

PROJECT OF MAKING GUIDEBOOK TO EMPLOYMENT

Developing a Guidebook for Students of Bachelor of Social Services that Aims
to Prepare Students for Challenges of Finnish Labor Market

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this report is to elaborate the process, objectives and challenges of producing the guidebook called – Guidebook to Employment. As the name suggests it is designed to guide English speaking international students of Universities of Applied Sciences in Helsinki region; who are in first and second years of their studies. It will help them to enhance their employment prospects in Finnish labor market particularly in the social service field. This guidebook has been designed to help social service students seeking jobs in the relevant fields. Along with the process of making the guidebook; the report will give information to readers on concepts such as employability, international students and Finnish labor market that are widely used in this guidebook. Furthermore this report elaborates the background and applicability of these concepts.

The process of making the guidebook was educative and helped us to understand the demands of Finnish labor market and preparatory efforts needed from the international students. The project development process began in February 2015 and ended in May 2015. The content formation was based on relevant literature, qualitative research, feedback from professionals and authors' own experiences as international students. Every step, from data collection, research, analysis for writing the contents or receiving feedback, was a learning curve for us. The first draft of guidebook was scrutinized by professionals from Finnish labor market and second draft was tested with students of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Diak).

We have produced a guidebook for international students of social services to help and assist them in finding jobs. The guidebook contains informations on Finnish language courses, multicultural activity centres, tips of writing CV and cover letters.

Professionals from certain organizations showed their support and have expressed their willingness to publish it on their websites, which was encouraging. We hope the guidebook will help students to improve their employment prospects and provide them ideas about the employment situation of international students in social sector.

Keywords: Finland, social services, bachelor of social services, universities of applied sciences, employability, employers, international students, Higher educational institutions, labor market

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1 INTRODUCTION

Finding job in a new city or a country requires help which if not timely or precisely provided can lead to waste of time, energy and money. To ease the process of job search there are several types of help provided by local municipalities, universities of applied sciences (UAS), immigration office and employment agencies in Finland. Being international students ourselves, we rarely received such specific help in the social service sector. This thesis is based on the idea to provide help in finding job to social service students in Finland. A guidebook called: "Guidebook to Employment" has been produced targeting first and second year international students of bachelor of social services wanting to stay and work in Finland after graduating. This guidebook was produced for the students not having ample knowledge about competitive Finnish labor market. The students gain insight about factors that they need to take into serious consideration during their course of studies, to improve their employment prospects and prepare them well for the Finnish labor market.

Government policies normally formulated on the expectations that highly educated students fully take part in economic activities of the country. However, their core learning should prepare them for the demands of the market hence key skills and employability promoted by governments as part of the curriculum of high level education (Knight & Yorke 2003.) Finnish job market is replete of competition and it is challenging to find job without necessary preparation such as language skills and building relevant network.

According to Cambridge Dictionary (2015) employability means the skills and abilities that allow you to be employed. The skills and abilities such as communication, time management and networking; requires knowledge or guidance from different sources, which our guidebook is aiming to deliver. Students who have Finnish language knowledge, work experience, positive attitude towards work life and a relevant degree have an added advantage over other international students while finding jobs. Finding a job is also dependent

upon individual effort and dedication. This guidebook provides help particularly for international students dealing with challenges of finding jobs in Finland.

In this report, key concepts associated with the guidebook will also be discussed which provides the background information. These concepts also provide in-depth analysis on the importance of required guidance and also current situation of international students in Finland. Finnish labor market, international students and employability are the key concepts discussed.

The thesis consists of two parts; the theoretical part and the empirical part. Theoretical part explains the objectives and concepts associated with the guidebook. Whereas the empirical part comprises of the process description, evaluation process and professional development. In order to find the relevant contents, this process conducted research with students and employers from whom themes were derived through analysis of the data. Our objective of writing the thesis gradually became clearer and concrete. The guidebook was a result of development process and inspiration from authors' personal struggles in seeking jobs. Both of the authors are from foreign background and studying in Finland in the degree program of social services in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the thesis was to produce a guidebook, which provides guidance and assistance in job seeking and enhancing employment prospects for international students of mainly social sector in Helsinki Metropolitan area. The guidebook was written in a manner which was easy to read and helpful for the students.

Additionally the aim was to find the challenges of work lives of international students. Although, finding these challenges was secondary objective of this report where participants (alumni and current students of DSS) gave suggestions and feedbacks regarding DSS studies. After receiving their responses, the guidebook has been formulated in such manner that it answers the concerns raised by respondents.

This guidebook aims towards first and second year international students of social services in university of applied sciences. However being DSS students, it was easier and accessible to find the data within the degree program of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Diak). Though it is contextualized with DSS program, it can be equally useful for the students of other universities of applied sciences in social services programs.

3 FINNISH LABOR MARKET

The higher education internationalization strategy (2009-2015) highlighted the efforts to increase the number of international students up to 20,000 by 2015, promote the export of expertise and enhance the international competitiveness of Finnish higher education. At the same time in the context of the ageing population, the Finnish government is trying to make the Finnish labor market attractive to foreign graduates from Finnish universities (Ministry of Education 2009.) As a result there are approximately 20,000 international students in Finland in the year 2015 and more than 2,000 students graduate every year. According to Center of International Mobility (CIMO n.d) 45% of graduates from all degree programs in 2012 found job within a year. However the statistics do not disclose the nature of the jobs. But the question remains, do these graduates work in the field corresponding to their education or do they work in unskilled jobs.

3.1 Foreigners in Finnish Labor Market

In recent years Finland's unemployment rate has been increasing making the labor market competitive for both the native born and even more so for the foreigners.

TABLE 1: Unemployment Rate in Whole Finland from 2013-2015

Unemployed	Year/month	Unemployment (%)
Persons (in whole)	February	

268,000	2015	10.1
241,000	2014	9.1
231000	2013	8.7

Table 1 demonstrates the rise of unemployment from the year 2013 -2015 in the whole Finland. The number has increased by 27,000 in 2015 and by 10,000 in 2014 compare to a year before.

TABLE 2: OECD Unemployment Rates of Foreigners and Native Born with Higher Education in 2009

Unemployment of foreigners (%)		Unemployment of native born Finnish (%)		Year
<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	2009
17.9	14.6	8.7	7.4	

In Table 2, the Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) report (2009) displays the unemployment rate for foreign graduates with higher education in 2009 was almost twice higher compare to native born.

No wonder that more international graduates preferred to enroll into further full-time studies (11.9% against 6.4% of Finnish ones) as observed in the study of international graduates in Universities of Applied Sciences (Majakulma, 2011) Nevertheless, Johansson (2008) states this difference in the unemployment

rates among native and foreign-born graduates is typical for the majority of Western European countries.

However, contrary to increasing unemployment in other sectors, bachelors in social service students have extensive scope in welfare states such as Finland because of their role of social policy in almost every field (it will be further discussed in detail in chapter Applicability). Generally their perceived role is to promote people's wellbeing and prevent social exclusion. Social work focuses on dealing with clients, instructing groups, communities and management and development. With the increase in demand of employees in healthcare and social services field, it is essential to utilize international students who have studied in Finland in the workforce. Hence international students need to be well equipped with the skills needed in Finnish labor market.

