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# **Labour Market Integration of International Graduates**

**Evidence from Finland**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The expansion of English-taught degree programmes has increased international student enrolment in Finland, yet this growth has not translated into comparable levels of labour-market integration. While Human Capital Theory assumes that nationally recognized qualifications facilitate smooth entry into skilled employment, international graduates continue to experience persistent education and employment mismatches. This study aims to examine how international graduates perceive the factors shaping their labour-market integration through an integrated theoretical lens.

Drawing on a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design combining qualitative interviews (n = 11) with a quantitative survey (n = 51), the findings show that, despite holding Finnish degrees, many graduates experience skill underutilization and downward occupational mobility. From a Social Capital perspective, restricted access to locally valued work experience and professional networks constrains the conversion of human capital into employment, producing an enduring “experience paradox.” Extending Career Construction Theory, the study further reveals that integration is an emotionally intensive process marked by sustained identity work, insecurity, and motivational strain during prolonged job searches.

This study advances labour mobility and integration scholarship particularly *strategic human resource management* by reconceptualising labour-market integration as a relational, emotional, and processual accomplishment. This thesis contributes to construct sharpening through theorizing Human Capital, Social Capital, and Career Construction perspectives while demonstrating how capital conversion, relational embeddedness, and career sense-making jointly shape international graduates’ employment trajectories under institutional constraints.

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**KEYWORDS:** International Graduates, Labour Market Integration, Strategic Human Resource, Human Capital, Career Construction, Finland.

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## Abbreviations

WIL – Work Integrated Learning

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

EU – European Union

TE Offices – Employment and Economic Development Offices (Finland)

NVivo – Qualitative data analysis software

JASP – Statistical analysis software

n – Sample size

CV – Curriculum Vitae

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the Study

There has been an increasing number of international students in Finland in the recent years, which is consistent with the country's initiatives to recruit international talents amid labor shortages and demographic problems. In 2022, there were over 55,000 applications for international students in Finland with over 11,000 accepted into their programs (Study in Finland, 2022) showing a marked increase from prior years. That trend has continued, data from the (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2025) there was 13,000 new international students started degree studies in Finland in 2024 indicating that Finland's international education sector is growing rapidly.

Although Finland has been successful in attracting a growing number of international students, the pathways that support their transition into the labour market after graduation remain insufficiently defined, and limited attention has been given to what happens once their studies are completed. An estimated half of all international graduates face difficulty entering the Finnish labour force indicating a gap between the goals of higher education policy to attract talented individuals and the actual outcomes of those students' post-graduation employment. In short, Finland has been quite successful in attracting international students but most have struggled to find work in Finland upon completion of their studies. There has been a recent increase in International Graduates working in Finland as approximately 53% have secured full time employment in Finland by three years after graduation compared to 42% in 2018 (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2025).

The research identified two main barriers to securing employment: Limited Language Skills and Limited Professional Networks. Employer's unfamiliarity with local hiring practices and preference for applicants who already possess some form of work experience within Finland create limitations for other job seekers (Shumilova et al., 2012; Lu & Everson Härkälä, 2024). Many highly skilled immigrants report that their qualifications are untapped and insufficiently recognized in the Finnish labour market (Yijälä & Luoma,

2019). These findings indicate that labour market integration is dependent on both personal capabilities and structural aspects.

The problems are particularly evident in regional labor markets such as Vaasa. The energy and technology sectors shape the local economy and often require knowledge of Finnish or Swedish. Even though international students value their time spent at the University of Vaasa, many of them still have difficulties finding employment corresponding to their qualifications. In comparison with larger cities (like Helsinki), smaller regional labour markets (such as Vaasa) have some additional barriers because of fewer job opportunities that can be obtained through speaking English and even greater expectations for applicant with Finnish proficiency. The discrepancy between the goal of increasing internationalization in Finland and the reality in terms of results concerning job opportunities on the labour market makes it relevant to examine for integrating graduate's w into the society and support system for integration.

The study has been carried out due to the uncertain nature of the integration into the job market for international students, more specifically those who have studied outside of the capital. Furthermore, many of them are unsure about how the labor market will respond to them.

## **1.2 Research Gap and Aim**

While there has been an increase in research on the international graduate integration process in Finland, several areas remain unaddressed. Quantitatively based studies identify barriers such as discrimination, language difficulties, and challenges related to the recognition of foreign qualifications. According to Ahmad (2020), individuals with non-European surnames receive interview invitations less frequently.

Many studies rely on either quantitative data or qualitative research findings and there is little evidence of the use of both types of data. Furthermore, very few studies have researched the impact of institutional support (such as university career service). OECD

and European Union (2018) demonstrate that immigrants have higher levels of unemployment compared to the native-born population within OECD nations. Also, registry data suggest that not even half of foreign graduates manage to keep their jobs in Finland five years since their graduation (Mathies & Karhunen, 2021).

The University of Vaasa offers an effective context for addressing these gaps. Vaasa has a medium-sized labour market with many jobs in the energy and metal manufacturing sectors. National-level data help explain broad employment trends, but they do not show how recent graduates perceive or respond to these issues. Although there are limited numbers of studies that have researched national level trends and regional level experiences, as well as all three (national/levels/regional) levels of experience, no studies have used both levels of experience to examine Vaasa.

This research attempts to bridge these gaps by exploring the viewpoint and experiences of international alumni of the University of Vaasa. This research aims to explore how various individual, social and institution-level factors influence their access to job opportunities in regional labor markets in Finland.

### **1.3 Research Question and Objective**

The study is design to explore how international graduates from the University of Vaasa experience their transition from graduation into the Finnish labour market. The study examines how social factors such as discrimination, language skills, regional labour market situation, institutional factors such as university career counseling and the employer's recruitment process and individual factors, human resources, social resources, and ability for self-activity affect the transition.

**Research Question: How do international graduates of the University of Vaasa perceive the key factors influencing their integration into Finnish labour market?**

This research question is significant since it will ensure an in-depth study of all factors that impact international graduate job placement, especially in regions where there has been no previous research done on the issue.

**Objectives:**

The following study examines how sociological, structural, and personal variables facilitate the career integration process of international graduates into the Finnish labor market within a strange environment. The issues surrounding graduates of the Vaasa area, their problems and opportunities, along with the effect of language proficiency, networking, and employer perceptions on their situation will be examined. This study will further investigate the views of the graduates about university help, among others, and make recommendations accordingly.

**1.4 Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on the international graduates who have successfully graduated from the Master's programs, and in some cases from Bachelor's programs, offered by the University of Vaasa within the period of 2018 – 2024. In particular, the time frame selected allows us to explore the labour market experiences of international graduates after the tuition fee payment requirement was implemented in 2017 and before future legislative changes expected in 2025-2026.

In terms of geography, the study is conducted within Finland, specifically focusing on the Vaasa area. Vaasa is an industrial-focused labour market with a medium-sized population that is heavily weighted towards the energy, metal and engineering sectors. In comparison to other regions of Finland, such as Helsinki (the Capital Region), Vaasa has fewer knowledge-intensive business services. Additionally, there is more emphasis placed upon Finnish language ability and experience working in the local industry. Therefore, Vaasa city seen as a suitable, albeit less researched, location for studying international graduate integration.

On a theme-based perspective, this research study explores the transition of higher education into sustainable employment; i.e., work that requires higher education qualifications and provides opportunity for professional advancement. Although migrant integration is a larger issue that encompasses aspects beyond employment such as accommodation and social inclusion etc., this study does not include these aspects in its main scope. Furthermore, although it acknowledges those international graduates who departed Finland shortly after completing their studies at a macro-level. Nevertheless, they do not form part of the empirical investigation.

This study will employ sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. First, we shall use qualitative interviews to generate initial ideas regarding central themes. Second, we shall conduct a quantitative survey to explore general trends and to test whether our identified thematic constructs reflect valid measures of sustainable employment. Finally, national statistics and policy documentation will provide the necessary historical context. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods for gathering information, one after the other, will make it possible for us to derive valuable insights from the qualitative side as well as validate our findings quantitatively. While the research is expected to explore the integration process of international students through education to employment, however, this study has not covered other dimensions of integration, such as social integration, cultural integration, among others.

### **1.5 Research Process**

The whole process of carrying out research takes the form of a series of activities that are connected to one another for the fulfillment of the purpose of research and solution of the research problem. The entire research process is composed of 5 sequential stages of activity: (1) the review of existing research literature and theory; (2) designing a suitable research method; (3) gathering empirical evidence through field work; (4) analyzing the data collected; and (5) presenting the results. The importance and limitations of the research have been covered in the concluding chapter.

### **1.5.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

A thorough literature review was carried out, which included not only academic papers but also literature on Finnish graduate integration, skilled migration, and labor market dynamics. In addition to focusing on the research question and objective, the literature review will also focus on the theoretical perspective being used for this study, which includes Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Career Construction Theory.

### **1.5.2 Research Design and Methodological Strategy**

An Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design was found suitable to provide breadth into graduates lived experiences. The interviews were conducted with the Semi-structured questionnaire to collect the in-depth insights into graduates lived experiences and perceptions. The quantitative stage validated and extended the findings from the qualitative stage with a larger sample size. This type of research design was appropriate for investigating the complex social phenomenon of Employment Integration within Regional Contexts.

### **1.5.3 Data Collection Procedures**

The first phase of data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews. The focus was on gathering details about the graduates' experience of finding jobs, the difficulties they faced during this period, and what kind of assistance they thought they lacked. The second phase involved developing a structured questionnaire based upon the above-mentioned issues. By using questionnaires, researcher able to gather data that would enable us to find general trends and perspectives among many more graduate students than could be interviewed in an interview setting.

#### **1.5.4 Analysis of Data**

The interview data in this research were analyzed through the identification of repetitive concepts and themes. The interviews were reviewed in order to determine how the participants viewed their experiences, and then the information was categorized according to the themes identified. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires will be evaluated utilizing descriptive statistical analysis to examine trends within the data, measure mean responses and analyze response variability in accordance with the various thematic areas. This study also uses Cronbach's alpha, meaning Standard deviation to examine the reliability of all constructed measures to establish internal consistency.

#### **1.5.5 Synthesis of Key Insight**

The last part of this process interprets study results, theorizes and operationalize theoretical foundations to guide the proposed conceptual frameworks. In synthesizing together individual, social and institutional factors). This study demonstrates employment integration outcomes. Finally, this study discusses academic contributions, proposes practical implications of your research, outlines limitations, and identifies future research recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review

International Students' integration into local labour markets has become one of the most discussed topics in Higher Education Research, Migration Studies and Employment Studies. Since there is increased global competition for skilled workers, several countries are trying to draw in international students as a component of their long-term labour market strategy and innovation strategy. International graduates offer some very useful forms of Human Capital including qualifications at advanced levels, multilingual proficiency and intercultural competence, which positions them as possible contributors to economic development and global competitiveness (OECD, 2023a; Hawthorne, 2010).

The benefits of having international graduates, however, does not translate into successfully transitioning out of higher education and into skilled employment (Lu et al. 2024; Cai & Pekkola 2012; Alho 2020). They also have problems when it comes to securing jobs in the job market where employers value language skills, local job experience, and professional networks.

The problem has gained much attention at the policy level in Finland due to demographic challenges, including population aging and labor shortages. Finland has managed to attract international students to enroll in degree programs taught in English. However, there were variations in employment chances among these international students, with some experiencing a prolonged job search period, unemployment, or working in fields unrelated to their studies (Statistics Finland 2023; Finnish National Agency for Education 2024). This underscores the need to clearly identify the variables that shape the labour-market integration process.

This chapter examines existing literature about International Graduate employment outcomes focusing on key employment barriers, institutional support systems and Regional Labour Market Conditions. In addition, it gives a brief description of the theories

and concepts underpinning this research and highlights the gaps that have been addressed in this Thesis.

## **2.1 International Graduate Labour Market Integration in Finland**

The recent years the issue of how international student's transition from university into employment in Finland has become more significant due to Finland's declining population and aging workforce. Because of these demographic challenges there are pressures on both increasing the number of people entering the labour force and increasing the diversity of the types of workers available for hiring? With its emphasis on attracting skilled foreign nationals, and with an excellent higher-education system drawing an increasing number of international students to study at universities in Finland (OECD, 2023a). Finland has implemented numerous policy measures to increase the attractiveness of employing international students after they graduate. Despite these efforts, many international students graduating with recognized degrees in Finland continue to experience difficulty in finding employment that matches their education level, job skills or desired career objectives.

As previously discussed, international graduates' ability to enter the labour market is determined by two types of influences; individual characteristics such as education, skills and work experience, and broader structural, institutional and cultural factors (Cai & Pekkola, 2012).

