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DIVERSE AND ENTANGLED:
Student Perspectives on Participating in Finland's First Early
Childhood Education and Care Bachelor's Program in
English

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ABSTRACT

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Tampere University's Early Childhood Education and Care bachelor's program in English is the first of its kind offered in Finland. The students making up the Tampere University (TUNI) Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) program in English are an amazingly diverse group representing different countries, family backgrounds, and life experiences. The lives of the students were entangled together as they navigated their academic situation and a COVID pandemic. Their experiences with each other coupled with the education provided at Tampere University allowed them to see differences and to understand those differences through personal engagement thus creating a rich academic learning experience that is called Internationalization at Home.

The purpose of the research was to discover the students' motivations and perspectives on enrolment and participation in Tampere University's ECEC bachelor's program. The motivations for applying for the program and their experiences with 1) Internationalized Curriculum, 2) Extracurricular Activities, and 3) What Global, International, and Intercultural competencies were learned.

Results showed that the students learned Global International and Intercultural competencies by working with each other being supported by teachers in the program using an internationalized curriculum. More work is needed in the area of Extracurricular Activities to actively support Internationalization at Home between the Finnish language ECEC students and the participants in the English language program.

Keywords: Internationalization at Home, global citizenship, diversity, motivation, perspectives

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Tampere University's Early Childhood Education and Care bachelor's program in English is the first of its kind offered in Finland. I was selected for the program but was worried in the beginning because I did not fulfil the profile of a 'traditional student.' Panacci (2017) defines a traditional student as recently graduated from high school, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, living in campus housing, and does not have other major roles or responsibilities such as parenting. In my case, I am married, an immigrant to Finland, a grandmother of three, and a co-caregiver to aging parents. My age is quite a bit older than the traditional student age range. I have plenty of work experience in and out of the ECEC field, and this is not my first time participating in post-secondary education as a student.

The students making up the Tampere University (TUNI) Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) program in English are an amazingly diverse group representing different countries, family backgrounds, and life experiences. Most of us are older, have a spouse, partner, and/or children, have a range of experience in the ECEC field from beginner to experienced, or have already obtained a university degree in different fields. Our commonalities are choosing ECEC as a profession, we live in a Finland at this moment, and we speak and understand the English language. Panacci (2017) writes that there is no way to lump the non-traditional students into one category, but there are subgroups that bring a wealth of knowledge and experience, and have their own circumstances, educational needs and expectations that need to be taken into account.

The most obvious difference among us as a group is that we come from different countries and represent four different continents. Our backgrounds, languages, and stages of life have been a great asset while we have been working together to learn to become outstanding ECEC professionals. We have created a support network mixing "host national" and "multi-national" students described by Compiegne (2021) as a community of practice strengthening a

sense of belonging and wellbeing. We found support in this community which reinforced our social identities. Bringing together diverse points of view to discuss important topics in the field of ECEC such as multilingualism, inclusion, childhood, and family structure increased our intercultural awareness and fostered a sense of commonality. We were forced to confront our stereotypes and assumptions of each other, and this gives us a unique perspective as ECEC professionals. Writing this thesis made me think about how different our program experiences must be from the typical ECEC program taught in the Finnish language to primarily Finnish students. Our group is a blend of native-Finns (born here, raised here,) naturalized-Finns (born elsewhere with acquired Finnish citizenship,) foreign-born immigrants and residents, and one international student.

We didn't just 'do' group projects together or participate in class. Our lives were entangled together as we navigated our academic situation and a COVID pandemic. It was more than asking each other about perspectives, we were helping each other to cope in and outside of university. With my classmates, I learned how to figure out and use technology required for studies. I heard other people's experiences with 'outside' institutions like the Migration office, the Employment office and health services, and I was able to learn how to use those systems more efficiently. I was able to learn about Finnish traditions in areas other than my own and in a deeper way. I was educated in deep issues like racism and colonialism from long, after-hours discussions with my peers. We have forged our very own, unique version of the 'collegiate experience' discussed by Ping (1999). He says that one of the oldest goals of education is to help people understand themselves and others in a multicultural setting. The only way to learn more is to talk with people who have different ideas. Each student's experience is full of contrasts, both big and small, that are immediate, wide-ranging, and always present. Students interact with people who are different from them every day, not just once in a while (Ping, 1999). Our group's experiences with each other coupled with the education provided at Tampere University allowed us to see differences and to understand those differences through personal engagement thus creating a rich academic learning experience.

With this thesis, I respond to my curiosity about how my classmates viewed their experiences and see if there are similarities and how they might differ. What were my peers' motivations and perspectives on enrolment and participation in

Tampere University's Early Childhood Education and Care bachelor's program in English? I explored the motivations for applying for the program and our experiences under three areas that are relevant for the internationalisation of higher education: 1) Internationalized Curriculum, 2) Extracurricular Activities, and 3) What Global, International, and Intercultural competencies were learned. Learning about their perspectives might contribute to improvements in programs at Tampere University and beyond to improve the internationalization of higher education and to benefit all degree students, not only those who are deemed as international.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Ministry for Education and Culture in Finland prioritized quality learning experiences for all students by including intercultural policies in the areas of student mobility and internationalizing curricula (OKM, 2017). Tampere University's action plan for internationalization includes providing international students and degree students with immigrant backgrounds integrative support (Tampere University, 2020). Though the policies are well-meaning, difficulties with providing those quality intercultural educational experiences for both international and home students have been identified within European institutions of higher learning (de Wit & Hunter, 2015).

2.1 Meaning of Internationalization in Education

The definition of Internationalization used in this research comes from de Wit and Hunter (2015). Internationalization of Institutions of higher learning means the deliberate process of adding a global, international, or multicultural dimension to the education objectives, and delivery of higher education to improve the quality of education and research for all students and faculty, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. Intercultural learning is the process in which people from different cultural backgrounds learn from each other as they work together. Students and educators develop insights and understanding of other's cultures while exploring their own within the spaces of classroom environments (O'Brien, Tuohy, Fahy, & Markey, 2019). Interculturally competent people find it easier to live and work in multi-cultural situations and develop leadership skills to negotiate an increasingly diverse transnational environment (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

2.2 Internationalization and Global Citizenship

Higher education's internationalization is a movement that is inextricably tied to globalization (Altbach, 2015; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Because they are "different but dynamically linked concepts," the phrases internationalization and globalization are sometimes used interchangeably (OECD, 1999, p. 14).

Internationalization, according to Jane Knight (2010), is a term that stresses relationships between and among countries and cultures, whereas globalization emphasizes the world's oneness—interdependence and connection. However, both conceptions are associated with internationalization in higher education—both reacting to the force of globalization and working as a globalization agent (Knight, 2010). Studies on higher education internationalization agree on a complicated and frequently fragmented internationalization process (Frølich & Veiga, 2005), which has resulted in the notion of internationalization becoming various things to different individuals (Knight, 2010).

The concept of global citizenship is an interest of the higher education community. Douglas Bourn (2020) summarized the term as a type of global social engagement, a rebirth of interest in global governance, a realization of social mobility and multiple cultural identities, a response to globalization, or more instrumentally within education as addressing citizenship inclusion within the curriculum. Bourn (2020) contends that the phrase "global citizenship" is more about a means of opening up communication and debate, as well as a spectrum of theories and interpretations as the basis for constructive discourse. Several studies have demonstrated that citizens respond to requests for global cause support on an individual and communal level (Gaventa & Rootes, 2007).

The notion of "global citizenship" is also linked to instructional techniques aimed at developing and empowering students as critical agents who see the interconnectedness and significance of global concerns to their own lives, as well as the relationship between local acts and global effects (Killick, 2015; Lunn, 2008).

2.3 Internationalization and Intercultural Learning

One of the most fundamental features of internationalization is that participants will undoubtedly undergo change on several levels. A valuable dimension of global experience is “its disposition as a catalyst for intercultural development, and it is vital for academics, students, and institutional identity, mission, growth, and excellence” (Hamza, 2010, p. 53). Intercultural sensitivity and professional skill upgrading are two more characteristics of internationalization (Corbin Dwyer, 2019; Slethaug, 2012). Participants have the opportunity to form substantial networks because of their international experiences, which can enrich their ideas and assist them in keeping up with research they encountered while abroad (Hamza, 2010). Higher education institutions have provided a way of exporting social, economic, and political development, have collaborated across national borders, and have expressed the reality of interconnectedness among nations in economic, political, sociocultural, and intellectual dimensions, as well as international awareness and cooperation (Deardorff, Wit, & Heyl, 2012).

Slethaug (2012) found that overseas experience benefited global teaching among professors who took part in international cultural exchanges. Mezirow (1991) proposes that the advantages that are gained by professors may be applied to students participating in international exchange programs. For example, using Mezirow’s transformational learning theory supports how adults assimilate new information, perspectives, skills, or practices into their world cross-cultural aspects, indicating a significant feature of international learning (Altbach, 2015). Transformational learning comprises being more thoughtful and critical of oneself, as well as more receptive to other people’s viewpoints (Mezirow, 1991), resulting in a shift in how they understand themselves and the environment in which they live (Merriam, Baumgartner, & Caffarella, 2007). According to transformative learning theory, frames of reference are influenced by a person’s own experiences (Cranton, 2016; Mezirow, 1991). Individuals begin to review their known values, beliefs, and expectations when critically analyzing their established assumptions and views (Hamza, 2010).

However, intellectual and social-cultural rationales of the past have given way to economic and political rationales of the present, according to literature on higher education internationalization (Altbach, 2015; de Wit & Altbach, 2021;

Knight, 2020). Today, universities all over the world "develop strategic international alliances through cross border partnerships in both teaching and research" (Hamza, 2010, p. 50) to increase their institutions' worldwide visibility (de Wit & Hunter, 2015; Knight, 2017a).

2.4 Internationalization Abroad (IoA)

Jane Knight (2017) explains the concept of internationalization in education as having two legs. The first leg, mobility, is made up of the people, programs, and policies. The people include the students and teachers that move around internationally in education. The programs are responsible for moving the people around by recruiting, joint degree programs, and international branch campuses as examples. The policies and regulations are taking charge in areas like quality assurance of education, credit accumulation, qualification recognition, and learning outcomes. Knight (2017) explains that in western countries, the number of people on a given university campus involved in this first leg of internationalization, is about two percent. Of the students that make up our ECEC program in English, we have only one that fits the definition of an international student, choosing to conduct all their higher learning in an institution in a country different from their home country.

Barriers for students for studying abroad include prohibitive costs, recognition of credits, and delayed graduation (Soria & Troisi, 2014). Soria and Troisi's (2014) study show that people of colour are less likely to go abroad and women in exchange programs are highly overrepresented. Even though studying abroad is what people think of first in internationalization of education, de Wit and Hunter (2015) recommend changing the focus of IoHE's from the first leg, mobility, to the second leg, "internationalization at home" to ensure a quality education for all, rather than for the elite, mobile few.