3.2 The Development of Concepts on Education Attainment and Labor Market

According to citation in Shumilova, Cai & Pekkola (2012), conventionally, the relations between education achievement and labor market outcomes have been studied by applying human capital theory (Schultz 1961) or job market signaling (screening) theory (Arrow & Spence 1973.) Although both theories indicate a constructive relation between investment in education and labor market return, their explanations of how education affects employment, differ. Human capital theory argues that education increases individual's productivity, which consequently enhances job performance and leads to higher salaries. However, in the case of international education this link is not always that straightforward as the graduates might have to adjust their salary expectations upon returning to their home country or miss out on some employment opportunities in the host country due to necessary cultural and social integration (Cai 2011).

In contrast, signaling theory argues that education only acts as an instrument for job seekers to indicate their inherent ability to employers. In other words, it is the inherent ability not education itself that increases productivity. For instance, it is assumed that job seekers with a higher education are presumably more adaptive; more motivated and have greater learning abilities (Pavlin 2010.) Only very few studies deal with screening/ signaling of international education in the labor markets (Cai 2011.) Wiers-Jenssen (2008) discusses the signaling effects of foreign education by arguing that a foreign education experience generally signals certain country specific skills (e.g. mastery of a foreign language and intercultural competences) and characteristics of job seekers to employers. The researcher proclaims that foreign education's signaling effect is weak, if it is less known by the employers.

Literature on the relationship between international education attainment and labor market outcomes has shown that international education experience helps students to be employed either in the host countries or in their home countries (Mohajeri Norris and Gillespie, 2009). With respect to the relations between educational attainment and labor market outcomes, the majority of studies tend to apply human capital theory or job market-signaling (screening) theory. Although both theories imply a positive relationship between investment in education and labor market return, their explanations differ on the mechanisms concerning how education affects employment (Cited in Cai 2012).

Human capital theory argues that education increases individual's productivity, which consequently enhances job performance. To better understand the differences between foreign and domestic education, a division between country specific and general human capital is made (Chiswick and Miller 2003; Duvander 2001; Wiers-Jenssen 2008). Country-specific human capital theory assumes that certain aspects of human capital such as 'language skills, cultural skills, and professional skills adapted to national requirements (Wiers-Jenssen 2008) tend to be more useful in some labor markets. Similarly, Salisbury et al. (2009) argues that a broad range of skills can be developed during the period of

study abroad, such as 'a deeper understanding and respect for global issues', 'more favorable attitudes toward other cultures', 'stronger intercultural communication skills', 'improved personal and professional self-image', 'better foreign language skills', 'self-confidence', 'ability to handle ambiguity', 'insight into their own value systems' and 'overall maturity'. These authors have also indicated that such skills are normally acquired when individuals study abroad.

Acknowledging the positive impact of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), in particular, on the development of individual's competencies and employability, it yet remains unclear what really matters in the recruitment process: the human capital shaped by the HEIs, or the inherent capabilities developed during the student life. Moreover, factors external to HEIs, such as social background, gender, age, ethnic affiliation, career aspirations, networks, the quality and availability of work experience; access to information; and labor market conditions, are increasingly believed to be affecting the employability of graduates (Pavlin 2010; Lindberg 2008.) These aspects are not reflected by either human capital or signaling theory.

4 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

According to the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Institute for Statistics' (UIS) Global Education Digest (2006), international student can be defined as an internationally mobile student who has left his or her country or territory of origin and moved to another country or territory with the singular objective of studying. According to Nancy Arthur (2011), the international students' decision to stay or leave is affected by many factors that they have to reflect on upon their graduation. One of the factors is the influence of the host country: how integrated the students feel and how they perceive their opportunities and the hospitality of country of their studies. These are important factors that should be carefully discussed in the strategies for internationalization in society and in individual universities (Toolkit for HEIs n.d.)

The international students are not just motivated by gaining a degree but also by finding an opportunity of obtaining relevant employment either globally or in Finland. This need is perfectly reasonable. But in order to be successful, the institutions need business life, industry and the service sector to appreciate one thing: here is a pool of graduates with remarkably useful cultural capital, and it would be in the interests of any internationally active business to recruit them (Sahlberg n.d.)

4.1 Challenges for International Students

HEIs are preparing students with excellent skills pertaining to their fields of education, however, employers when asked, stressed on lacking basic skills in students such as communication and time management (Knight & Yorke 2003.) Employability comes with different challenges posed by external and internal factors, which are discussed in detail below. In the following paragraphs challenges faced by international students will be further discussed.

Universally, communication skills are important part of employability and communication is strongly associated with the language skills hence Finland is also no exception. Importance of Finnish language is unquestionable, however communication skills overall are essential in professional life. The most important issue for a foreigner is usually to be able to communicate in native language. There are few jobs where it is possible to work without knowing any Finnish, and for reasons of occupational safety alone it is vital to be able to communicate in Finnish. Finnish language skills and knowledge of Finnish culture are regarded as extremely important for employment (Majakulma 2011).

In his project (2014) Hallott uncovered weaknesses in higher education institutions compared to their international peers. In one case study he looked at Sheffield Hallam University's Business School, a UK institution with a large intake of foreign students. He found that their career service was much more active than at similar Finnish institutions, offering students networking events, careers counseling, tutorials and work placements and employing 20 careers advisors. This is one area Hallott feels Finnish institutions need to improve in particular. (Cited in Yle News 2014.)

Cultural differences between the country of origin and the country of immigration can cause an impact on employment. Understanding Finnish society will help ease integration process. Finland is being more multicultural as compared to 10 years ago. In a case study Majakulma (2011) has stated that often the attitude of some employers towards foreigners can create a hindrance in itself for employability. Finland has extensive policy for integration for foreigners however still figures have shown that foreign citizens are most affected by the economic recession in Finland and the employment gap between native and immigrants (including international students) is approximately three times more (Larja, Warius, Sundback, Liebkind, Kandolin & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2012, 51-53.) Building right network is as important as having Finnish language skills in Finland. Lack of networking skills and contacts can lead to difficulties in finding jobs. In Finland 70% of the vacancies go

unadvertised and filled with the personal connections and networking (Thompson 2004, 33). Most of these jobs circulated by word of mouth, so having contacts is instrumental when looking for a job in Finland. Being in a new country or in new field pose challenges on international students of having no or limited network.

4.2 Literature Review

In June 2003, the career services of University of Helsinki, published a survey on the employment status of foreign graduates of years 1997–1999. The survey showed that there are good employment prospects for foreign graduates, but not sufficient information accessible about the Finnish working life, job-hunting techniques and skills needed in the employment market. The report highlights the problem of underemployment situation where 15% of the respondents did not benefit from their education in their jobs. Pulkkinen (2003) mentioned that many respondents also indicated that “being a foreigner is itself a hurdle in succeeding in the labor market”, with 40% feeling somehow discriminated against.

In 2005, the student unions of five Finnish universities conducted a survey to investigate how international degree students perceive Finland as a place to study, work and live (Kärki 2005). Although it is assumed that, due to the increase of the ageing population in Finland, highly educated and skilled foreigners can provide the future labor force to secure the country’s economic growth, the survey shows that international students face great challenges in finding a job in Finland mainly because of the language barrier. The other factors identified by the survey that affect foreign students’ employment in Finland are discrimination, access to job information searches, lack of the right contacts, lack of relevant work experience, wrong field of study and residence permit restrictions. It is indicative that 21% of the students were planning to leave Finland when asked about their future plans after graduation, while eight

percent felt that they would like to stay, but it was not possible (Shumilova, Cai & Pekkola 2012.)