## **2.2 International Graduates as Skilled Workers in Finland**

International students graduating with Master's degree from Finland are believed to have acquired professional skills believed to be utilizable in the labour market. In addition to their obtained work experience and cultural adaptability, assets that are highly valued in the labour market (OECD, 2023a). Although, positive contributions of international students are apparent, research has repeatedly demonstrated that there is only a

fraction of utilization of the professional skills of foreign-educated graduates in the Finnish labour market. This stems from, employers are not realizing the potential of international graduates. More so, employers persistently prioritize national o

origin over other attributes of job applicants. Consequently, numerous international graduates often find themselves employed at levels that do not accurately represent their ability or are restricted by lack of opportunity for upward mobility. According to the statistical data collected by Vipunen -Education Statistics Finland, only a minority percentage of international graduates manage to find a job commensurate with their educational qualifications right after graduating (Vipunen, n.d.). Some go on to search for jobs that match their qualifications while others take positions that pay less than what they were qualified for.

### **2.3 Key Barriers to Employment**

In recent times, the topic of international graduate employment has been identified as one of the most relevant issues surrounding international higher education and migration policy (OECD, 2023a). Since a growing number of economically developed countries rely on foreigners with high educational qualifications and technical competencies to fill labour shortages and foster innovation (Tomlinson, 2017; OECD, 2023a), nations such as Canada, Australia, Germany, and Finland have introduced special initiatives with the aim of attracting international graduates populations as part of their workforce strategy (OECD, 2023a). Nevertheless, although many nations have developed some interesting programs and policies in order to help international graduates to adjust to the labour market of their home country after graduation, there is plenty of literature available showing that this transition can be affected by structural barriers and lead to inequality in access to employment among international graduates (Tomlinson, 2017; Hawthorne, 2010). In this regard, this chapter examines the extent to which five key variables directly relate to the unique Finnish context; specifically, language ability, local work experience, professional networks, labour market structure, and gaps between policy objectives and

actual practices. Each of these obstacles does not represent separate issues or problems. Rather, they are interrelated structural elements that determine the trajectory of international graduates through the host country's labour markets. Moreover, each variable illustrates how national host labour market conditions support forms of capital which have a basis within their own environment (linguistic competence, social network, cultural knowledge), as opposed to the qualifications they may or may not have acquired formally. The context for the relationship(s) is important for developing an explanation of why high qualification International Graduate's experience continuing inequitable employment opportunities despite possessing significant amounts of human capital and positive policy environments.

### **2.3.1 Language Proficiency and Linguistic Gatekeeping as Barriers**

Language has a key function in determining whether an international graduate will have career opportunities in Finland. The majority of students completing an English-medium programs, although all their course work is undertaken in English, are expected to have at least intermediate level Finnish or Swedish language skills. For example, most public sector jobs and customer facing jobs would require graduates to have at least B2 standard Finnish or Swedish language proficiency. There is evidence to suggest that having very poor Finnish language skills may limit job opportunity, discourage employers from employing them and increase the amount of time taken to find first-time employment Lu & Everson Härkälä (2024). Therefore, this clearly illustrates a difference in the language environment provided by universities, compared with the language required by employers in the job market.

In addition to acting as a functional tool for communicating within the workplace, language acts as a structural gateway regulating entry into the job market. While many graduates meet both the academic and technical qualifications and language requirements, there remains a barrier to entering employment due to lack of advanced levels of Finnish or Swedish. As Saarinen & Nikula (2012) state, "language requirements" act

as regulatory mechanisms governing who enters the job market by favoring the dominant national languages, and therefore defining what qualities make someone employable.

In addition, an employer's perception of how much Finnish is needed for day-to-day work (regardless of use of English), can further support their belief that learning Finnish or Swedish will be necessary if they are to achieve a successful integration within the workforce. In regions such as Vaasa, where there are extensive business/customer service sectors relying heavily upon the use of local languages, such expectations tend to restrict opportunities. Therefore, the concept of language-based barriers to access to the workforce is representative of the broader institutional/structural society in terms of defining who should/be able to enter the labour force.

### **2.3.2 Labour Market Structures Employer Expectations and Bias**

Labour Market Integration of International Graduates Is also Shaped by broader structural and institutional conditions beyond individual factors (Heath & Cheung, 2007). Research shows that many international graduates will experience implicit bias due to such things as name, accent, visa status, and perceived cultural differences (Heath & Cheung, 2007). These factors can affect employment opportunities and limit career progression in Professional Roles. Both employer expectations and broader Finnish labour market norms influence the availability of jobs for international students. A number of employers have a preference when it comes to selecting a candidate that they already know understands how to function within a Finnish workplace environment; how Finns communicate professionally; and what is considered proper etiquette in the workplace. Furthermore, many employers will use formal hiring processes which favor candidates that were born and raised in Finland or at least have long-term residency status. This type of structural preference limits job opportunities for international students based on education, skills, regardless of the degree earned (Alho, 2020).

Finnish employers' perceptions regarding "culture fit" also play a significant role in determining whether job applicants were selected for positions. Finns work in environments characterized by low hierarchical levels, autonomous decision making and non-verbal forms of communication. Many international students are likely to find these cultural norms unfamiliar; therefore, it can affect how an individual's appropriateness for a job is assessed (Yijälä & Luoma, 2019). As such, the assessment of cultural fit will generally favor those that are already familiar with Finland's implicit expectations regarding its work environment. Even when applicants are qualified, employers may bias international graduates based on their name, accent, or immigration status. Such biases can result in less opportunity for them to have enough time during interviews or even to be considered for positions available (Heath & Cheung, 2007). Therefore, employer views and attitudes as well as unwritten rules create additional structural barriers limiting equal access to employment for international graduate applicants.

### **2.3.3 Recognition of Qualifications, Local Experience, and the Paradox of Experience**

A common term "Experience Paradox" is rarely found in published literature; however, it has an equivalent called the "Paradox of Experience". This is a phenomenon in which companies require job candidates to have past employment to be hired. However, these job candidates can't obtain this type of experience since they have no previous employment. Companies generally perceive past work experience as proof that candidates understand the day-to-day routine of a workplace, company culture, expectations, and local customs. International students attending school in another country find it difficult to achieve full-time or part-time employment due to restrictions on working hours for international students, the lack of availability of internships, and difficulty finding other types of part-time employment; therefore, they are rarely able to develop work experience. For graduates in Finland who studied internationally, employers' preference for domestic work experience over experience gained abroad creates an additional barrier. According to Ahmad (2020), even with the qualifications held by international students being equal to those held by local students, the preference for the former's education

and experience in Finland by prospective employers creates an obstacle for them. The lack of any relevant local experience plays into the experiential paradox outlined by Ahmad (2019), whereby graduates are unable to get work experience in Finland just because they lack it at first place. In addition, Ahmad's study indicates that applicants whose surnames sound foreign or who received their education abroad receive substantially fewer interview invitations compared to similarly qualified individuals with Finnish surnames or Finnish degrees. Skilled immigrants often complain that their skills go to waste in Finland. The fear of prospective employers about the adaptability and capability of graduates to remain stationary is also a major challenge for their complete employment.

#### **2.4 Policy–Practice Gaps in Talent Retention: Institutional Support and Career Service Limitations**

Finland is making efforts to attract international graduate workers into its labour force. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2022) states that programs like Talent Boost and extended post-graduation residence periods will support this effort. In addition, Finland's initiatives represent a purposeful approach to addressing some of the demographic issues it faces such as its aging population and labour shortage in certain sectors. Although Finland has been successful at attracting international students to study in universities throughout the nation, most of those students continue to experience difficulty finding permanent work opportunities within the Finnish economy. According to Samaeva (2023), while the government of Finland has developed systems for attracting international talent, there is a very evident disparity between what is being achieved through policy development and how effectively foreign educated graduates are actually utilizing the skills they have obtained through education.

The access of international graduates into the Finnish labor market involves institutional arrangements and the knowledge of the employers. It has been found that many employers lack knowledge about the rules for the issuing of residence permits and are thus

reluctant to employ international graduates (Lu & Everson Härkälä, 2024). The complicated bureaucratic processes involved in governmental institutions, along with poor coordination amongst employers, universities, and public organizations, make it difficult for the graduates to be absorbed into the workforce.

The role of university career services is to facilitate the absorption of students in the labor market. However, most international students feel that such services fail to provide them with relevant assistance as they cannot offer personalized advice to them, nor do they help them obtain important labor market information, despite these institutions being available for assistance. The mismatch between what exists and what is needed by the students creates problems for them (Mathies & Karhunen, 2019; 2021).

## **2.5 Professional Networks and Social Capital**

Professional networks can be a very helpful source for people who are looking for jobs, particularly in labour markets that employ many workers through unstructured hiring practices. Seibert et al. (2001) explain how professional networks and access to relevant information can provide structure to one's career using Social Capital Theory. International students will find it much harder to enter the "hidden job market," because this type of job market relies upon referrals and social connections as opposed to formal advertising (Lancee, 2010). Networking is a primary component of the hiring processes in Finland, and employers typically identify potential employees by seeking out employee referrals from current employees (Lancee, 2010). Many international students experience difficulties building their professional network due to limited fluency in speaking Finnish the limited interaction they have had with Finnish employers while pursuing their studies. Consequently, many international students will likely experience greater difficulty finding employment than domestic graduates having the same level of Education.

## 2.6 Psychological and Emotional Dimensions of Integration

Psychologically challenging experiences are common for many international graduate workers experiencing labour-market integration. Job search length, uncertainty regarding future residence status, and financial strain create stressful conditions that create job search anxiety and decline confidence which negatively affect an individual's ability to make meaningful decisions relating to his or her career. The prolonged duration of unemployment has also demonstrated to lower international graduate's confidence levels and influence their likelihood of remaining in the host country (Lu & Everson Härkälä, 2024). Feeling excluded from the host culture is another factor that intensifies these negative effects on the integration of international students over time (Yijälä & Luoma, 2019). Structural barriers and emotional/psychological barriers, therefore, interactively impact not only the employment of international graduates but also their long-term intent to settle in the host country.

## 2.7 Regional Labour Markets: The Case of Vaasa

The labour market of Vaasa is unique in its specialization since it relies primarily on the Energy and Technology Cluster. Therefore, there is very limited job opportunity for employees who lack specialization in any technological or industrial sectors. Some of the key players within this cluster include Wärtsilä, ABB, Danfoss, Hitachi Energy, VEO, and Metso.

Therefore, international graduates entering the Vaasa labour market will experience unique challenges. The very small amount of industry-specific and/or technology-based job types limits the opportunities for individuals without technical education/training. Additionally, the low volume of job openings (due to high level of specialization) creates increased competition for all available job openings. Often, recruitment in Vaasa involves referrals and other forms of informal network-based hiring practices. Therefore, making it challenging for new entrants into the labour force to enter the "hidden job market" within Vaasa.

Additionally, due to its relatively small population and less diverse workforce, international graduates may have limited opportunity to form professional contacts with local employers that typically seek out international talent.

## **2.8 Theoretical Framework**

A conceptual framework of multiple dimensions is used to investigate the integration of international graduates into the labor market context. Educational attainment plays a major role in relation to the success graduates may have in the labor market; however, what matters for their success in the labor market after education is not only whether they have access to the labor market because of the structural factors and hiring processes, but also how they behave in the labor market. In order to study the interconnection between all the aspects, three approaches will be considered, Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), and Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005).

### **2.8.1 Human Capital Theory**

Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) developed human capital theory, and it is a fundamental explanation of how education, skills, and work experience affect labour market performance. According to them, individuals will make an investment in their own productivity by investing in education and training, which employers will then recognize with increased salaries or better job prospects. Therefore, from this point of view, Finnish-educated international graduates should have a great opportunity for success due to their acquired high-level qualifications, technical competence, and increasing cultural adaptability in global labour markets (OECD, 2023a; Hawthorne, 2010).

The labour market is not always based on meritocratic principles as indicated by the findings of studies conducted in Finland. Structural barriers can impede the conversion of an international graduate's human capital into wage-earning capacity. This includes language requirements; employer preferences for national work experience; and little

recognition given to foreign qualifications which may outstrip an individual's educational achievements and therefore lead to less potential employment options (Lu & Everson Härkälä, 2024). This can be particularly observed in industries in which the mastery of Finnish or Swedish language becomes indispensable for the success of an employee, and there is an importance attached to the understanding of local cultural values and work practices. Consequently, numerous international graduates are experiencing skill underuse, over qualification, or extended unemployment searches even though they have high academic credentials (Yijälä & Luoma, 2019)

Although Human Capital Theory (Backer, 1964) explains the types of assets international students can contribute in terms of skills, knowledge and work experience, yet it is limited by its inability to address how those skills are perceived within the context of a country's labour market structure and institutions. Hence, other theoretical frameworks will be used to explain why certain individuals have success with their graduate degrees while others fail to achieve such success.