2.5 Internationalization at Home (IaH)

As a result of globalization, an increasing number of institutions of higher learning are attempting to enhance their students' global, international, and intercultural (GII) abilities (Burnett & Huisman, 2010). The GII competencies include

awareness of the intricacies of situations in a global context; appreciation of cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity; knowledge about numerous facets of global and international cultures; and comfortable in dealing with individuals from other cultures (Soria & Troisi, 2014). People with developed GII dimensions are considered to have an easier personal life and a productive professional life, as well as strong leadership skills in a global environment (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

Internationalization-at-home (IaH) and internationalization abroad both aim to help students build their GII abilities (Beelen, 2011; Hayle, 2008), however IaH is considered to be more effective than abroad in terms of internationalization (Soria & Troisi, 2014). IaH aims to assist all higher education students in achieving international and intercultural dimensions, as well as to give possibilities for returning foreign exchange students to integrate their study abroad experiences and provide alternative international experiences at home for those who prefer not to go abroad (Nilsson, 2003). Internationalized curriculum and international extracurricular activities are two ways in which IaH may assist students in achieving GII competences (Hayle, 2008).

2.5.1 Internationalized Curriculum

A curriculum that delivers international and intercultural knowledge and abilities, aiming at equipping students to perform (professionally, socially, and emotionally) in an international and multicultural setting, is what defines an internationalized curriculum. (Nilsson, 2003). The "internationalization of curriculum," is done by "the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the preparation, delivery, and outcomes of a program of study" (Leask, 2009, p. 209). This process produces a curriculum that will "Engage students with internationally informed research, cultural and linguistic variety, and actively cultivate international and intercultural views as global professionals and citizens," (Leask, 2009, p. 209). The two goals of internationalized curriculum are: "cognitive objectives" (providing international competence) and "attitude-related objectives" (providing intercultural competence). As students' awareness of cultural variety grows, participation in lectures and formal curricular activities with international or global topics can help them build intercultural competence (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

2.5.2 Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities contribute significantly to students' GII abilities. According to Soria and Troisi (2014), IaH is a viable alternative to studying abroad since students may improve their GII abilities at home by participating in international extra-curricular events on campus that include students from other culture. The presence of international students is thought to contribute to an institution's multicultural and international component to some extent (de Wit & Hunter, 2015; Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp, & Woodfield, 2013). According to researchers, "intercultural learning at home can initiate the development of positive attitudes toward other cultures, and behavioral skills to act efficiently and adequately in an intercultural context" (Crowther et al., 2000, p. 18). Students may also gain confidence and comfort in interacting with foreign classmates through international activities (Crowther et al., 2000; Soria & Troisi, 2014). In other words, encounters and relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds assist home students in developing their GII competences by allowing them to learn more about new cultures, as well as to comprehend and tolerate differences and diversity (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

It is critical that foreign students engage in extracurricular activities for internationalization at home to succeed. It has been argued that newcomers may withdraw into their "own cultural colonies" if they do not form deep bonds with other students from various cultures (Crowther et al., 2000). The literature suggests this is because often people are more likely to interact with others from their own cultural groups than with other foreign or local students (Crowther et al., 2000; de Wit & Hunter, 2015; Knight, 2020). New students may experience "negative effects on their readiness for learning, their consciousness of relevant learning tasks and on their academic performances" if they are separated in their own cultural groups (Crowther et al., 2000, p. 17). To avoid this and promote the active participation of international students, schools and universities should provide adequate social assistance for newcomers and ensure that foreign students communicate with one another upon arrival and their local peers. Because the percentage of students who stay at home institutions throughout their studies is so high (about 95% in Finland), it's important to consider an

institution's IoH programs and policies in order to reap the benefits of IaH (Crowther et al., 2000).

2.6 The Four Pillars of Education

The "Four Pillars of Education" were first described in a report written for UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century chaired by Jacque Delors (1996). The report describes overarching educational aims that address personal and societal human development. On the one hand, education is a highly personalized process, with stages corresponding to the continual maturation of the personality. On the other hand, it symbolizes a "a process of constructing social interaction" (Delors, 1996, p. 95). According to this viewpoint, the four pillars of education represent broad goals of learning in the twenty-first century and provides a compass for complicated internationalized curriculum goals.

Delors (1996) was clear that throughout a person's life, education must be structured around four essential forms of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. These four fundamental forms of learning, which are aptly referred to as the "Four Pillars of Education," can each be defined alone, but together they form an integrated whole that, in an ideal world, should be present in every pedagogical interaction and throughout the internationalized curriculum (Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015).

The Four Pillars of Education framework is used to explore the acquisition of global, international, and intercultural (GII) competencies by the students in this study. A brief overview of the educational relevance of each of the four pillars of learning is provided below to aid in understanding.

2.6.1 Learning to know

"Learning to know" is a very different way to learn than by memorizing facts or memorizing lists, as is often stressed in traditional curriculum and rote learning. Instead, it means being able to use the tools of knowledge well. Learning is an ongoing process that can be enhanced by any kind of experience (Delors, 1996).

“Learning to know” means getting better at using your memory, imagination, logic, solving problems, and being able to think in a clear and critical way (Scott, 2015). It is a discovery process that takes time and involves digging deeper into the knowledges taught in educational institutions. To learn something, you must learn how to learn. This requires concentration, memory, and the ability to think, so that you can take advantage of formal and informal learning opportunities throughout your life.

Therefore, “learning to know” can be seen as both a tool to learn and a goal of learning and life in general. As a tool, it helps each learner understand at least a little bit about nature, humans, and their history, his or her own environment, and society. As a goal, it gives the learner the chance to enjoy the process of knowing, finding out, and understanding.

2.6.2 Learning to do

The pillar “learning to do” is about putting what you've learned or known into use. It is closely related to technical education and training in work skills. But it's more than just learning how to “do” certain things or practical tasks in traditional or industrial economies. As the knowledge-based economy grows, human work is becoming less and less important. “Learning to do” requires new types of skills that are more about how to act than about what to think (Scott, 2015). Materials and technology are becoming less important than people and their relationships with each other. Learning to do something means moving from having a skill to having a competence, or a mix of higher-order skills that are unique to each person.

So, “learning to do” includes things like being able to communicate well with others, being able to work well in a team, having the social skills to build meaningful relationships with other people, being able to adapt to change at work and in social life, being able to turn knowledge into innovations, and being willing to take risks and solve or manage conflicts.

2.6.3 Learning to live together

The Delors report (1996) recognizes the importance of this cornerstone of education in light of the world's rapid globalization. It implies a two-pronged approach to learning: first, the discovery of others; second, the experience of shared aims throughout one's life (Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015). In particular, "learning to live together" entails the growth of characteristics like introspection and self-awareness, curiosity about the world and others, compassion and cooperative social behaviour in caring and sharing, deference to other people and their cultures and values, the ability to engage with others and resolve conflicts through dialogue, and skill in working in teams.

2.6.4 Learning to be

"Learning to be" is a way of learning what it means to be human by getting the knowledge, skills, and values that help a person grow in their intellectual, moral, cultural, and physical aspects (Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015). This means that the internationalized curriculum should encourage imagination and creativity, teach universally shared human values, develop a person's memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical ability, and communication and social skills, teach critical thinking and independent judgment, and teach people to be committed and responsible for themselves.

It's important to remember that the four pillars of learning apply to all stages and areas of education. They work together and support each other. Because of this, they should be used as basic principles and cross-cutting themes that can be used across different subject areas when teaching.

It is with this framework that I will analyze how Internationalization at Home within the ECEC degree program helped the students learn the GII competencies previously discussed.

3 RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

My research question: What were the students' motivations and perspectives on enrolment and participation in Tampere University's Early Childhood Education and Care bachelor's program in English? I explored and arranged the motivations for applying for the program and our learning experiences through Internationalization at Home under the two areas 1) Internationalized Curriculum, and 2) Extracurricular Activities. Following that I looked at our Global, International, and Intercultural (GII) competencies learned through the Four Pillars of Education framework.

3.1 Qualitative Research

The first aim of this study was to understand the motivations of the students who applied to the Bachelor of Education Early Childhood Education and Care in English, offered for the first time at a Finnish university. By focusing on students' experiences and reasons for applying, a qualitative methodology offered the approach and tools best suited to the study. Qualitative research allows researchers to focus on the distinctions between individual's experiences and aims to gain increased understanding about a specific topic from the perspective of the individual (Hall & Harvey, 2018). Qualitative research spans disciplines, fields, and subject matter, and incorporates semiotics, storytelling, phenomenology, ethnography, and case studies, among other techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

3.2 Interview Method

Individual or group interviews can be used for quantitative or qualitative research. An interview is a method in which one person poses questions to a

person or group of people in order to obtain answers to specific queries or an expansion of their views on a specific topic (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

3.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interview can have both open and closed questions, making it useful for qualitative research (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). Even though open questions are most often used, everyone is asked the same questions, so there is some standardization. The interviewer has the freedom to ask for more information about a certain answer and can change the questions based on the interviewee's needs, for example, how well the interviewee understands something.

The method of this study used the semi-structured interviews as described by (Seidman, 2006). The questions were not detailed or the same for all interviewees. My goal was to better understand my classmates' views about their educational journeys, and I allowed for them to speak freely to explain their own perspectives (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). I prepared a set of open-ended questions to introduce the themes of the research, such as motivations to apply to the program, their expectations of the curriculum, and their thoughts on teaching methods. From there I compiled a detailed analysis of each participant's responses.

3.2.2 Focus Group

Focus group interviews are discussions led by an interviewer with a small group of individuals (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). A focus group is often composed of two to twelve individuals who were chosen because they share interests. In this case, we are all students within the same program at university. When using a semi-structured interview, it is the moderator's responsibility to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to speak and that the conversation is not dominated by one or two people.

Seventeen of my classmates participated in four group interviews in groups of two to five students in the interview sessions.

When I asked my classmates to participate in focus group interviews, one of my classmates initially declined. Later, that classmate asked if they could still participate in the study but wanted the interview setting to just include the two of us. The same semi-structured interview questions were asked.

3.2.3 Self-Interview

It may seem strange to look at oneself as valid research, since traditional models of research have tended to stress the need for the researcher to get out of the way. Also, in the academic world, it has always been thought that the "right" subject for research is someone other than the researcher. More and more people think that the researcher himself or herself is an important part of research. This is because more and more people are realizing that the researcher is one of the most important tools in research (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). People think that the researcher's personal history, opinions, and biases will always affect the research in some way, from the first idea to the final report.

After conducting two group interviews, I chose to answer the semi-structured questions myself, by writing them out in a Word document. I have employed these written thoughts as a tool to help me reflect upon my research but was not used as main data.

This study examined students' perceptions of the intent and consequence of participation in the learning-based activities in one program on one campus (Tampere University) and involved data collection over a two-week period. In this study, data sources included four focus group interviews, one individual interview, and one written self-interview.