Säpyskä (2007) carried out an investigative project, "Taking Foreigners' Skills into Use in Pirkanmaa Area", in which the purpose was to explain how the public sector could help both Finnish employers and foreign employees to find each other in the recruiting market and make the Pirkanmaa area a more international, multicultural and open working and living environment. The tone of the report as well as the attitude of the interviewed Finnish employers was, in general, positive. Nevertheless, the lack of Finnish language skill is often an obstacle to the foreigners' employment in Finland. However, this finding is closely followed by constructive solutions and suggestions. The project states that if the foreign workers' Finnish language skills are sufficient, they have more opportunities to find work. It also suggests that foreign workers should be more active in expanding their social and professional networks and contacting employers. In doing so, they might end up discovering "hidden vacancies".

Vehaskari (2010) found that the language barrier is not the only challenge that a foreigner faces when trying to find employment in Finland. The other challenges include the restrictive bureaucracy of the residence permit, closed professional networks, difficult in integration and limited career options. The author also indicates that the Finnish employers' attitudes towards foreigners generally play a negative role, and changing attitudes is hard and takes time.

In a European survey on Employers' perceptions of graduate employability (European Commission 2010) recruiters highlighted the importance of teamwork, sector-specific skills, communication skills, computer literacy, the ability to adapt in new situations, first class ability in reading/writing and analytical and problem-solving skills. Foreign language skills were regarded as more important when the recruiter had international contacts. A large majority of employers were satisfied with the skills of the graduates (Majakulma 2011.)

In this respect, there is a mounting team of global talent available for Finnish employers. They are the international graduates from Finnish HEIs, many of who intend to stay and work in Finland (CIMO 2011). However, such resources have not been efficiently used yet. The foreign talent will not merely solve skill shortages in Finland. It is acknowledged that foreign expertise can add value to a company's innovation, design and marketing. When a Finnish enterprise decides to hire an employee directly from his home country, it can gain a number of benefits, but the decision may also result in expenses such as immigration fee, visa fee and air fare. However while hiring the international graduates from Finland, the list of benefits includes: language skills; knowledge of the target market abroad; contacts to businesses and institutions and an understanding of the political, business and cultural peculiarities of both Finland and the target partner country (Vehaskari 2010). In other words, hiring international graduates might be a cost efficient way for Finnish companies to internationalize (Shumilova, Cai & Pekkola 2012).

Despite all these advantages, there are difficulties in retaining the international talent in Finland. First of all, until recently, the approach to labor immigration in Finland could be characterized as ad hoc and cautious. The government has implemented a strategic goal to connect students educated in Finland more meticulously with the country's labor market needs and has applied less strict work permit policies for students where work is available. Non-EU graduates can extend their residence permit for one year after graduation to look for a job (Infopankki 2011). Yet the entry level jobs and the fixed-term contracts that are usually available for graduates often result in a vicious circle of residence permit applications dependent on the applicant's luck to get a work contract on time. Moreover, it is important to note that the Finnish labor market is highly competitive due to its comparative rise in higher education accomplishment rate in the 25–34 year-olds' age group. In 2009, almost 40% of young people had a higher education degree (OECD 2011). Although the average unemployment rate among university graduates was only 4%, the rate was more than double among foreign-born graduates (Finnish Ministry of Education 2009). According

to Vehaskari (2010), the cost of educating one-degree student in Finland ranges from around 30,000 to 100,000 Euros depending on the major. In this context, it is legitimate to wonder whether the graduates will be able to find a job in Finland and stay, adding value to the Finnish economy, or rather take advantage of the heavily subsidized education and leave in search of better opportunities elsewhere.

According to earlier studies these factors are connected to the integration of immigrants into the Finnish labor market as well. Country of origin often explains an individual's labor market position. The labor market status of refugees and immigrants from developing countries has been weakest, and is strongest amongst immigrants from Western countries and Asia. Educational level and work experience are also important, although academically educated immigrants have had difficulties in getting employed in their own fields and at a level equivalent to their knowledge. A degree attained in Finland or any other developed countries seem to offer a better starting point for employment than a degree attained in developing countries. Also language skills are very important for a person's labor market position. Personality and individual characteristics, such as being active, flexible, social, open, positive and friendly have been found important as social networks and social competence are instrumental to gaining access to the labor market. Social networks have a dual role, on one hand they act as a crucial resource opportunity, on the other hand they operate as constraining factors by channeling immigrants into the low-prestige sectors of the labor market. Ethnic discrimination and the prejudices and attitudes of employers, as well as those of employees and customers were regarded as obstacles. The experiences of discrimination were more common among immigrants who were visibly non-Finnish. Graduates from Finnish HEIs should have a better labor market position than immigrants generally have because they have a degree from Finland and greater experience of Finnish society and working in Finland. According to the Majakulma (2011) most of the international graduates from Finnish UASs have stayed in Finland and are employed.

The factors that influenced employability of the international students were being able to communicate in Finnish and an understanding and knowledge of Finnish society. Personal characteristics like motivation, self-confidence, activeness, persistence, openness, flexibility, self-directiveness and independence were also important. Professional competence, the degree completed, competence gained during education and work experience were also seen as important, as were multicultural competence and foreign language skills, job seeking skills and networks which all enhanced an employee's employability. However, the attitudes of some employers were seen as a hindering factor (Majakulma 2011.)

5 EMPLOYABILITY

The underpinning of all employability is work ethic, that one is hardworking, industrious, reliable and conscientious. Another factors include communication; speech, writing, personal appearance and personal hygiene. Also the ability to gather, analyze, synthesize and apply information is a vital skills. Finally, the ability to learn more skills (and teach others) through formal and informal continuous personal development is essential (Trought 2012.) Employability has many definitions but they break down into two broad groups.

The first relate to the ability of the student to get (and retain and develop in) a job after graduation. The other set are concerned with enhancing the students' attributes (skills, knowledge, attitudes and abilities) and ultimately with empowering the student as a critical life-long learner (Hillage and Pollard 1998)

According to Confederation of British Industry (2015) employability covers a broad range of non-academic or softer skills and abilities, which are of value in the workplace. It includes the ability to work in a team; a willingness to demonstrate initiative and original thought; self-discipline in starting and completing tasks to deadline. Furthermore, employability skills in the field of social care is defined by New College Durham (n.d) as:

to be able to understand the values that underpin the role of Care worker and the organization in which he/she works, understand the responsibilities and boundaries of the role. Understand the need for confidentiality and ways of maintaining it, and know basic organizational politics and procedures of the care worker.

University of Kent (2015) has described the skills essential in social work are the ambition to help the marginalized, competence to communicate clearly and effectively, ability to develop harmony among all kind of people, concern for others' feelings without being emotionally attached and willingness to work besides normal working routine.

According to Pavlin (2010), the concept of employability is closely linked to 'professional success', which can be described by a number of subjective and objective indicators such as: a) the smoothness of the transition from higher education to the labor market (duration of job search); b) income and socio-economic status; c) a position appropriate to the level of educational attainment; d) desirable employment conditions (independent, demanding and responsible work); and e) a high degree of job satisfaction.