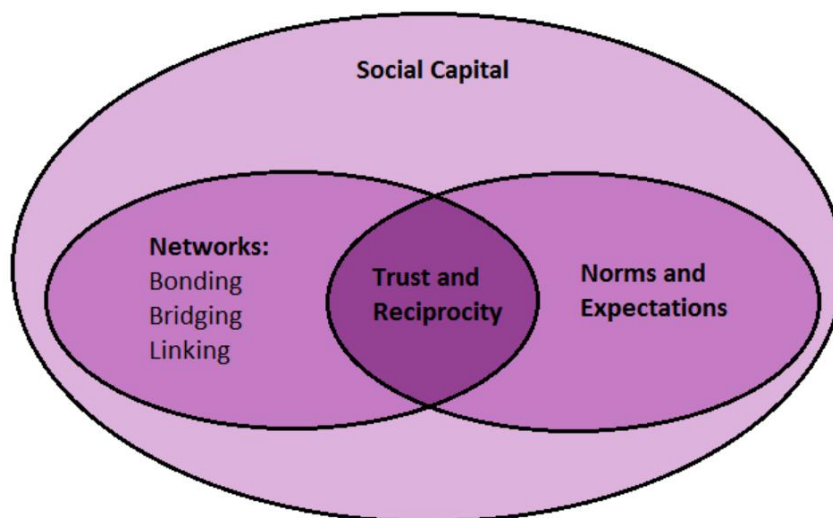
### **2.8.2 Social Capital Theory**

Social Capital Theory explains how a person's socio-economic status is determined, taking into account three aspects: the level of trust within a community, the extent of one's network, and the amount of information accessible via that network. Many sociologists, including Coleman (1988), Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (2000) agree that individuals can obtain "resources" from the people they know through various means, such as referrals, insider information about job openings, informal assistance. Hall & Soskice (2001) identified that informal recruitment processes tend to occur in Coordinated Market Economies (CMEs) like Finland. Thus, social capital can be very instrumental in defining the job opportunities that international students have access to.

When entering the Finnish labour force, international students usually do not possess enough levels of social capital. They have limited opportunities to create professional

networks, and therefore they have limited access to informal recruitment channels. Since many positions in Finland are filled by referral, international graduates may have fewer opportunities to access these types of recruitment pathways which can reduce the chances of securing employment that matches their skills and qualifications Alho (2020); Koivunen et al. (2015). Evidence supports this pattern. For example, Samaeva (2023) identified that networking ability was the strongest predictor of employment among international graduate students. When international students establish local connections through internships, student organizations, volunteering or involvement within their communities their likelihood of obtaining employment increases significantly compared to those without such connections. This evidence demonstrates how important social capital is to an individual's opportunity to enter the Finnish labour market.

While Social Capital Theory helps explain how various networks provide access to different opportunities, it does not offer insight into how individuals respond when confronted with obstacles or change strategies. For this reason, Career Construction Theory provides a complementary approach to understanding individual argentic responses.



**Figure 1. Core Constructs of Social Capital Source: Adapted from Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000)**

These elements reinforce each other: networks allow trust to emerge; trust induces compliance with norms; norms reinforce the strength of networks (Coleman 1988).

### **2.8.3 Career Construction Theory**

Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005) places emphasis on how people create their own careers, through means of being adaptable, having agency and creating personal meaning. In contrast to traditional views of career development as a linear progression from education to work experience. Career Construction Theory emphasizes the psychological and behavioral methods used by individuals to navigate the many uncertainties involved in career transition. The four major elements of career adaptability concern, control, curiosity and confidence provide significant insight into international graduate's experiences of navigating new labour markets. International graduates that are able to proactively seek employment; remain open to learning; and demonstrate resilience when facing setbacks may be more successful at overcoming the structural barriers such as language, recruitment processes and cultural norms encountered when transitioning to a foreign country. The Career Construction Theory explains how international graduates can succeed when facing structural disadvantages because they have certain advantages, while other international graduates face difficulties even though they have high human and social capital.

In summary, the use of Career Construction Theory has allowed us to have further insights on how labour market integration is influenced by internal and structural factors.

### **2.8.4 Integration of Theories**

This study intertwines three theories to investigate the study phenomenon include (i) Human Capital Theory (Backer,1964), Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), and Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005). The three theories collectively offer a comprehensive approach to analyzing why international graduates succeed at

various levels in the job market. Human Capital Theory considers education and professional skills to be significant factors in determining one's employability. On the other hand, the Social Capital Theory stresses the significance of having personal networks as well as acquaintances in obtaining jobs within the hiring practices of the employers. Finally, the Career Construction Theory considers the aspect of an individual's choice and flexibility when making career transitions.

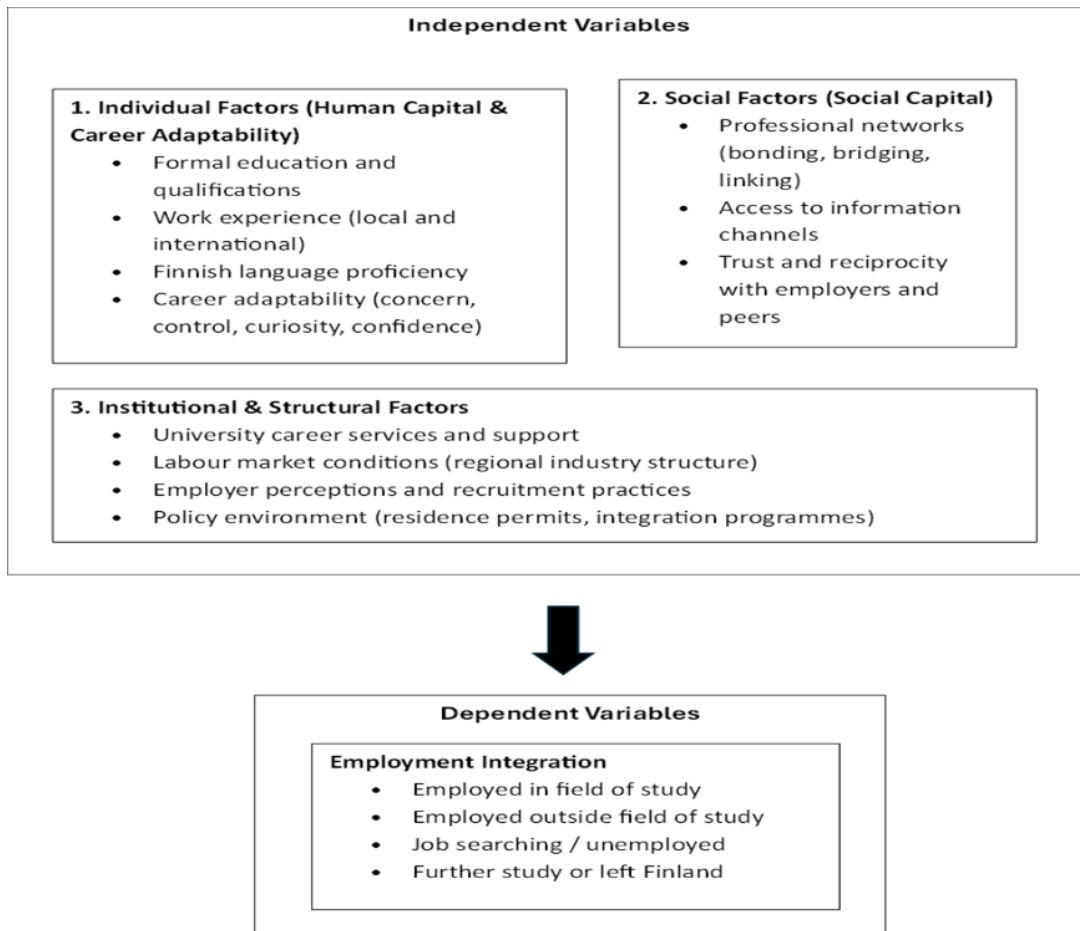
Overall, it can be concluded from the above theories that labor market outcomes depend both on individual endowments as well as the interplay of these endowments with external factors.

## **2.9 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper draws upon the foundations laid by Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Career Construction Theory to demonstrate the linkages amongst variables that affect the integration of international graduates from the University of Vaasa into the workforce.

As can be seen from the below figure, the conceptual framework considers three sets of independent variables whose interaction determines the dependent variable, which is Employment Integration (operationalized in terms of one's current employment status, match between job and education, and perceived career success).

The conceptual framework forms the basis for the subsequent empirical analysis, since the factors highlighted above will serve as building blocks of our study and will guide the achievement of our research objectives. As pointed out above, employment integration requires the joint effort of individual, relational, and contextual assets.



**Figure 2 Conceptual Framework**

Source: Author's own illustration based on Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), and Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005).

## 2.10 Critical Synthesis and Research Gap

The Chapter unpacks the main research question of *“How do international graduates of the University of Vaasa perceive the key factors influencing their integration into Finnish labour market”*. In doing so I demonstrate how international students' labour-market entry is influenced by three types of factors: personal (individual), collective (social) and institutional. Individual capital theory shows how important education and skills are; however, they fail to assist international graduates to get into the labor market due to

language and work experience barriers in the destination. The social capital theory highlights the importance of the network and recruitment process, which is not common amongst international students especially those living in the regions. Career construction theory brings a psychosocial element to the picture by showing how adaptable an international graduate can be their level of self-agency and their mental health status can affect their job search behavior and employment outcomes.

Although there is increasing research on the issue of international students' employability in Finland, much remains to be researched in this area. Research on international students' employability in Finland primarily focuses on the Helsinki metropolitan area while ignoring other labour markets e.g., Vaasa's. In addition, many studies have employed a single-methodological approach either qualitatively or quantitatively that limits researchers' abilities to examine both structural labour-market features and experiences of international students while searching for employment opportunities. Finally, there is little research on how universities provide supportive structures and regional talent programs affect international students' employment outcomes beyond urban centers.

This research paper aims to fill these gaps through an analysis of the experiences of international students at the University of Vaasa using a mixed methods research approach. By synthesizing national-level trend analysis and findings from qualitative studies along with quantitative methods, this study will analyze how the interaction between personal, social, and organizational variables works in one regional labor market. Since this research is based on contextual factors, it will be quite important in the ongoing discussion about high skilled migration and suggest practical methods for how to retain these people and include foreign students in the Finnish workforce.

In this chapter, a comprehensive model was created by combining theoretical and empirical models that determine the level of employment integration among international graduate students in Finland. Human capital (knowledge and skills), social capital (relationships or networks), and career adaptability are linked with each other and are related

to structural factors, including the labor market, to form a good platform for empirical work in the next chapter.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This chapter gives a summary of the methodological approach used in order to examine the integration process of international students at the University of Vaasa into the Finnish labor market. This includes the research methodology and its design, data sources, participants' selection process, data collection process, and data analysis techniques employed. The studies use an exploratory mixed methodology, which will be based on sequential exploration. According to Creswell & Plano Clark (2018), the study uses sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, first gathering qualitative data to investigate the research problem and then quantitative data to confirm and expand the findings.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

In this study, sequential exploratory mixed-methods method was used which included two separate phases.

##### **Phase One – Qualitative**

In the first step, the researcher interviewed some international students at the University of Vaasa by using a semi structured interview method. This study used semi-structured interviews based on their advantage of some level of flexibility, which enabled comparison between the data of different individuals as they told their own stories. Conducting interviews involved personal meetings or video conference through Zoom. There was one participant who answered the questions in written form. The interviews (n = 11) took about 30-40 minutes. Some respondents gave additional information regarding challenges and opportunities that arose when searching for jobs, more than what the original interview had intended to address.

##### **Phase Two - Quantitative**

The second phase involved developing a survey instrument from the themes found in the qualitative data. Questionnaire survey was conducted in order to determine whether the issues that emerged through the interview process would be applicable to a wider group of international graduates in Finland. The questionnaire items were derived from the outcomes of the interviews to ensure consistency of the research. This two-stage methodology allowed for an integration of both qualitative abilities to provide depth, as well as quantitative ability to provide breadth, by allowing researchers to gain a better understanding of how international students' transition into the labour force in Finland.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The case-study design with descriptive elements have chosen. As Yin (2018), indicates, the case study is appropriate to use where you want to explore a "contemporary phenomenon within some real-world context "particularly when it is difficult to define the boundaries of the phenomenon under investigation and its surrounding context. Since individual factors, institutional factors, and regional factors may influence the employment integration of international graduates, a case study design involving interviews (experience-based) is deemed most appropriate in order to conduct a holistic evaluation of the experiences of the International Graduates at Vaasa University.

The descriptive research design allows researchers to record naturally occurring trends, perceptions, and issues without manipulation of variables (Saunders et al., 2019).

### **3.3 Sources of Data**

The study was guided by two types of data sources. It can be divided into two categories: primary data sources and secondary data sources. The use of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires served as means to collect primary data. Data collection through both approaches helped the researcher gain insights from international graduates of the University of Vaasa (Cohen et al., 2018). Since interviews involve methods of collecting

comprehensive and detailed qualitative data about every individual's situation, surveys could also enable quantifiable data to be collected about a larger group of people.

Three different secondary sources were used in the triangulation process, such as policy documents, government statistics and ecosystem reports, as well as some articles from scholarly journals which provided a background for a discussion of international trends in the labor market situation of graduates in Finland. The use of such different types of secondary data sources helps increase the credibility and reliability of this study in regard to the use of the triangulation technique (Flick, 2018).

The use of both primary and secondary data will help this research to capture not only the Personal Experience of the International Graduates but also the Structural Factors influencing them.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **Qualitative Interviews**

Semi-structured Interviews conducted with International Alumni at the University of Vaasa to evaluate several aspects of their experiences. These aspects included but are not limited to Language Barriers; Work Experience; Utilization of Skills; Professional Networks; Employer Expectations for graduates; Institutional Support; Regional Labour Market Conditions. Interviews conducted via a digital platform. All recordings taken with participant consent and later all recordings transcribed in full. The interview questions developed for this research aligned to the conceptual model used to guide this study, thereby allowing for a direct correlation between theoretical concepts and empirical findings.