3.3 *Social Constructivist Approach*

A social constructivist approach was used given my focus on students' views and experiences, since it emphasizes that learning cannot be understood outside of its historical, cultural, social, and institutional settings (Lattuca, 2002). Because the answers to the questions are complex, it meant that a single phenomenon can be interpreted in many ways (Levers, 2013). Semi-structured focus group interviews were utilized to allow participants to openly talk about their thoughts

and feelings. This allowed me to generate conversation around the subject of their answers which can give more insights (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

Because I am also a student in the program, my perspective heavily impacted this research in all areas, including the interviews and data interpretation. I included my own careful reflections over my experiences and points of view of the program.

3.4 Data Collection

The sixteen participants of this study are degree students from the Faculty of Educations and Culture at Tampere University's Early Childhood Education and Care program in English. I personally invited my classmates to participate in a series of recorded, online focus groups via email, which included relevant information about the study, such as the research topic and aims of the study, and how the acquired information was to be used. I listed their rights and included information about privacy protection in the email. One student opted for an individual interview. I did a self-interview by answering the questions in written form.

The four focus groups and one individual interview consisted of one to five participants and lasted from one to two hours. The session recordings were transcribed, anonymized into a word document, and then deleted. The analysis came from the transcribed word documents. The interviews transcribed were about 117 pages long.

The interviews took place online, using the Zoom platform in a series of small focus groups of one to five participants. Because the participants have our TUNI ECEC in English program in common (the focus), they are familiar with each other, they trust to share their views in front of the others and have a common experience to relate to the conversations about the topics that I introduced as a facilitator. The groups were small to ensure that all participants had a chance to engage in the conversations I initiated with my prepared questions (Parker & Tritter, 2006).

List of Discussion Questions

1. What motivated you to apply to TUNI's ECEC program in English? Do you remember your first thoughts when you heard about the program?
2. What did you expect from the program when you started? Have your experiences changed and how did they match your expectations?
3. Tell me about your experiences working with our culturally diverse group? Can you give some examples?
4. Who do you spend with the most time at school?
5. How much do you interact with students outside of the program?
6. Can you give examples of how you share your time with other students? (Examples: Visit homes, just at school, studying or having meals together, pursuing hobbies, study/group work, free time.)
7. Would you say that you have developed friendships?
8. Have you learned from each other during the past years?
9. How do you think studying in this program might affect your life in the future? (Example: thoughts, behaviors.)
10. Have you changed as a person being part of this group? If yes, in what way?
11. Name some things that went better than you expected. Name some things that surprised you. What was challenging?
12. How could the program be improved?
13. Did I miss anything? What would you like to add?

3.5 Analysis

I converted the audio recordings of the interviews into confidential computer files. I then used Microsoft Word®. to prepare the transcript for thematic analysis. After experimenting with a few techniques, I utilized the Tampere University-provided Atlas.ti software to emphasize and identify intriguing portions of the data, bearing in mind the research question.

Next, I employed an inductive method of analysis (Yin, 2011). I sought out significant themes to define the motivations and experiences of undergraduate ECEC students studying in English (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The data was meticulously read and revisited to identify emerging themes. I manually coded each transcript (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). I then evaluated the codes to determine their interrelationships and identify commonalities (Yin, 2011).

3.5.1 Research Ethics

The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2020) has guidelines for ethical research process. Confidentiality, privacy protection, and data protection are essential aspects in every part of research.

All participants were informed about the aims of the research, the reason they were asked to participate and how it related to the research, what they needed to do to participate, their right to more information about the research process, the methods of data collection, privacy protection (anonymity), and how the data was intended to be used. The participants' anonymity was secured in this study and the identity of the participants cannot be recognized from the collected data. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time without providing any reason (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

Special considerations was made for audio recorded conversations, such as letting the participant know the recording would be stopped at their request, assuring them the recordings would only be used for the purpose of the research and was stored securely, and that the privacy of the participant will not be compromised (Rapley, 2007).

My research participants are students at Tampere University and my thesis concerns the activities conducted by Tampere University, so permission was obtained before gathering data. The Tampere University Faculty of Education and Culture granted permission to conduct the research after receiving my application accompanied by a 1) risk assessment, 2) privacy notice, and 3) the research proposal as attachments.

3.5.2 How Data was Managed

Ethical research requires that the data acquired will be stored according to common standards recognized for scientific knowledge (TENK, 2020). The data was generated, maintained, and ordered in a way that the data was available and reliable, with an emphasis on data protection and security (Archive (FSD), n.d.). The data was collected within the country of Finland and therefore the data was

stored and protected using the Finnish Social Data Archive guidelines (Archive (FSD), n.d.)

All data was collected and stored using TUNI approved programs and servers which are password-protected and require an authenticator app to access, or on my personal laptop's hard drive which is both password-protected and requires my biometrics to open as well. I collected and stored the consent forms in TUNI provided One-Drive. The TUNI provided Zoom app was the main platform for the collection of data. I stored the recorded and transcribed conversations on my personal hard drive and the transcriptions in my TUNI's Microsoft One-Drive account. The backup files were password and biometrically protected. Anonymization was implemented as the recorded data was transcribed. Audio data was destroyed as it is no longer relevant using a file shredding program, Erasure. Transcribed data will be destroyed upon acceptance of this thesis using Erasure.

4 MOTIVATIONS TO APPLY TO THE ECEC PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

The sixteen students who came together to participate in the Early Childhood Education and Care program in English all have a story on how they got to Tampere University.

There were two common motivations to all sixteen individuals for attending Tampere University. First, we all wanted to become qualified education professionals and work in Finland. Second, we all wanted to study in English language. Reading through the interviews, two student groups emerged that offered different themes to those common motivations. The first theme, brought up in the interviews of the migrant students who came to live in and contribute to Finnish society; and the second, by domestic students seeking internationalization in higher education. Two very different paths lead by the same motivations.

4.1 The Migrant Journey to Tampere University

Of the ten foreign born students in this study, four had previous ECEC education at institutions of higher learning outside of Finland, and nine students had been working as unqualified ECEC professionals in Finland. The experiences of the migrant students typically reflect what other researchers have already described. Skilled migrants cannot get recognition for prior diplomas and learning and can experience barriers to securing employment which creates an array of social and economic insecurities and vulnerabilities (Cameron, Farivar, & Dantas, 2019). Due to these reasons, they have endured severe demoralizing and disempowering downward social mobility, as well as vulnerability (Guo & Liu, 2021). A key tactic of governments for addressing skill demands and shortages

is to promote skilled migration, which in turn leads to a variety of employment hurdles, such as social and economic anxieties and vulnerabilities (Cameron, 2019).

Students who were qualified ECEC professionals in their home countries were hired as unqualified staff in Finland, expected to perform as qualified staff for less money and benefits. One student talked about the conundrum of starting as an unqualified substitute and was hired as an unqualified teacher eventually taking on the director's duties of their day care, which they felt unqualified for.

I was teaching, and at the same time, work- helping in the office because back in [my home country] I was manager, education manager at one of the private companies. So, I could understand how things are working but I didn't know how they were for Finland. So, it was a hard job to, you know, to learn through, and then I felt more pressure, that, 'Oh, I am unqualified.' FGI2P3

Other chimed in perceiving their education from their home countries as undervalued and unappreciated by their Finnish municipal managers and co-workers.

I feel like my previous studies were not appreciated or valued in any way. Like my four-year degree from a university in [my home country] is just garbage here. FGI2P2

For those nine students working as daycare professionals, it meant they were unable to get a permanent employment contract. They signed yearly contracts with the same company repeatedly. A lack of a permanent contract makes life precarious and long-term planning difficult if not impossible. For example, getting a home loan is more difficult in Finland with short contract. Home ownership does not only offer a family direct service and stability, but it may also enhance life satisfaction and physical and mental health (Sinning, 2010). Sinning (2010) further explains, even after accounting for income, children of homeowners are more likely than children of renters to complete higher levels of education. Home ownership is one of the key milestones in the integration of immigrants. A married, migrant student with a small child talked about the anxiety of working with only temporary contracts, feeling that they were kept in limbo by the director.

When I joined [a private day care company], I asked them if it was possible to make me permanent. And the answer I got was, 'Let's see.' And then at

the end of my first year in the contract with [that company], April came, right, and this happened in the day care before as well, April came, and I'm sitting there thinking, I don't know if I've got a job in two months. That's a really weird situation. So then I push the day care managers to make a decision. [...] And then they are like, *almost*, they want to negotiate with me, talk with me about things even. Even if they think that there might be, you know, that I'll probably be hired, there's this element of uncertainty. And then when I sign that contract for next year-- it's, it's just one more year. FGI5P3

Tampere University's ECEC in English program offered unqualified migrant ECEC professionals a path to participating in ordinary Finnish society as fully valued employees.

We were in the profession already because we, we had an interest in it and we liked working with kids already. But the reason we got into [the program] was so that we could, [laughs] you know, have a job and keep a contract. FGI5P4

Long term migrants to Finland got used to the system of working in the ECEC profession as unqualified teachers, nurses, and directors, but when Tampere University offered its ECEC program in English, it provided a way to be recognized as fully educated teachers and to create more stability in one's life.

All the students agreed that there is nothing wrong with Finland having a high standard of education and quality in the field of ECEC, however, getting the education to become qualified has been the biggest hurdle. Learning the Finnish language well enough to attend a university program can take years by itself, and many of us are older and have adult responsibilities. Some of us spent years trying to find solutions, with little help from the Ministry of Education and the universities we contacted.

One student talked about how their motivation lagged after communicating with the Ministry of Education asking them how to get qualified.

I felt I was shut down [...] Their response really was that, 'Hey, we don't deal with this. Send your credits to [a] university for recognition, and, you know, go and study.' And there, there was no places in Finland to study in English at that moment in time, for a teacher's degree. FGI5P3

It wasn't just those students with university degree or experience in their home countries that had trouble finding a university program in English after migrating to Finland. A student with no prior education or experience in ECEC has also found work in an English kindergarten after coming to Finland and talked

about wanting to become an ECEC professional. The student expressed frustration about trying to find a way to get qualification either in English in Finland, as she did not speak Finnish or her home language, but that was too expensive and not accepted as qualifying her to be a teacher in Finland.

It was nice to be in the kindergarten, but I really wanted to get out of the assistant role and to be able to do something more than that, like I wanted to be more with the kids. So, I've been looking like for options. Obviously in Finland it's pretty hard if you don't speak Finnish. So, I'd been looking at, like, back in [my home country] if I could study something online that would qualify me at least is like a [ECEC nurse] in Finland. But I have to pay a lot of money because I would be an international student. I would be considered as an international student in [my home country] since I'm not a resident there. So, it was going to cost a lot, so I was looking at different options for that. FGI3P3

Two of the program students ended up in a preschool program while trying to find a bachelor of primary education university program in English.

I think my motivation to apply for this is because I wanted to start my career in education. And this is the only program that I can find in bachelor's degree which has an English option. I4P1

Many highly educated professional immigrants have encountered difficulties in transitioning to the host country's labour market (Cameron et al., 2019). One of the most prominent issues addressed by migrant students in Tampere's ECEC in English program pertains to the lack of recognition and the devaluation of immigrants' prior learning and work experiences, which in turn leads to taking up employment in a lower professional responsibility. Migrant students shared experiences of employment while considered unqualified within the ECEC profession and the subsequent impact on our new lives in Finland. Cameron (2019) argues that the devaluation of immigrants' credentials can be seen as an attempt to regulate immigrants' prior learning and skills, contradictorily filtering immigrants' participation in the labour market while simultaneously inviting them to make economic contributions. The migrant students in this study according to the interviews experienced the same dynamics taking place in Finland.

