal intentions.

All in all, the future holds several matters to be considered and resolved in the context of entrance exam arrangements. Nevertheless, we find it necessary to follow all these developments carefully and when applicable, in order to deploy the best practices to ensure the admission of the best possible students also in the future. Then as now, their competences will continue to correlate with the quality and outcomes of our learning environments, and meeting the targets of the new financing model. Mission accomplished.

EXAM SUPERVISION AROUND THE WORLD: A MULTITUDE OF COMPETENCES REQUIRED

Riikka Vanhanen

Since spring 2010, the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) has arranged Finnish universities of applied sciences' (UAS) entrance examinations altogether in 22 countries around the world. Before the admissions process of spring 2019, a total of 15,615 applicants have participated in the exams. This article discusses the entrance examination process from the organisers' perspective by shedding light on the practical tasks inherent in the facilitation of exam events in varying conditions all over the globe.

While a more comprehensive account on the admissions process cycle and the organisation of the activities within FINNIPS is provided in an earlier publication (Vanhanen 2013), this article focuses on the entrance examination phase and its importance in securing high-quality and transparent student selection. It also serves as an introduction to the following expert testimonials where the country-specific coordinators and exam supervisors reflect on their experiences from the exam supervision over the past ten years.

UAS REPRESENTATIVES TAKE CARE OF THE EXAM ARRANGEMENTS

The admissions process to Finnish UASs' English-taught degree programmes proceeds from the January application period to the entrance examinations, which in recent years have been held in 12 countries outside Finland around mid-March. The country selection is defined on a yearly basis by the FINNIPS network's steering group based on the member UASs' feedback and wishes. In 2019, the exam countries are Brazil, China, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Nepal, Russia, USA and Vietnam. This year, 12 different entrance examinations for eight different study fields and 37 UASs' degree programmes are conducted in these locations.

A country-specific coordinator is assigned to each exam location to agree upon and take care of the practical exam arrangements with a local cooperation organisation. The arrangements are made based on mutual guidelines drawn up within the network: the exam venues, classroom premises, level of local assistance, etc. are all considered beforehand to enable safe and smooth

organisation of the examinations. The country-specific coordinators, all of whom are representatives of the network's member UASs, are typically people with extensive experience and cultural knowledge about the target country. As the following articles will reveal, the FINNIPS network has had a great opportunity to get first-hand experts to coordinate the local exam arrangements along with many country-coordinators that are originally from the exam countries. In addition to coordinating the exam arrangements in a particular country, the country-specific coordinators' knowledge about the target cultures and ability to communicate in local languages are great assets that can also be utilised in the context of marketing activities. And the more UASs that are part of the network, the greater the cultural variety in the pool of experts participating in the joint efforts.

In the entrance exams the country-specific coordinators are joined by FINNIPS exam supervisors, who also come from the network's UASs. Depending on the number of applicants in each country, one to six exam supervisors are assigned to take care of the implementation of the exams together with the country coordinator. Customarily, the same country-specific coordinators agree on the exam arrangements with the local partners abroad year after year. Sometimes, however, the country coordinators and/or cooperation organisations change, and new people step in. With exam supervisors, it is common to circulate the countries of responsibility after a couple of years to enable people to get to know different exam places and to test the exam arrangements in different kinds of settings. It is also a conscious decision to mix the pairs and groups of exam supervisors so that people from the network's different UASs get to know each other. In addition to networking, this method also allows the inclusion of new people in the process, as the newcomers can be matched with more experienced supervisor peers.

As highlighted, the entrance exam supervision task is assigned to staff members of the FINNIPS network's member UASs. Based on the selection criteria, the people responsible for the tasks are lecturers teaching in international degree programmes or other experts of international education working in an immediate interface with foreign students. As the evaluation of the applicants' English language skills is an important part of the exam supervisor's tasks, it is only natural that people who eventually encounter the students in the classroom also take care of the assessment. Meeting the applicants in person is also part of the marketing efforts, and a means to make Finnish UAS education visible and known to applicants around the world. Accordingly, the entrance exams as well as the exam supervisors provide a real glimpse of the Finnish UASs to the applicants. This may be a crucial factor

for the applicants to get convinced about the excellence of our education and to commit to choosing Finland as a study destination.

ADAPTABLE TEAM PLAYERS WANTED

As already pointed out, organising the entrance examinations abroad is not as straightforward a task as it may be in Finland. The conditions in the exam countries around the world are already very different when considering the climate, infrastructure, language, local culture, habits, etc. Unlike in some other types of work assignments, there rarely is time for getting to know the exam country and surroundings before the exams. The exam trips are targeted expeditions with tight schedules and a clear mission. Therefore, one of the most crucial traits of a country-specific coordinator and an exam supervisor is to be able to quickly adapt to a new environment, working conditions and colleagues and to manage the exam process according to the agreed practices – no matter what comes across. Like the exam supervisors' stories will point out, the exam days are long, and sometimes the work is conducted in the middle of power cuts and other types of challenges. This requires stress control and stamina from everyone individually and an ability to support the team members in a tight spot. However, necessity is the mother of invention, as also will be pointed out, and adapting to the conditions abroad is a prerequisite for juggling all the responsibilities of the job.

Organising the entrance examination is not obviously a question of application and adapting the arrangements freely to each context. Instead, the process of implementing the exams is guided and instructed throughout. Naturally, the content of the entrance examination in each study field is fixed, but to ensure a transparent, secure and high-quality exam process, the arrangements and instructing the applicants, for example, have to follow the same standards and agreed practices in all the locations around the world. To enable this, the FINNIPS entrance exam process is clearly described in written instructions, and the tasks and duties of country-specific coordinators, exam supervisors and the staff of the cooperation organisations abroad are also defined in detail.

An important part of the preparation and quality-management process for the exam is the mutual exam supervisors' yearly training, which is arranged a month before the exam period abroad. The intention of the training session is to go through the mutual instructions and arrangements together with all the supervisors. Conducting the group discussions and the evaluation of applicants' English language skills is its own subject in the training. The assessment criteria are carefully considered and discussed to find common grounds for evaluating the applicants around the world. Commitment to mutual guidelines and participation

in the development of the exam practices is also an example of the type of team work needed and implemented within the network. In the joint admission process and cooperation all the players play for the same goal, and following the agreed practices is a prerequisite for ensuring a successful end result - in this case, a high-quality student selection to all the network's UASs.

In addition to exam-related contents, the training also includes a section conducted by representatives of the Finnish Border Guard. Checking and verifying the exam candidates' identities and their right to participate in the exam is an important part of ensuring the security and trustworthiness of the exam process. Forged documents and identities are a regrettable yet existing phenomenon in international student recruitment. The training by the authorities helps to acknowledge the risks inherent in the exam process and thus also grants tools for preventing attempted malpractice. It is for the UASs' and applicants' best that the exams be capable of choosing students who seek to come to Finland for the purpose of studying. To ensure this, in addition to the careful student selection process, the applicants need to be well-informed about the requirements of the students' residence permit process. In order to facilitate the foreign students' entry to Finland, it is also important for the authorities to be aware of the admission procedures and schedules; therefore, the cooperation and exchange of information with the Finnish Border Guard and the Finnish Immigration Service is vital. Accordingly, FINNIPS cooperation is also teamwork with various authorities.

NETWORKING, LEARNING AND CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

Taking care of the exam responsibilities has left a mark on many of the persons involved in the process, as will be revealed in the exam supervisors' and country-coordinators' texts in the following articles. For lecturers of international degree programmes, being part of the student selection phase opens up a better understanding of the societies, backgrounds and realities of the foreign students that enter the Finnish UASs. Conducting the exam process abroad is therefore not solely a question of accomplishing a given task. It is also a learning process where new insights are gained from new cultures, people and ways of doing things. All this is beneficial for the further development of both the admissions process and international degree programmes.

Things do not always go as planned beforehand, and thus the process of conducting the entrance examinations abroad is constantly developed based on the experiences and feedback collected from the country coordinators and exam supervisors. Some of the challenges are fixed on the spot, in the best way

possible in the given circumstances. Some of them will be further analysed and discussed back in Finland and acknowledged when drawing up the plans for the next round of exams. Good practices and novel ideas are obviously also shared and harnessed for future use.

An example of the occurred progress in the exam process can be detected for example in the amount of paper: as will become quite apparent in the exam supervisors' stories, conducting a paper-based exam to hundreds of applicants means quite a bit of planning when packing the carry-on luggage. Ensuring the data and exam security is a main priority, and hence handling all the exam papers is a form of art. To ease the task of destroying the extra paper and to lessen the weight of the exams carried back home, those responsible for drawing up the exams have been challenged to compress the information into a neater form, which has happened commendably. The next stage of entrance examinations will soon be introduced in Finland as the Finnish- and Swedish-taught UAS degree programmes will start using a digital exam. This would be a natural development also for English-taught degree programmes – at least in Finland. While moving on from paper-based exams is considered, exam supervisors and paper exams are needed until the digital exam is shaped into a format that can be securely and reliably implemented abroad in countries whose infrastructure differs from Finland's.

Travelling to distant locations with colleagues from other UASs is also a way of learning. While over the years more and more people have gotten to know each other better in the network activities, many times the exam supervisors do not know each other beforehand. Parallel to taking care of a demanding work assignment, the exam supervision trips create possibilities to get to know new people, exchange views with colleagues from different organisations and study fields, and build professional networks. Even if the trips are conducted within tight schedules, there are times when the supervisor peers can sit down and enjoy the experience: those willing to take up the challenging task are often ready and willing to work hard and at the same time be open to influences and vibes brought about in the foreign environment.

According to my personal experience, these trips and the countless incidents within them – be they desperate, humorous, frightening or triumphant – produce unforgettable memories, many times marked with laughter and a sense of success. Since the joint efforts in the entrance exams have produced good results measured both in numbers and the quality of student selection, it is possible to conclude that the FINNIPS exam supervision is, on many levels, an example of cooperation at its best.