6 GUIDE BOOK TO EMPLOYMENT

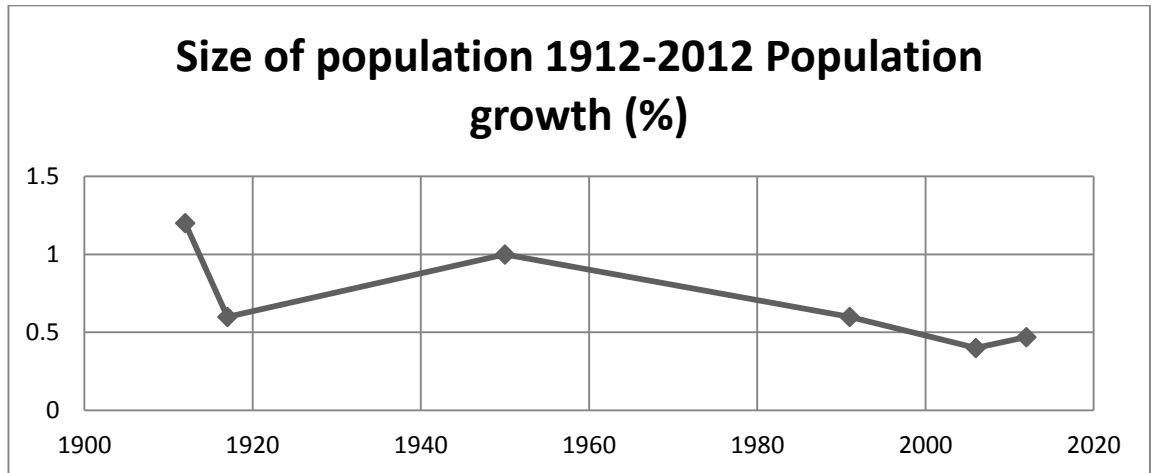
Writing a guidebook is a tedious work; it requires initial level of research as well as careful selection of contents, and then explaining it all in concise and precise way. After going through all the challenges and understanding the subject of guidebook, next logical step was to make a plan to execute it; which will be described step by step in coming chapters. According to Thomas and Jones (2007) in today's competitive world simply being graduate from a university would not give a sufficient edge to student in job market. Hence through their courses, HEIs put more effort for the future employment of students. But it would be unfair to put all the stress on HEIs, it is upon students as well to prepare themselves for future. It is pivotal for them to start working on their skills to enhance their opportunities to be employed during their studies. Thus, our guidebook aims to help international students in learning skills, tools and techniques in order to face a foreign labor market; which in our case is Finland. Students intending to stay in Finland after their studies can use this guidebook for tips about Finnish labor market, Curriculum Vitae (CV) writing, cover letter writing and interview preparations in general. Specifically our guidebook has been designed and written while keeping in mind the perspective of international students. It is providing them assistance in finding employment in Finland in the social sector.

6.1 Applicability

Both authors are students of social services, which makes social sector the obvious choice for the guidebook, however, there are some other factors in Finland such as comparatively more jobs in health care and increase in ageing population which will be explained in next paragraphs. In social services typical operating areas for degree-holders include: elderly care services and care services for disabled people, work for mental health and problems, social care

for adults, work with children and families, welfare services for substance abuse, probation and rehabilitation, and services for immigrants or refugees.

TABLE 3: Population Growth 1912-2012 in Finland



As validated by statistics shown in Table 3, population of Finland increased after World War II, when in the year 1950 Finnish population growth was 1% as compared to 1917 or 1991 when growth rate was 0.6%. After 1991 Finland is seeing continuous decline in population growth afterwards it has not exceeded from 0.4% till 2012 (Trading Economics, Statistics Finland.)

Further Tanner (2011) reviews Finland's labor market and immigrant integration, and notes that Finland's population is growing older. For instance, a bulk of the post-World War II baby boomers (over 500,000 people) will be retiring in the next five years. Hence, there will be a need to fill these vacant places left by retired people in the labor market. Given the demographical trend in Finland, population decline will inevitably occur after 2025 if no compensating measures are systematically implemented. Tanner suggests that the speed of the decline may be slowed by more immigration, particularly labor migrants. Attracting more labor migrants may increase the working-age population, therefore compensating for future labor shortage. According to a survey conducted by CIMO (2012), 68% of international students in 2012 were

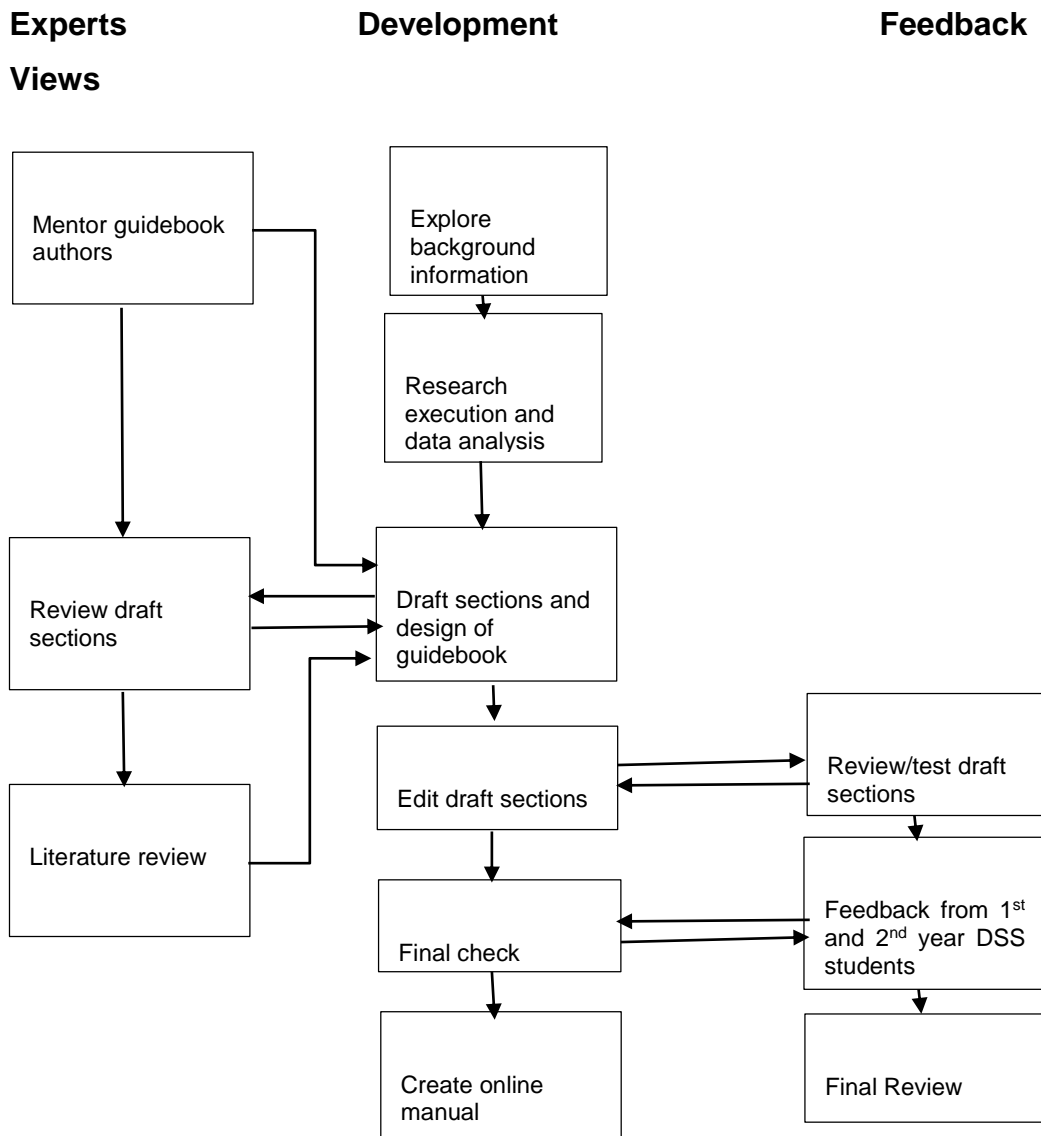
employed in social service, health and sports sector making it the most employed field in Finland compared to other fields.