Finnish universities are well known for providing Master and Doctoral level programs in English (Jogunola & Varis, 2018). However, Bachelor programs in Education in English are lacking. A look at StudyInfo.fi (2022) offers only three

Bachelor of Education programs, none of which are in ECEC. All migrant students in this study lacked proficiency in Finnish at an academic level and required university programs in English language.

In summary, migrant and international students were motivated to apply to Tampere University's English language ECEC program because we wanted to be recognised as education professionals, qualified to work in Finland, and complete our studies in a shared language for understanding.

4.2 Domestic Students' Motivations to Join the ECEC Program in English

There were five native Finnish speakers who were accepted into the ECEC program in English. Their primary motivations for doing so were because they were interested in participating in a diverse educational environment and they thought that studying in a foreign language would bring more value to their education. They also were very motivated by the entrance requirements to the program in English, which differed from the entrance requirements for the ECEC program in Finnish. Other motivations were job security and interest in ECEC.

Because of previous school and social interactions, four of the native Finnish speakers expected to experience a different community among their student peers if they studied in English.

"The fact that this is an English program, that's what threw me into it more. I feel like English program is best cause usually people are either interested in internationalization or there will be people with different backgrounds in them. So that was also an aspect that really interested me." FG11P2

Three of the native Finnish students brought up that the requirements for admission into the program were not as strict as for the Finnish language program. One of the native students talked about English being a favorite subject in school and this program also offered the qualification they needed for their chosen profession but was concerned because they didn't test well during the Finnish entrance exam.

"And then, another factor was because this program didn't really care about the grades of your matriculation exams, or the results. And because my results from those were kind of bad, or not bad, but you know, not the kind that get you the good points from them to the entrance exam...This didn't

really care, other than you had the qualifications to apply to higher education. I was like, 'Oh man, I have to try to apply.'" FG2P4

Two of the five native students brought up how doing the program in the English language would add value to their future ECEC qualification. One of those Finnish students told how their search for an online ECEC degree, or a program with a flexible schedule for working students, was fruitless. They found this degree program and decided that doing the three-year program with contact learning would be acceptable *only* if the program were in English.

"And then I saw this degree program in English, and I started thinking that if I have to do, like, studying during the day full time, I want to do it in English. I *won't* do it in Finnish, but I *will* do it in English because I think that adds into my degree, and opens doors for me, as a future teacher." FGIP4

The broad use of English as a second language in Finland can be viewed as the result of several historical events that occurred at the same time, many of which can be directly linked to the social reform that developed in the second half of the 20th century and the drive for modernization (Peterson, 2022). The integration of English language instruction within the curriculum reflects priorities related to the social welfare state's guiding principles for education. At the same time, the concentrated effort to learn the English language was a part of globalization in relation to the outcome of World War II, with America rising as a major player in world politics and economics and Great Britain maintaining its historical influence through the continued use of the English language.

Foreign language proficiency has traditionally been a sign of greater social class and intelligence in Finland. Beginning around the end of the 19th century, the Finnish nationalist movement "authors, poets, writers and journalists ... resembled the archetype of an intellectual. They were academically educated, well-travelled individuals, skilled in languages— virtual renaissance figures, who participated in artistic circles and were interested in various social, political and cultural issues" (Kortti, 2014, p. 7). Access to a foreign language and social class are still linked in modern Finland. Clearly the students in this study recognize the social capital obtained by studying for a degree in a foreign language.

The domestic students in this study were motivated to apply to Tampere University's English language ECEC program because they were attracted to the different admission process and wanted to become qualified Early Childhood

Educators. They chose to study in English because they were seeking out internationalization opportunities that they felt will add value to their education.

5 STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF THE PROGRAM

5.1 Experiences of the Curriculum

While discussing the program during our interviews, four themes emerged consistently in all the interviews. The relevance of the program to real world teaching and caring for children in daycares and preschools, the experiences of working with the teachers within the program, how we maximized working together as a group, and lastly, how we experienced the program while coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.1.1 Relevance

The ECEC in English students were expecting Tampere University's program of study to equip them with teaching skills, knowledge, and behaviours to perform efficiently in day care classrooms, preschool classrooms, or other learning environments.

Some of the less experienced students felt that the curriculum did not meet their expectation regarding how prepared they were to go to work after graduation. They discussed how the theory was disconnected from the practical day-to-day tasks and duties as ECEC teachers. Students talked about difficulties in handling stress on the job, dealing with difficult children, navigating the special education system, and paperwork as gaps in our university education.

After working for some time, I felt like I didn't have enough of the skill and the knowledge that I was expected to have--to do, to be a good teacher and work. And I felt like one of the things I didn't recognize when I was in school, is that we weren't equipped by practical knowledge, and we weren't prepared well enough to deal with a lot of stress. A lot of demanding in the work, and we weren't told, like, the reality of the job, so there was a lot, unpreparedness when entering the work, the real life, you know? So, it was a shock for me, a very big shock, actually, to see how teaching really is. I feel like the theory world and the reality, somehow, quite a distance. I4P2

Program students with more previous teaching experience talked about the differences in our home countries' programs and Tampere's ECEC program concerning practice and theory. In the group interviews we discussed connecting the theories we were learning to our past experiences and education. This follows the research that students with experience are able to tie their previous knowledges to new ideas (Sevimli-Celik, 2021).

I was actually expecting that there will be more practical tips or more practical ways on how to do things with children. More than having...more of these...this theoretical stuff. But then again, I was like comparing this program to the program I had in the [my home country] and it's way, much better than what I had in [my home country] so I couldn't really like, complain, actually, because I wasn't like, you know, debunking or like, I was just throwing out all of the things that I learned before and, and replacing it with all of the things that I am learning now which was really awesome. FG1P6

Research shows that ECEC teachers who received teacher education reported higher professional teaching identities, however, students' sense of teacher identity may also be challenged in the stressful and conflicting period when ECEC students begin their teaching practicum (Huang, Zheng, Duan, Yang, & Li, 2022). According to Sevimli-Celik (2021), Turkish preservice teachers lacked confidence in their ability to instruct due to the lack of practice-based instruction in teacher education programs. The conflicts between the theories that they learn as students and the teaching practices that they need to deliver as teachers put them into a dilemma, negatively influencing their perceptions of themselves as teachers.

In our focus group interviews, our pre-service teachers also experienced negative perceptions of themselves in the classroom. One felt they had inadequate skills to accept a full-time teaching position after graduation, two others said they weren't cut out for the job of being an ECEC teacher. The lack of experience with practical training directly influenced their confidence in themselves. The students with experience in ECEC teaching had a head start in developing our teaching identities. We thought of ourselves as teachers already and didn't seem to experience the same kinds of negative self-perceptions.

Actual teaching experience fills in the gaps in training, and perhaps pre-service teachers with little experience need more practical experiences while in their ECEC programs.

5.1.2 Teachers

The ECEC in English students had strong opinions about the quality of the curriculum as presented by the teachers and professors in our program. Students felt that the quality of the program was dependent on the teachers' preparedness, language skills, methods, and knowledge.

Students mentioned one of the teachers in all five interviews as standing out as exceptional. One student was able to summarize the qualities we appreciated about that teacher, namely, the quality of their courses and teaching, taking time and a personal interest in us as students, and modeling professionalism.

[...] One of the big things that both surprised me and went better than I thought was [this teacher]. These professors that I've worked with, like, again, not just the regular [TUNI ECEC] lecturers, but the professor's that I've interacted with in my previous studies. I'm not saying they're not nice, they're nice, but they don't have the time, and they are not able to give the time and attention that [this teacher] does. I think it made a big difference for me. Yeah. I mean just little things, like you show interest in something, I mean you know, you know, you had the same experience, Researcher. You show interest in something, and they say, 'Hey, come to this conference or come for this research group meeting.' And I'm like, these are accomplished professionals doing their post doctorate, doctorates around the world. *What am I doing here?* [laughs] You know? So that surprised me and went much better and I think they've been a very good example in terms of our professional posture. I think they have been a good example for us. FGI5P6

In our discussions and interviews, students talked about the differences among the media, such as PowerPoint slides and pre-recorded videos and materials, such as handouts or notes, prepared by teachers. Some courses had very well-prepared materials and lecture slides, while others were obviously machine translated. We knew what kind of a course we would have on the first day because the professionalism of the teacher was reflected in their visual lecture materials. A Finnish student in our program speculated if they would have a better learning experience taking the same courses from the Finnish language ECEC program, as the curriculum was the same and maybe better taught in Finnish.

There have been times when I have wondered, like, whether I should just, you know, take the same course in Finnish. [Laugh] I don't know, partly

because, well, of course I have more opportunities offered to me as a, you know, a fluent Finn but also sometimes I feel like the teaching quality might be better, because you know, the materials. FGI2P5

Just as we made assumptions about teachers, some students perceived that the teachers made assumptions about us as learners. Both native and foreign students thought that because many in our group are not familiar with basic things a native Finn might know, there are some basic things for natives that should be covered for foreign learners. For example, a student talked about how a teacher was surprised when we all did not know a web-based application commonly used in Finnish high schools and universities.

I think that comes to this thing that teachers need to know to whom they are teaching. If you don't know the group you need to start from the basic things [like] what is VASU ... The same thing I think happened with [one teacher]. Unfair stuff, [their] lectures. [They were] like, 'Yeah, there is this Flinga and you can go and put your thoughts in there.' We were doing this group work and I remember [not everyone] knew what Flinga was. But [the teacher] did not ask and I remember having the classroom conversation [with the teacher] and [they were] like, 'Well, everyone knows what it is. What, what's the matter with you? You don't know what Flinga is?' And we're like, 'Well, you could have just explained it to us what it is.' So, I think that's, that's the thing, that you need to know who you are teaching and what you teach." FGI3P27

In the very first course of a teacher who taught us in many courses throughout our program, as participants recalled, the teacher had many slides to cover in our lectures so it was hard to take notes. They told us that we could just download the slides, so notes were not necessary. But over time the teacher adapted their style. The teacher slowed down and lectures became more conversational. They said to a guest lecturer in one of our online lectures to be prepared to cut their lecture by ten percent to allow for the questions and class participation. At the end of our last class with this teacher, the teacher said that they found working with our diverse group interesting and fun.

This is one example of how Finnish teachers learned to appreciate working with diverse students, practically demonstrating transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991). In this case, the teacher demonstrated being more receptive to other people's viewpoints, perhaps resulting in a shift in how they understand themselves and the environment in which they live.

Some students with less work experience thought the teachers taught as if all program participants had the same knowledge and work experience.