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HUNGARIANS HAVE A SOFT SPOT FOR FINLAND

Sara Czabai-Leppänen

The Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) is turning 10 years old in 2019. I have been actively participating in the network for seven out of these ten years assisting the student recruitment process in Hungary. As I am originally from Hungary, I became the perfect candidate for acting as the country-specific coordinator in Budapest. I practically organised the entrance exams on site in cooperation with a Hungarian partner university; I also handled the pre-registration and on-site registration and supervised the exams. The 30-40 students that on average participated in the entrance exams made Hungary one of the “easy-breezy” exam locations, especially compared to countries like Nepal or Vietnam in terms of applicant numbers.

Hungary is also a special place for the reason that most applicants want to study in Finland because they are passionately in love with Finland. Weird, right? Every year we have applicants who surprise us by speaking some Finnish, for example. They are usually super eager to show off that they have managed to learn a bit of one of the world’s most difficult languages, just out of sheer enthusiasm for the country. It might surprise you, but Hungary is full of hardcore Finland fans! Quite many are in love with Finnish heavy metal, some are nature lovers, and others just simply love Finland. Without a doubt, Finland has an excellent reputation in Hungary, in terms of everything.

For some reason, Hungarians know more about Finns than vice versa. Hungarians are, for example, much more aware of the language bond that Finns and Hungarians share through belonging to the same Finno-Ugric language family. Every Hungarian child knows about the Kalevala and can list at least five words that sound remotely similar and are taught in the school to show how the languages are related. As a person who had to learn Finnish, I would say it’s fake news, ok? There is hardly any resemblance and Finnish is still super difficult to learn, even for a Hungarian. But ok, there is actually one sentence that is used as an example to “prove” the relation; I leave it up to you to find the resemblance:

In English: A fish (that is alive) swims under the water.

The same in Finnish: Elävä kala ui veden alla.
And in Hungarian: Eleven hal úszik a víz alatt.

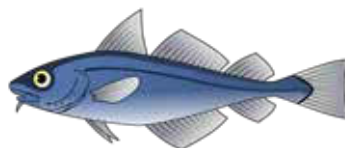


Image: Freestockphotos.biz



Country-specific coordinator's pre-exam work: Sara Czabai-Leppänen meeting potential applicants at a study fair in Hungary. (Photo: Riikka Vanhanen)

A STORY FROM LATVIA

Anzelika Krastina

My story is about the extraordinary experiences gained in the capacity of FINNIPS country-specific coordinator in Latvia. I have worked at Lapland UAS most of the time as a teacher (senior lecturer) for more than a decade, and part of my work has always been in the field of international cooperation in the format of cross-border or transnational projects, student and staff exchange coordination or strategic partnership development. Therefore, a variety of international assignments have been performed over the years. However, it came as a nice surprise from one of my colleagues when she returned from the FINNIPS meeting and asked whether I would be interested to consider assisting the organisation of FINNIPS entrance exams in Latvia. I myself came from Latvia many years ago aiming to advance my education in Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences. My previous qualifications, work experience and language skills combined with advanced education in Finland opened new doors for me. Unexpectedly, I also gained for myself a long-term job opportunity in Finnish Lapland.

My first thought was that Latvia is a rather small market, therefore providing a rather small pool of talent to be attracted to Finland for studies. Hence, the idea of organising entrance exams within the FINNIPS network in Latvia did not sound as something feasible to me in the first place. While my conscious mind was conducting feasibility analysis, the subconscious mind already gave an answer. It was a “yes.” I was interested in doing it, and so the arrangements for the first edition of the FINNIPS entrance examination began. There was no problem finding a partner in Latvia for arranging the exams. However, as with many things, when doing something for the first time one cannot avoid some problems and mistakes. Having a good partner in a bad location (remote, far away from the city centre) was lesson number one. While there seemed to be a decent number of applicants, I estimate that only half of them showed up in the first exam. No one can say for sure, but it was probably the location, distance and difficult commuting to the facilities of the partner university that were the main reasons for young people to skip the exam. In the following years these factors were taken into account, and subsequent exams were organised in the heart of Riga, and with a much higher participation rate.

On the other side of the experience, I can say that I was very positively surprised that those applicants who did come to the exam were very motivated

to study in Finland. For many of them it was a well-thought-out decision and not just an attempt at trying one's luck. During the group interviews, the participants demonstrated very good knowledge about Finland, Finnish economics, industries and social life. On the other hand, I could sometimes observe that even though we are almost neighbouring countries and share the "northernness" factor, cultural differences can still be seen in many situations. Though I have always considered Latvians to be culturally similar to Finns, some comical situations based on cultural differences appeared during the exams, especially during the evaluation of group discussions. Sometimes, Latvian applicants tried so hard to demonstrate their knowledge and skills during the group discussions that it could come across as domination or overexcitement. It is very common in Latvian culture for all kids to actively participate in some afterschool activities related to drama, poetry, dancing or singing. That way young people learn to perform in front of an audience in an artistic manner and with good diction. Some of my Finnish colleagues appreciated this factor as a plus during the exams, while there were also sometimes disagreements on whether we should give a low mark to an applicant due to their "domination" in group discussion.

To me, FINNIPS as an idea is something truly unique and innovative, and probably possible only in Finnish society, where universities collaborate with one another under a common goal instead of competing. As a country-specific coordinator I organised several entrance exams in Latvia, and every time I had a great opportunity to meet a new colleague from another university of applied sciences. Therefore, FINNIPS is not only about exam arrangement, but also about so much needed networking with colleagues within Finland. It gave me a great opportunity to discuss with other colleagues how things are done in other UASs, educational arrangements, interesting methodologies and something new that I probably would not think or do otherwise. In those few little moments when we had free time it was my greatest honour and pleasure to guide my Finnish colleagues through the beautiful city of Riga and discover something new about my hometown from a visitor's point of view. If this article permits, I would love to thank FINNIPS and all my colleagues for this amazing possibility and collaboration. It was not just about arranging exams; it was a learning opportunity from so many interesting perspectives.

FINNIPS EXAMS IN NEPAL: ADAPTING TO LOCAL CONDITIONS

Ajaya Joshi & Nicolas Le Grand

With the establishment of the FINNIPS network in 2009, the entrance examination in Kathmandu, Nepal, followed immediately in the spring of the same year. The cooperation with the local partner, the Siddharta Vanasthali institution, began at the same time. Unlike now, the initial period was filled with both excitement and anxiety; there was limited information, guidelines and instructions on how to organise the examination.

From the beginning in Nepal, the number of candidates who applied for the FINNIPS entrance examination was great; hence, there were only a few of us exam supervisors. During the early examinations period, some interviews went past 9:00 pm. It was normal to stay up late to organise the examination papers and prepare for the following day's examination. Looking back, there is no recollection of any candidate complaining about the long wait after the examination, nor of the exam supervisors feeling overwhelmed with the number of people to interview.

Nepal was also the entrance examination centre for candidates from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, meaning it was difficult to estimate the actual number of candidates who would appear for the exam. It was common for candidates to come straight to the examination centres from the airport, hence bringing additional challenges. It was not feasible to print all the exam papers in Finland, which meant we had to print extra papers there. However, during that time there was an extreme shortage of electricity. We spent a few nights looking at the electricity grid and driving to different parts of the city to make exam copies in case we ran short of paper.

To ensure there was no mixup in the assessment of the candidate's interview evaluation, we created an assessment sheet where all the observations could be noted on a single evaluation form, and after the discussion we transferred all the information onto an individual group discussion form. The process was so simple and effective that we later implemented it in the entrance exam in Finland.

An example of a partner-led initiative to improve the process: due to the very high number of applicants, the partner called in the local police. This meant that there were 4 to 5 policemen armed with automatic rifles throughout the examination. This contributed to the sense of security and the seriousness of the FINNIPS entrance exam.

The exams which had to be taken back to Finland were weighed, packed and distributed among exam supervisors so that the papers could be carried in carry-on luggage. A “blame list” was then created to assign each parcel among the exam supervisors. The exam country coordinator would take a picture of the blame list so that we could be able to identify who would be the guilty party in case of loss (this never happened by the way, thanks to the blame list!).

With each year, together with our local partner, we continuously improved the entire process. Today, the exam runs like clockwork, from registration to sending the exam papers to Finland, but sometimes it is great to reflect on how far we have come. Ten years on, it gives us great pleasure to see some of the students who came to Finland via the FINNIPS entrance exam become successful entrepreneurs, find work in their respective fields or pursue postgraduate and PhD studies. Those who went back have found promising positions and become goodwill ambassadors between Finland and Nepal. Being part of this network was truly a pleasure, and FINNIPS is an important change agent in Finland and Nepal.



Nicolas Le Grand burning the extra papers after the exams in Nepal in 2015. (Photo: Ajaya Joshi)

FINNIPS EXAM SUPERVISOR EXPERIENCES: NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

Sebastian King

The typical experience of an exam supervisor will vary depending on the location, number of candidates and the personalities of the other exam supervisors. Naturally, the examination process is controlled as much as possible to provide the same conditions for the test-takers in each country, but cultural differences and the habits of the local partners will also affect the way the process is carried out. My experiences of exam supervision have been in Vietnam and Nepal. These countries are similar in terms of the number of candidates taking the exams, which can be over a 1,000, but in other respects the experience of the exam supervisor can be quite different.

After a long flight to India, and then a shorter flight over Nepalese hills and mountains still bearing the signs of flooding and natural disaster, we arrive in Kathmandu airport to be greeted by the local partners who lay garlands of flowers around our necks. Business begins a few hours later with a discussion with the partners at the exam venue, a local school, and the first exams are scheduled for the following morning. A tasty lunch is offered every day at the school and the end of the exam week is celebrated with beer drunk outside in the schoolyard and the burning of all exam question papers that are not needed in the return journey in a pit in the corner of the schoolyard.