#### **Quantitative Questionnaire**

A structured questionnaire was developed from qualitative data and consistent with the conceptual framework. Questionnaire was designed with an aim to ascertain major factors that affect ability of the individual to integrate into work force.

Data was collected using questionnaire administered through LinkedIn and other social media as well as special groups from Vaasa region. Questionnaire comprised of six areas measured using a five-point Likert scale as well as one open ended question.

Section 1: Participant Information – Gathers demographic and background information, such as graduation, employment, and educational attainment.

Section 2: Factors Influencing Employment Integration – Comprises 25 Likert-scale statements across six thematic categories:

- A. Language & Structural Barriers (4 items)
- B. Work Experience & Skill Utilization (4 items)
- C. Professional Networks & Ecosystem (4 items)
- D. Education-Employment Mismatch & Reskilling (4 items)
- E. Labour Market Conditions & Technological Change (4 items)
- F. Career Services & Institutional Support (5 items)

### **3.5 Population and Sampling**

The sample population of the study consisted of all the international students who have graduated from the University of Vaasa having obtained either a bachelor's or a master's degree between the years 2018 and 2025.

#### **Qualitative sampling**

The researcher employed purposive sampling technique for sample selection considering the participants' labor market experience (Patton, 2015). The research recognizes that the use of purposive sampling and convenient sampling techniques, as well as a

smaller sample size, could potentially make generalization of the results difficult. The number of participants in the qualitative study was eleven (n=11).

**Table 1: Characteristics of Qualitative Interview Participants**

<b>Parti- cipant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Degree Level</b>	<b>Employment Status</b>
P1	Female	Master's	Employed (not related to field of study)
P2	Female	Master's	Employed (not related to field of study)
P3	Male	Master's	Left Finland
P4	Female	Master's	Employed (related to field of study)
P5	Female	Master's	Employed (related to field of study)
P6	Female	Master's	Job searching (temporarily working in Sweden)
P7	Female	Master's	Employed (related to field of study)
P8	Male	Master's	Employed (not related to field of study)
P9	Male	Master's	Employed (not related to field of study)
P10	Female	Master's	Job searching
P11	Female	Master's	Job searching

### **Quantitative Sampling**

This survey was distributed using convenience sampling (participants from alumni network and social media). Research has demonstrated that convenience sampling is an acceptable method for preliminary exploratory studies.

Number of participants in survey responses: 51

### **3.6 Measurement of Variables**

The study defines the dependent variable as the "Integration of International Graduates in the Labour Market," referring to how well international graduates integrate into long-

term, sustainable positions within the Finnish labour market. The study measures labour-market integration using three criteria: current employment status, the match between graduates' jobs and their field of study, and graduates' own evaluation of their success in achieving their career goals. The study measures labour-market integration using three criteria: current employment status, the match between graduates' jobs and their field of study, and graduates' own evaluation of their success in achieving their career goals. Employment integration into the labour market was evaluated using both objective and subjective measures as described in other literature on labour-market integration (Ager & Strang, 2008).

### **Measurement of Independent and Dependent Variables**

The dependent Variable is the employment integration of international graduates, which means the degree of international graduates entering sustainable employment in the Finnish labour market after leaving higher education institutions and interprets employment integration in terms of present employment status, consistency between current employment and field of study, and subjective employment outcomes.

The study classified the independent variables into five dimensions:

1. **Language & Structural Barriers**-measured by four items on the necessity of knowledge of Finnish limits in employment due to language use expectations of employer on language and recognition of degrees.
2. **Work Experience & Skill Use**-measured by four items on work experience in Finland, internship opportunities, credit of experience in home country and working based on one's qualifications.
3. **Professional Networks & Ecosystem**-measured by four items on professional networks and access to employment, informal recruitment process, informal importance of networks on interview and efficiency of career events from university/region.

4. **Employment-Education & Re-skilling**-measured by four items on the adequacy of degrees in job search practical experience expectation of employers, jobs fitting with education and need for re-skilling.
5. **Labour Market & Tech Changes**-measured by four items on the competence of labour market, economic climate, employer expectations and technology changes in terms of employment.
6. **Career Services & Institutional Support**-measured by five items on service usage, awareness of employers' expectation and job search skills development.

### **Scales and Units**

Dependent Variable (Employment Integration): Measured through current employment status categories (Employed related to field of study, employed not related to field of study, Job searching, studying further, other) and perceived integration outcomes.

Independent Variables: The dimensions related to each independent variable are rated using a 5-point Likert Scale (1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree) to gauge perceptions and experience regarding employment integration dimensions.

There are six categories for independent variables: Language-Structural Barriers, Work Experience and Utilization of Skills, Professional Networks and Ecosystem, Education-Employment Misfit Reskill, Labour-Market Conditions and Technological Change, and Career Services and Institutional Support. Perceptions across these categories were measured using Likert scale. Likert scales have been widely used in social science research because they are reliable and easy to interpret (DeVellis, 2017). There were also demographic data collected from the degree level and current employment status.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Thematic Analysis was employed to analyze Qualitative Interview Data according to the six stages suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006). Which is an appropriate methodology to

discover patterns that exist within participant's experiences, which corresponds with the studies' emphasis upon the process of employment integration as follows;

1. **Familiarisation:** The familiarity with the dataset was gained by the researcher through reading and rereading of the transcripts of the interviews conducted on each participant's experience.
2. **Generating initial codes:** Next, the initial codes was assigned systematically across the dataset to define interesting features of the data with the assistance of NVivo. These included anticipated themes such as "language barrier", "lack of contacts" and themes, which emerged from the data such as "employer attitudes to non-EU degrees", "regional focus".
3. **Preliminary themes:** The codes were subsequently categorized into initial themes based on the underlying pattern of meanings.
4. **Evaluation of themes:** Themes were reviewed in relation to coded extracts and the dataset.
5. **Definition and name of the themes:** Each theme named and clearly defined.
6. **Writing up:** The final themes will write into Chapter 6 (Findings) and Chapter 7 (Discussion), with supporting quotations from the participants.

The analysis used JASP to process quantitative data, calculating descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for all variables. These summaries illustrate how individuals responded on the six thematic elements of employment integration (Field, 2018). Reliability of findings was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which is greater than 0.70. (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

### 3.7.1 Descriptive Statistics

The following statistical procedures were applied:

1. **Frequencies:** To describe the demographic characteristics of the sample (i.e. Graduation status, employment status, and degree completion).

2. **Means:** To describe the overall perceived view of the elements of employment integration on a Likert scale by item and by the construct it represents.
3. **Standard Deviations:** To describe the dispersion of each Likert item as well as each construct.
4. **Cronbach's alpha:** For assessing the internal consistency reliability of constructs and the questionnaire as a whole.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the six themes assessed in this research. The frequencies and percentages of responses in each Likert scale point ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 is “Strongly Disagree” and 5 is “Strongly Agree,” were determined. The average score was then computed using the following formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i}{n}$$

Where:

- $\bar{x}$  = the sample mean
- $x_i$  = the value of each individual response (from 1 to 5)
- $n$  = the total number of responses

The overall mean for each dimension was calculated by taking the average of the mean scores of all items within that dimension. For example, the mean score for Language & Structural Barriers was computed as:

$$\text{Lang. \& Struct. Barrier.} = \frac{(\text{Mean of item 1}) + (\text{Mean of item 2}) + \dots + (\text{Mean of item } n)}{n}$$

Where  $n$  denotes the number of items measuring that dimension (in this case, 4 items).

### 3.7.2 Measures of Dispersion

Following this, standard deviation was worked out to know how far respondents varied in their answer or the uniformity in their response. If standard deviation is small, then respondents have agreed to respond close to the mean. Standard deviation is calculated using formula:

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n - 1}}$$

Where:

- $s$  = sample standard deviation
- $x_i$  = each individual response
- $\bar{x}$  = the sample mean
- $n$  = the total number of responses

### **Determining the Integration Level**

The mean score of each domain of knowledge was calculated. The interpretation of these scores was done based on a five-point scale, where 1 indicated initial, 2 managed, 3 defined, 4 quantitatively managed, and 5 optimizing. A mean score of 1.00 to 1.49 was interpreted as Level 1, 1.50 to 2.49 as Level 2, 2.50 to 3.49 as Level 3, 3.50 to 4.49 as Level 4, and 4.50 to 5.00 as Level 5.

Finally, the average mean scores of all Employment Integration of International Graduates in Finland areas were calculated and the overall company maturity level was calculated as for. The formula is:

$$\text{Overall Integration Level} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^6 \text{Mean Integration Level of Area}_j}{6}$$

This final score shows a general picture of how international graduates feel about the total set of factors affecting employment integration in Finland.

The results of this analysis validate the relationships that exist as indicated within the conceptual framework.

### 3.8 Reliability and Validity

The application of a mixed-methods approach improved the total credibility of the research. Additionally, by using themes from the qualitative interview data to develop quantitative questionnaire items, it provided an opportunity to establish content validity; the survey questions were created from the actual experiences of international graduate students. Using the thematic findings from the qualitative data to inform the development of the survey items demonstrates consistency with Denzin's (2012) suggestions for validating exploratory studies employing a mixed-methods methodology.

Along with the alignment among the measures, the academic supervisor evaluated the questionnaire for clarity ensuring the measures, relevance to the participants and alignment with the conceptual framework.

#### 3.8.1 Reliability

The reliability of the survey was measured by the Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), an extensively utilized tool for determining reliability. Cronbach's Alpha measures the degree to which questions included in a survey test the same construct. The equation for calculating Cronbach's Alpha is:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k \sigma_{Y_i}^2}{\sigma_X^2} \right)$$

Where:

- $k$  = number of items (questions) in the scale.
- $\sigma_{Y_i}^2$  = variance of the  $i$ th item.
- $\sigma_X^2$  = variance of the total score of the scale.

Generally, a Cronbach's Alpha score greater than 0.70 is an indicator that the reliability in social sciences is acceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The study was conducted in line with the guidelines for ethics provided by the University of Vaasa. Each participant was duly informed and obtained his/her consent before being enrolled into the study. Transparency, voluntary participation, and respect for participants' rights represent a good foundation for all ethically researched work (Israel & Hay, 2009). Assured that their responses could not be linked to them or used to identify them as individuals based on their completion of the online survey further protected the respondents from identification. They were also informed that they had the option of stopping their involvement in the research at any time. Each respondent's information was safely stored and only used for academic purposes, which is consistent with standard social research ethics (BERA, 2018).

## **4. Qualitative Data Analysis**

This chapter will give details of the findings obtained through eleven semi-structured interviews on how the international students understood how the specific factor influenced their integration in the Finnish labor market. The themes have been identified in accordance with the methodology suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006). The theoretical background for this research is the combination of Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986/2002; Putnam, 2000), Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), and structural-institutional perspectives. All four approaches together form an integrated framework to study the effects of interaction between individuals' competences, social capital, career behavior, and structural conditions on their labor market performance.

The analysis identified seven main themes as relevant to understanding how international students integrate into the Finnish labour market. They include emotional and psychological impacts; employer expectations and the value of local experience; language and structural barriers; social capital networking; career service support; job-search strategies adaptation; and plans and retention.

### **4.1 Overview of Themes**

The study used thematic analysis to identify international graduates' experiences of transitioning into work after completing higher education in Finland. Table 2 presents the coding summary for each interview using thematic analysis in NVivo.

**Table 2: Summary of Themes and Coding Frequency (Source : Own Interview Data in Nvivo)**

S.N	Theme	Files	References
1	Employer Expectations and Local Experience	11	115
2	Social Capital & Networking	11	71
3	Language and Structural Barriers	11	53
4	University Career Services	9	63
5	Emotional and Psychological Impact	10	29
6	Job Search Strategies & Adaptation	11	28
7	Future Plans and Retention in Finland	9	19

In this table, the number of code references supports the prominence of each theme, indicating that participants discussed these topics more frequently and at greater length than others and the frequency of employer Expectations and Local Experience was the dominant theme. Participants primarily perceived employer expectations and local experience requirements as significant barriers to labour market integration. Additionally, the high number of references for both Social Capital and Networking and Language and Structural Barriers further supports that establishing a network and acquiring adequate language skills are major obstacles that international students face upon graduation.

The job search strategies, adaptation, plans, and retention had fewer references. Therefore, although job search strategies, planning, and retention posed challenges, participants addressed these issues less frequently than other structural barriers experienced by international students.

Finally, the fact that many of the same themes appear consistently throughout the participant files indicates that there is similarity amongst international student's experiences and therefore the findings provide strong evidence supporting the systematic nature of the structural barriers identified.

## **4.2 Employer Expectations and Lack of Local Experience**

Participants across all interviews identified employer expectations as a major obstacle to workforce entry. All participants emphasized employers' expectations for participants' experience, language skills, and their ability to communicate in Finnish regardless of whether they had a Finnish Master's degree. As one participant explained, *"Employers respect the degree, but they focus more on practical experience, language skills, and local experience"* (P10). Another participant stated, *"Most jobs in my field can be obtained with a bachelor's degree, but they want Finnish language and local experience rather than a master's degree"* (P4). This suggests that higher education alone holds limited value.