I had to also learn all these like smaller things that many other people already knew because they worked so long in the industry. So, so that was a challenge for me was sometimes that there was maybe a level of assumed knowledge that I just didn't have because I hadn't worked as a teacher before. FGI3P14

The students discussed in four of the five interviews what we perceived as the teachers' attitudes were toward teaching in the English language. It was very common for native Finnish teachers to ask us on the first day about our Finnish language skills, but never by an international teacher. We were told many times that there were lovely books and articles to read in Finnish language to back their lectures, it was a pity we could not understand them. Some students thought the teachers were uncomfortable using the language. An immigrant and native student recognized the difficulties for some Finnish professors to teach in English.

I was expecting that there'd be, like, different qualities of teaching. Because a new English [program] means that there are teachers who are not as comfortable [laugh] with [laugh]using, using English." FGI3P7

In response to the difficulties that some Finnish teachers encountered with the English language, we worked with them to overcome these issues. Our Finnish students would translate tough or rare concepts, our English speakers helped search for the right words, etc. However, one student brought up how our learning can be impacted by the teacher's language difficulties.

Some teachers are clearly not as used to teaching in English. And because you can, again it's, if you're not, not everyone is fluent in English. [...] But sometimes it's... if they really struggle it's a bit difficult to learn. FGI2P6

Two students participating in different interview discussions said they felt as if some staff were being forced into teaching in English, which led us to feel like the teachers resented having to teach us.

"Many times, I felt that the teachers that were teaching, were just like, they kind of HAD to do it. I feel like there were teachers that did not want to teach in English but they HAD to. And that's, well, that's not quality for me, when we talk about studying." FGI3P6

As part of university's internationalization efforts, today more and more faculty members are asked to teach in their second or extra language. While many teachers are confident in their ability to move to another language as the medium of teaching, others are concerned about their capacity to teach

successfully in their second language (Knoerr, 2019). The fact that some students think that instructors instructing in their extracurricular activities have a detrimental influence on their own learning (Knoerr, 2019) can only exacerbate teachers' lack of confidence. According to Knoerr's (2019) study, bilingual university lecturers who teach in English think this circumstance has an influence on their academic responsibilities and identities. Even though their linguistic and cultural identities don't change, their academic identities and professional roles have a big effect on their self-image, self-esteem, and sense of self (Knoerr, 2019). University teachers generally reported in Knoerr's (2019) study that they liked teaching in an additional language and felt it was a positive experience. The teachers feeling most confident in teaching in a second language reported spending more time and work than for their first language courses (Knoerr, 2019).

The availability of the professors and teachers to discuss and answer questions was also brought up in the interviews. Three students talked about how teachers reacted when questions were asked in class. Some of the teachers showed frustration when we asked for clarification.

I mean, I remember that first course we had with [one teacher], that um, I was asking [them] some questions or something and the way [they] reacted I just felt like I was being annoying, or I was inconveniencing [them,] like the way [they] react when someone needs more explanation. [They're] kind of like, [heavy sigh] and then [...] I always felt like, 'Oh sorry that I'm inconveniencing you even though you're supposed to be here to teach us.'

FGI2P26

Over time, teachers that worked with our group consistently changed their teaching practices and lectures to suit our style of learning. Most teachers told us how they were surprised with our discussions, and they liked to see that we were engaged and hear our thoughts. A student talked about how they felt that the teachers learned and adapted their teaching practices to accommodate to our group.

We make them think. We make them work for their salary. So, they have to do a lot of things to, like, accommodate the know-how and knowledge that we already had, to get us something new, to give us something...like, yeah. But I think that they've learned a lot. FGI3P16

It was evident to everyone that we were all learning together, including teachers. Personal exposure to diverse classrooms can help teachers, as well as

students, to develop problem-solving skills, think about their own values and educational philosophies, learn more about other cultures and educational systems, and gain a better understanding of differences and diversity. This may help to adjust their teaching style to meet the needs of their students (Okken, Jansen, Hofman, & Coelen, 2022). Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning theory explains how adults assimilate new information, perspectives, skills, or practices into their worlds' cross-cultural aspects, which is an important aspect of international learning (Altbach, 2015).

From the interviews it is clear how teachers acquired intercultural skills, since it is not enough to be good teachers in an international environment. In turn, teachers also play a key role in helping students develop their intercultural skills (Okken et al., 2022). An interculturally competent teacher is able to interpret, evaluate, and relate to ambiguous intercultural situations, change the frame of reference, and use skills that fit intercultural contexts (Okken et al., 2022). In other words, teacher in this way facilitate Internationalization at Home. Because of their exposure to our group of degree students, it seems our teachers have honed their teaching practices to educate students in international environments.

5.1.3 Group Learning

In the interviews the students were asked about how participating in a group impacted their learning. Many of us talked about how the diversity of the group was helpful for our learning. We used each other as resources for understanding the lectures, gaining insights from each other's practical experiences, and shared our perspectives. Because we were a variety of ages and experiences, from different parts of the world, we had plenty of perspectives to share.

We have such a diversity in many ways, we are diverse in cultural background, religion, and years of experiences. So, I felt really thankful in a way that I have such strong experienced classmates that I can talk to, I can ask from, I can exchange ideas, and stuff like that, so it was a great thing. And we get along together very well. [...] That's the best thing about this education, I think. Because we couldn't talk to the professor the way, like we cannot share, we cannot ask questions as often as we want, but there's a team, the classmates, for me to really pose the questions to and really lean on when I need some support. They are like my teacher, I think. I4P3

As previously stated, one way our group learned was by discussing lecture topics with one another outside of the classroom. Students said that we learned more about our lecture topics through continued sharing amongst ourselves at lunch, study sessions, and small group projects assigned by teachers.

Because it wasn't just the lectures, but it, like, the lunch. Lunch time spent with our fellow students after the lectures that we continued these discussions. IFG3P9

That student continued to talk about the small groups being supportive and motivating as well, as our group was highly motivated.

I think my most enjoyable experiences with working with the group has just been real, has been record moments when I recognize such incredible like, intelligence and talent on the part of my course mates on many of these assignments that we're on. And, you know, you're working with another partner and the other person writes something and you're like, 'Wow, this is really amazing.' And I've just been, many, many times, just been struck by just a high degree of intelligence... excellence, from our, our course mates. So, and I've learned, I've learned quite a lot of that. Absolutely. FGI5P17

While some students can succeed in their academic careers working independently, most students work more effectively in groups (Johnson, Johnson, & Stanne, 2000). As a result, educators, like TUNI's ECEC teachers, frequently center on promoting cooperation and collaboration in the classroom. Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne (2000) go on to say that informal relationships within social networks, particularly friendships, have a significant role in the emergence of studying relationships. From the theoretical background in this paper, we can add that the group developed an appreciation for cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity, which is foundational to the Global International and Intercultural (GII) competencies defined by Burnett and Huisman (2010).

TUNI's ECEC program in English made a space for international and domestic students to interact, form wholesome connections, and form a group identity. This development of our environment facilitated the growth of a closely knit social network that centered on appreciating difference and diversity.

5.1.4 COVID-19

An unexpected twist to our educational experience was learning while coping during a global pandemic. COVID-19 touched all aspects of our lives, and the

students reflected on trying to work and learn during the pandemic in the interviews.

Students talked about feeling overwhelmed and unmotivated and how COVID-19 affected our learning and lives.

COVID and dealing with the distance learning [...] affected everything. My study, from my studying, motivation, to my grades, to my ability to concentrate. [laugh...] It really was the biggest hurdle for me. This whole thing." FGI321

We discussed how having a strong bond with each other before we were sent home helped us to transition to online learning, but some thought it was sad that we couldn't be together for contact teaching.

Because of how well we learned while working together, some students felt that we could have learned more if we had contact teaching. One even wondered how our experience would have been different without COVID-19.

"I think we're a weird group because of, because of COVID. I think I have [clears throat] I think we; I mean we got short-changed basically with, with our university experience. I think it, of course, is no one's fault, it's just you know, this virus. But it's hard to say how it would have been otherwise, right?" FGI5P6

For some of us, online learning was welcomed. Five of our group lived in other cities in Finland and had long commutes to get to Tampere. Most of us met online for study groups, and some of us met online for coffee dates, just to chat and check in with each other to provide some mental health support. Students talked about how the pandemic made managing our learning and personal lives easier.

Actually, these COVID things...I understand [another student's] point of view that for them this social aspect of studying is really important. But for me, traveling, three hours, like to get to Tampere, for me this thing was a blessing. Because I could do these studies at home. FGI3P13

Students discussed how the pandemic affected the curriculum of the ECEC program in English. We couldn't get as many practical experiences working with children because we weren't allowed into daycares due to the virus. Another way the curriculum was affected was the immediate transition to an online platform for lectures and small group sessions. We understood the teachers when they seemed to have a hard time.

At the same time, I was really careful that there are a lot of these, our teachers, some of them are a little older, ones who just couldn't figure out Zoom, who couldn't figure out how to, or who would get nervous because they were on a camera, the teachers themselves, I could, I could see it, you know. FG15P22

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated significant changes in how university teaching and learning activities were conducted around the world (de la Fuente et al., 2021). There is no doubt that COVID-19 touched the lives of Tampere's ECEC English students in all areas of learning. Personal motivation, online learning, changes to the curriculum, and group dynamics all were profoundly impacted by the pandemic. While some felt they missed out on the social side of contact learning, others were very happy to stay home and attend the university through telecommuting. Having some strong connections to each other and teachers before the pandemic sent us home seemed to help the students cope with the new ways of learning.

5.2 Experiences of Extracurricular Activities

The Tampere University Early Childhood Education students' academic organization is called ITU ry. Their objectives are to support students and provide activities and events for their members. Our class was assigned two tutors when we started to show us around and answer questions. Many of us joined ITU and tried to participate in parties and informational events. We bought overalls and attended the coffee gatherings. We received and read the newsletters. There was still a hard line between the English speaking and Finnish speaking ECEC students.

Students mentioned feeling awkward when they attended events. One student talked about trying to participate in the social activities and feeling out of place. I tried to join the choir and when I walked into the room all conversation stopped and people were looking at me silently. I tried to stay and be brave but I didn't go back. When we did go to the coffee socials the two groups would clump together with their own known friend groups.

Before Corona when they were still arranging some stuff there sometimes, like I think maybe Student 2, and Student 4, and I, we were like well we have

an hour until the train so let's like stop by there, but I felt like I was back in high school. And all the popular girls were hanging out around the couch, you know, laughing, joking around. And, like, you know, we would try to kind of like, get in and be like, 'Hey! Hi! How's it going?' or like I'll talk to the girls that were at the coffee bar with the cookies or whatever. And then like, it would just awkwardly fizzle out and then we would just be kind of left standing there kind of wondering why we were here. FGI2P24

The language differences were an obstacle. Events were planned in Finnish only. A Finnish speaking student in the English language ECEC program talked about the newsletters.

Although, although they are sending those English newsletters, as well, as well as the Finnish but often I noticed that there's some, maybe an event or something they're talking about in Finnish. But then there's no mention of it in English. ... I feel like they have done too little, too late. FGI2P23

Both Finnish and English-speaking students noticed that there were differences in values between our groups. Most of our group were older with jobs and families. We were not interested in parties and bar hopping.