In Vietnam, the exams take place at two locations: Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) in the south of the country and Hanoi in the north. In both cities, the traffic takes some getting used to and the first-time exam supervisor is advised to stick closely to any locals when crossing the roads. There is little socialising with the British Council partners in Vietnam, but cooperation is nevertheless very smooth and polite. The exams are arranged in a hotel or conference centre, and it is advisable to have a sweater in the exam or interview rooms due to the air-conditioning. The exams in Nepal take place in a large hall in the school without air-conditioning and local partners walk around the aisles offering candidates water to drink from a bottle during the exams.

In both countries, the days can be very long. The group discussions take several hours to complete after the exams are over, and these are then followed by an hour or more in which the various papers of each candidate are stapled together and arranged alphabetically according to exam type

and university. Sometimes a paper goes missing or is accidentally stapled to the wrong sheet and time must be spent going through all the papers again. A good team spirit is essential as the work stretches into the evening and tired and hungry exam supervisors become desperate to return to their hotel rooms. In Vietnam, a shredder is sometimes available at the hotel to dispose of the question papers, but more often than not these are shredded by hand.

A common fear among supervisors in Vietnam is of taking the wrong set of exam papers to the venue in the morning. This can happen as there are several versions of some exams to be given depending on the location, and on some days many different exams are administered. So some exam papers are kept in the hotel safe to avoid confusion. On one occasion, it was discovered 5 minutes before an exam was due to start that the wrong paper had been brought to the venue. Nearly 200 hundred candidates were already seated in the exam room waiting to start. We calmly explained the problem and then asked them to wait in their seats so as not to disturb the candidates taking other tests. It was then decided that one supervisor would take a taxi back to the hotel to get the papers and another would try to photocopy all the papers using an old photocopier available at the venue. The exam could then start whichever method delivered the papers soonest. In the event, the photocopier was slightly faster, but it took well over an hour before the exam could start. The candidates, in the meantime, had behaved impeccably, waiting the whole time quietly and patiently in their seats.

“PAPERWORK” IN VIETNAM

Anne Ahokas-Sironen

I worked as a country coordinator for Vietnam in 2010–2017. In 2013 and 2014 I also travelled to Vietnam as an exam supervisor. One of the challenges was coordinating the copying and carrying of the exam papers. In 2014 the number of exams taken in Vietnam was 755. Each of the five exam supervisors had about 8 kg of question papers in their carry-on luggage when we left Finland. We were relieved to know that the amount of paper would be less when returning, since the question papers could be destroyed after the exams and only the answer papers needed to be brought back.

How to destroy hundreds of question papers at a hotel? In 2013 we had torn the papers to shreds with our hands and it took us hours. The following year I came up with an idea to take a paper shredder with me. After the first exam day I proudly introduced the shredder to the other supervisors and was praised for my cleverness. With a broad smile I started to insert the paper into the machine. After just a short moment the shredder stopped working due to extreme overload! Now my colleagues smiled broadly... we couldn't stop laughing. Tearing the papers was fun that evening!

We did have some radical ideas how to get rid of the papers. Now I'm happy we did not burn the papers on the roof of our hotel in the crowded centre of Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi.



When technology fails, manual work steps in. Exam supervisors Anne Ahokas-Sironen and Riikka Vanhanen in Vietnam in spring 2014. (Photo: Nina Palmros)

FINNIPS ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS IN KENYA

Otieno Mbare

I have been an ambassador (country coordinator/exam supervisor) of FINNIPS from its inception until 2017. For the years I have represented the network abroad, I can say that FINNIPS remains the only good thing that happened to most applicants seeking further studies in Finland. It will be recalled that before the birth of this network, applicants in far-flung regions such as Africa had tremendous challenges in accessing entrance examinations organised in Finland. Along with the other major objectives of this umbrella university network, FINNIPS has been able to: 1) enhance the quality of the students joining the universities of applied sciences (UAS) from abroad, and 2) make it easy for applicants abroad to participate in the FINNIPS entrance examinations by enabling them to participate in their countries or neighbouring countries. There were challenges and hurdles at the beginning. However, with time and experience I mastered the art of executing my work. It was good that we could share our experiences with other supervisors, some of whom were very new to the process. The good thing is that a basic solid foundation had been put in place for the smooth running of the entire process. During those initial stages, I ensured that I went through the entire examination process and always compared how things went the previous year with the current situation. The idea was to develop the best practices that can be applied universally around the world.

These best practices have been shared and diffused during organised FINNIPS seminars led by Riikka Vanhanen. Riikka has been a key pillar of the network since its inception. One can't contemplate FINNIPS without the input and energy of Ms. Vanhanen. When there is flawless process from the top, the same will happen downstream. That is why most applicants have always praised the way that FINNIPS examinations abroad are organised and conducted. I used to hear this a lot from the applicants. Some even went so far as to compare the network's exams with their local examinations arrangements, which they termed very chaotic.

The problem I have noted with the entrance examinations in Africa is the tyranny of geography. FINNIPS has only one examination centre in Nairobi serving the entire continent. The network might consider adding another centre in West Africa to serve the many applicants who would otherwise have

to travel all the way to Nairobi. Alternatively, if FINNIPS would just want to maintain one centre in Africa, then it would be fair to alternate the examination centre among the major cities of Lagos, Accra or Nairobi, respectively. This suggestion is simply to create a balance for applicants from West and East Africa based on my own experience during my tenure with the network. I really did understand the challenges that most applicants experience to get to the examination centre.

Long live FINNIPS!

Competent education contents creates
global talents

STARTING A NEW INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMME IN A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES – EXPERIENCES FROM SAIMAA UAS

Emilia Laapio-Rapi

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences has had international degree programmes in the fields of tourism and hospitality, and business for several years now. The idea of an international programme in nursing has been floated for almost the whole decade. We have visited other universities of applied sciences and discussed double degree programmes, but the idea of having a complete nursing degree in English was considered to be too big. Preliminary discussions concerning an international degree programme in nursing started in 2016, and in the spring semester of 2017, these discussions became more serious. During these two academic years, the amount of exchange students was also increasing. There was a clear need for an English-taught programme in the field of health care. This need was finally filled when our very first nursing group started their studies in August 2018.

HOW TO START?

Even though Saimaa UAS has had many groups of international degree programme students before, quite a large amount of work to plan and execute the new programme was needed. The first phases included working with the curriculum, admission office and other international degree programme managers. Other important decisions were made in the early stage with regard to language requirements. To achieve a nursing degree, students must train their skills in a clinical environment, e.g. in hospitals and other health care facilities, so the question was whether they would already need to have Finnish language skills when applying. We decided not to make Finnish a mandatory subject for the applicants, and this decision also significantly molded the curriculum.

The help and instruction given by the admission office were also crucial at this point. The simultaneous timeline with the international admission process and construction of the programme made the spring semester of 2018 very hectic. The FINNIPS network was also an important resource

at this phase. Tips from other nursing programmes and colleagues from the network's member UASs and the joint admission exam process freed much-needed time to use in developing the programme. Well-structured examination and an experienced network also made the entrance exam days easier to cope with.

The excitement arose during the summer when more and more international students started to enroll in the education and replied positively to letters sent from the admission office. As a new tutor-teacher I was personally very happy that I could ask a helping hand from more experienced tutor-teachers here in Saimaa UAS. Their advice and help made it easier to start with the new group. The first day of studies was equally tense for both students and the tutor-teacher.

STUDENT BODY

The decision regarding Finnish language skills made the student body truly international. Only two out of the 22 students are Finnish, and over half of the group has never been in Finland before. The international students come from Rwanda, Cameroon, Nigeria, Russia, Estonia, Vietnam and China. Almost all of the foreign students have said that one of the reasons for choosing Saimaa was the lack of a Finnish language requirement. Quite many of the students already have either a degree or some prior studies in their home country: some of the students have, for example, a degree in business and management or some other health care related studies, such as pharmacological studies or studies related to nutrition and wellbeing.

INTERNATIONALISATION AND INTERNATIONALITY IN PRACTICE

Starting with a group of students who come from all over the world is completely different from starting with Finnish ones. The culture shock hits both students and teachers quite rapidly. In order to gain at least some similarity in study methods, rules and behaviour among the group, teachers need to have similar thinking and instructions. The Finnish way of studying nursing at the UAS level differs greatly from the Asian education system, for example. In nursing studies, students need to translate theory into practice quite soon and show an active attitude towards their studies. Quite a large amount of the studies are based on active communication between the group or the student and a teacher, and this is something that not every culture encourages.

CHALLENGES IN INTERNATIONALISATION

There are many challenges related to the new international programme. The first challenge is providing a curriculum that meets both national and EU competence regulations and takes into account the needs of international students. In nursing education, clinical training in real health care settings also requires Finnish language skills, and the curriculum has to offer enough language education. As the students have varying levels of English language skills, providing English lectures in the early stage of the studies is crucial. Language barriers have been reported to affect intercultural communication (Keles 2013), teachers' workload and training in real-life situations (Hvalič-Touzery et al. 2017). Study motivations also vary between students. Some students have strong internal motivation and a clear picture of the nursing profession, while with others, their motivation is more external and the view of the profession is more general.

Another challenge is the diversity of cultural backgrounds. In order to understand how much cultural diversity actually affects students' education, teachers should have a broad understanding of different learning styles, educational methods and culture. Finding the right balance between the students' choice to study in a different culture and how to support the students in a multicultural way is very challenging for the teacher. Students may also suffer from loneliness and having to face the challenges of adult life for the very first time. Some studies suggest that international students benefit from positive experiences with the local community (Rohmann et al. 2013), and close contact with host nationals may enhance cultural adjustment over the long run (Geeraert et al. 2014). If there are many students from the same culture, there is also a possibility that they will be in contact with only each other. Mixing up the group and students from different cultures is important in order to bridge the cultural differences. Offering possibilities for contact with local organisations and communities is also important, but it requires effort from the teachers. Tips and support from the FINNIPS nursing network have been very important when solving these challenges.