6.2 Process of Finding Contents for Guidebook

Initial years of studies in a new country brings fresh excitement for international students; being new in foreign land, social circles or in different field of studies. Consequently, students spend more time on understanding the norms and culture of the place. That excitement may take the focus away from learning employability skills or making career choices. First draft of guidebook was presented to a professional working in the social sector and edited it. In keeping her suggestion, focus was shifted to prepare new generation of students of bachelors of social services (socio-noms). Therefore, it was decided to address first and second year students from bachelor of social services through our guidebook (Sakilayan-Latvala personal communication 19.03.2015)

In order to make the guidebook user-friendly, a research was planned with students of DSS. Primarily, background literature was studied extensively to know what previously has been written on the same subject. Also literature was studied to understand concepts and techniques which were included in guidebook. Secondly, current students and alumni were interviewed to know their views about employability and their experiences in Finnish labor market. Also employers were interviewed to know their perspective on the subject. In Figure 1, the whole process has been summarized and will explain in this chapter.

FIGURE 1: Process of Developing Guidebook



6.2.1 Research for contents

Information has been gathered through open-ended questionnaires and interviews. According to the plan of making guidebook, 8 students were selected to conduct research with. The participants were sent the same open-ended questions however the questions differ for current students and alumni. Four different sets of questionnaires were prepared for four different groups who were divided into the current students, alumni, employers and employment agency (see all questionnaires in appendix 2). Due to availability of time and schedules of students, only seven students were interviewed. Out of these seven, three students were alumni and successfully doing jobs in relevant fields. Five were current students of DSS program. Participants of this research were selected from DSS program due to relevance of study and access to schedules of the students. It is important to keep in mind that this research however is not the full part of this thesis. Results of this research have formed a part of contents of the guidebook. One of the former placement employers also took part in this research to give employers' perspective on employability. Semi structured interview was also held with Bridge (Luckan) employment agency.

6.2.2 Background Literature

There are some books, guidebooks, brochures available on the subject of employability and ways to find employment in Finland. Employability is relatively new notion. Extensive studies of background information have been done to find the appropriate content for the guidebook and in order to avoid repetition of the subject that is already available on Internet.

Focus on social sector also made our guidebook unique because in background literature exploration, no guidebook has been found which was solely providing information on the social sector. However in general, many universities or some organizations like trade unions have produced materials, to enhance the employability skills of international students. Contents of our guidebook was

influenced by the literature written on employability and enhancing. After collecting data from research with students and from exploring background literature first draft of guidebook was written keeping in mind the points raised by the students.

6.3 Result Analysis and Themes

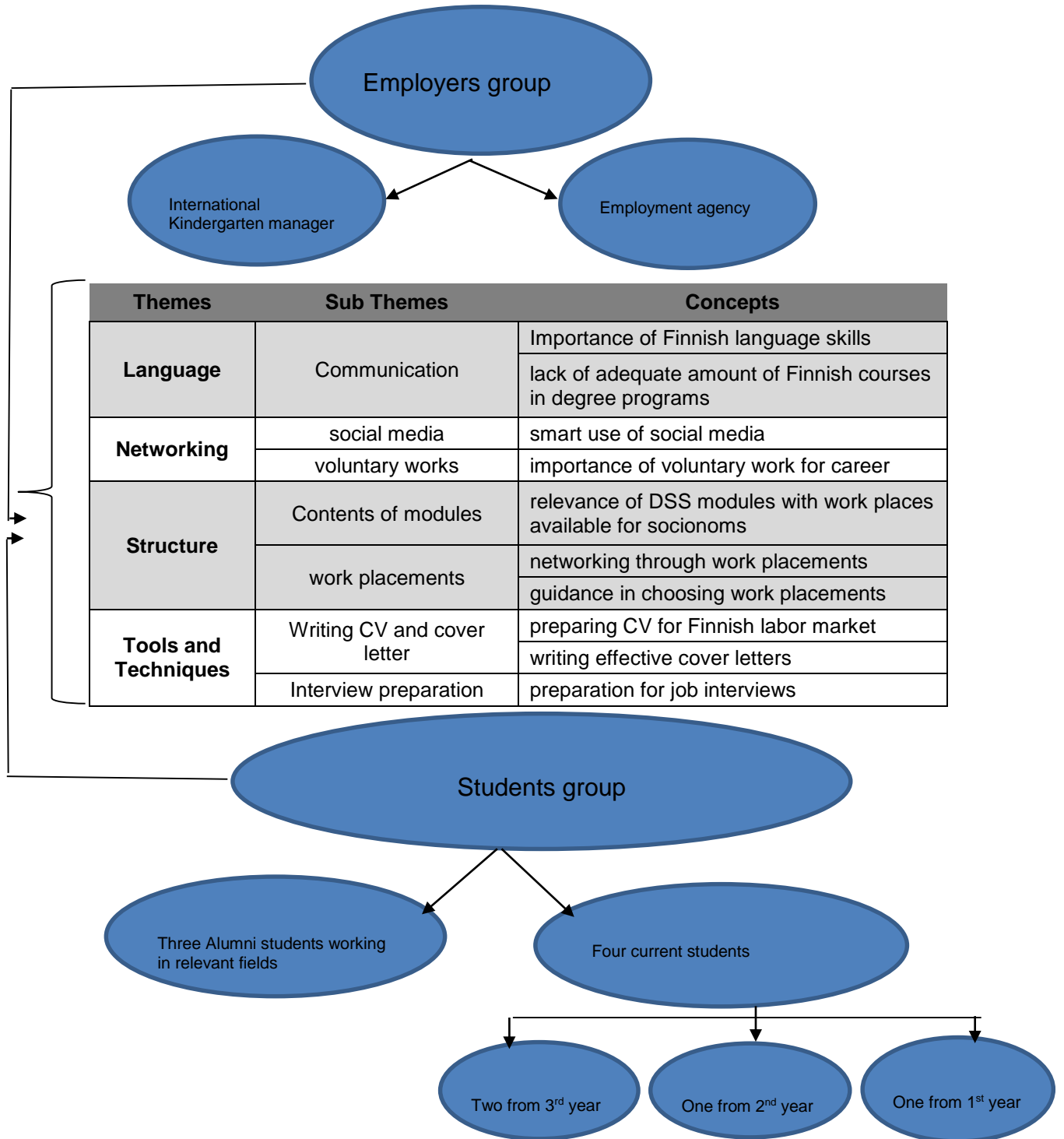
Respondents of research were divided into two major groups; students group in which three alumni students and four current students participated. Two of them were about to finish their degrees and one was from 1st year and other was from 2nd year of DSS. Open-ended questionnaires were sent to the students. Same set of questions was given to the students belonging to each group (alumni and current students). The other group of respondents was employers consisting of one international kindergarten manager and two representatives from Bridge (Luckan) employment agency. Face-to-face interview was conducted with Bridge representatives, hence, semi-structure interview technique was chosen.