These freshman parties which most of us weren't that interested in because we're a bit older, or, you know. I think that that was a very big difference between our group, and the Finnish cohort, like, for the same year. And it was quite obvious the difference sometimes like in what our values were and what their values were. FGI3P17

An incident came up in a couple of interviews. It took place at our ECEC in English students' Christmas party and is a good example of a cultural difference between our groups. One of the students in our study who had purchased overalls, which are customary among first year students. These overalls were adorned by patches with supporters' logos or slogans. One student mentioned to the tutor that they wanted to put a patch in a place other than what was usual within ITU (Association of Early Childhood Students), and the tutor said this absolutely cannot be done that way. The student felt that the message on the patch was inappropriate for public display as after all they were becoming day care professionals. The tutor said that perhaps the student was too old to get the joke. The student felt insulted to be called old, and perhaps felt also unwelcomed into a group of young students. A younger, native Finnish speaking student in our group pointed out the lack of understanding by the tutor.

I remember when we had our first year, our pikkujoulu. The little Christmas party we had, like, in that weird basement. [Laughs hard] Because I left there with, I can't remember her name, but one of those ITU's tutors. And the whole bus ride until I had to get off the bus, they talked about how they thought that our group was weird. And how they can't understand how we cannot take a joke, because, [one of the ECEC in English students] didn't want to put that, put the [...] patch on their overalls, the way that ITU says that it's supposed to be. [long pause] And I am like, [pause] yeah, I see why [the student] didn't want to do that. I don't understand why someone would want to do that. But that just, [long pause] I don't know... I think it shows a clear difference between the Finnish ECEC students and what our group is. Because they didn't see what the problem was with that. That not everyone wants to make a funny dirty joke. FGI3P15

Others also expressed feeling unwelcomed and got little benefit from being a part of the ITU organization. A student responding in this study thought that some activities could be planned together with someone from our group.

There was no representation for, from the English-speaking students. FGI2P24

The two ITU groups needed more varied opportunities to network with each other. While social activities outside of the classroom also play a significant part in giving opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to spend more time together, the classroom is where our student groups connected with one another. It is crucial to keep in mind that Internationalization at Home's primary goal is to support all pupils in developing their international and multicultural perspectives (Nilsson, 2003).

The commonly held categorizations of diverse backgrounds include a person's nationality, culture, mother-tongue, or ethnicity. ITU tried to make our group fit into their assumed norms such as attending their parties, wearing their overalls, and translating their newsletter thinking these things would lead to us to be equal participants within the student academic organization. It didn't work.

The diversity within the ECEC group in English seemed to be one of the problems beyond language use. We were culturally mixed by age, experiences, gender identity, stages in life, education, on and on. They might have thought that we were the problem because we didn't integrate into their society.

The degree students in the ECEC group in English offered to work with ITU to promote our participation within the group. One suggestion that was made was to include some of us on their ITU board. We could work together to change

the organization towards the direction of diversity. They turned us down, but going forward I strongly suggest they start by looking at and celebrating the diversity within the existing organization then move forward to becoming a more inclusive group.

Internationalization at Home promotes foreign students to have the opportunity to incorporate their international experience obtained abroad into the educational setting at their university (Soria & Troisi, 2014). Our students might have been offered the chance to share their foreign knowledge and experience with local students, especially those who might have not had the chance to study abroad, on such occasions thereby supporting the goal of Internationalization at Home at Tampere University.

This chapter addressed Internationalization at Home through curriculum and extracurricular activities during our English language ECEC program at Tampere University. Student experiences reflected the literature showing that an internationalized curriculum, group learning, and teachers with competency and skills in teaching in an international context are the most important components to global education. Students' experience of ITU, the on-campus ECEC students' organization, shows there is room for improvement for university supported extracurricular organizations to blend program students, also by expanding the conceptualisation of who students are in an international context, as they are not representing the group of fresh high school graduates. Perhaps the diversity and friendships within our own group successfully provided the multi-cultural aspects to our off-campus time.

In the next chapter we will look at how our group achieved Global International and Intercultural competencies.

6 LESSONS LEARNED

6.1 Global, International, and Intercultural Skills

There are several publicly accessible frameworks for global skills (Redecker et al., 2011). These frameworks demonstrate the value placed on the development of global competencies for today's students at all educational levels. The Four Pillars of Education promoted by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) highlight the core ideas required to reshape education to make it applicable to both the present and the future: Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together, Learning to Be (Delors, 1996) (Scott, 2015). This approach is focused on lifelong learning and growth throughout all educational levels in a global setting.

The Four Pillars of Education cannot be defined separately because they are all part of the same thing. They work together to make a whole that is stronger than the sum of its parts. Since education is a whole experience and teaching is more than just teaching specific skills, students must be taught and given experiences that help them think and act in creative and critical ways in the right situations. These Four Pillars of Education gives a list of the four most important parts of a well-rounded education.

6.2 Learning to Know

Everyone agrees that mastery of foundational material and learning focused on twenty-first century topics are crucial for today's students. In contrast to collections of isolated and decontextualized facts and data, the underpinning of twenty-first century capabilities must be based on integrated content knowledge (Scott, 2015). Global citizens must also commit to lifelong learning; they must regularly review what they already know and what they still need to acquire for success in both job and life, and they must be prepared to retrain themselves when new circumstances call for different abilities (Delors, 1996).

One student said that they have learned the beliefs that Finnish society has toward children and education. They were able to tie their observations to Finnish culture and theory to understand ECEC in a deeper way.

A lot of the basics, or the foundational principles and beliefs really about children, about education, about day care, that really defined, or make the that, really define the Finnishness of early childhood education, *here*, I think now, I'm like, [makes a noise and gesture of eureka,] I get it. FGI5P5

Two students reflected how their time in the program helped them to see and use basic features of childcare routines in a different way and connect to the curriculum. Both expressed confidence in their knowledge of the Finnish Curriculum to justify their pedagogical choices in their classrooms.

So, I've seen how much I've grown and, for example, I'm this issue of this, this idea that day-care, day-care life has to be relaxed and gentle and not rushed, as it's written the curriculum, I have really *changed* my opinion about lot. So, I think my personality and my, the way I might, my *being* with the children is the same. I'm very goofy and silly and that is the same. I completely resonate with what Student 15 is saying about confidence. Now when I say stuff, and people are like, maybe don't agree, whatever, and I'm like, I'm not mean or rude about it. But I'm a lot more confident because I'm just like, you can just *look* at the curriculum, it says this and that, you know, for example or then I'm able to just express things a bit well. FGI515

Most students demonstrated integrating content knowledge and theory to their experiences to become reflective and confident teachers. Mastering knowledge is a process of collecting information continually through both formal and informal experiences (Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015). Learning to Know is a process that takes time and effort and requires delving deeper into the acquired information and making it into new knowledge. Intercultural sensitivity and professional skill upgrading are two characteristics of internationalization (Corbin Dwyer, 2019; Slethaug, 2012).

6.3 *Learning to Do*

According to Carneiro (2007), academic and applied knowledge is necessary for both students and adults. They also need to be able to connect knowledge and skills, competence and learning, inert and active learning, codified and tacit knowledge, and creative and adaptive learning to turn these learning processes into useful skills. These skills place a strong emphasis on active learning.

Critical thinking is regarded as essential to education in the twenty-first century (Redecker et al., 2011). It is possible to learn, practice, and master critical thinking, which entails obtaining, analyzing, and synthesizing information (Redecker et al., 2011).

One student said they learned critical thinking and reflection in their years in the program. They have learned to reflect on why we do what we do, to dig for meaning behind the systems of operating.

I'm a lot more critical in my thinking now. And I have that background knowledge to really lean on. The first year was, like, a foundation for me, and it changed me as a person a lot. I learned to be more accepting people the way they are, more sympathize for people, put myself in other's person, shoes. And, I said about critical in a way that when we learned the philosophy, then I realized there's so many different ways for you to see life. There's not only one way that I thought that that it should be. You know that even education, you can look at from so many different views from different lenses. And the same with life, the same with, with every system, political systems, or society system, or educational system. So it's so fascinating for me, to do those first courses to change your mind to be more reflective to, to be more critical and question yourself, question the way you have done in the past, and why you do the way you do. I4P4

Strong communication skills are widely appreciated in professional and everyday life. These skills include the ability to convey ideas effectively both vocally and in writing, to clarify viewpoints, to deliver understandable directions, and to motivate people (Scott, 2015).

One student talked about how their partner was impressed with how well the students could articulate ideas with one another.

My [partner] was telling me, 'Wow, like the way you were talking!' Because sometimes [my partner] would listen to our conversations and the discussions and the lectures. 'Wow, you guys, you nailed those topics. You guys were talking like you're talking with President Obama or like you're in this UN convention thing. Like, you're talking at a very high level. And you guys were really, like, tackling these topics like, professionally, and in a friendly manner.' FG11P13

Another student learned to listen effectively. They talked about listening for understanding and glean knowledge from other's experiences.

I become open minded and good listener. Like, I'm not, I, I still have my own culture and identity but on the other hand, I still really interested in learning from different people, their story, their teaching experience, everything." Student FG11P7

A Finnish student said they learned confidence to participate in discussions through the safe group environment during discussions.

I feel like in this group, you can quite freely express your own thoughts without like seeing judgment from others. As everyone knows, that we are very diverse group and we are used to that everyone has their own opinions and thoughts. So, I feel like personally I have also got some confidence during this course, or program. FGI1P13

Learning to Do refers to, among other things, having capacity for effective interpersonal communication, aptitude for teamwork, and social skills for fostering meaningful relationships. Learning to Do takes the knowledge and transforms it into practical skills, for example, the GII skill of being comfortable to communicate with people from diverse cultures and in diverse settings (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

6.4 Learning to Be

The same way that cognitive abilities are essential, so too are the character traits that help learners develop their identities, determine how they react to failure, conflict, and crisis situations, and help them get ready to deal with the challenging issues of the twenty-first century. Global citizens must be able to collaborate with and learn from diverse groups in a range of professional and social situations, as well as be able to adjust to rapidly changing circumstances (Scott, 2015).

To perform well in life, we gained strong social and intercultural abilities. These abilities enable us to work effectively in diverse teams, interact with others effectively (e.g., knowing when to listen and when to speak, and how to conduct ourselves in a respectable, professional manner), be open-minded to different ideas and values, and use social and cultural differences to inspire creativity, innovation, and higher-quality work (Scott, 2015).

Two students talked about being mindful while listening and discerning when to participate during sensitive discussions.

Working with people from international backgrounds, different backgrounds, taught me how to be sensitive. Sensitive in a way that I have to be, sensitive with what, what other people feel, and I have to think first before I talk. FGI1P7

Another student talked about learning flexibility while doing assigned group work.

I think it's taught me, like, in a way, flexibility, because I'm the type of person-- that's something I'm trying to grow out of--that when I think I'm right, I *am* right. And just to learn those skills of valuing other people's expertise in a way, and that understanding that your way is not always the only, good way, to do things. FGI3P17

While another student discussed how learned professional skills can be applied to their everyday life.