Participants also reported that Finnish work experience played a major role in whether employers responded to their applications. One participant described this clearly: *"I had been applying for hundreds and hundreds of jobs, but I did not get any response"* (P3). Not receiving any feedback created feelings of isolation and added to the confusion about how to participate in Finland's labour market.

Those who were able to demonstrate some form of local knowledge through internships, volunteering, or networking described having better access to employment. One participant explained this shift: *“After approximately eight months, I secured my first job through networking and gaining local experience”* (P7). Others highlighted the disadvantage of lacking such experience. As one participant put it, *“I didn’t have the necessary Finnish work experience... this limited my opportunity”* (P6).

These different experiences indicate that many employers see local experience as a kind of “hidden” or unofficial requirement. Employers often use applicants’ proficiency in working in a Finnish workplace to determine whether they understand local expectations and can adapt quickly. Although there are certainly different ways that employers select applicants depending on their country of origin, in Finland, this represents a major structural barrier to accessing job opportunities for foreign-born graduates, especially those who have earned excellent grades academically but do not possess a network of contacts in Finland.

Overall, these results suggest that formal education credentials alone are insufficient to provide job security; they also demonstrate the significance of “social capital” as a factor in attaining entry into the labour force. These labour-market conditions limit the extent to which academic qualifications can support international graduates’ integration into the Finnish workforce.

### **4.3 Social Capital and Networking**

Across the interviews, many graduates described limited professional networks as one of the most persistent barriers shaping how they understood their integration into the Finnish labour market. Most respondents said they entered the job search with almost no contacts, which made it difficult to access opportunities that circulate informally. One participant captured this clearly when they said that their *“main challenges included limited professional networks and lack of Finnish work experience”* (P7). This shows how social capital and local experience often reinforce each other.

Participants repeatedly noted that many jobs in Finland are never advertised publicly. Instead, they move through referrals, recommendations, or informal conversations. One participant explained that *“professional reference is the most important thing to get jobs in Finland... if you have reference or recommendation, then chances of getting jobs related to your sector is very high”* (P6). Another participant described how even their internship opportunity depended on a personal connection: *“I got the interview call only because... my friend recommended me”* (P9). These examples illustrate how social capital can sometimes compensate for structural disadvantages such as limited Finnish language skills or lack of local experience (Seibert et al., 2001; Lancee, 2013).

However, building these networks was not straightforward. Many participants lived in smaller cities like Vaasa, where the labour market is limited and English-speaking professional communities are small. One participant explained, *“Limited networks in smaller cities made it harder to access opportunities”* (P6). Others described how difficult it was to build rapport quickly, especially when they were new to the country. As one participant put it, *“building a rapport is not very easy within a very short period of time”* (P8). These incidents capture the difficulties that international graduates encounter in regional labor markets, which involve a lot of informal recruitment but have limited chances for networking.

To navigate these constraints, participants tried a range of strategies. Many used LinkedIn, attended university events, or took part in volunteer work to meet people and gain visibility. One participant described how they tried to stay active online: *“I’m quite active on LinkedIn... I’m trying to connect with professionals and introduce myself”* (P1). Another participant explained how volunteer work helped them access opportunities that would otherwise be closed, stating: *“My volunteer experience has greatly impacted my opportunity for employment”* (P7). These efforts reflect the adaptability described in Career Construction Theory, where individuals create their own pathways when formal structures do not support them.

Across the dataset, the high number of references to networking challenges shows that this issue was widely experienced. This theme directly answers the research question by demonstrating how graduates see social capital as a central factor influencing their integration into the labour market. Social Capital Theory also supports theory since this particular theory stresses that relationships, informal recruiting, and networking are important factors in gaining employment. Additionally, the results are supported by quantitative data, particularly those related to professional networking, informal recruiting, and attending career events.

#### **4.4 Language and Structural Barriers**

Across the interviews, Finnish language skills came up repeatedly as one of the biggest barriers to finding work. Participants often indicated that language proficiency was not only required for job performance but also served as a marker of workplace “fit.” One participant put it simply: *“even if a job doesn’t fully require it, many employers still prefer candidates who can speak Finnish”* (P10). This shows that language expectations stretch beyond the job description and act more like a general filter for employability.

Graduates also felt that language requirements narrowed the kinds of roles they could even consider. As one participant explained, *“most jobs can be obtained with a bachelor’s degree, but we need Finnish language skills rather than a master’s degree”* (P4). This is consistent with national studies, which demonstrate that language skill is one of the biggest determinants of employment for immigrants in Finland (OECD, 2018b; Ahmad, 2020).

Along with language, individuals discussed larger structural impediments that made them feel excluded. Participants noted that English-speaking roles were limited in regional areas like Vaasa, where Finnish and Swedish dominate workplace communication. One participant said, *“There is a greater emphasis on Finnish speakers and people who can speak Finnish”* (P6). These graduate students believed that these preferences were a component of an overall system (as opposed to individual choices), therefore

they felt like the degree to which they would be able to integrate into society was dependent upon the existence of pre-existing systems rather than their own actions.

The combination of the language barrier and structural barriers to opportunity resulted in a feeling of separation from others and limited potential for professional development among these graduate students.

A number of respondents said that they applied to numerous positions and did not receive any response, and they felt this had nothing to do with whether or not they were qualified for the position, as employers required Finnish language proficiency and cultural familiarity. These are examples of how both language barriers and structural expectations can affect not just graduate's ability to get a job, but how graduates perceive their potential for the future in Finland.

The high number of references across participants confirms that these barriers are widely experienced. This theme directly answers the research question by showing how graduates understand language expectations and institutional constraints as limiting their integration into the labour market. It also highlights a weakness in Human Capital Theory, since qualifications alone do not lead to employment. Instead, structural factors and access to locally valued skills play a major role in shaping opportunities.

#### **4.5 University Career Services (Institutional Factor)**

Throughout the interviews, graduates tended to mention the career service services of universities as an element, which affected the process of adaptation to the Finnish job market. They generally believed that they were aware of the availability of such services, but at the same time, considered them unsuitable for foreign students. Several participants described the guidance as quite general and not very connected to what actually happens in the Finnish job market (Alho, 2020; Saarinen & Nikula, 2013). One participant put it simply: the information provided *“was not sufficient... especially regarding the realities of the Finnish job market”* (P8). Another shared a similar view, saying the support *“did not fully prepare the students for the practical difficulties they would face”* (P11).

A common issue across interviews was the lack of practical, hands-on help. Many graduates expected support with CV writing, interview preparation, and understanding Finnish recruitment practices, but felt that these services were limited. One participant stated directly *“there was no CV or interview preparation help”* (P9). Another explained, *“I had to learn most of this on my own through trial and error”* (P4). These experiences show a clear mismatch between what students hoped for and what they actually offered.

Participants also mentioned that career services did not provide many opportunities or even a platform to meet employers or build professional connections. One respondent noted, *“There were limited opportunities to directly connect with employers”* (P2), while another said that career services *“did not always lead to meaningful connections”* (P7). As a result, many graduates felt ill prepared for the realities of entering a labour market in which local connections have significant weight.

Even among the majority who had a negative impression, a few admitted to gaining basic knowledge about online employment sites and the general job search process through career services. However, this type of support often seen as too limited to help them overcome bigger structural barriers, such as language requirements or the lack of networks. As one participant explained, *“Most confidence came from personal experience rather than from institutional support”* (P3).

There was one exception: a participant (P5) who reported a more positive experience. She felt that career services *“helped me understand Finnish recruitment processes”* and supported her transition. However, this view stood out as unusual compared to the rest of the dataset.

The coding results show that many participants, suggesting that these experiences were widely shared, raised concerns about career services. Such uniformity supports the argument that institution-based interventions are significant in influencing labor market integration.

This theme helps answer the research question by showing how graduates understood the lack of institutional support as one of the things that made their transition into employment more difficult. Within the conceptual framework, the theme points to the institutional dimension of integration by showing how universities influence students' access to networks, their understanding of employer expectations, and their ability to adjust to the labour market after graduation. Additionally, the qualitative data supports the quantitative analysis, in terms of service knowledge, perceived value, and how much there was a difference between what the students expected from an educational career service as an international graduate and what the student received. Together these two areas of research indicate that although many career services provide students with some basic information about their options, career services generally do not have the tools or resources needed to help solve the more practical problems or structural barriers that exist for international graduates.

#### **4.6 Emotional and Psychological Impact**

International graduate participants reported that their experiences in searching for jobs were emotionally draining and psychologically taxing. Many participants stated that they struggled with the stress associated with continually applying unsuccessfully to jobs, as well as the fact that they received little to no feedback from potential employers.

One participant expressed this experience clearly:

*"I graduated on June 18, 2025, and still I couldn't manage to land a job. The situation is getting more frustrating every day" (P9).*

The negative psychological impact of long-term unemployment is also evident; numerous respondents said that their experiences were disheartening because of the prolonged duration of their unemployment.

*"This mismatch between my education and my current job has been discouraging"* (P11).

These events illustrate how failing to meet expectations, especially when one has invested their time into acquiring a Finnish university degree can create stagnation or lower levels of motivation for many people.

Many graduates experienced increased stress due to the difference between what they anticipated when first arriving in Finland and what ultimately transpired. For many graduates, it was expected that upon completion of a Finnish Master's program, this would make it easier for them to enter the labour force. However, instead of finding a smoother transition into employment, many of these graduates discovered language barriers; a limited network to facilitate entry into the labour force; and an extremely competitive job market. As one graduate noted,

*"I have been applying to hundreds of jobs but I receive no responses"* (P3).

These findings illustrate the complexity of emotional responses. Participants expressed mixed reactions. While most reported feeling challenged, others showed a sense of optimism regarding their potential long-term prospects. For example, a participant who was pursuing his post-graduate studies stated

*"I'd love to come here long-term, but I'll have to find a good job"* (P4),

This shows that individuals' immediate struggles with integrating into a new economy, as well as their hopes and aspirations for building a stable life in Finland, influence their emotional responses.

All the participants had similar experiences in terms of their feelings about the job market such as unemployment and uncertainty, but they felt different degrees of those feelings. Regardless of how strong or weak each participant's feelings were for these topics, each participant shared a feeling that resulted from their attempts at integrating into

the labour market; that is; they all shared an emotional/psychological response to this attempt.

#### **4.7 Job Search Strategies, Adaptation, and Future Plans**

Graduates used several job search techniques to overcome structural barriers in the labour market and were able to establish themselves in Finland. In the interviews, they talked a lot about the different ways they tried to enter the Finnish labour market. Many of them said they had to adjust their job-search habits quite a bit. Some changed their CVs several times, others widened the types of jobs they applied for, and a few mentioned doing volunteer work just to get some experience in Finland. Online tools like LinkedIn also came up often as something they relied on. One participant explained, *“I applied for many jobs and tried out different types of approaches including calling the recruitment manager directly” (P3)*. Another said that *“the opportunity I gained from doing volunteer work has greatly influenced my ability to find employment” (P7)*.

Even with all these efforts, many still ran into the same barriers. A common one was employers wanting applicants who already had Finnish work experience. Several graduates also mentioned that they applied to many jobs but never heard back. Because of this, some ended up applying outside their field or taking jobs below their qualification level. One participant said, *“I am still looking for a job related to my studies” (P10)*. Another explained that they moved from searching only in their field to *“odd job providing me with some degree of stability” (P6)*. These stories show the gap between what graduates expected based on their education and what the labour market offered, especially for those with foreign degrees (Cai & Pekkola, 2012; Yijälä & Luoma, 2019).

These job-search experiences also shaped how participants thought about their future in Finland. Several said they were unsure about staying long-term because employment was the main factor in their decision. One participant mentioned that her *“family is*

*thinking whether we are going to stay here or not*” depending on job opportunities (P1). Others said they would consider leaving Finland if they continued to face long periods of unemployment or underemployment. This reflects wider trends where international graduates’ willingness to stay is strongly tied to whether they can find stable work (OECD & European Union, 2018; Mathies & Karhunen, 2021)

At the same time, many participants tried to stay positive. Some who had found work whether in their field or not described these roles as “steppingstone” jobs that gave them some stability while they kept searching for something better. Another participant said she was still *“optimistic and will continue looking for positions that relate to my area of study.”* These comments show how graduates try to stay adaptable and make the best of their situation, even when the process is difficult.

Job search strategy is linked with adaptation and with what graduates believe will happen because of their experiences in the labour force. They have learned from their experience in the labour force and therefore it has influenced their job search strategy, their adaptations to employment (including their expectations) and ultimately whether they plan to stay in Finland. This theme directly relates to the research question by illustrating how graduates view themselves being integrated into society using their job search strategies and the obstacles they face; it indirectly supports the theoretical framework by demonstrating graduate's ability to be adaptable; the limitations of human capital in a Finnish context; and the impact of structural factors on career development. These themes are consistent with the data collected during the surveys (which supported many of the quantitative results), particularly job search behavior, job market expectations, career adaptability, and decision making regarding whether to remain in Finland.