Bridge is a project of Luckan; they mainly work with immigrants and Bridge has numerous international students as their clients. One of their services is to help students or unemployed immigrants in job seeking. Services of Bridge are free of cost for students. Nonetheless they do not give guarantee to find jobs yet they help clients in improving CVs, finding language courses, mentoring, integration and building social networks.

Employers are the decision makers; their perspective was included in our guidebook to give reader a realistic picture about Finnish labor market. Respondents including employers and students chosen for interviews have exposure to multicultural environment at their work and study places. All participants of research conducted with students have disclosed their interest in working in Finland after graduation or to study further. Data collected from the answers given by our participants have been thematically analyzed and

contents of guidebook have been drafted on the basis of issues highlighted by participants.

FIGURE 2: Themes Derived from Data Analysis



6.3.1 Language and Communication

The common issue mentioned by all students was Finnish language skills, which play a key role or may become a hindrance while seeking jobs. Finnish language courses should be incorporated throughout the study program. In the words of a former student:

As mentioned earlier, Finnish language throughout the study period will boost the language skill of the students and by the time they graduate, they will be ready to enter into the Finnish labor markets. Of course, obtaining the language skills depends upon the student capability and motivation but still it is better than just teaching basic language at the beginning of the study which students tend to forget as the time passes by.

The students surveyed mentioned similar issues. Below is a remark from one of the current students when asked about current language courses.

Very helpful but we need more courses and more integrated Finnish language courses in the academic curriculum.

According to the respondents; Finnish language course provided by the school is inadequate. Students have raised concern that in span of their studies; the language they learnt in the first year has been forgotten. Pursuit of learning language is individual effort, however, sources to receive more information about language courses has been included in our guidebook. Employers also have emphasized on the importance of language. According to one of the respondents – a kindergarten manager:

Finnish language is very important, not in all work places a must but it certainly gives you an added advantage over other applicants. Plus it will enable quicker growth in the company if you are not restricted by language. Whilst not working take language classes

6.3.2 Networking

The respondents from employer group emphasized on creating and expanding networks through various means such as voluntary work and work placement. Representative from Bridge (Luckan) mentioned the importance of voluntary work:

In the Finnish society the most important thing in job searching is networking. Adding to that, voluntary work is a good way to widen your network. What kind of organization should you choose for voluntary work? It may also happen that you get a job through your volunteer work. So while you are jobless it is also good to volunteer.

The importance of being active in social networking websites such as LinkedIn and Facebook was mentioned by our respondents and they also accentuated on attending social events such as job fairs, events or gatherings where chances of building social network are greater.

6.3.3 Structure

Students who participated in research have expressed that they need more exposure to different organizations and more opportunities to choose the placement organizations. Though placement organization has somehow given an exposure to Finnish work life and help build contacts but not necessarily help in receiving job offers because of other problems such as language. It is interesting to see almost same concern raised by alumni and current students. In the words of a former student:

Well it has been really productive at least for me in order for creating network in general. However, in terms of getting job, placement did not help much because of my choices to go in such places where getting job within Finland had least chance (reason was Finnish language and nature of work place as well as being myself overambitious). Therefore I suggest students to select such placement places where little Finnish language is enough and jobs

are easily available such as institutional care homes for people with disabilities, elderly care homes etc.

Current student mentioned similar thing as well:

The placements I did in the past are not very helpful because language was the major barrier.

As explained in earlier chapter, bachelors of social services can work in different areas, so according to students, different study aspects such as childcare and elderly care should be imperative part of degree program. Moreover, students showed their concerns regarding modules of DSS, where emphasize is on community development. Whereas graduates of social services can work in various other fields for which they are not being fully trained such as services for elderly and disabled, children and families and substance abuse welfare.

6.3.4 Writing Resumes and Job Interviews

Employer group was primarily asked about their preferences of choosing candidates through screening CVs and in job interviews. Respondents from employers' group mentioned the importance of being straightforward and precise in the CVs. Adding a picture that was taken in the professional manner and marking date on the CV were mentioned. The length of CV discussed was 1-2 page appropriate for new entrants in job market. According to employers, resume should be neat, clean and to-the-point. One of the respondents from employment agency mentioned the importance of adding e-portfolio as well with CV:

And in cover letter write more about what I am doing and my skills are. And it is always great to have reference, it can be from your hobby even though if you are not working but if can be from your teacher could be your reference where you inform them in advance. And thing I notice in my clients that they do not mention native language in their language skills. I know it is like every language

you are able to speak is important. Don't underestimate your own language you never know it is always advantage.

Representatives from Bridge (Luckan) emphasized on mentioning native language in CV. According to them it is important to have different cover letters for different jobs tailored around the requirements mentioned in job advertisements.

Respondents from employers group also discussed preparation of the candidate before going in an interview. Appearance, conversation style, answering techniques and content in interview were also discussed in answers of the respondents. International kindergarten manager; who is one of our respondent from employers' group describe her choice of appropriate candidate in this manner:

Present yourself well, clean and tidy. Have a clear opinion about the job/field from which you are seeking. Answer all questions confidently, do not hesitate or show you are not sure of the answer. Be calm, friendly and do not fidget. Be confident in your knowledge, and show initiative. Ask questions too but don't be too pushy, employers don't appreciate arrogance. Have mock interviews with friends to prepare yourself.

Mention of publication or project work of the student on CV, according to employers, can be beneficial as it presents the body of work of candidates. One of the employer group respondents suggested including some useful information; trade unions services, visa policies for students who do not belong to European Economic Area (non-EEA) and rights of employees in Finland are among few which are selected by authors to include in the guidebook.

7 CONTENT WRITING

From the above themes, final contents of guidebook were derived and first draft of guidebook was written. On the basis of themes drawn from the respondents and from studies of background literature a list of contents were selected. Focal point of these contents was to equip students through the phases of their study program for Finnish labor market and eventually make them competitive after their graduation. Employability is a vast subject and job searching is just one aspect under this umbrella. Contents of our guidebook have been divided into 1) Introduction and understanding of Finnish work life 2) Job searching tools and techniques 3) Assessing your skills and 4) Useful tips.

7.1 Introduction and Understanding Finnish Work life

Introduction is the first interaction of reader with our guidebook; it should built the interest of readers. Introduction starts the dialogue between author and readers (international students); where importance of having guidance in job searching was mentioned and the target group (bachelors of social services) was discussed. In previous chapter challenges of international students were discussed; these challenges were combined with background literature, and the importance of integration in Finnish work life was described. First step towards integration in Finnish work life begins by making effort in understanding it. Finnish work life is generally the same like elsewhere yet different as having some prominent characteristics which are close to Finnish culture; such as gender equality and systematic and organized approach towards work. It is important for the readers to be familiar with these attributes, henceforth in practical life, they do not receive any surprises.

7.2 Job Searching Tools and Techniques

Job searching is an important tool; most of the guidebooks and literature are already available on Internet on this subject. Section of tools and techniques of employment is mainly focusing on illustrated version of writing CV, according to Finnish format and Finnish labor market trends. This part of guidebook is assisting readers to present themselves in job interviews. It is interesting to see that the data we have gathered through interviews, students are not particularly curious about receiving information on techniques however employers are mentioning the importance of presentation such as CV or cover letters. However, our guidebook is showcasing the CV writing specifically according to Finnish standards and also providing interview techniques in lieu of that. It is targeting students from social service field.