[The program] taught me different things, and it helped me in a way that I could apply those learnings from my every day, my everyday life, not only like professionally, but also how I deal with regular people with different kinds of people. FG1P13

Some students talked about how their personal and professional identities have been shifted during this program.

I think this is this program's changed my values, and what I think is important, a lot. From what I thought like I said earlier, like this difference between what I expected to get from this degree, as far as what kind of an education, or what kind of a teacher, I was going to become, and what actually happened. So I think that it's changed those values, a *lot* for me, like completely. FGI3P17

Two students born in Finland but come from culturally diverse families talked about how they appreciate their cultures in a new way.

I have also learned to, like, to appreciate Finnish culture, too. That sometimes your own culture can kind of disappear, like you don't think about your own culture. But when I see how things are done elsewhere and how they're done here, I also kind of see the good parts that we have here and I can also see more clearly the parts that maybe we should look how other countries are doing some things. FGI1P10

The capacity to adapt depends on students' openness and dedication to life-long learning (Carneiro, 2007). One student demonstrated how they intend to take their learning further.

I would like to find a way to move, in a lot of our courses whether we've talked about, whatever the issue we've talked about, whether it's, it's gender, or racism or, or play or whatever, I would like us to, I would like to move beyond certain just cliché understandings of things and understand better how to apply them at work with the kids. And I, and I, that's where I'm, I think that's where a lot of my change in behavior and thinking will, will continue to develop over the next few years. FGI5P15

Learning to Be can be understood as the process of developing as a human being, in its intellectual, moral, cultural, and physical dimensions through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values. The students in this study demonstrated immense growth in this area and had the opportunity to form substantial networks, which enrich their ideas, according to Hamza (2010).

6.5 Learning to Live Together

There is strong evidence that students who work in collaborative teams produce greater levels of thought and retain material longer than those who work alone. With the use of shared learning, students have discussions, keep track of their progress, and develop their critical thinking skills (Johnson et al., 2000).

Students in our program understood the importance of not just being friendly, but also looked for and used the skills and ideas of diverse individuals, which Barret (2014) identifies as an important quality of global citizenship. We developed social and cross-cultural abilities to seek out other people's perspectives as well as understanding and appreciating the problems of people and cultures that are different from our own. We fostered an understanding of and respect for the diversity of people, groups, and communities that according to Scott (2015) leads to intercultural competence.

Employers are looking for professionalism, a strong work ethic, oral and written communication, cooperation, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Redecker et al., 2011). Through the many group work assignments given, the program students succeeded in learning to work in a cooperative setting.

Our teams will be different ages, yeah, in the future, though there are continuously more men coming into the field. But there will be different values and different backgrounds, and that's something we have to learn to work with and I think that's a strength of our program, because we're training it from here. Even us who have not who don't have that much work experience or life experience. That's all of us. And I think that's something this program has that has added value. FGI3P16

Civic literacy is a crucial ability that includes understanding the local, national, and international ramifications of civic concerns as well as how to

exercise one's rights and responsibilities as a citizen at the municipal, state, and federal levels (Scott, 2015).

In one of the interviews conducted for this study we discussed discrimination in the administrative side of ECEC. A naturalized program student said they wanted to fight the discrimination with their newly found confidence in themselves as an ECEC professional.

After the degree I will feel more confident... to fight back. [...] I wouldn't say I learned a lot about, for example, multicultural work, and et cetera, because I have been in the multicultural groups before. But this degree, I got more theory and knowledge how to justify the way how I am thinking and the way I'm doing stuff. So there is theory behind now, I can show it. And then there's the qualification. I will have, you know, I have...reference. I did university, so I'm not, because all the other was not counted, and I am from third country. And coming to Finland I already understood that my experience and qualification, or whatever is zero, so it doesn't count. I had it in my mind so, I was resentful, but then facing injustice didn't feel good. But from now on, I will have long tongue. (A saying in [my home language].) I will fight. FGI2P17

Globally competent learners behave ethically and cooperatively - in inventive ways - to contribute to local, regional, or global development (Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). Many ECEC in English program students became mindful to incorporate prior approaches and the viewpoints of others into their professional and everyday lives.

I think [social justice] adds to my own, own, like, understanding, and, the way I do my work. So that's how I utilize that side off this, this degree. But I totally agree that this was not expected, but really like, interesting. And I remember that first course, where I was like, [sucks in breath] this is not going to work, I didn't sign up for this. [laugh] But after the two years doing my thesis, I was like, 'Yes! This is exactly what I signed up for.' FGI3P8

The mere presence of knowledge does not often give pupils a clear route for action (Hackman, 2005). Some degree students reported feeling overwhelmed, which made them feel confused on what to do to become active in and teaching social justice to children.

And then the fact that we're being pushed constantly, challenged, you know as activists, that we should be activists, so to speak, and then, again, the way that the real-world kind of conflicts our positioning, as professionals. That's been difficult to come to terms with, really, because I feel like I should go out into the professional world and be full of enthusiasm and motivation. It's like, I don't want to *rush* into something which, from my perspective, I'm going to change the world as [our teacher] puts it, but we are kind of expected to do that, in a way that we, we, we feel like we should want to, right? I

actually feel like I want to, *but* [pause] And that you know you are quite limited in your capacity to change things as an individual, so you have to work on something collectively towards the future. That's challenging for me, because, you know, you, we were in this course, with, full of this enthusiasm, full of these burning ideas to change and then the real world is going to be fighting against us. FGI5P19

Respect and tolerance are essential in culturally diverse communities to ensure that people's perspectives from various backgrounds are adequately acknowledged and accepted (Barrett et al., 2014). Our program students learned the skills of active listening, adaptability, and collaboration with team members in multidisciplinary and intercultural teams.

Throughout the years of our degree program, we learned that there are many kinds of diversity, and we appreciated each other for our differences. We all had something to contribute.

And I started actually speaking more and having discussions with people, I realized—I always knew that my thinking was small, even if I've lived in like, three different countries my whole life, but I learn a lot because not only was everyone sort of like, had years of experience and they've lived, they've gone through so many more experiences than I have. But also, I learned from their like, different worldviews and sometimes even hearing the stories that people have about their teaching experiences where they've lived at. [...] And I remember I was like, then I was like, oh, then I have a, I have a lot of catching up to do. But then I didn't think of it that much, like, after we got to know each other more. I was, I actually, I, there's something I can give as well. It's not just I need to receive. FGI1P9

Some in our group were native Finnish students from the countryside and learned diversity by participating in our program.

I was really surprised that the group was so diverse. Not only like age or backgrounds but, like, a lot of things. So, for me, that's like living in a small place like I do, we don't get a lot of diversity here, if I'm completely honest. We have very, very few children that are some something else than, typical Finnish...looking children. So, for me, it has to be like this diversity and learning about diversity in like in practice. FGI3P20

One migrant degree student talked about coming to understand the white, European culture.

The different perspectives also made me think in different way. I would, I would say, in [my previous degree program], it was more how they say, blended group. But it was more African and Asian and towards that culture. Here I get to know more about white—sorry, for the white culture and how things are done. And I realized that I actually didn't know it before I met you guys. FGI2P14

While a native-born Finnish student began to understand the immigrant experience in a different way.

I learned so much about, like how, from our class, how, maybe being an immigrant in Finland, makes things much harder. In some ways that I *had not thought* about, even though I always had friends like, either, either have roots or [have come as an immigrant.] And I have been an immigrant myself when I lived in the US. But it's, it's an eye opener really. This, now all these experiences have made me more rich. FGI3P20

That same student talked about having a guilty feeling for taking an immigrant's spot in our program but came to realize that their perspective was important to this experience.

I've always thought that this is an amazing program. Not, not necessarily because what the university does, but because what we as a group have done to it. And when I've been feeling all kinds of down because of COVID things and maybe when I've gotten a bad grade or something, that's when my head has started thinking, 'You're taking someone's spot, someone would need this way more.' I think it's, it wouldn't be the same without having Finns in here, but also it wouldn't be the same if it was *just* Finns or even more things. I don't think anyone in our group, if there was one person who wasn't the person they are, as they are, or have been, it wouldn't have been the same experience. FGI3P21

Still another of our group felt that we students and the program instructors did not discuss deeply enough on how we could incorporate our experiences into our diversity and multicultural classroom pedagogy.

We did ourselves a disservice by not really exploring our different cultural views. I actually think we *didn't* do that, we just kind of...Yeah, I mean, I'm saying for *all* we've learned about diversity and constructing a better world through diversity in our studies, we didn't do that in our group. I mean, we just, yes, we conversed with each other and heard each other's experiences but when we think about okay when we think about what we're supposed to do as day care teachers with groups of diverse children, right, and how we're supposed to bring out the diversity and celebrate the diversity of everybody. And think about the diverse of everyone. I don't think we did that. I don't think we actually sat down to explore. Hey, what are the different ways of looking at the world, what are the different ways of looking at childhood. We didn't. But that was not the point of this program at all. We were learning the Finnish system. FGI5P10

The Delors Commission places a special emphasis on the pillar of learning to live together in the context of escalating globalization (Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015). It suggests education adopt two parallel paths: one path leading to the discovery of others, and the second path finds experiences of common purposes

throughout life. Specifically, it implies the development of such qualities as: understanding of self and others; appreciation of the diversity of people, and an awareness of the similarities between, and the interdependence of, all humans. Our degree students showed empathy and cooperative social behavior through our caring and sharing with each other. We learned to respect other people and their cultures and value systems. We were capable to resolve conflict through dialogue and work toward common objectives.

It is easy to see how a group of non-Finish speaking students could learn those global skills. We are living in a different country, so we are already globally thinking on some level before the program began. While the migrants had only this one choice, the Finnish speakers had many options. They were equal participants in all aspects of this program including the caring and sharing with each other. Without them and our Finnish teachers there would be a hole in our social education. We were all necessary for our group learning.

Evaluating the data through Delor's Four Pillars of Education, however, was interesting but difficult. Interesting because when looking at the literature I could easily see where our learning reproduced the ideas behind each pillar. It was difficult because the ideas encompassing each pillar were tangled and interwoven with each other. Each competency learned could easily be assigned to more than one of the pillars for different reasons. For example, reflecting is a competency that can be included in Learning to know, as it is by reflection on our own practices that we can learn to improve them and flows naturally into the area of Learning to Do as we then change our practices. Reflection is in Learning to Be because we must reflect on how we as individuals fit into a global society. Learning to Live Together requires reflection on our values and viewpoints in a constantly changing world. The beauty of the Four Pillars of Education is the wholeness, working to educate and prepare a learner to live a life rather than have just a career.

Tampere University's Early Childhood Education and Care program students experienced changes on a variety of levels, which is one of internationalization's most essential characteristics. Two further aspects of internationalization, intercultural sensitivity and the development of professional skills were well met as shown through the lens of Delor's Four Pillars of Education.