## **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter combined the qualitative findings from the eleven interviews and detailed seven themes, which influenced how international graduates experienced transitioning

to the Finnish labour market. Through the seven themes, it was clear that integration depends upon both what graduates do themselves and wider structural and institutional conditions around them. While many of the graduates were proactive in searching for employment, changing their job-search strategies as necessary and attempted to develop professional networks wherever possible; these efforts were often limited due to employer expectations and language demands. In addition, several participants felt that university career services did not provide adequate support to address their specific challenges.

Although there were barriers facing the graduates, which affected their ability to enter the labour market, some graduates showed resilience by adjusting their expectations of being able to find suitable employment and finding alternative ways of entering employment. Sometimes this involved taking jobs below their level of qualification or rethinking whether they wanted to stay long-term in Finland. These experiences highlight the point that accessing the labour market is more than having the right degree or motivation. It also relies upon human capital, social connections and the interplay between structural or institutional factors at work in practice.

In summary, the findings from the qualitative analysis offered greater clarity regarding the perspective of the graduates concerning the challenges and opportunities that affect their integration process. In the following chapter, the findings from the quantitative analysis will be presented, which will provide further insights regarding the pervasiveness of the aforementioned patterns among the respondents.

## 5. Quantitative Data Analysis

The following chapter will present the findings from the study conducted. The findings are categorized into six critical dimensions, which represent the major determinants of international graduates' labor market integration in Finland. These include language and structural barriers, work experience and skill utilization, professional networks, education employment mismatch, labour market conditions, and institutional support.

### 5.1 Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the survey was evaluated using the Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) measure for all six sub-dimensions. Cronbach's Alpha values varied between 0.714 minimum to 0.861 maximum. This confirms that items within each category reliably measure the desired factors (Hair et al., 2006). More importantly, the overall value of Cronbach's Alpha for all twenty-four items in the survey was 0.767 which falls in the 'good' category and hence proves the validity of the survey.

**Table 3: The Outcome of Reliability Test (Source: Own survey results, 2026)**

S. N	Category	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	Language & Structural Barriers	4	0.714
2.	Work Experience & Skill Utilization	4	0.724
3.	Professional Networks & Ecosystem	4	0.739
4.	Education–Employment Mismatch & Reskilling	4	0.739
5.	Labour Market Conditions & Technological Change	4	0.861
6.	Career Services & Institutional Support	4	0.828
<b>Cumulative Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>0.767</b>

## 5.2 Descriptive Findings

### 5.2.1 Language and Structural Barriers

This descriptive analysis on Language & Structural Barriers clearly shows that the respondents mostly agree on the existence of significant linguistic and structural obstacles within the Finnish labour market. This category of Language & Structural Barriers has an average Mean value of 4.12 on a 5-point Likert scale and standard deviation of 0.98. The highest mean is of “Proficiency in the Finnish language is essential for obtaining employment in Finland” that is 4.19 with SD 0.76. The comparative lower mean is of “Limited Finnish language skills significantly reduce my employment opportunities” has Mean 4.01 and SD 1.11. As a result of the low standard deviation value under the category "Language & Structural Barrier," it is evident that there is a considerable language and structural barrier within the country.

**Table 4: Language & Structural Barriers (Source: Own survey results, 2026)**

<b>Language &amp; Structural Barriers Descriptive Statistics</b>				
<b>Items</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Miss- ing</b>	<b>Mean (arithme- tic)</b>	<b>Std. De- viation</b>
1. Proficiency in the Finnish language is essential for obtaining employment in Finland.	52	0	4.192	0.768
2. Limited Finnish language skills significantly reduce my employment opportunities.	52	0	4.019	1.111
3. Employers tend to prefer candidates with Finnish language skills, even for	52	0	4.173	0.985

<b>Language &amp; Structural Barriers Descriptive Statistics</b>				
<b>Items</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Miss- ing</b>	<b>Mean (arithme- tic)</b>	<b>Std. De- viation</b>
positions where English may be sufficient.				
4. Foreign educational qualifications are not fully recognized in the Finnish labour market.	52	0	4.096	1.071
<b>Language &amp; Structural Barriers</b>			<b>4.12</b>	<b>0.98</b>

### 5.2.2 Work Experience and Skill Utilisation

This descriptive analysis on Work Experience & Skill Utilization clearly shows that the respondents mostly agree on the international graduates have difficulty to convert their acquired skills, education, and previous work experience into relevant job options in the Finnish labour market.

This category of Work Experience & Skill Utilization has an average Mean value of 4.23 on a 5-point Likert scale and standard deviation of 0.94. The highest mean is of “Work experience obtained in my home country is undervalued in the Finnish labour market” that is 4.3 with SD 0.94. The comparative lower mean is of “Finnish work experience significantly enhances employment opportunities” with Mean 4.115 and SD 1.096. The small value on the standard deviation for the category Work Experience & Skill Utilization clearly shows that the respondents mostly agree on the international graduates have difficulty to convert their acquired skills, education, and previous work experience into relevant job options in the Finnish labour market.

**Table 5: Work Experience & Skill Utilization (Source: Own survey results, 2026)**

<b>Work Experience &amp; Skill Utilization Descriptive Statistics</b>				
<b>Items</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Miss- ing</b>	<b>Mean (arithme- tic)</b>	<b>Std. De- viation</b>
5. Finnish work experience significantly enhances employment opportunities.	52	0	4.115	1.096
6. Limited access to internships or part-time work makes it more difficult to secure employment.	52	0	4.288	0.825
7. Work experience obtained in my home country is undervalued in the Finnish labour market.	52	0	4.308	0.940
8. My skills and qualifications are not fully utilized in my current or previous employment in Finland.	52	0	4.231	0.899
<b>Work Experience &amp; Skill Utilization</b>			<b>4.23</b>	<b>0.94</b>

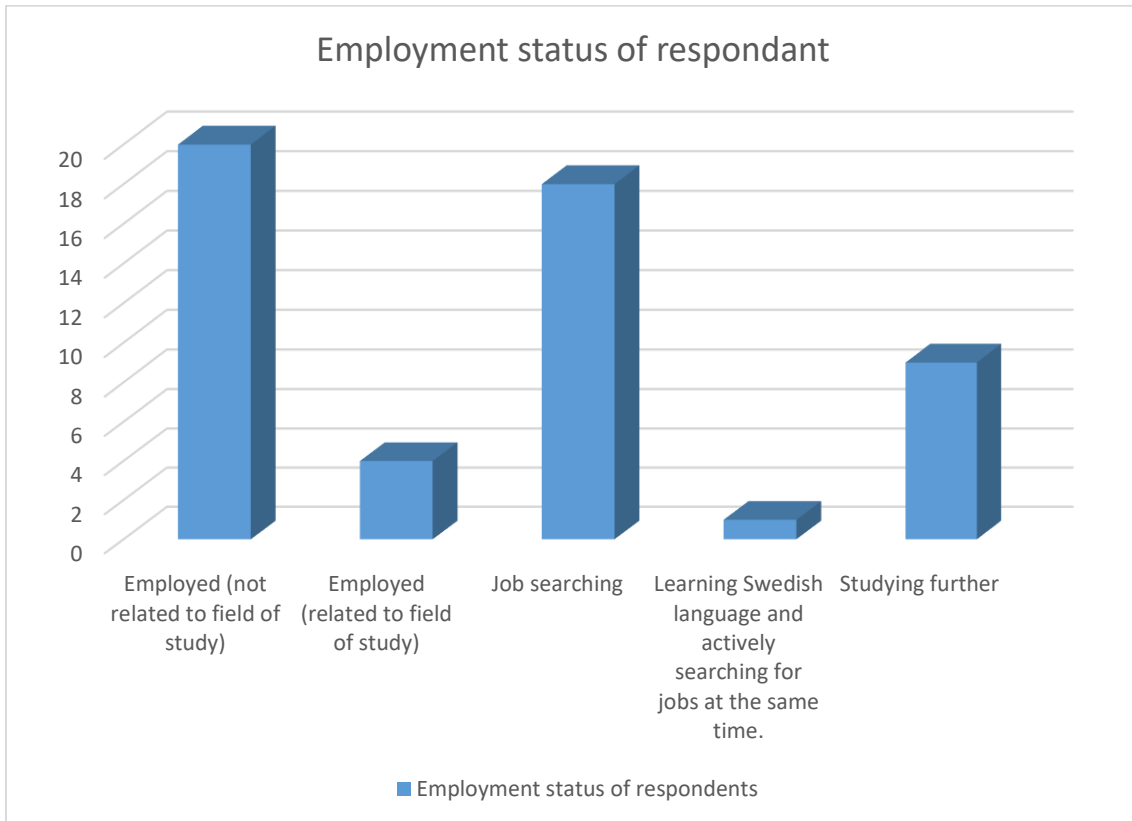
### 5.2.3 Education–Employment Mismatch and Reskilling

This descriptive analysis on Education–Employment Mismatch & Reskilling has an average Mean value of 4.14 on a 5-point Likert scale and standard deviation of 0.91. The highest mean is tied between the “International graduates are often employed in positions that are not related to their field of study” and “Additional training or reskilling is necessary to improve employment prospects in Finland” that is 4.346 with SD 0.861 and

0.947 respectively. The comparative lower mean is of “Employers place greater emphasis on practical skills than academic qualifications” with Mean 3.865 and SD 0.886. This trend indicates that having educational qualifications is not enough to achieve successful labor market integration, and the shortage of practical skills relevant to local conditions is the reason behind this phenomenon.

**Table 6: Education–Employment Mismatch & Reskilling (Source: Own survey results, 2026)**

<b>Education–Employment Mismatch &amp; Reskilling Descriptive Statistics</b>				
<b>Items</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Miss- ing</b>	<b>Mean (arithme- tic)</b>	<b>Std. De- viation</b>
13.Degrees obtained in my home country or in Finland are not always sufficient to secure employment in the Finnish labour market.	52	0	4.038	0.969
14. Employers place greater emphasis on practical skills than academic qualifications.	52	0	3.865	0.886
15.International graduates are often employed in positions that are not related to their field of study.	52	0	4.346	0.861
16.Additional training or reskilling is necessary to improve employment prospects in Finland.	52	0	4.346	0.947
<b>Education–Employment Mismatch &amp; Reskilling</b>			<b>4.14</b>	<b>0.91</b>



**Figure 3: Employment Status of respondents**

This figure shows that many respondents either are working unrelated to their area of study or have yet to find work; very few people are in an employment position using their qualifications. The results clearly demonstrate that there is a lack of connection between education and employment and suggest the necessity of reskilling or additional post education training.

#### **5.2.4 Labour Market Conditions and Technological Change**

This descriptive analysis on Labour Market Conditions & Technological Change has an average Mean value of 4.18 on a 5-point Likert scale and standard deviation of 0.87. The

highest mean is the “The Finnish labour market is highly competitive for international graduates.” that is 4.346 with SD 0.861 and 0.947 respectively. The comparative lower mean is of “Technological changes (e.g., digitalization, automation, artificial intelligence, and green transitions) influence employment opportunities.” with Mean 4.038 and SD 0.862. These results indicate that international graduates have a balanced perspective on the macro-environmental forces that influence the labor market in Finland.

**Table 7: Labour Market Conditions & Technological Change (Source: Own survey results, 2026)**

<b>Labour Market Conditions &amp; Technological Change Descriptive Statistics</b>				
<b>Items</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Miss- ing</b>	<b>Mean (arithmetic)</b>	<b>Std. Devi- ation</b>
17. The Finnish labour market is highly competitive for international graduates.	52	0	4.346	0.947
18. Economic conditions significantly influence the availability of employment opportunities.	52	0	4.173	0.879
19. Employers have high expectations regarding skills, experience, and adaptability.	52	0	4.192	0.793
20. Technological changes (e.g., digitalization, automation, artificial intelligence, and green transitions) influence employment opportunities.	52	0	4.038	0.862
<b>Labour Market Conditions &amp; Technological Change</b>			<b>4.18</b>	<b>0.87</b>

### 5.2.5 Career Services and Institutional Support

This descriptive analysis on Career Services & Institutional Support has an average Mean value of 3.03 on a 5-point Likert scale and standard deviation of 0.99. The highest mean is the “I was aware of the career services offered by the University of Vaasa during my studies” that is 3.46 with SD 0.874. The comparative lower mean is of “University Career Services facilitated connections with employers or professional networks.” with Mean 2.69 and SD 1.02. The relatively high standard deviation with the low Mean on these items shows different individual experiences with career services. Even though it is clearly seen that university career services support is largely viewed as ineffective in dealing with the unique circumstances international graduates have in the Finnish labour market.