POSSIBILITIES AND ADVANTAGES OF AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME

Not only does an international degree programme in nursing affect the degree programme students, it also enhances internationalisation among the whole faculty. Studies show that exchange periods increased students' intercultural

competence and problem-solving skills (Behrnd & Porzelt 2012). These skills and competences are truly needed in the present working life and global world. Being in an environment that is not the student's own cultural environment also enhances the understanding of different clients and their needs. Students' self-confidence can also increase when they solve educational and other barriers without family support.

The arrival of large numbers of international students at the same time also affects the faculty. Shifting education to the English language offers more and more possibilities to exchange students and other international guests. We have also been in close contact with the health care field and invited both nurses and managers from the field to meet and discuss with international students. An international programme offers new possibilities to enhance internationalisation in clinical training places. International students are also an excellent example to Finnish students about the existence of various cultures in the world, and mixing these student groups provides more capabilities to Finnish students to be in connection with different cultures. Overall, starting a new international degree programme in nursing has made the faculty into a more international one.



Group NURS18 in clinical training hours with nursing lecturer Sini Hämäläinen. (Photo: Emilia Laapio-Rapi.)

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INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMME GOES ONLINE: CASE BUSINESS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, LAUREA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Mari Koski & Antonius de Arruda Camara

Online learning is increasing rapidly all over the world. In Finland as well, virtual versions of several higher education degrees are already available. This is due to the demand for more flexible ways of learning that are dependent on neither time nor physical location. People are increasingly willing to study alongside working fulltime. Virtual studying offers an excellent possibility for combining both.

Virtuality also affects the traditional forms of internalisation in studies. The new Business Information Technology (BIT) programme offered by Laurea UAS is already global without any need to physically move abroad. Instead, the students will meet each other in a fully virtual learning environment - at the same time challenging the traditional forms of internalisation. Online international learning implementations offer new perspectives into the internalisation concept in general.

This article discusses the transformation of the Business Information Technology programme of Laurea UAS into a fully online degree: the possibilities, advantages and related challenges.

HISTORY OF THE BIT PROGRAMME

The Business Information Technology degree programme was started in 2009. At the time it was the second English degree programme to be established at Laurea Leppävaara campus, with the first one being Business Management (Service Business Management from 2018 onwards). Business Information Technology, similarly to other English degree programmes offered at the campus, was intended to offer the students a possibility for multicultural learning and internationalisation through their studies and, furthermore, to serve the needs of the local industries.

From the very beginning the programme has had a multicultural student body: European and Asian as well as African students have all been well represented throughout the years. The percentage of students with a Finnish background has remained approximately the same during the years, being

around 15%. In addition to the student body being multicultural, the teachers in the programme also come with multicultural backgrounds: Indian and British, for example, alongside the Finnish teachers.

The BIT programme joined the FINNIPS network in 2010. At the time the entrance exam cooperation was carried out by Laurea, Oulu, Lahti and Kemi-Tornio (nowadays Lapland UAS) Universities of Applied Sciences. Lahti and Laurea continued their cooperation until 2018, when Laurea withdrew from the network. The reason for this was the decision for the programme to go fully online from autumn 2019 onwards. Along with this, it was decided that the SAT tests and recorded video interviews would be taken into use instead of traditional entrance exams. With the help of the recorded videos, an overall picture of the applicants' aptitude for virtual studies can be evaluated, at least to some extent. Furthermore, the videos will be used for the assessment of the applicants' oral English language skills.

DIFFERENT PHASES OF THE BIT CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

From 2010 until 2018, the programme has had altogether three major curricula versions. The initial curriculum had a strong focus on the development of generic competences where study-unit implementations were geared to support the pedagogical approaches of project-based learning. The curriculum was composed mostly of compulsory study-units that were supposed to be completed in a pre-defined order. Earlier study-units provided the prerequisites necessary in later study-units. Due to this rigid structure and interdependence of the study-units, the curriculum could be described as a pipeline where students did not have much flexibility to build more personalised study plans. The amount of elective credits was 30. Elective study-units offered the students the possibility to specialise in certain ICT profile areas. The amount of compulsory Finnish language credits was 10 in the first curriculum.

In 2013, Laurea undertook a wide curriculum reform affecting all its bachelor-level programmes. The reformed curriculum was launched in the autumn semester of 2014. A major goal in the new curriculum was to better support students in creating more personalised study-plans. Instead of a pipeline, the curriculum offered competence modules that students could choose from based on their personal development goals. Competence modules were classified as compulsory core competence modules and elective complementary modules. The amount of elective credits in this new curriculum was increased to 60 ECTS.

In addition to the new modular structure, the learning objectives of modules and study-units were designed with the objective of reducing the amount of prerequisite interdependencies between modules and study-units. This should allow students to progress more freely with their studies without being blocked by unexpected dependencies among the study-units. The amount of compulsory Finnish language credits in the new curriculum was increased to 15 ECTS, so as to better serve the needs of working life and the students' employment possibilities in Finland.

The latest change in the BIT curriculum occurred in 2017. The major driver for the changes was the need to harmonise the content of the core competence modules offered at different Laurea campuses. The objective was to offer core competence modules of equal learning outcomes and content within the same programme independent of the campus where the programme was being offered. Having similar core competence modules would allow for a better mobility of students across Laurea campuses.

Specifically for the degree programmes in English, there was another driver requiring changes: the introduction of tuition fees for non-EU students. Due to this, the content of the degree programmes in English was also revised with the intent of being able to offer a highly competitive degree in the global education market. As a consequence of this revision, the amount of compulsory credits for Finnish language courses was reduced to 5, as the former amount of 15 was considered too high for students paying tuition fees.

INTERNALISATION AND INTERNATIONALITY IN PRACTICE

As previously mentioned, the BIT programme has been multicultural and international right from the start. English has been and still is the only tuition language of the programme. Multicultural student groups form a natural setting for implementing internationalisation in practice. Both the Finnish and English degree programme students study in mixed study groups on several occasions. This makes it possible for the Finnish degree students to also benefit from a multicultural learning environment.

The traditional forms of international activities have all been in place throughout the years: student and staff exchanges, international job placements as well as international projects. Students have received support in their search for jobs and placements, both in Finland and abroad, via the career planning study-unit that is mandatory for all. Finding jobs and placements in Finland has been and still is a challenge for students with a foreign background. One of the aims of the career planning support has been to enhance and

strengthen the students' skills in identifying their competences and strengths while searching for jobs and placements.

TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL ONLINE PROGRAMME: POSSIBILITIES, CHALLENGES AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The decision to go for a fully virtual BIT programme was made towards the end of 2017. According to Margit Lumia, director of Laurea Espoo, the decision was based on the students' increasing need for flexibility in their studies concerning the time and location; many of them were in working life during their studies. "We have been developing online studies with a new pedagogical approach to fulfil this present-day need. This "BIT Goes Totally Online" is a logical outcome of our development work, and the programme was chosen especially on account of its target group already consisting of students with IT skills," Lumia says. (Lumia 2019.)

After the decision was made, several questions related to the practical programme implementation needed to be considered. One of the most crucial ones was the student selection method. Along with the decision to go fully online, it was no longer seen as an ideal option to use traditional paper-based exams, either. Thus, it was decided that SAT tests and recorded video interviews would be taken into use instead. The first student group to be selected with this method will start in autumn 2019.

When planning for online degrees, it needs to be remembered that it is not possible to get a student visa into Finland on the basis of fully virtual studies. Therefore, the programme needed to be planned so that it does not include such elements that require students to physically come to Finland from abroad. This has to be especially taken into consideration regarding the placements. It is therefore assumed that the online students will take their placements either in their home countries or in another country outside Finland.

Contrary to the nature of the rest of the studies, the introduction days (2–3 days) in August 2019 will be mandatory for the students to attend. This decision was made in order to enable the students' identities and eligibility to be checked in person in a trustworthy way. It is also important to be able to test the technical equipment used for the studies while being physically present. Getting to know the teachers face to face and creating a positive atmosphere for the studies in general likewise play a significant role in this context.

The role and status of mandatory Finnish language studies also needed reconsidering, since the students living abroad do not physically come to Finland, except for those already residing in the country. Consequently, Finnish is no longer

mandatory in the BIT curriculum. Students who wish to study Finnish online are naturally offered possibilities to do so. These studies can be included in the student's personal study plan as complementary (elective) studies.

Traditionally, part of the attraction of foreign students choosing English degree programmes in Finland has been and still is Finland itself: the country and its culture. Clean nature, a safe environment and a well-functioning infrastructure are still considered strong assets for Finland in the global education market. With virtual studies, the role of these aspects diminishes. Instead, the quality of the degree itself becomes the main driver for attracting potential applicants. It is extremely important to take into account the high quality regarding the studies and support services offered to the students.

The amount and need of guidance will certainly be one of the main challenges in the new programme. Effective online study guidance requires resources, and this needs to be taken into consideration. The staff members along with the selected students need to be able to use various types of technical equipment and online tools so as to ensure a smooth run of the studies. This, again, requires training and resources. Data security in general is a main issue to be considered. As the participants in the new BIT programme come from different parts of the world, data security requires special attention. Laurea already has experience in implementing some Finnish degree programmes online. Based on the good experiences of these, it is believed that virtual guidance processes can also be successful in an international virtual degree programme.

INFLUENCE OF THE VIRTUAL STUDIES ON THE FORMS OF INTERNATIONALISATION

When discussing the role of English degree programmes in Finland, the adaptation of students with a foreign background into Finnish society and their employment in Finland have traditionally been strongly emphasised themes. With virtual studies, these themes no longer play such a crucial role. Instead, the importance of the international online learning implementations drastically increases.

Arja Majakulma, Director of International Affairs, Laurea, says that online studying will have an impact on the traditional forms of internationalisation, like exchanges and placements: "Students studying fully online are presumably not interested in traditional student exchange, where the studying takes place physically in the target country. This has an impact on the amount of outgoing students. Likewise, it is not possible to take incoming exchange students into the fully online programmes – this, naturally, has an impact on the amount of incoming exchange students." (Majakulma 2019.)