Sample CV, cover letter and interview questions have been drafted carefully, focusing on the needs of bachelors of social services from the universities of applied sciences. Sample job advertisement has been added as well in both languages, Finnish and English, to make the example more relevant for the readers.

7.3 Assessing your Skills

Employability skills are not only required for finding job in relevant field, rather it is a learning process for enhancing skills which pushes us to constantly assess ourselves. Clear emphasis has been shown in the results of data analysis on the importance of learning some skills required by students; including communication, network, time management and leadership skills. This section of the guidebook also describes the smart usage of Internet and social websites like LinkedIn, Facebook, Yahoo groups for building networks and searching job more effectively. Knowing people physically rather than just virtually is also

important which can be done through different volunteer programs or attending events such as job fairs and social gatherings.

Work placements are important part of curriculum of universities of applied sciences in the field of social services. Decision of choosing appropriate work placement can pave a way for students in the labor market. In order to make guidebook more relatable to readers, web links for language courses, Finnish volunteer programs for social service field and even list of work placements have been added.

7.4 Useful Tips

This section included useful tips from alumni, current students and employers for the better chances of getting employed. They have shared their experiences of finding jobs in Finland. Success stories and personal references to Finnish job market also included in this section. It also includes useful web links and information of Finnish work life to provide guidance to employees. For example what things employee should keep in mind before signing a contract and even after getting job what are the rights of employee in Finland. Suggested by one of our respondents, information has been added regarding trade unions, job search engines and employees' rights.

Also new prospects of starting business and financial assistance for unique business ideas have been discussed. EEA and non-EEA students can receive different types of help through various sources. There are some visa policies for non-EEA students which are briefly discussed and for details web links have been given.

7.5 Tone of Guidebook

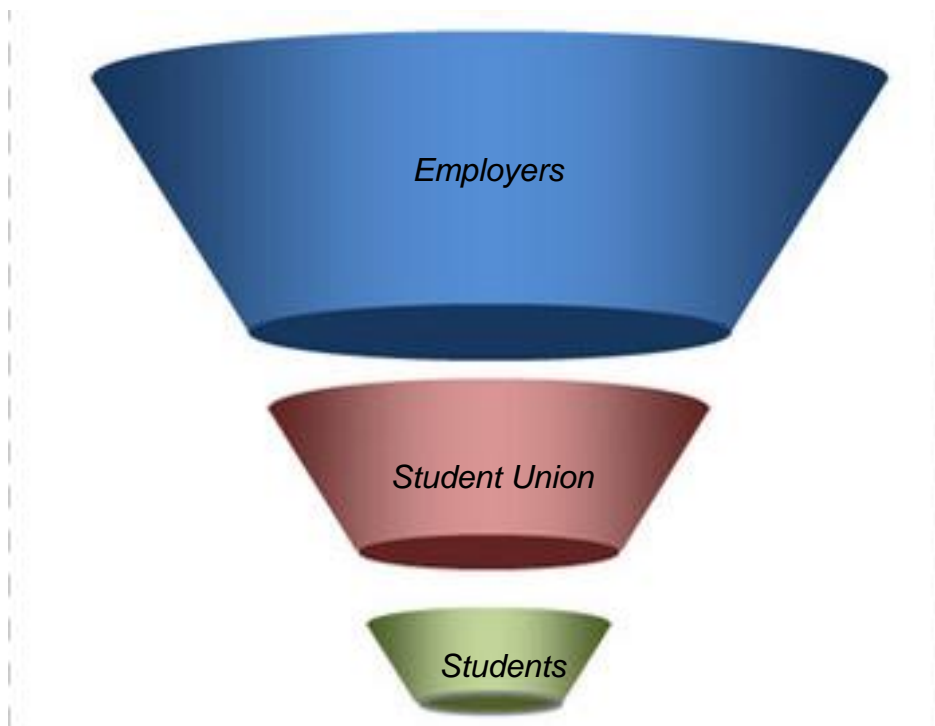
While writing the contents of the guidebook ease of language and flow of information for readers was kept in minds. Careful choice of words that are easy to understand were used. Tone of our guidebook is addressing the readers in direct manner as we are talking with them. Long and complicated sentences were avoided in the guidebook. Focus was mainly on making the guidebook concise and precise for the readers. And provide them guidance through different forms of employability in general and job seeking in Finland in specific. Keeping the practicality of our guidebook in mind we made it relevant with study program students have chosen which in our case is bachelors of social services. .

8 FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Project assessment tool was used for overall assessment. This tool has five separate areas; objectives review, journey review, what went well review, what could have gone better review and project summary (Melton 2007 160-164.) Some of these areas will be mentioned in later chapter of personal and professional development like journey review, what went well and what could have gone better review. Three layered feedbacks have been taken continuously to improve the quality of the guidebook and to provide relevance for our readers. In appendix 4, thesis process in details of when and from whom the feedbacks were taken from can be found. It is illustrated in detail in next figure.

FIGURE 3: Three Layered Feedback

*(Initial draft of the
guidebook)*



Final draft of guidebook

The First layer of feedback was taken at the initial stage from a staff member of Vantaan Nicehearts; an NGO working for immigrant women. She suggested to change the target group for guidebook and suggested some structural changes in the contents. Second review was done after editing the initial draft; this review was given by SAMOK (The Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences). According to their review, addition of practical things was required in our guidebook to make it more relevant with social sector of Helsinki region; such as addition of entrepreneurship ideas and links, useful links for networking and social gathering. Third and last layer of feedback was received from the stakeholders itself; a focus group was arranged with students of first year from Diak DSS program. Their feedback on our guidebook was taken in the form of group work in a classroom where students were divided in the group of five in four groups. Second year students of DSS were also approached through email and some of them provided their feedbacks.

8.1 Objective Review

At the start of this report objectives of thesis work have been discussed; at the end of this project main objective was achieved by producing a guidebook for international students of social sector in Helsinki area which is providing guidance and assistance in understanding and enhancing employment prospects in the field of social services. One of the objectives was also to make this guidebook easy to read and helpful for students. One of first year students in focus group gave feedback as:

It is 1 stop shop. It is clear, easy and concise. It is interesting and informative where variety of skills explained.

One of second year student remarked:

Just by reading through I have already learnt something.

Secondary objective was finding out the ingredients of enhancing employability among international students from alumni and current students of DSS program of Diak. This objective was accomplished by the research conducted with the DSS students (discussed already in detail in previous chapters). Students emphasized on incorporation of Finnish language courses throughout the curriculum of DSS and also pointed out importance of better management of work placements in more relevant places with the study modules which will help enhance their employment prospects. We have successfully accomplished our objectives by delivering the guidebook however usefulness of our guidebook yet determine by other factors such as distribution of copies to students and implementation of mentioned methods by students.

8.2 Project Summary

Final draft of guidebook has been shared with stakeholders for evaluation on their parameters of satisfaction. Feedback from different professionals has

already been taken from the preliminary stages of producing the guidebook. Contents have been edited in the light of comments and suggestions given by reviewers. Similarly, other feedback session with stakeholders (students) was also planned and executed while keeping in mind the options of changing the contents or design, if required. Face-to-face feedback has been taken from a staff member of Vantaan Nicehearts at the early stage of process. She pointed out some structural changes such as contents were overlapping, to separate tools and procedures, to shorten the text, to provide information about work placements and most importantly to be clear on choosing target group. She also emphasized on the difference between employability and finding employment. Keeping in mind her suggestions and also from our supervising teachers the contents and text were changed to an extent.