**Table 8: Career Services & Institutional Support (Source: Own survey results, 2026)**

<b>Career Services &amp; Institutional Support Descriptive Statistics</b>				
<b>Items</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Miss- ing</b>	<b>Mean (arithme- tic)</b>	<b>Std. De- viation</b>
21.I was aware of the career services offered by the University of Vaasa during my studies .	52	0	3.462	0.874

<b>Career Services &amp; Institutional Support Descriptive Statistics</b>				
<b>Items</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Miss- ing</b>	<b>Mean (arithme- tic)</b>	<b>Std. De- viation</b>
22.University Career Service helped me understand employer expectations and required competencies.	52	0	2.923	1.045
23.University Career Service contributed to improving my job-search skills (e.g., CV writing and interview preparation).	52	0	3.077	1.045
24.University Career Services facilitated connections with employers or professional network.	52	0	2.692	1.020
<b>Career Services &amp; Institutional Support</b>			3.03	0.99

### 5.2.6 Open-Ended Responses

The survey ended with an open question that gave the respondents a chance to voice their views on the topic of employment integration. The answers revealed some of the major issues, as summarized below.

- a. Most people reported having a hard time finding work. In particular, many found it difficult to find work in fields they studied.

- b. Many stated that the Finnish labour market is very competitive. Especially for foreign students/graduates.
- c. There were repeated concerns about how important being able to speak/speak well Finnish would be. The majority of the participants said that looking for a job is almost impossible when you do not have good enough Finnish.
- d. Participants also noted that many jobs are filled through professional connections (networking) rather than open advertising.
- e. Participants also mentioned an absence of help in job placement from universities. A few participants suggested that there should be more assistance (practical career advice) given at the university level.

## 6. Discussion

In this chapter, the conclusion resulting from the findings will be presented in respect to the research question, theoretical perspective, and relevant literature. The aim of this study was to understand the reasons that affect the labor market integration of international graduates from the University of Vaasa. These results show that interdependent linguistic, structural, social, and institutional factors contribute to the degree of labour market integration. They mutually enforce each other as well as in the regional context of Vaasa. The combination of quantitative patterns and qualitative insight allows for a better understanding of how international students go through the process of transforming their student status into an employee status.

### 6.1 Relating the discussion to the Research Question

Research Question: *“How do international graduates of the University of Vaasa Perceive the key factors influencing their integration into Finnish labour market?”*

The findings suggest that three areas, which are related to each other, determine the perception of integration for graduates:

1. Linguistic and structural barriers
2. Social capital, networks, and employer expectations
3. Institutional support and regional labour-market conditions

These areas overlap and complement each other, implying that integration is a holistic process and not isolated as a phenomenon.

### 6.2 Language as a Structural, Symbolic, and Gatekeeping Mechanism

The results indicate that language was the primary determining factor for all of the various dimensions of employment success. Respondents' responses were extremely quantitative (strongly agreeing) to the idea that fluency in Finnish/Swedish was required for

their job (Mean=4.12). The qualitative results indicated that employers referred to language use as the “first filter” in the hiring process.

Further, language has both symbolic and structural functions. Many employers will view language as an indicator of an employee's cultural familiarity with the work environment, expected workplace behavior, and overall reliability. This also relates to Saarinen & Nikula's (2013) theory of linguistic gate keeping; employers use language as a means to control who is included or excluded from participation in the labour force.

The findings also contradict the common assumption that specific aspects of a job directly determine its language requirements. A number of interviewees reported that they could have performed their job duties using English alone. However, many of their employers preferred employees who spoke Finnish. These findings suggest that institutionalized workplace requirements and values may shape language expectations, rather than the actual requirements needed to perform the job.

Vaasa presents a unique set of regional conditions that contribute to creating additional layers of complexity around language-related issues. Because Vaasa is a bilingual area, it creates two sets of expectations for workers regarding language. Overall, this contributes to limiting worker options. Therefore, this study indicates that language-related issues are not simply individual deficits. Rather, language barriers represent structural elements of the labour market. Additionally, broader regional identity, workplace culture, and employer expectations tie into them.

### **6.3 Work Experience, Employer Expectations, and the “Experience Paradox”**

These results clearly reveal a large discrepancy between the qualifications that international students receive upon graduating in Finland and employers' expectations of those

qualifications. According to respondents, they agree very strongly with the statement "foreign work experience has little or no value" (Mean = 4.31). Moreover, respondents' qualitative reports also point out the "paradox of experience": employers require their employees to have Finnish work experience; however, few employers give international students such opportunities.

This represents a broader issue regarding how employers use their employees' experience (local), cultural understanding and language abilities as ways to reduce the potential for risk when they hire. Employers do have valid reasons from a company perspective to limit the risks that are involved with hiring new employees; however, if employers continue to utilize practices such as those mentioned above, international students would continually be at a disadvantage and further exacerbate current inequities.

Implicit biases create additional complications for this system. Students participating in this research reported that both their name, accent and visa status affected employer's perceptions of them. In fact, Ahmed (2019) provided proof of discrimination in the recruitment process in Finland. As such, the present study finds fault with the idea that labour markets operate according to meritocratic principles. Rather, we see the socially constructed character of employability. Employers expect many things of international students, including measurable competencies and cultural assumptions/behavioral norms that international students cannot demonstrate unless they first have prior experience working in Finland.

#### **6.4 Social Capital and Unequal Access to the Hidden Labour Market**

The results of both the qualitative and quantitative analyses emphasize the importance of social capital in determining the job-search activities of students. The quantitative category Professional Networks & Ecosystem had the highest mean score. With a mean of  $M = 4.01$ , these students indicated their belief that many jobs are awarded to individuals through informal connections rather than formal advertising. This idea is further supported by the qualitative research of the students who have interviewed about the difficulties they faced when trying to locate the "hidden job market" in Vaasa.

These findings support Social Capital Theory's emphasis on the significance of networks, trust, and social relationships to assist students in acquiring labour-market opportunities (Coleman, 1990; Bourdieu, 1986). As such, international graduate students face significant disadvantages because smaller regional labour markets often rely on referrals and connections to acquire employees, and therefore those without strong professional networks may be disadvantaged.

Additionally, the findings support Samaeva (2023) that one of the most predictive factors of employment for international graduates in Finland is the student's level of networking. However, there appears to be a serious knowledge gap. While the students recognize the significance of having professional networks, they believe that institutions provide insufficient support to help build them. The students clearly demonstrated their perceptions through their ratings of their universities' facilitation of networking. The students rated their universities' networking opportunities significantly low ( $M = 3.46$ ), indicating that current programs have not provided sufficient assistance for the needs of international students.

The disparity between the students' understanding of networking being so important and the lack of support from educational institutions to facilitate building professional networks will result in unfairness regarding employment opportunities for all graduating students and reinforce pre-existing structural inequities.

## **6.5 Education–Employment Mismatch and Skill Underutilization**

Graduates were generally misemployed relative to their education. Many respondents agreed that it was inadequate to have just an educational degree (Mean = 4.14), as well as many also agreed that they needed to obtain additional training or re-skill or up-skill in order to find employment (Mean = 4.35). Graduates described working in jobs outside their field of study or pursuing further education to improve their employment prospects.

This mismatch is part of a larger labour-market trend where there is increasing "credential inflation" or skill mismatch. Finnish employers seem to be more interested in the

applicant's prior experience and competence in the specific context they are working than their formal education credentials.

Also important to recognize, that this mismatch does not represent a purely "skills" issue; it also relates to employers' expectations regarding language proficiency, and structural issues which limit the utilization of graduates' skills. Therefore, we can see that the failure of international graduates to utilize their acquired skills is both an outcome at the level of the individual graduate, as well as an inefficient use of labour in the broader sense.

Additionally, the geographic location of Vaasa has its own impact on these dynamics. The predominance of manufacturing, technical sectors create fewer opportunities for graduates from non-technical fields. Even those technically qualified graduates may still have to overcome some degree of linguistic and cultural barrier.

## **6.6 Institutional Support and Structural Gaps**

The results clearly demonstrate little or no effect that institutional support particularly career service has on graduates' employment prospects. Qualitative accounts as well as quantitative data (mean = 3.03) illustrated a major disconnect between the type of support provided through career services and the nature of the graduate job market.

It appears that career services do not directly address some of the key structural issues that international students face when entering the labour market. For example, while career services may be able to offer general advice regarding how to enter the job market, these services do not typically address the common barriers faced by many international students such as lack of fluency in the local language, lack of professional network connections, and lack of understanding of what employers expect from new employees. In addition to this issue, Mathies & Karhunen (2021) have identified differences in support for international students at different Finnish universities, which indicates that there is not a consistent approach used to support international students transitioning into the workforce. Furthermore, current forms of institutional support tend to focus on

improving individual students' employability rather than addressing broader structural barriers to successful employment.

### **6.7 Psychological Dimensions of Labour Market Integration**

In addition, this study emphasizes the effect of involvement in the labor market on the psychological well-being of participants. The subjects reported that they felt frustrated, confused, and lacked self-confidence due to their long-term unemployment and job rejection experiences. This shows that integrating into the labour market is not only a financial endeavor but also an emotionally and psychologically challenging experience for individuals. The cumulative effect of these types of barriers may negatively affect future career choices and potentially lead to long-term underemployment/ unemployment in Finland.

### **6.8 Integration with the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The research provides evidence for and against the theories used within this research. Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory suggests that education and work-related experience can create positive job prospects. However, the findings also showed that their future employers were not recognizing many of the graduates' formal qualifications. Therefore, it shows that having just human capital will be insufficient to allow graduates to take advantage of the value of their formal education due to structural and cultural barriers limiting their formal qualification.

In contrast, Social Capital Theory explains why graduates have very few opportunities. For example, with access to limited number of networks, lack of strong ties to an employer, limited use of informal recruitment methods by employers greatly restricts graduate job searches; particularly in a regional labour market such as Vaasa where much of the hiring is based on who you know or referral processes.

Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), was helpful in explaining how the graduates responded to the challenges they faced through adapting i.e. developing new language skills, re-skilling etc. However, the results clearly indicate that while individuals may develop strategies for overcoming the constraints that they face at least in terms of structural obstacles such as linguistic gatekeeping, employer bias and limited networks - these structural constraints continue to limit the ability of the graduates to achieve greater levels of labour-market integration.

In summary, the findings suggest that the relationship between human capital, social capital, and structures is critical to realizing labor market integration, as opposed to an individual component alone.

### **6.8.1 Theoretical Contributions**

This research provides an insight into human capital theory by highlighting that the link between education and labor market performance is rather complicated. The results of the investigation reveal that the effectiveness of human capital can be determined by contextual factors, such as the institutional and cultural environment in which it is measured.

In terms of Social Capital Theory, this research emphasizes the significance of the accessibility of professional networks on the creation of career opportunities. The research indicates that due to limited accessibility to professional networks within smaller labor market regions, some groups, including international graduates, may be disadvantaged regardless of equal credentials.

When it comes to the Career Construction Theory, the findings highlight the need to be cognizant of the constraints that exist within an individual's agency. Despite their attempts at adaptive practices, the outcome was not always positive for the graduates in terms of labor market integration.

In summary, this research suggests that adopting an integrated framework, taking into account human capital, social capital, and structural factors, could give a more holistic picture regarding labor market integration.

## **6.9 Answering the Research Question**

The results demonstrate how international students view their ability to enter the labour market in Finland is impacted by a number of factors including;

- (1) Linguistic Expectations
- (2) Undervaluing Foreign Experience
- (3) Limited access to networks
- (4) Education and employment mismatch
- (5) Inadequate institutional support for Integration and
- (6) Regional labour market constraints.

The outcomes were consistent with the qualitative and quantitative findings, and concluded that there is an interaction of social capital, personal ability, and structure in influencing entry into the labor market. Consequently, the research outcomes reveal that the process of labor market integration is multi-dimensional rather than a single step from education to employment.

## 6.10 Summary

The overall evidence from this analysis demonstrates that, while internationally qualified individuals have significant amounts of human capital, there are multiple inter-related barriers to their integration into Finnish society that go well beyond individual differences in skills and qualifications. In addition to encountering linguistic gatekeeping and structural bias, many will also experience limited social capital, and find themselves without adequate institutional support. The regional location of Vaasa adds additional complexity to all of these barriers. Consequently, the findings illustrate the necessity of developing holistic approaches that can aid not only in enhancing individual employability but also in creating favorable conditions that will determine people's access to jobs.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusion

This research highlights numerous crucial conclusions that can be drawn concerning the integration of international graduates in the Finnish labour market. It was discovered that the labour market does not sufficiently take into account the human capital that international graduates had gained in their respective countries prior to entering the labour market, such as work experience and educational qualifications. Even though the level of formal education among the respondents was rather high, the degree to which human capital contributed to their chances for securing a job was highly dependent on their Finnish language skills.

The findings also support the assertion that the expectations of employers, especially the requirement for previous Finnish experience, present more barriers for international graduates. The informal nature of recruitment processes serves as another hurdle as graduates are favored if they have social connections within the community. With a labor market like the one in Vaasa, referrals and networking are important to many employers.

The research further underscores the role played by labour-market circumstances at the regional level. While cities such as Helsinki and Espoo provide a greater number of jobs for English speakers and a wider array of job possibilities, the same cannot be said for Vaasa. These findings imply that labour market integration depends not only on personal capabilities but also on social ties and structures.

The results of the study have proved that entering the Finnish labor market is not an easy task, as it involves many dimensions. That is to say that the success of any person within the labor market should not be seen from the perspective of individual capabilities but should be considered based on interaction of different elements.