Students studying in fully virtual programmes and residing outside Finland have an option of taking the job placement either in their home countries or abroad. Therefore, the impact on the number of international placements is probably not that drastical. What needs to be emphasised, according to Majakulma, is the fact that online studying requires more guidance related to the support of the internalisation competences of the students and the implementation options included. (Majakulma 2019.)

Laurea already has experience of online international learning (OIL) implementations where students from several universities or universities of applied sciences study online together. Arja Majakulma emphasises that this is a new form of internalisation which offers possibilities also for those not taking an exchange period abroad. (Majakulma 2019.) Furthermore, it also offers a form for internalisation at home - without the need to physically move to another country. Online projects are a good possibility for international and multicultural co-learning. At the same time, they challenge the traditional ways of implementing project-based learning in a physical classroom setting.

High expectations for the new programme

As has been said, the new BIT programme will start with the first student intake in autumn 2019. In spite of the identified challenges, the expectations in terms of the new programme are high. As was previously highlighted, there is a clear global demand for quality online study opportunities. Ilkka Kurkela, BIT programme development manager at Laurea, summarises the advantages of the new programme: “We believe that this online degree will provide relevant digital working life skills for the students. Especially in Business Information Technology it is essential for the students to learn how to study and work online individually and in groups. Online studies also enable the students to design their own learning path in a flexible way. This is also a great opportunity for our teachers and staff to challenge themselves and be the pioneers of education development. Our vision is to enable motivated students around the globe to join us and connect them with working life.” (Kurkela 2019.)

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ADMISSIONS AND INTERNATIONALISATION OF MARITIME MANAGEMENT, CAPTAIN AT NOVIA UAS AND THE IMPACT OF THE FINNIPS NETWORK

Ida Borgar

Novia University of Applied Sciences (UAS) is the largest Swedish-speaking UAS in Finland with over 4,000 students. Novia was the first university of applied sciences in Finland to start a sea captain programme in English. Novia UAS introduced the Maritime Management programme in 2010. Although Novia UAS is a new university of applied sciences, it is the result of a merger between Sydväst Polytechnic and the Swedish Polytechnic, Finland). (About Novia UAS 2019.)

UNIQUE STUDY ENVIRONMENT AND DEGREE

Aboa Mare, the academy and training centre where this degree programme is offered, has a 200-year-long tradition of educating seafarers (History 2019). The Maritime Management, Captain programme differs from most degree programmes offered in English in Finland. Many universities of applied sciences in Finland offer traditional programmes such as international business or various engineering programmes that are based on traditional education in a classroom.

Seafaring education includes other elements that makes studying seafaring unique. Onboard training makes up 40% of the studies, which is an important part of the degree. Students also have access to Novia's 10 simulator bridges and are trained by nearly 40 specialised staff members. Major shipping companies (e.g. Viking Line, Tallink Silja and Neste Oil) also train their staff at Aboa Mare, as it is specialised in ice navigation and energy-efficient shipping. The campus is in the harbour of Turku, placed in the heart of the maritime industry. The campus shares the premises with other maritime authorities such as Trafi and the Finnish Boarder Guard, making it an ideal place for maritime education (Bachelor of Maritime Management, Maritime Management, Captain 2019).

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND THE SEAFARER'S PROFILE

Basic admission requirements to bachelor degree studies in Maritime Management, Captain follow the same educational requirements as other bachelor degree studies, i.e. an applicant needs to have a senior secondary school certificate. There are health and safety requirements that apply to this field of study. All admitted students must submit a health certificate issued by a physician that is certified by the National Supervisory Board for Welfare and Health (Valvira). There are specific requirements for eyesight, colour vision and hearing that are stipulated in a Decree issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The medical certificate must also verify that the “...*person is physically and mentally fit for the tasks at hand and he/she does not have such an injury, disability or illness that can either prevent or distinctly hinder the completion of his/her work.*” Furthermore, the certificate must indicate that the “...*person does not have an illness that can be assumed to either worsen or be harmful to other people on board or the safety of seafaring.*” If the health certificate is not submitted or the medical certificate states that the person is not suitable for seafaring, the applicant is not admitted (Entrance Requirements 2019).

In addition to these health requirements, an applicant pursuing a career in seafaring must be prepared for long periods of isolation and other aspects of the profession. Research suggests a need for psychological testing in connection with admission, to manage the student's expectations of the profession (Caesar & Cahoon 2015). Non-technical skills such as decision-making are important for seafarers. According to recent research (Talman et al. 2018), testing of the following competencies should be included in the entrance examination for seafaring: language and communication skills, English language skills, multicultural skills, interpersonal skills, team working skills, psycho-physical factors, vision, spatial perception, attention, visual motor coordination, factors related to personality and readiness to work while isolated on a ship. These findings may impact the composition of the entrance examination for seafaring, including Maritime Management, Captain, in the future.

RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OVER THE YEARS

Offering the Maritime Management, Captain programme in English has brought a new dimension to the student group. Initially the programme attracted mainly Finns and Finnish-speaking students, which made up nearly 50% of

the student group with only a few international students from neighbouring countries. In 2011, the programme joined the FINNIPS network to bring more diversity to the student group. After joining the FINNIPS network for international programmes the degree programme has attracted more and more international students. Today, nearly 40% of all the students are admitted through the FINNIPS network to this degree programme.

The tuition was free of charge in Finland until 2017, when tuition fees were introduced. The annual tuition fee is €6,000 for non-EU/EEA students in this degree programme. The total cost depends on the number of semesters used to complete the degree. The normal duration of the programme is 4.5 years. The price for this degree in Finland is affordable compared to corresponding degrees in the UK or USA with a price tag of €16,000/year (Studyportals, Bachelors 2019).

Initially we expected the numbers of applicants to decrease due to the introduction of the tuition fees. However, the number of first-choice applicants for Maritime Management, Captain grew by 8% in 2017 and increased further by 30% in 2018 compared to the first-choice applicants in 2016 before the introduction of tuition fees.

The introduction of tuition fees has brought new demands on Novia UAS. The presence of fee-paying students has put pressure on the quality of the education offered. In addition, fee-paying students set demands on the effective administration of payments and scholarships. Novia UAS introduced online payments of tuition fees from the start; since then other universities of applied sciences have followed. Although the payments are nearly automated at Novia UAS, the administrative procedures with following up fee-paying students still needs fine-tuning and integration with our student register system.

STUDENT STORIES – EFFECTS OF THE FINNIPS COOPERATION

Through the FINNIPS network, international students have been recruited to Maritime Management, Captain from the far corners of the world. Through the FINNIPS entrance examinations we have students from countries such as the United States, Bangladesh, Vietnam and the Philippines. Some students have even come from countries such as Nepal, a mountainous nation with no large waters or coastline, seemingly an unlikely place for a sea captain to begin a career in seafaring. Sandeep Nepal, our alumnus since 2016, shares his story with us.

I am Sandeep Nepal. I now live in a mountainous place called Bergen in Norway. I work in Finland as a sailor. I studied in Finland and got a job here and I have kept it like this. In the past when I was in Nepal, I was a student of electronics and communication.

Why did you choose Novia UAS and sea captain studies?

Since childhood I have had a lot of interest in aviation and seafaring. As aviation was expensive to study, I found a very cheap way to take forward my career in seafaring by choosing Novia UAS, where education was for free. Many of the members in my family are doctors, engineers, bankers, lawyers, etc. I wanted to do something that no one else in my family has done. This was another reason that I wanted to become a sailor.

After coming to Finland, I had the opportunity to complete my bachelor's degree in marine technology and was able to study refugee law at Åbo Akademi University.

What are your memories of the FINNIPS entrance examination in Nepal?

As I had a good educational background in Nepal (bachelor's degree in electronics engineering), the exam taken via FINNIPS was not difficult. It was a systematic and well-modeled system. It was 9 years ago, so I don't remember much at this point. However, I am sure that I would not be here today at this point in my career without FINNIPS.

Where are you working now?

I have worked in several companies in my career as a trainee, ordinary seaman, second officer and chief officer. I am now working in Prima Viking for prima shipping. The future is uncertain, and I am looking for more challenges in the upcoming days.

Any advice you want to share with new students?

My advice for new students would be to find out what you really want to do in your life and who you really are. It is not an easy way out of your home country. There are many more challenges than you think, but it is worth it!

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF THE FINNIPS NETWORK

Head of Degree Programme Tony Karlsson comments on the importance of the FINNIPS network for the visibility of the programme. The FINNIPS network arranges the entrance examinations around the world, which improves

the applicants' possibilities to participate in the examinations, which in turn is a prerequisite for admission. He says that through being part of the FINNIPS network we have gained a truly international group of students, which is excellent, keeping in mind that these students will be working internationally in their professional life. One of the challenges that we face is that many applicants apply only to gain an opportunity to come to Europe, without a genuine interest for seafaring (Karlsson 2019).



Sandeep Nepal. (Photo: Sima Alise Nepal)

For many years Novia was the only UAS offering seafaring education in English. Currently it is the only seafaring programme in the FINNIPS network, which gives our programme the benefit of offering something unique. For Novia UAS it is imperative to cooperate concerning recruitment efforts in marketing and admission. Being part of the network brings visibility to Novia's unique degree programmes in a way that we could not achieve on our own. The cost of covering one international recruitment fair nearly exceeds the cost of being part of the FINNIPS network. It is a challenge to recruit students to Finland, let alone recruiting students to a small UAS with a mere 4,000 students. Branding Finland and the universities of applied sciences internationally effectively requires joint efforts.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

The changing admission system in 2020 brings uncertainty to the international higher education field in Finland. The new act on admission to higher education is changing the joint application system, making the arena more competitive for degree programmes in English. This is a challenge that universities of applied sciences need to face within the next 10 months. There are many options for arranging the admissions to degree programmes in English in 2020. It is difficult to fully predict the outcome of these changes and the impact they will have on Novia UAS and other higher education institutions in Finland.