Second draft was presented to SAMOK to receive their feedback. Being mother of all students unions, SAMOK is in touch with students and gave helpful information regarding latest information sources for international students. Then they also pointed out some structural changes in contents of guidebook and also about practical aspects of guidebook. Students also reviewed the final draft, which is available in the appendix after changes mentioned by them.

For our third feedback session we have chosen focus group method. In this method a small group of students was chosen to give feedback on our product. First year students were selected to arrange focus group feedback session. After explaining them about this project and thesis process as part of PCS1 module (module of DSS study program which is starting point for thesis studies). They were divided into 4 groups and each group were asked to read each section of the guidebook. Group 1 for example was reading introduction and understanding Finnish work life (chapter name of our guidebook) and rest of 3 groups are reading rest of the assigned parts of guidebook. The whole guidebook was distributed among four groups. After reading we asked them to answer the questions. These questions were asked regarding relevance or usefulness of guidebook to their lives/studies, areas of improvement in

guidebook and interesting and informative part of guidebook. Each group presented their answers later in front of whole class and then everyone discussed on the feedback.

The major critique was on grammatical mistakes and upon long and complicated sentences or wrongly constructed sentences. Some students mentioned to add example of CV in Finnish, which was not possible because both the authors are not proficient in Finnish language, however later Finnish advertisement example was added in guidebook. Some students in focus group said they already know these things written in the guidebook and some described it as precise and “one-stop-shop” where they can find almost every kind of information. Our guidebook was shared with second year students via email as well. Almost similar kind of feedback from students was provided. Next chapter will explain more about journey through process, what went well and what could have been better in professional development.

9 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The thesis process as a group was a learning experience. It somehow made the workload easier because we both shared the challenges of the thesis process together. However it was complicated at times because we both are individuals having different ideas and approaches to work. Cooperating as research partners to agree, disagree and negotiate upon contents was an on-going process between us. Nevertheless we developed a mutual understanding and respect of each other's working style, schedules and adjusted accordingly. In professional life we will definitely work with team of people hailing from different ethnicities and backgrounds having their own unique characteristics and personalities, in this case it was also a great practice. We learnt to utilize the best of our skills and knowledge and appreciate each other's contribution.

Initially we had planned to graduate by May 2015; therefore we faced an immense time constraint. We had to sort out time for collecting and reading previous studies, meetings with people related to our thesis work, content writing and formulating questions. Along the time, we improved organizing, communicating, managing and coordinating skills. We had to juggle time between our work placements, jobs and thesis at the same time. Managing time, organizing schedules and coordinating with each other with constant communication was a routine we eventually learnt to adapt. We realized that planning early is important and couple of times we found ourselves confused since there was much to do and the time was limited.

We understood more so about the Finnish labor market, which as challenging as it may seem for a foreigner, there is also equally an opportunity to work in the Social Service field. In the process of preparing a guidebook, which mentions about how to write CV, cover letter and appear in an interview we both gained insight over how to improve our own job application skills. We met with various professionals and students who gave valuable advices and suggestions

for our guidebook and thesis report. After a hard work that has been put in making the product, it was not easy to hear criticisms. Often we felt disappointed, lost and wondered if we will ever be able to make it. Nonetheless we learnt to take in the criticisms; ponder upon it and open ourselves to differing new ideas. Every time we interacted with teachers, students and other professionals it gave us an opportunity to learn something new that can be included in the guidebook.

DSS study program had however equipped us with skills to work in a team, to self-reflect and be open to feedbacks to mention few. Therefore we knew the dynamics of group work. Overall we gained deeper knowledge about the situations of international students in the Finnish labor market. We are happy that we produced a guidebook, which will help students improve their employability prospects. In the process, we were also able to expand our own networks.

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APPENDIX 1: ABBREVIATIONS

CBI: Confederation of British Industry

CIMO: Centre of International Mobility

CV: Curriculum Vitae

DIAK: Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

DSS: Degree Program in Social Service

EEA: European Economic Area

HE: Higher Education

HEIs: Higher Education Institutions

OECD: The Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation

SAMOK: The Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences

UAS: University of Applied Sciences

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONAIRES

2.1 Questions to Alumni

- How helpful was the study placement from school in terms of building social network?
- How helpful was the language courses provided by school in term of finding jobs in relevant field?
- Is there anything you want to add/change in terms of study module and curriculum at Diak that can stimulate international students' employability in the social field?
- Anything you wish to add as a tip for the soon to be graduates?

2.2 Questions to Current Students

- What is your expectation after you graduate from Diak?
- As an international student, what do you expect from the school to provide you in order to prepare you well for the labor market?
- How helpful are the study placement from school in terms of building social network?
- How helpful was the language courses provided by school in term of finding jobs in relevant field?

2.3 Questions to Employers and Employment Agency

- How can international students increase their prospects to be chosen for job interviews?

- What things should international students keep in their minds when appearing for job interviews?
- In one section of our booklet we want to publish suggestions/advices to international students on job seeking from Finnish employers. Please give your input briefly.

APPENDIX 3: THESIS PROCESS TABLE

	PROCESS	DATES	OTHERS
1	REGISTRATION FOR THESIS SUBMISSION	27.02.2015	
2	THESIS PRELIMINARY PRESENTATION	12.03.2015	
3	PRELIMINARY THESIS SUBMISSION	30.04.2015	
4	PUBLICATION SEMINAR	07.05/08.05.2015	
5	MATURITY EXAM	06.05.2015	
6	SUBMISSION OF FINAL THESIS	29.05.2015	
7	FINAL EVALUATION OF THESIS	03.08.2015	

8	EX STUDENTS	20.02.2015	QUESTIONNAIRES SENT VIA EMAIL
9	CURRENT STUDENTS	20.02.2015	QUESTIONNAIRES SENT EMAIL
10	PAULA RISANEN (KINDERGARTEN MANAGER)	21.02.2015	QUESTIONNAIRES SENT EMAIL
11	VISIT TO LUKAN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY	27.02.2015	FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW
12	VISIT WITH MEG FROM VANTAANNICEHEARTS	19.03.2015	GUIDEBOOK FEEDBACK
13	SAMOK (STUDENT UNION)	25.03.2015	GUIDEBOOK FEEDBACK
14	MEETING WITH MARIANNE AND ARI (TEACHER)	26.03.2015	GUIDANCE FOR THESIS
15	PRESENTATION FOR 1 ST YEAR DIAK STUDENTS	09.04.2015	GUIDEBOOK FEEDBACK
16	GUIDEBOOK SENT TO DIAK 1 ST & 2 ND YEAR STUDENTS	14.04.2015	GUIDEBOOK FEEDBACK
17	GUIDEBOOK SENT TO SAMOK	14.04.2015	GUIDEBOOK FEEDBACK

APPENDIX 4: GUIDEBOOK TO EMPLOYMENT

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_vbywBZYcsTaUQ2eIJPSVEzelU/view?usp=sharing

APPENDIX 5: LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE 1: Finland Labor Force Survey

TABLE 2: OECD Unemployment Rates of Foreigners and Native Born with Higher Education in 2009

TABLE 3: Population Growth 1912-2012 in Finland

FIGURE 1: Process of Developing Guidebook

FIGURE 2: Themes Derived from Data Analysis

FIGURE 3: Three-Layered Feedback