## 7.2 Critical Implications

The conclusions from this study bring into view larger issues regarding how labour markets define "employment" and "labour-market integration".

The focus on language and local experience suggests that labour market integration is defined more by conformity to established norms than by the utilization of individuals' diverse skills. This raises the question of whether current labour market practices maximize the use of available talent or simply perpetuate exclusion.

The reliance on informal networks suggests that employment opportunities are unevenly distributed in the labour market. This casts doubt on the idea that labour markets in countries with highly developed economies function as completely open systems; rather, these same labour markets continue to support structural inequality.

Disconnect between policy goals such as attracting international graduate students and actual employment outcomes illustrates a discrepancy between stated aims and actual implementation. Although international student-graduates are encouraged to stay in Finland, there is no consistent way to integrate them into the Finnish labour market.

This indicates that labor market integration should not only be considered an economic question but a matter of institution building as well.

## 7.3 Practical Recommendations

The results from the above study have revealed some of the challenges faced by international graduates when they enter the labor market in Finland. Using the key themes that were identified especially those related to the need for good language skills, limited work experience, poor professional connections and lack of institutional support, the following is a brief set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the integration into the labor market.

### 7.3.1 Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions

Higher Education Institutions are recommended; First, **to move from employability to a labour market integration framework**. Universities need to stop supporting their graduates in a generic manner and embrace a framework, which tackles barriers such as language requirements, network limitations and the experience paradox. Such framework will be closer to reality compared to the current situation that international graduates find themselves. **Second, Integrate Work Integrated Learning (WIL) into all study programmes**. This can be through mandatory internship programmes or work collaborations through projects. This is especially important in Finland considering that employers attach much importance to local experience. Third, **create long-term partnerships with employers**. The solution here will not be just organising career events but establishing a long-term relationship between universities and companies to develop continuous avenues into the labour market through internships, thesis cooperation and other entry-level opportunities. Fourth, **enhance career service functions to help graduates tap into hidden job markets**. In order for universities to assist their graduates effectively, career services need to offer assistance in networking and hiring processes.

### 7.3.2 Recommendations for Employers

Employees are recommended to; First, **Evaluate the language criteria in an appropriate manner**. The Finnish-language criteria should focus on job requirements rather than act as automatic filters. A more relaxed policy regarding language can help in attracting talented individuals from overseas. Second, **Implement and promote transparent and inclusive recruitment processes**. Decreasing dependence on hiring through informal channels and improving formal procedures would make the recruitment process more equitable for international candidates because they may not have connections within Finland. Third, **Value the international work and study experience of candidates**. The employers must set up appropriate criteria for evaluating the international experience gained by candidates instead of giving precedence only to domestic experience.

### 7.3.3 Recommendations for International Students and Graduates

**International Students and Graduates are recommended to; First, engage early in networks and campus activities.** Building connections through student organizations, volunteering, and project participation helps access the hidden job market and strengthens social capital. Second, **continue developing language skills.** Even basic Finnish proficiency can improve employability and signal commitment to integration, especially in smaller regions. Third, **seek practical experience during studies.** Internships, part-time work, and project collaborations help overcome the experience gap and provide local references. Fourth, **make full use of university career services.** Career counselling, mentoring, and job-search workshops can support adaptation to Finnish recruitment practices when used proactively.

### 7.3.4 Recommendation for Policy Maker

First policy makers are called upon to **encourage more workplace-based language training schemes.** This promotes realistic language acquisition and lowers the language barrier issue as an employment criterion, particularly at the entry-level level. **Second, offer incentives like subsidized internships and transitional work for hiring companies to encourage employers to hire international graduates.** This step would help to overcome reluctance among employers and help the graduates deal with the paradox pointed out by the findings. **Third, emphasize regional labour market policies, especially in smaller cities like Vaasa.** There is a need for regional policies since there is a significant difference between small cities and large cities regarding opportunities, networks, and diversity among employers. **Fourth, establish a national strategy for facilitating the move from studies to employment.** There should be a clearly defined strategy indicating language skills required and support provided during the transition period. **Fifth, Promote and monitor fair and transparent recruitment processes.** The promotion of transparency in recruitment will lower barriers associated with unfair and informal recruitment processes.

## 7.4 Integrated Labour-Market Pathway Recommendation

This study's main conclusion is that separate initiatives are insufficient to solve labour market integration. Rather, it necessitates an institutionally organized strategy. The results obtained from the study reveal that the problems faced by international students are not just independent but interdependent problems existing among universities, employers, and public-sector organizations. In light of such an observation, it becomes clear that any kind of individual solution offered by one of the parties whether universities, employers, or government agencies is insufficient for overcoming the problems faced by international graduates. It is necessary to have a coherent and integrated approach to creating a labor market pathway enabling the international graduates to become familiar with the Finnish labor market in a predictable way. This integrated pathway should consist of three main aspects:

**Table 9: Integrated Labour Market Pathway Recommendation**

Recommendation	Rationale & Impact	Top-Level Responsibilities (Universities, Employers, Regional/National Agencies)
<b>1. Structured Work-Experience Pathways</b>	Helps international students get practical Finnish work experience while studying, which lessens the “experience paradox” they face when graduating.	The universities create WIL guidelines and incorporate internships, employers promise internship numbers and project-based work, while regional authorities facilitate the matching of students and local firms.
<b>2. Network Access Through Cross-Institutional Collaboration</b>	This facilitates intentional entry into Finnish professional networks, transforming networking into a corporate rather than a personal challenge.	Universities and firms establish mentor partnerships; cities and chambers of commerce plan cooperative networking sessions; and regional talent centers link up university students with local businesses.

<b>3. Integrated Support Services Across Institutions</b>	Integration of fragmented service provision into a coherent framework providing uniform guidelines on recruitment practices, language acquisition, and qualifications recognition.	Universities, TE Offices, and municipal authorities coordinate career counseling; enterprises provide on-the-job language training; national bodies facilitate qualifications recognition and residence permit information.
<b>4. National Coordination Mechanism</b>	Provides for an integrated system whereby expectations, accountability, and knowledge are harmonized throughout the whole process.	The Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, regional organizations, employers' federations, and municipalities work together to specify skill expectations, ensure fairness in hiring, and provide a roadmap for the country.
<b>5. Outcome: A Predictable Labour-Market Pathway</b>	Establishes a smooth and structured pathway from studies to employment, minimizing uncertainties and retaining talent.	All parties act together to make sure that international graduates follow a clear and structured pathway to employment within Finland.

## 7.5 Limitations

This research has a number of shortcomings. The sample used was limited in terms of both its size and the geographical area covered, being confined to the Vaasa area. This poses constraints for generalizing the obtained findings to the wider context of Finland. Furthermore, the application of self-report data could lead to introducing a subjective bias due to its inherently personal nature. Moreover, as this was a cross-sectional study, changes in employment status of the graduates were not considered. Lastly, no employers' point of view was included in the study.

However, despite such shortcomings, the mixed method used in this paper improves the validity of its findings.

## 7.6 Directions for Future Research

Further studies can explore several dimensions in connection with this study. For instance, according to Yijälä & Luoma (2019) it is crucial to pay attention to employers' views. Researching the criteria by which employers assess the candidates' foreign qualifications, linguistic abilities, and international work experience will help create an adequate picture.

Comparative regional analyses, for instance, comparing labor market structures and language environments in places like Vaasa, Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku, this could help determine whether the problems mentioned above arise because of the nature of smaller labor markets, or if it is actually a wider issue found in other regions as well. Based on Mathies & Karhunen (2021) and Samaeva (2023), future researchers could implement longitudinal designs in their studies. This will help determine how the network develops, how human capital is acknowledged, and how the structural barriers shift when the international students adapt to the Finnish environment. Additional research could identify the most successful types of institutional support (mentoring programs, university-employer cooperation, networking programs, etc.) in ensuring a positive job market position for international graduates. Lastly, there is a good scope for research into the psychological aspects of labour market integration, specifically on the effects of extended periods of job searching, underemployment, and rejection on one's overall well-being and career success.

Combined, these areas provide an extensive framework for further study into the process of labour market integration.

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## 9. Appendices

### a. Appendix 1. Qualitative Interview Questionnaire

#### Section 1: Background

1. Can you briefly describe your educational background and the degree you completed at the University of Vaasa?
2. What has your situation been since graduation (employment, job search, further studies, or moving to another country)?
3. If you are currently employed, how closely is your job related to your field of study?

#### Section 2: Transition to the Labour Market

4. Can you describe your experience transitioning from graduation to the Finnish labour market?
5. Before graduating, what were your expectations about finding work in Finland? How did the reality compare?
6. What challenges did you face during your job search, and how did you try to overcome them?

#### Section 3: Skills and Work Experience

7. How important were Finnish language skills in your job search or employment experience?
8. Did internships, part-time jobs, or other work experiences in Finland influence your employment opportunities?
9. How do you think employers perceived or valued your degree from the University of Vaasa?

#### Section 4: Networks and Support

10. What factors or resources helped you most during your job search?
11. How important were professional networks (such as classmates, alumni, LinkedIn contacts, or personal connections) in finding job opportunities?

#### Section 5: University Career Services

Please rate the following statements from **1 (Strongly Disagree)** to **5 (Strongly Agree)** and briefly explain your answer.

- I was aware of the career services offered by the University of Vaasa during my studies.
- The university provided enough information about career services for international students.
- Career services helped me understand Finnish recruitment practices.
- Career services improved my job search skills (CV writing, interview preparation).
- Career services helped me connect with employers or professional networks.
- Career services increased my confidence in navigating the Finnish labour market.
- Overall, the University of Vaasa's career services supported my transition to the labour market.

### **Section 6: Future Plans**

12. Do you see yourself staying in Finland long-term? What factors influence this decision?

### **Final Question**

13. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as an international graduate entering the Finnish labour market?

## b. Appendix 2. Quantative Questionnaire

Factors Influencing Employment Integration of International Graduates in Finland .

Scale 1 = Strongly Disagree ,2 = Disagree ,3 = Neutral,4 = Agree,5 = Strongly Agree

### A. Language & Structural Barriers

1. Proficiency in the Finnish language is essential for obtaining employment in Finland.
2. Limited Finnish language skills significantly reduce my employment opportunities.
3. Employers tend to prefer candidates with Finnish language skills, even for positions where English may be sufficient.
4. Foreign educational qualifications are not fully recognized in the Finnish labour market.

### B. Work Experience & Skill Utilization

5. Finnish work experience significantly enhances employment opportunities.
6. Limited access to internships or part-time work makes it more difficult to secure employment.
7. Work experience obtained in my home country is undervalued in the Finnish labour market.
8. My skills and qualifications are not fully utilized in my current or previous employment in Finland.

### C. Professional Networks & Ecosystem

9. Professional networks play a crucial role in accessing employment opportunities in Finland.
10. Many job opportunities are filled through informal networks rather than open advertisements.
11. Personal connections increase the likelihood of being invited to job interviews.
12. Universities, company-specific programs (e.g., ABB, Wärtsilä, Danfoss), and regional initiatives (such as the Vaasa Talent Program) support employment opportunities through networking and collaboration.

### D. Education–Employment Mismatch & Reskilling

13. A university degree alone is insufficient to secure employment in Finland.
14. Employers place greater emphasis on practical skills than academic qualifications.

15. International graduates are often employed in positions that are not related to their field of study.
16. Additional training or reskilling is necessary to improve employment prospects in Finland.

#### E. Labour Market Conditions & Technological Change

17. The Finnish labour market is highly competitive for international graduates.
18. Economic conditions significantly influence the availability of employment opportunities.
19. Employers have high expectations regarding skills, experience, and adaptability.
20. Technological changes (e.g., digitalization, automation, and artificial intelligence) influence employment opportunities.

#### F. Career Services & Institutional Support

21. I was aware of the career services provided by the University of Vaasa during my studies.
  22. University Career Services helped me understand employer expectations and required competencies.
  23. University Career Services contributed to improving my job-search skills (e.g., CV writing and interview preparation).
  24. University Career Services facilitated connections with employers or professional networks.
- 
25. Is there anything you would like to share about your experience as an international graduate in Finland?

### c. Appendix 3. JASP Calculations

#### Reliability Language & Structural Barriers

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##### *Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics*

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95% CI

<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.714	0.082	0.553	0.875

#### Reliability Work Experience & Skill Utilization

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##### *Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics*

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95% CI

<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.724	0.094	0.539	0.908

#### Reliability Professional Networks & Ecosystem

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##### *Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics*

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95% CI

<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.739	0.094	0.554	0.924

#### Reliability Education–Employment Mismatch & Reskilling

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##### *Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics*

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95% CI

<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.739	0.123	0.498	0.979

#### Reliability Labour Market Conditions & Technological Change

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##### *Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics*

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95% CI

<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<b>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.861	0.041	0.779	0.942

#### Reliability Career Services & Institutional Support

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##### *Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics*

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			<i>95% CI</i>	
<b><i>Coefficient</i></b>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
<b><i>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></i></b>	<i>0.828</i>	<i>0.059</i>	<i>0.712</i>	<i>0.944</i>