One of the unsolved challenges with future admissions to higher education in English in Finland is how to digitalise entrance examinations for degree programmes in English without compromising on the needs of the different English programmes such as seafaring. Finnish and Swedish education offered at universities of applied sciences are currently developing a digital entrance examination for 2019 and 2020 as part of a national project funded by the Ministry of Education in Finland (AMK-opiskelijavalinnat 2019). Similar demands will likely be placed on English degree programmes. However, there are challenges to be addressed. Challenges related to a digital entrance examination are purely technical issues yet also related to maintaining a high standard on proving the identity of the candidates, which is important when it comes to cooperation with the immigration authorities.

Digitalisation has brought new challenges and opportunities to the education sector. Although higher education is still mainly offered on-campus, a few UASs are taking their degrees to new dimensions by offering fully online degrees. Novia UAS is exploring new ways of delivering classes so that students can participate in lectures regardless of their whereabouts. Within Novia UAS and our Maritime Management, Captain degree programme, some courses are offered online to allow students to study during their on-board practice. This field of study requires practical exercises in many subjects, such as basic safety at sea, celestial navigation and training in the simulation centre (Bachelor of Maritime Management, Maritime Management, Captain 2019). Therefore, this degree requires on-campus studies regardless of technical advances in digitalisation of education.

Adapting the education to the needs of the industry and the trends in the current global market is necessary to survive in the competitive education market. As a response to the changing digital world, Novia UAS has in the past two years offered a unique master's programme in Autonomous Maritime Operations, focusing on emerging trends in the maritime field. Students that have graduated Maritime Management, Captain are eligible to apply for further studies at universities of applied sciences after gaining at least three years of work experience in a relevant field after their graduation. We also offer a regular master's degree in Maritime Management aimed for those pursuing a leadership role in their careers. Our students have great opportunities to be part of the future in the maritime industry, either as professional seafarers or by gaining deeper knowledge in their field of expertise through pursuing a master's degree.

CONCLUSIONS

As for the changing admission system in 2020, the higher education field faces the challenge of marketing Finnish higher education internationally. There are opportunities to cooperate towards a more effective and focused student admission in 2020. It is our hope that the FINNIPS network will continue to bring international students to Finland over the next ten years and work towards cooperation within student admissions, keeping in mind digitalisation challenges as well as the specific needs of different programmes. The FINNIPS network has brought a diverse group of students together in recent years, and the Maritime Management, Captain degree would not be the same without its international students!

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INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMME IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT – A GLOBAL AND LOCAL SUCCESS STORY

Jaana Häkli

Based on interviews of Tanya Connolly & Katja Vehviläinen

International degree programmes attract applicants from different corners of the world through the FINNIPS joint application procedure, but where do our graduates end up after graduation? Saimaa University of Applied Sciences started the international degree programme in tourism and hospitality management in 2006. So far, 153 students have graduated from the programme with a bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management. As Finland is facing the growing problem of a labour shortage, it is in the national interest to integrate as many international graduates from Finnish universities of applied sciences as possible to work and live in Finland after their graduation. How successful are the universities of applied sciences in this, or do they perhaps also have alumni success studies that reach beyond Finland's borders?

A MULTICULTURAL GLOBETROTTER

Tanya Connolly (known as Tatyana Nikiforova during her study time) was a student who was accepted in 2006 at Saimaa University of Applied Sciences to the first international group studying for a bachelor's degree in tourism. Studying in English had been a dream of hers for a long time, and studying abroad was strongly encouraged by her parents. Her home town is St. Petersburg, and its close location to her study town of Imatra was a major advantage when it came to the selection of where she would complete her degree; her parents could stress less about their daughter's whereabouts as she was close by. During her studies she made a random decision to go on a student exchange for one term to Singapore instead of going to Germany. She wanted to explore a cultural environment that was different from Europe and learn something new. Upon returning to Singapore, she worked one year for a tourism company specialised in medical tourism for Russian clientele, and after that for 2.5 years for Resorts World Sentosa, a hospitality and casino brand owned and operated by Genting Group, the biggest Asian gaming operator, as a Senior Executive in VIP Casino Marketing. Working for Resorts

World Sentosa taught her a lot about marketing and working for a big business conglomerate.

Nowadays she works as a Global Partnership Manager for Acronis, a leading cyber protection company. The company sets the standard for cyber protection and hybrid cloud storage through its backup, anti-ransomware, disaster recovery, storage, and enterprise file sync and share solutions.

When the Swiss-Singaporean company opened its international headquarters in Singapore in 2014, she was subsequently approached to join the company. Due to her background in hospitality and her personal interest in sports, she found her place in a technological company's sport partnerships management position. In motorsports, where top-secret innovations are developed all the time, data protection is an essential feature of business. Since then the partnerships from motorsports have spread to other fields of sports marketing, including the football premier league in the United Kingdom. Currently, she manages a team of her own which is responsible for managing over 40 global sport partnerships, of which 5 are major ones, such as RokiT Williams Racing, SportPesa Racing Point F1 team, NIO Formula E team as well as Manchester City and Arsenal Football Clubs. Every now and then she trots the globe with the Formula 1 circuit, as these Acronis Racing Weekends are important events for showcasing the partnerships and creating exclusive experiences for their partners.

Working for a global company has created amazing opportunities for Tanya. Since she has a few people reporting to her already, she can develop her leadership skills, and there is a huge pool of new things for her to learn now that the company is opening new offices in different countries, e.g. in Bulgaria. Her plan is to stay at Acronis:

“As long as the company gives me new challenges, it makes no sense to look for jobs somewhere else. With new partnerships, the work never gets boring. I want to be known as a professional in the industry. I want to be the best in what I do and I want to be a part of something meaningful. Acronis Foundations builds schools in developing countries, e.g. in Cambodia and Senegal. To me it is important to be a part of something meaningful. It is good to do good.”



Tanya Connolly. (Photo: Acronis)

A PASSIONATE PROMOTER OF IMATRA

Katja Vehviläinen, formerly known as Ekaterina Makeeva, had quite a similar story to Tanya's during her study time. Katja's parents were eager to send their daughter to study abroad, so she applied for studies in Finland in 2006 and was not accepted because she was not really interested in studying abroad herself; at that point her life was in Russia. She was interested in numbers and wanted to continue her university studies in finance that she had already started during her studies in upper secondary school. However, a year later her attitude towards tourism and studies in Finland had changed completely, because she had learned a lot about Finland through a promotional visit of Saimaa UAS's teachers to the university where she was studying at that time. She applied again and received a study place in hospitality management.

During her studies she went on a student exchange to Taiwan, where she learned a lot about Asian culture and way of living. During her second compulsory placement, which she did at Imatra State Hotel at the reception, her Finnish skills got a real boost from her colleagues who taught her new words, corrected her grammar and also taught her cultural aspects. In 2010 Katja worked for a project in the Imatra Region Development Company, where she became familiar with productisation and project management. Her career path changed dramatically through her work there, since she switched from

hospitality industry to project management and business consulting. Katja worked for the Imatra Region Development Company as a business expert for 6 years, mainly helping companies establish and develop their operations, but her work was constantly connected with tourism as well.

This has all paid off now, because at the end of January 2019 she was promoted to the position of Imatra's Tourism Development Director, just a week after her graduation with a master's degree in Business Administration from Saimaa University of Applied Sciences. She speaks Finnish so fluently that even the filler word "niinku" is said in all the right places, and her Finnish is idiomatically more colourful than that of an average native speaker. Her eloquent personality makes one think that she was born and raised in South Karelia even though she has only lived here for the last 10 years. Thanks to her personality, promoting Imatra happens naturally in almost every event she attends.

INTERNATIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMMES TEACH KEY COMPETENCES

Key competences such as teamwork, intercultural competence, project management and presentation skills are taught to students during their studies for a bachelor's degree. Some of these key competences, such as project management, are polished further in master's studies.

Studying in an international degree programme has taught the graduates many key competences that are now useful in working life. Working in teams and how you deal with people representing different cultures, or how you change your own behaviour and communication patterns based on who you are interacting with, are skills that are needed when negotiating global partnerships or meeting customers from different cultures. It is important to understand the Dream Team thinking; how to get the best out of people and how the team works effectively for the same goal.

"Even though we were studying in a small town in Imatra, the curriculum always had an international approach. Courses had a global perspective and therefore studies were very beneficial. I deal with cross-cultural differences every day in a global company, so those case studies from international companies were very useful. It is funny how life goes. During my studies, I struggled to pass courses such as Budgeting & Investments, but now I'm responsible for budgets for global partnerships," Tanya laughs.

Other key competences learned in Finland were project management and presentation skills. Finnish education is practical. Real-life projects in

cooperation with local companies were carried out throughout the studies and their results were often presented in the form of presentations – just like in real working life.

Analysing trends and looking at the future was as important during studies as it is in today's marketing. Sports marketing is quite a special niche, so Tanya had to learn quite much about that by learning by doing – something that was also an important pedagogical study method during her years in Finland.

Katja's studies for her master's degree in International Business Management were useful for her present work. They brought her more understanding in business operations even though she had completed a special qualification in business consultancy after her graduation with a bachelor's degree in tourism and her Russian degree in finance. Qualified teachers with personal experiences in running a business, providing case examples of what-to-do and what-not-to-do, highlighted the studies. The teachers had a spark in their eyes and were interested in sharing their experiences.

Memories about Finnish teachers are still well preserved in the minds of our graduates. The teachers were more than just teachers for international students who were alone abroad for the first time in their lives. They gave you a lot of advice and guidance, and you remember them from those and not from the course assignments.

Learning Finnish is an integral part of integrating to Finland. Foreign students must have possibilities to speak Finnish, not everything should be conducted in English. Understanding the language is a key to people's hearts and a key in understanding the target culture.