7 CONCLUSION

While I was studying in the English Early Childhood Education program at Tampere University, I wondered how our program experiences might be different from the typical ECEC program taught in the Finnish language to primarily Finnish students. The two groups had in common teachers and the ECEC program to provide a foundation for us to build our knowledge of the Finnish educational and early childhood education system, the Finnish National Kindergarten and Preschool Curriculum, and the cultural way of doing things, leading us to be qualified ECEC professionals in Finland. However, our group was small, so we were able to get to know each other quickly and establish trust within our group. We brought a blend of operational cultures from Finnish preschools and those abroad that we worked into the classroom through our professional and cultural diversities and required our teachers to give us a chance to be heard and participate in the learning and teaching process. And, of course, we were a group with experience with intercultural sensitivity and we developed those skills even further.

This bachelor's thesis discussed the perspectives of students participating in a newly offered Early Childhood Education and Care program in English language on Tampere University's main campus. I chose to do this evaluation through the lens of Internationalization at Home, because I learned so much more than I expected from this degree program, and a lot of it was through my classmates rather than lectures and readings. I suspected because of the diversity of the group, we brought much more to the academic table than my previous experiences with college and university. The aim of this research was to find out how this group was formed, and how we learned together within this program to prepare for working as global citizens.

The first theme were the motivations for the students to apply to the program. This showed the stories of how and why the students arrived in the program in two different ways: either interested as a home student in

internationalization or migrants living in Finland for many years interested in becoming qualified workers integrating professionally into Finnish society.

Finland needs skilled and qualified Early Education professionals. We can train them from within, and those teachers are going to need the GII competencies discussed in this paper to successfully and compassionately educate and care for a rapidly diversifying society, including migrant children and their families arriving in Finland all the time. Finnish ECEC students must be exposed to Internationalization at Home to prepare for the global society Finland has become.

Another place to find skilled professionals is from the migrant pool that is in Finland already. They are here, working with the children as unqualified teachers and nurses. As taxpayers, they deserve a chance to become qualified through quality Finnish education. They bring with them the global competencies and skills needed for Internationalization at Home.

The next theme looked at the program experiences of the students in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The lack of integration between the Finnish and English language degree students within the main social and support organization, ITU, was the main challenge found in this area. The friendship within the program students and group learning were clearly working well.

Providing intentional extracurricular activities between the home language and the migrant students will aid both groups immensely. The home language students will have a chance to develop their intercultural sensitivity which will aid them in their future professional and personal lives. The migrant students will be able to better integrate into Finnish society, benefiting them in their future professional and personal lives.

The third theme looked at the global skills that can be gained from an internationalized curriculum. The students clearly learned many abilities as discussed using the framework of UNESCO's Four Pillars of Education. Learning together within a diverse group was again the main idea behind the learning.

I have included the students' recommendations to improve the program as an appendix to this work. They include adding practical education, cooperation between the Finnish and English degree programs, creating a multimodal option for distance learning, and adding modules of courses in English to complement the ECEC degree.

From this study other questions have arisen. I would like to know more about how the Finnish teachers changed their teaching practices to suit our group. Further research could explore an ECEC degree program which includes Internationalization at Home as a common component of all education courses and teachers' learning within this program. There could also be a systematic orientation by university teachers and curriculum planners to change all courses taught in Finnish or English to include Internationalization at Home. Lastly, I think exploring how our group in the future benefits from the education and internationalization we received at the university, and how we are doing as global citizens could further add to how the English ECEC program has worked as preparation for becoming globally minded professionals.

A reoccurring idea in this degree program was the concept of 'entangled.' We have spent a lot of time during our three years looking how different subjects are woven together and connected in complicated ways, for example, education theories, policies, and pedagogies. Once we start looking for these links, global citizens see connections in the environment, politics, society--everywhere. This group learned in a variety of entangled ways, by bringing knowledge with us, through curriculum provided by great teachers, group learning opportunities, and by supporting our own learning with discussions and sharing experiences. These are the basics of Internationalization at Home.

Internationalization at Home was brought up as an idea more than 20 years ago. Bengt Nilsson (2003) came up with the idea for IAH in 1998 at Malmo University in Sweden, where there was a growing number of foreign students and a need for them to learn about each other's cultures. Teaching ECEC in English naturally brings people together in a common language to grow and learn from each other. Training more teachers to support collaborative learning and intentionally teach global, international, and intercultural skills is highly recommended in our changing and internationalising communities in Finland.

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APPENDIX

Student Recommendations

The students made numerous well-considered suggestions on how to make the ECEC in English program better. They include adding some practical learning, cooperation between the Finnish and English language programs, setting up a distance learning option, and adding English language study modules to complement the education studies.

Practical Materials Added to the Program

Some students wanted to have more useful knowledge for everyday working with children.

There could have been more practical, practical stuff or practical ways and how to implement those theories.” FGI1P17

I think that the universities should invest not only for this English program but also for the Finnish program in a course on basic care for children. Because you can 100% go through this program without knowing anything about nutrition or changing diapers. FGI3P25

Other students talked about preparing upcoming students for the realities of the working life. They would have liked to learn both a realistic expectation of the job and how to handle the stress of working life.

We need like, a contact to the real working life. You get this rosy glamour picture of what it is to be a kindergarten teacher. But come on. It's nothing like that. So, I think we need a stronger connection to the working life.” Student FGI3P24

I wish that I can tell *me* how to take care for more mental wellbeing, at work. And take care for yourself and take care for your own right and take care for yourself as well to become a good teacher, you know? You can't just not give in; you just have to receive and restore that energy yourself too. So that stuff we didn't talk a lot about, only in pedagogical leadership, a little bit, teeny tiny bit and I didn't really understand what she try to say. So, that's maybe

something we should talk about. Please tell us about the reality is not pink world. I4P6

Cooperation between Finnish and English ECEC programs

Students thought the Finnish language degree students could benefit from understanding the immigrant families that they will undoubtedly encounter in their future workplaces. Two naturalized Finnish students talked about their own immigrant experiences, one as a parent with a child in Finnish daycare, and the other as a former student in Finnish daycare.

I think Finnish students will be, would really greatly benefit from attending our course, like, our program, like with international students. Because same with the Finnish students deal with the future, like, teachers who will be working with children. And you know, from my perspective, like, as a parent, like, I'm always, like, think at the back of my mind like, 'I wish my child's teacher knows what I'm thinking, what I'm feeling as a foreigner, as an international person here.' I wish she has experienced like, working with international people. I wish she has like, studied with international people, like with people from different backgrounds so that she knows where *I'm* coming from.

Because it's very important that, yes, like, kids who are in the Finnish education system, they're from different backgrounds too. But then again, when you didn't have that first-hand experience working with an international group, then it would be difficult to apply just a theory that were like, included in your program into a reality. So, I think it's very important that you at least have that experience working with international groups at least, at least in the program, like this ECEC program when you're a student. FG11P21

Because I know first-hand how, it's, how alienating it can be, as a child, for your teachers to constantly not understand you, and to constantly group you with something that you haven't even understood yourself yet, whether that's religion or whether [...] being racialized. [...] And you wish that your, these teachers would understand how it is as well. FG1P22

Other students felt that the two ECEC degree programs can learn from each other and get us comfortable to work with people from other cultures.

From this diversity point of view and all of this, I feel like more cooperation between the different degrees would be like, 'insight education'. Especially this early childhood education I think would benefit from, would benefit both groups. [...] I think of our group, as these really vocal and ready to challenge, also the teachers. So we would act as a role model for other students as well, that it's okay to challenge the teacher. It's, they are not gods, so they could learn a different way of thinking about what it is to be a teacher. FG13P32

Collaboration between the Finnish group and the English group just because, I don't know, I just had this sense that we're both studying the same thing.

And we are meant to be integrating into Finnish society and, and if we are to ever get jobs within Finnish day cares, or day cares which are, let's say half Finnish, half English, because they are more and more day cares are operating in both, both languages. Then it would just help to share those perspectives. I'm really... I'm very pleased that we had, you know, [the Finnish students] in the group to really ground, often I found that, that grounded my understandings, my thought process, and then whenever I had questions why is this done and why is like this. FGI5P20

Multimodal Education

There were many of the participants in the ECEC program in English that would have appreciated some kind of multimodal or remote learning option. Seven of the sixteen students resided in cities outside of Tampere. Five of the sixteen were working fulltime while in the program. Six of the group were working part time to supplement their expenses.

Flexible, like, study options. I think that's what COVID has showed, like, having this option to study from home. I know it's not for everybody, and some people really didn't like this this way of working, but I think having these kind of flexible study options for those of us who live further away. Especially in this kind of program, like, in an English program where it's not being offered in every university in Finland, where it's been offered in like one university or two universities. So having that option where people don't have to uproot their whole lives and move to a new town, just to be able to study is really beneficial. And having that people can still go to work, you know, at the same time as doing these studies, because student aid is pretty rubbish in this country. If you're used to something, something *a bit more* so if you have bills to pay, car loans, mortgages, kids to raise, you know, student loan isn't going very far. So that's a big barrier I think to people being able to apply. So, I think having flexibility in the study methods is, this would be a good thing. FG3P25

You have a training for people who are older, who are working at the same time, it should be like more of this [multimodal education]. The teachers would realize that really, okay, we need to pay our bills, we need to work the same time. It's just not that you can just when you're in your forties you can just leave work for three years and not do anything. There should be this understanding that this group is different, like, the training is different and it's more for older people. So that, that's, I think one of the improvements as well that should be taken into consideration: that they should treat us as multimodal students. FGI3P25

English Language Modules and Courses to Support ECEC Programs

Students were frustrated when trying to take their elective courses when trying to find courses that would complement the major of ECEC. Perhaps the practical

information courses could be added as a module, or special education. Another student suggested language education.

I would love that Tampere university would start these [Language Shower] studies as a part of these bachelor studies. [...] And the other thing is [Finnish as a Second Language.] So, children who don't speak Finnish as their native language. Tampere university should have this possibility to study this. I think it's like 55 credits, what the union recommends to have these studies. [Other Language] studies to open these possibilities for teachers to get qualified on and, qualified on things that you really encounter when you go to work. FGI3P32

In conclusion, the most important recommendation to Tampere University is to continue to offer the ECEC in English program again. There are many reasons why, but one student talked about how the qualification raises the quality and reputation of the entire profession.

I think it will affect *all* of our lives that first of all we are now qualified, and we also coming from the university. There might be like, teachers who got the qualification as a [social worker] like, some years back. There, there also is a difference, like, some people think higher of people who have this university degree, instead of [social worker]. So that's just you know that's, that's, that's the way it goes. [laughs] And you know, I'm sure that through this degree, this allows us to go, and, you know, present us, you know proudly. That you know, okay, we might be, you know, from different countries or cultures or we might be working in the private sector in English day cares, but we *really* are qualified teachers, no one can say anything about it anymore. That's something that I think has changed for *all of us*. And should be keep changing because not 20 of us is going to change the reputation of all the, you know, private English day cares. Like we need ways to get these people qualified because there is no way for them to get qualified without this [program]. So, there we go. We need more of us. FGI3P19