Katja Vehviläinen. (Photo: City of Imatra)

FINLAND – A SPECIAL PLACE IN THEIR HEARTS

Finland turned out to be their destiny, though in very different ways. Both of them are also ambassadors of Finnish education, and Saimaa University of Applied Sciences is grateful for that.

Whenever Tanya is asked how she ended up in Singapore, she needs to tell her story about her studies in Finland and her student exchange in Singapore.

“Studying in Finland made me who I am today. Every time I’m asked about where I come from, I have to tell my story about how I studied in Finland and then randomly came to Singapore to study and to work,” Tanya says.

On the other hand, Katja is today as passionate about the development of Imatra’s tourism as she was back in 2007.

”Many things in Finland are so self-evident to Finns that they do not even see the beauty in them. Finland is this great country with beautiful nature where you can drink water directly from Lake Saimaa. We have rapids that were the first tourist attractions in Finland, creating wonder and beautiful poetry among Russians or people from further away. Tourists need pull factors in addition to accommodation so that they have something to do during their holiday and do not find the place boring. Finland is a Mindfulness Paradise, and it is time for other people to see it, too,” Katja says.

“Finland has many things to be proud of, and it is important to integrate foreigners into our society – into OUR Finland,” Katja says emphatically. Wise words, from a true Finn.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION TO FINNISH LAPLAND AND THE ARCTIC REGION

Anzelika Krastina & Petra Paloniemi

Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Lapland UAS), situated on the Arctic Circle in Northern Finland, has an important role not only as one of the northernmost educational establishments in the European Union, but also as a regional developer. Taking into account the uniqueness of the northern environment and the economic dynamics in the region, Lapland UAS's strategy identifies central fields of expertise such as managing distances, smart use of natural resources, safety and security, service business and entrepreneurship, Arctic cooperation and cross-border expertise. The strategy also incorporates Lapland's regional development goals that include the creation of new enterprises, business development and internationalisation. In recent years, more and more attention has been given to the support of SMEs' internationalisation and export growth (Lapland UAS Strategy 2015). Therefore, the development of international education within Lapland UAS is of higher importance than ever before. There is a widely shared belief in Europe and worldwide that international education has positive ramifications for individuals and societies aiming to leverage the contributions of a better educated and more globally competent workforce (Deardoff et al. 2012).

Lapland is a unique and important part of a wider Arctic region. In recent years, there has been increasing attention towards the Arctic region from the international community due to changes occurring in the region as well as the many opportunities for economic development recognised in the region. Climate change, vast natural resources, increasing shipping in the Arctic routes, the developing mining industry, indigenous communities and a growing tourism industry are just some of the topics that are relevant to the international outlook of the Arctic region. Lapland is also known for its successful international cooperation with the established governance by eight Arctic countries under the umbrella of the Arctic Council. Cross-border cooperation, especially within the Barents region (the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia), is considered an integral part of the region's economic, business and cultural life.

The Lapland region aims to be the most innovative and business-driven sparsely populated area in the circumpolar Arctic. Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Region and Lapland's Arctic Specialisation Programme 2030 (Regional Council of Lapland 2019) are paving the way for even more international,

sustainable and economically dynamic regional development for Lapland. The human capital of the region will be a decisive factor with regard to the successful implementation of these strategies.

Tourism is one of the most important industries in Lapland. Lappish tourism is based on sustainable Arctic nature and experience tourism, which is currently a global trend in tourism (The Regional Council of Lapland 2017). In relation to its population, Lapland has the biggest share of tourists in Finland. The growth of tourism has been explosive; for example, the number of registered international stays has tripled in the 2000s. Today, there are only about 181,000 people living in Lapland and around 2.6 million registered overnights annually, and the numbers have been growing steadily. According to Visit Finland, the number of overnight stays of international tourists has grown by 33% from 2005 to 2016 (Visit Finland 2017). Tourism has already become a development catalyst for promoting both social and economic welfare in Lapland. Tourism brings both direct and indirect economic benefits to Lapland; tourism and its ancillary businesses are important sources of income for many people in Lapland. In recent years, more and more people have been employed by the tourism sector, and there is a strong and growing need of attracting more educated employees in the sector. Lapland UAS has an important role in educating future professionals to the field.

CASE STUDIES DEMONSTRATING BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FOR THE REGION

The task of the Finnish universities of applied sciences as regional actors is to prepare the students for real working life in the best possible way. Educational methods such as problem-based learning, project-based learning and experiential learning combined with real-life cases help the students increase their competences to be better prepared for the challenges of contemporary working life and business. The integration of real-life practices and entrepreneurship education into international education programmes has demonstrated the benefits of international education. International education does not merely aim to offer an alternative education in English; it serves a much wider purpose. Lapland UAS is a new institution that was created as a result of the merger of two regional UASs in 2014: Kemi-Tornio and Rovaniemi. In both UASs, international education was introduced from the early stages of their existence. Therefore, Lapland UAS inherited a well-established international education and further developed it through even closer integration with the region's socio-economic life.

In-depth analysis needs to be conducted in order to examine the qualitative and quantitative results of actual outcomes of international education and their influence on regional development. However, there are many good examples that can be introduced to illustrate the role of international education in regional development. It should be noted that the integration of real-life project cases into educational programmes and pedagogy has played a major role in ensuring that international education brings benefits for the region. While students are in the classroom, they also witness and experience real life and develop networks with regional actors, which leads to various opportunities for further employment or business development. The university of applied sciences uses various platforms to create a bridge between the school and working life, with InnoBarentsLab being one of the examples where students already during their studies develop and practice their entrepreneurship skills by developing business ideas and creating enterprises (InnoBarentsLab 2019). They engage in real-life Arctic cross-border cooperation activities, and sometimes these activities become noticed even at the EU level. Recently, our student from Hungary introduced an Arctic cross-border cooperation initiative in Brussels during the conference called “Bringing together Youth along the External Borders of the European Union” (Lapland UAS 2019).

First and foremost, international education brings to the university campus cultural diversity, which increases the awareness of different cultures. It also contributes to the development of intercultural communication among students, teachers and staff. Diversity is also a good source of innovations and for developing new business ideas. Many examples of successful businesses established by international students exist. Few people probably know that the famous local brewery Lapin Panimo (Lapland Brewery) was initiated and established by a Latvian man (alumnus of Lapland UAS) in partnership with local businesspeople. Another case can be connected with the development of Asian tourism in Lapland. In one of the Business Planning courses within International Business studies, one of the Asian students introduced a business plan as a part of the course assignment. This plan later became a reality, with the student becoming a real businessman with very successful business operations established in Finnish Lapland.

There are many interesting real-life cases of established export businesses between Finland and the country of origin of an international student. It is clear that those foreigners who study in Finland know well the “rules of the game” and are the best business contact in the foreign state for the exporting businesses. Many examples can be given in relation to the cross-border cooperation activities. Russia is one of the countries that border Finnish

Lapland. Our university has a long cross-border cooperation history with the Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Karelia regions of Russia. Many students get involved in these development and cooperation projects and later on become employees and regional developers in these same projects. In order to provide more concrete examples, we present the following case studies that will demonstrate how international studies have contributed to the increased intercultural competence, cultural tolerance, various innovations, new employments and new businesses created by international programme students.

INTERNATIONALISATION AND INTEGRATION THROUGH CULTURE EVENTS

International and Finnish students often organise joint culture events, including events that aim for better integration of immigrants. “Breaking the Ice”, one of the best-known projects created by the international students together with the Finnish students, was one of the pioneering activities in 2016 during the unexpectedly big inflow of refugees, most of whom came from the Middle East. International students, who had already integrated well into Finnish society, were able to explain specific features of Finnish culture and society through the project. Various presentations, culture events and food fairs were organised as part of the project. Many local organisations recognised the positive efforts of the project that were purely the students’ initiative and invited these active students to participate in various activities organised by responsible authorities. Many students continue to participate in activities and projects related to the integration of immigrants.

The annual International and Multicultural Fair at the university is a good demonstration of cross-cultural competencies and international teamwork. For local Finnish students it is not only an interesting experience where they get to know a variety of cultures represented in the fair, it is possibly also a first-time interaction in English with a foreigner or someone representing a country of which people have heard little about. In autumn 2018, at the event, countries like Russia, China, Bangladesh, Nepal, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Mali, Zambia and naturally Finland were presented. During the Fair Day, the organising group of International Business students showcased the cultures of their national countries in multiple ways while featuring the theme of business etiquette around the world, which is a relevant topic in both a global and local context. Several nursing, forestry and business students from Finnish degree programmes had an integrated English language or multicultural assignment to be completed in the Fair (Liu 2019). It is clear that the multicultural environment at school has become a daily experience

for these students, while also providing a real-life intercultural communication competence for future professionals of any background.

ACTIVATING THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE - ARCTIC YOUTH FORUM

International students who arrive at Lapland University of Applied Sciences, located as it is “on the edge of the earth,” as many say, may be a bit confused at the beginning. For many Asian or Central European students it is a very remote and sparsely populated area where not much happens according to their belief. However, it takes a few semesters before they discover the actual dynamics and opportunities of the North. By developing innovation competences and Arctic region knowledge, they discover this region from a completely different angle. They become ambassadors of regional development and take real action with new initiatives. Recently, a group of international and Finnish students established the first Arctic Youth Forum (AYF). Young people wanted to start a discussion about how to make the Arctic region and Lapland a lively and interesting place to live in, where the young generation can stay.

It was first organised as a side event of the Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit conference in 2017 by young, innovative students from InnoBarentLab of Lapland UAS. “Our main idea is to provide a platform for young people to express their opinions and ideas concerning the future of the Arctic while connecting them with influencers and decision-makers. We aim to do this because we want our Arctic to be lively and buzzing even 20 years from now. We need young people to stay in the Arctic for this to be possible, so it is time to give a chance for them to have a word,” says International Business student Nikolett Plesér, one of the organisers from the Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Arctic Center 2017). The panellists who engaged in interactive discussion with more than 50 young Arctic enthusiasts represented the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Rovaniemi Development Agency, Arctic Center, private businesses and NGOs. Topics such as environmental challenges, economic and business development, and local community issues were among those that were discussed with particular interest. The most important aspect of such initiatives is sustainability and continuity.

The following edition of the 2018 AYF was organised by another group of international students as an inspiration from previous activities under the topic “Arctic Business Network”. Students decided to bring the job market into the university campus. Local and regional companies were invited for interaction and discussions so that young people could create a network with regional

actors and establish meaningful contacts with potential employers or business partners. According to the leading organiser's team, consisting of students from Germany, Hungary, Canada and the United States, the Arctic Business Network had created a win-win situation for all participants as it was beneficial for both students and companies. There have been numerous available job offers, recruitments, announcements of training places for students' practical training and internship possibilities. As a result of such an event, several students received job offers, while several students who were dreaming of starting their own business realised that there is a potential to establish a company and begin negotiations with the first business partnerships created at the 2018 AYF. It must be noted once again that this is an independent initiative of international students supported by the school, and therefore it is a good example of how international education relates to regional development.

FIELDWORK AMIDST THE BOOMING TOURISM INDUSTRY IN LAPLAND

The Degree Programme in Tourism in Rovaniemi is one of the most popular programmes among international students. It also has a long tradition of cooperation with local tourism companies and organisations. The cooperation is visible in a very concrete level and in everyday practices in the tourism education; it is not only lofty rhetoric in the strategies. The cooperation has developed over the years and is dependent on the good networks and trust between the local organisations and the UAS and its teachers. All parties see the benefits of cooperation, and the win-win situation is obvious. Cooperation with the tourism companies and destinations makes the studies in the tourism curriculum interesting and relevant. Almost all the study units in the Degree Programme in Tourism contain cooperation with local organisations and companies. This increases the networking possibilities for the students and working life, and ensures that the studies are definitely related to the real issues of everyday working life.

For many years, the Degree Programme in Tourism has cooperated closely with the Arctic Design Week event in Rovaniemi. Arctic Design Week is an international design event that connects the design professionals of various fields together. The model of cooperation between the degree programme and the event has developed over the years. Currently, students take part in both strategic and practical levels in planning and implementing the event in close connection with the event organisers. In this cooperation, the tourism students learn collaborative event management in a real case and are able to create networks with many stakeholders.

The Degree Programme in Tourism also cooperates a lot with many tourism destinations. As one example, in 2017 the Degree Programme cooperated with the tourist destination of Elves Hideaway, situated in Kõngäs village in Levi, Finnish Lapland. Various methods of tourism service design were used in the storification process done by the international bachelor's students. For example, the students created customer personas of different target groups (Chinese, British and Finnish) for the destination. As a result of this development project, the students produced stories and tourism products based on the local cultural heritage and mythological beliefs for the use of the destination.

One example of cooperation is the international cooperation model with Kempten University of Applied Sciences in Germany and Breda University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. In 2018, an intensive course called "The Challenge of Lapland" took place in Rovaniemi, where students from Kempten UAS and the 3rd year tourism students studied together in one group. The students were charged with the learning task of designing authentic sauna experiences for five local companies using the Design Thinking method. In 2019, the intensive course will be organised by Breda UAS in the Netherlands, and the students from Lapland, Kempten and Breda will get together and develop a Memorable Tourist Experience at Safaripark Beekse Bergen. International cooperation with other universities of applied sciences maximises the learning results for the students as well as the teachers and brings significant benefits also for the organisations who take part in the cooperation.

CONCLUSIONS

The importance of international education in the context of Lapland and Arctic regional development cannot be underestimated. As seen in various case studies of this article, international education is especially important in terms of preparing professionals for working life in multicultural Lapland and the Arctic region. With the development of businesses and Arctic industries, the demand for international professionals will grow. However, local educational institutions are in the best position to help prepare such professionals that can integrate and adapt to an extreme northern environment. On the other hand, international students coming to Lapland also bring cultural diversity. It is said that diversity is the mother of creativity and innovation. The students are not coming to Finland or to Lapland just to gain an education and leave. Many international students create businesses, innovate and stay in the region,

thus contributing to the local socioeconomic development. For many local Finnish people this is a great opportunity to become a part of an international community and learn various cultures without leaving their home, thereby developing their personal cultural IQ. In order for all of this to happen, much work is done beyond the surface: attracting international talent is done with the help of networks such as FINNIPS. Looking from the perspective of Finnish Lapland, it is clear that our region is remote compared to other parts of the world, and it is hard or almost impossible to get recognised or noticed if Lapland UAS acted on a solo basis in the global market. However, FINNIPS forms a strong network of Finnish universities of applied sciences, and a unified form of examination abroad also makes it possible for Lapland to attract and retain global talent.

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Conclusions

TOWARDS STRATEGIC INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Riikka Vanhanen & Jyrki Holappa

The previous FINNIPS publication “Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences on the Verge of a New Era” (Vanhanen, Kitinoja & Holappa 2017) was published in the year when Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) started charging tuition fees from non-EU/EEA students in English-taught bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes. The new policy marked a change in the operational environment, and to succeed in the global competition, as was argued in many of the articles of the publication, HEIs would need to set strategic goals for international student recruitment and implement the plans accordingly. Looking from the FINNIPS network’s perspective, it was suggested – not surprisingly – that cooperation is key in the successful implementation of international education marketing and student recruitment.

In light of those reflections, it is also not a surprise that the work group set by the Ministry of Education and Culture to follow up and evaluate the effects of the introduction of tuition fees on Finnish HEIs made similar remarks and suggestions in their interim report published in November 2018. In the report’s conclusions and development ideas, clear target setting is seen as important for advancing the internationalisation of HEIs. Strategic planning should include both qualitative and quantitative objectives in terms of foreign students, degree programmes and profits from tuition fees. Furthermore, in order to succeed in the global education competition and to enhance Finland’s international visibility, it is suggested that HEIs should join forces and that the operation of different kinds of cooperation structures should be further enhanced. (MoEC 2018, 47.) While individual HEIs are responsible for the target setting regarding internationalisation, it is delightful to be able to acknowledge that, along with FINNIPS, the Finnish UASs already have a great model for cooperation.

For ten years already, the FINNIPS cooperation has produced a lot of tangible outcomes: extensive international education marketing and implementation of entrance examinations around the world have guaranteed a steady flow of international degree students to Finnish UASs. Mutual operations have been planned and conducted in close cooperation with the network’s member UASs as well as with a number of authorities and other interest groups in Finland and abroad. With the existing and well-functioning

cooperation structure the question is, how can the FINNIPS network be better utilised to support the further internationalisation of Finnish HEIs? It appears that even though we have a working cooperation structure at hand, is the long-term work, experience and results fully recognised? We hope that this publication, with its aim to make the network cooperation more visible, provides answers to these questions. Understanding the roles and tasks of FINNIPS enables also the better utilisation of the network for facing and dealing with new challenges occurring in the ever-changing operational environment.

FROM STUDENTS TO PROFESSIONALS

One of the recent changes in the Finnish HEIs' operational environment in the national context has been the introduction of the new financing model for higher education. The new financing model for Finnish UASs emphasises not only the number of graduates, but also graduating in due course as well as finding employment in the relevant field of study upon graduation. Consequently, the quality of candidates and their appropriate testing should be of even greater interest to the degree programmes and UASs. Part of the FINNIPS network's established and continuing practices is to ensure that the admitted students are also up to the task of reaching the set goals in accordance with the new financing model.

Even though the main emphasis of the FINNIPS cooperation is on student recruitment, meaning the initial phases of the international degree students' path in Finnish higher education, the network takes interest in recognising and bringing up the overall potential and influence of foreign students to Finnish society at large. Equally important is reflecting on the surrounding society's actions and their impact on HEIs and foreign degree students.

For example, the Finnish labour market needs to review its attitudes and practices, and consider whether it's making the best use of the potential that international degree students and graduates have to offer to Finland. The positive impact is already evident in many regions of this country, where the success and future growth of local industries and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) depends on the availability of a highly skilled and internationally oriented work force. Therefore, the SMEs and other employers should engage in deeper cooperation with the Finnish UASs and degree programmes to facilitate degree students' transition from higher education to working life, and simultaneously advance the formation of relevant education of competences and professional skills needed in the Finnish labour market.

Good examples and practices with excellent results of the cooperation between UASs and working life are also introduced in this publication.

THE WORK CONTINUES

This publication has covered accounts of the development of internationalisation of Finnish HEIs and looked into their future prospects with regard to possibilities in education export, for example. It has also provided descriptions about the work conducted within the FINNIPS network during the past ten years. The aim has been to offer insights to the accomplishments and results gained within the network cooperation. At the same time, the focus has been on reflecting the current changes and development schemes regarding the international students' admission process and degree programmes as well as on foreign students' study paths from the admissions phase to employment in Finland and abroad.

We want to thank all the authors for their contributions to the publication. Together the articles form a comprehensive picture of the past and current realities of international education and its impact. For a small nation like Finland, networking and cooperation are key factors for success. Accordingly, the FINNIPS network will continue its work in attracting global talents to its member UASs. When it comes to the strategic target setting and the scope of the network in the future, FINNIPS already has a vision: the more the merrier!

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The fourth publication of the Finnish Network for International Programmes (FINNIPS) is a celebration of the ten years of cooperation conducted within the network. Since the end of 2009, Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs) have joined forces to implement international education marketing and student recruitment together to attract global talents to Finnish higher education. By 2019, the FINNIPS cooperation efforts have created a significant channel for foreign degree students to come to Finland.

The articles of the publication are written by experts of international higher education in Finnish UASs and the Finnish National Agency for Education, EDUFI. They provide versatile views to the development of UASs' internationalisation and introduce examples on the development of the admission process and international degree programmes. Furthermore, the articles serve various insights regarding the impact of Finnish UASs' international education on different levels stretching from students' personal experiences to regional and societal effects.

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